

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

AGENDA

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 26th November, 2020 at 5.30 p.m.

This meeting will be held remotely. Joining details will be emailed to all participants.

The meeting will be livestreamed for the public to view on the Council's YouTube channel, 'sunderlandgov' at :-
<https://youtu.be/2QF2nksx9Y4>

Membership

Cllr Crosby, Hunt, Mann, McDonough, Mc Keith (Vice-Chairman), F. Miller, Mordey, Samuels, Scanlan, P. Smith (Chairman), Tye and K. Wood

Coopted Members – Mrs. A. Blakey and Ms. J. Graham

ITEM		PAGE
1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Minutes of the last meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 22nd October, 2020 (copy attached)	1
3.	Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)	-
	Part A – Cabinet Referrals and Responses	
	No Items	
	Part B – Scrutiny Business	
4.	Sunderland Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) Annual Report 2019/20	6
	Report of the Independent Chair of the SSCP (copy attached)	

5.	Establishment of Regional Adoption Agency - Update	34
	Report of the Director of Education (copy attached)	
6.	Annual Work Programme 2020-2021	95
	Report of the Scrutiny and Members' Support Coordinator (copy attached)	
7.	Notice of Key Decisions	97
	Report of the Scrutiny and Members' Support Coordinator (copy attached)	

E. WAUGH,
Assistant Director of Law and Governance,
Civic Centre,
SUNDERLAND.

18th November, 2020

Item 2

At a meeting of the CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held REMOTELY on THURSDAY 22 OCTOBER, 2020 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor P. Smith in the Chair

Councillors Crosby, Hunt, Mann, McDonough, McKeith, F. Miller, Samuels, Scanlan, Tye and K. Wood.

Also in attendance:-

Ms Amanda Brown, Chief Executive, Sunderland Carers Centre
Ms Jill Colbert, Chief Executive, Together for Children
Ms Julie Coulson, Finance Officer, Sunderland Parent Carer Forum
Ms Anita Cutts, Chair, Sunderland Parent Carer Forum
Ms Karen Davison, Director of Early Help, Together for Children
Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate
Mr. Luke Hall, Sunderland Youth Council
Mr Simon Marshall, Director of Education, Together for Children
Mr David Noon, Principal Governance Services Officer, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate
Ms Gillian Robinson, Scrutiny and Members' Support Coordinator, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate
Ms Lisa Watson, Carer Services Manager, Sunderland Carers Centre
Ms Paula Wooton, Co Chair, Sunderland Parent Carer Forum

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Mordey, Ms Graham and Ms Blakey

Minutes of the last meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 1 October, 2020

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 1 October, 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

No declarations of interest were made.

Children and Young People with Send and Young Carers -Impact of Covid 19

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which introduced presentations from the Sunderland Carers Centre and the Sunderland Parent Carer Forum in order to hear more about the impact of the Covid 19 situation on children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and the challenges facing young carers.

(For copy report – see original minutes.)

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Ms Paula Wooton, of the Sunderland Parent Carer Forum who provided the Committee with a comprehensive presentation including a brief history of the Forum and its operation, together with a detailed report on the results of the Forum's survey on the experiences of Sunderland's parent carers during the Covid-19 lockdown.

The Chair thanked Ms Wooton for her presentation and invited questions and comments from members.

Councillor Wood commended the 'brilliant' reports submitted from the Forum and the Carers Centre and reflected on what the city as a whole could do to help and support its parents and carers. She suggested that the reports were referred to the Chairs of the Council's Area Committees to see if they wished to have them considered by their Committees. The Chairman agreed and advised that she would propose that as a Committee recommendation.

Councillor Hunt echoed Councillor Wood's commendation of the reports which had made for very emotional reading. She asked if much contact had been made with parents since the full time return to school and whether the feedback showed a decrease in anxiety. Ms Wooton replied that parents of SEND children had initial concerns regarding the bubble system because the travel bubbles for the children were different to those in the classroom however this anxiety had largely eased over time as parents realised how safe the schools were. Ms Cutts added that the survey had been undertaken in the middle of lockdown when anxieties were at the highest point however things had moved on since then. The feedback she was receiving from parents now was that the schools were doing a fantastic job.

