

**Securing Permanence Group**

**Background**

This group (see terms of reference, appendix 1) was set up in early 2013 to improve the quality of social work practice and processes associated with ensuring that children in care are placed with permanent carers as soon as possible. Where this includes exit from care for example through return to parents, adoption or foster carers (including family and friends) applying for Special Guardianship or Residence Orders this will also result in cost savings. This is a completely new initiative which has required the development of specific information gathering about individual children's circumstances and analysis of themes.

**What we have learnt**

- Legal Planning Meetings are an effective mechanism for addressing circumstances where children have no-one exercising parental responsibility
- The extent of the challenges around finding long term placements of any kind for disabled children and those with complex needs or from minority ethnic backgrounds
- The need for more robust processes to identify and match children whose needs might best be met by being adopted by their foster carer
- Confirmation that delay in placement and subsequent adoption is minimal once children are matched with prospective carers
- Matching for adoptive placements should be speeded up further when new arrangements result in the Adoption service having a bigger pool of adopters waiting
- Special Guardianship Orders produce better outcomes for children as long as they are carefully assessed and supported and that the costs to the council are not necessarily significantly reduced because of the level of support (including financial) that some children require due to the complexity of their needs
- Some children subject to care orders placed at home with their parents need long term support

**Targets**

Reduce the number of children who have no-one exercising parental responsibility from 3 to zero by December 2013

Set targets for timescales to revoke placement orders when the care plan has changed from adoption (August 2013)

Set targets for timeliness of stages towards achieving adoption once year end data has been analysed (June 2013)

Establish baseline for the number of children subject to care orders where the plan is long term fostering who are not formally matched with a long term carer and set target for reduction (July 2013)

All final care plans for children whose care plan at the end of care proceedings is long term fostering are clear about whether the current placement is potentially appropriate or not- April 2014

Contribute to the Safeguarding and Family & Cohesion Cost Improvement Plan 2013-14 target of reducing average duration in care by 6 weeks (total saving £180k)

Increase number of children exiting care via Special Guardianship Orders from 3 in 2012-13 to 8 in 2013-14

Ensure all parents of children subject to Care Orders where children are placed at home are clear what a good enough level of care would look like to discontinue the order– end July 2013

Identify all children who are likely to be in residential care long term and ensure that their needs are being met and that arrangements are in place for safe transition to adulthood

**Jo Britton**

**Service Delivery Manager Safeguarding Advisory Manager**

**23/05/13**