Councillor Hunt asked a supplementary question. She acknowledged that the survey had been carried out at the height of lockdown however the findings had highlighted significant concerns from parents eg poor communication over home schooling. She asked if lessons had been learned and what could be done to alleviate such concerns if a second lockdown was enforced.

Simon Marshall, Director of Education, Together for Children replied that the DfE had responded very quickly to get things in place. Lots of advice was now available for parents and schools regarding home schooling and how schools operated their blended learning. Extra funding had been made available to schools for staff training in respect of how this blended learning was delivered. The DfE had also made a huge amount of material available in respect of online learning and school staff had been able to take advantage of lockdown to consider how this could best be delivered, both at home and in the school.

Having said that, Mr Marshall acknowledged that it wasn't always easy especially in respect of SEND children, where lockdown heightened anxieties caused through isolation with children being unable to socialise. There was a reassurance through the HMI inspection regime in that the first question the Inspectors would ask was, were schools adequately prepared to support all children in learning outside of school? He believed also that TfC were now in much better position to support schools and parents should there be a second lockdown having gained experience from the first wave.

Councillor Crosby stated that the survey indicated that mental health issues were a major concern for parents along with the difficulties of accessing professional mental health care. She asked if anything could be put in place to provide support. Ms Wooton replied that although it had been difficult for people to meet in person it was important that they were able to continue to talk to ease fears of isolation. People were encouraged to utilise as many methods of communication as were open for them and to contact the Carers Centre which was there to support all carers.

Ms Watson from the Carers Centre advised that it had revised the way it delivered its services in response to the experiences of Lockdown described by carers. The Centre had run a promotional campaign in early October to advise carers of the support available to them and to acknowledge and raise the profile of the work of Parent Carers who felt that they had become the forgotten carers throughout Lockdown.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Miller, Ms Wooton and Ms Coulson outlined the measures available to support autistic children and their parents in the return to school.

The Chairman then welcomed and introduced Ms Amanda Brown, Chief Executive, of the Sunderland Carers Centre who briefed the Committee on the history of the centre and its work as a service commissioned by the Council and the CCG. She then handed over to Ms Lisa Watson, Carer Services Manager who provided members with an evaluation of the services provided by Sunderland Carers Centre during the acute lockdown stage of covid-19 and the impact the service had for the carers of Sunderland as shown through a survey of 269 participants accessing the service during that time.

Councillor Samuels welcomed the report and stated that she had had the opportunity to witness first-hand the work of the centre when meeting carers there last year. She asked if the Centre had noticed an increase in the number of young carers during the pandemic who hadn't been carers before, what challenges were they facing and was it expected that these new carers were likely to be short term carers albeit operating in very difficult circumstances? Ms Watson replied that the main focus of the Carers Centre was the long-term carers. In the case of young carers caring in the short term, it would encourage schools and GP practices to get involved in providing support. It was important that across the city, messages were continually broadcast advising carers that support was available to them and how it could be accessed.

The Carers Centre had a dozen young ambassadors who took assemblies in schools providing support to their peers. This had stopped during lockdown but it was hoped that they could be video recorded for use in schools in the future.

In conclusion Ms Wooton advised that the Parent Carers Forum intended to undertake a follow up survey of parent carer's experiences early in the new year and that she would love to bring the results back to the Committee. The Chairman confirmed that she would welcome this.

There being no further questions or comments for the representatives from the Forum and the Carers Centre, the Chairman thanked them for their reports and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the contents of the reports and presentations be noted and referred to the Area Committee Chairs for consideration.

Annual Work Programme 2020/21

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided members with details of the Committee's work programme for the municipal year 2020/21

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. James Diamond, Scrutiny Officer presented the report advising Members that upcoming items for the Committee included CAMHS and a presentation from Sir Paul Ennals on the work of the Sunderland Safeguarding Partnership.

Members were reminded that the work programme was a 'living' document and could be amended throughout the course of the municipal year as issues arose.

The Chairman having asked if Members had any questions or comments on the report, Councillor Tye referred to a recent meeting between the Portfolio holder and the Chief Executive regarding the development of a new youth strategy for the city. He asked if a meeting of a small working group could be scheduled into the Committee's work programme with a view to scoping the development of the strategy. In response to an enquiry from the Chair, the Scrutiny and Members' Support Co-ordinator advised that she was unaware of the meeting to which Councillor Tye was referring.

Ms Jill Colbert, Chief Executive, Together for Children advised that she would welcome member involvement in shaping the youth strategy but reminded members of the separation between the Committee's functions relating to policy development and those relating to policy review with the key principle being that no member may be involved in scrutinising a decision in which he/she had been directly involved.

There being no further questions, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Notice of Key Decisions

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an opportunity to consider those items on

the Executive's Notices of Key Decisions for the 28 day periods from the 13th and 19th October, 2020.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

The Committee was advised that if Members had any issues to raise or required further detail on any of the items included in the notice, they should contact Mr Diamond, Scrutiny Officer for initial assistance.

There being no questions or comments it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the Notices of Key Decisions be received and noted.

There being no further items of business, the Chair closed the meeting having thanked members and officers for their attendance and contributions.

(Signed) P. SMITH,
Chairman.

Item 4

CHILDREN EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 NOVEMBER 2020

SUNDERLAND SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP (SSCP) ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT CHAIR OF THE SSCP

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To present the SSCP Annual Report 2019-20; this is a statutory requirement under section 14A of the Children Act 2004.

2. Background

- 2.1 This Annual Report covers a period of time when the Local Safeguarding Children Board ended, and the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) began on 5 August 2019. This change was required by statute in line with the implementation of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- 2.2 Sir Paul Ennals stepped down as Independent Chair of the SSCP at end of September 2020. He will attend Scrutiny Committee to present this report however future annual reports of the partnership are the responsibility of the three safeguarding partners (Sunderland City Council, Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group and Northumbria Police).

3. Achievements, risks and assurances

Achievements

- 3.1 The achievements of the SSCB/SSCP throughout the 2019/20 year are noted within the report, though it is useful to highlight some of these. The partnership has:
- Developed and published multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for the SSCP; implemented an interim structure for the operational arrangements of the partnership and developed a more streamlined structure from October 2020 onwards.
 - Implemented Operation Endeavour, a joint operation between SSCP, Northumbria Police and the Police and Crimes Commissioner to safeguard children and young people at risk of harm from going missing.
 - Influenced regional safeguarding developments by:
 - contributing to the development of a safeguarding children procedure manual covering the North and South of Tyne

- leading the implementation of the regional Missing, Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking (MSET) Framework.

Risks

- 3.2 The SSCP has identified the following areas as service priorities for the coming year:
- Complex Adolescents
 - Neglect
 - Mental Health
- 3.3 It is these areas that present the greatest risk to the safety of children and young people if we do not strengthen process, practice and partnership working, provide evidence based interventions and mitigate impacts.

Assurance

- 3.4 During the last 12 months, the SSCP has contributed to the development of a new regional performance scorecard. This will allow us to identify safeguarding concerns at a regional level and implement improvements in collaboration with other local authorities and safeguarding partners across the North and South of Tyne local authorities.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
- note the content of the report and accept it as assurance of the current effectiveness of the local safeguarding children arrangements.



SSCP
SUNDERLAND
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
PARTNERSHIP

Annual Report

April 2019–March 2020

Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	5
Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements	6
What have we achieved?	11
Data and performance in Sunderland	17
Engagement with children and young people	19
Strategic Priorities 2020-2021	21



Foreword

This is my final annual report as Chair. For the first half of the year I chaired the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board; from September 2019 we became the Sunderland Safeguarding Children's Partnership (SSCP). Just one small change of name, but larger changes in structure and purpose, in response to the Government's legislation. The statutory responsibilities for overseeing safeguarding rest now equally between the three "Statutory Partners" – the Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Police.

Sunderland retains a clear focus on the needs of children and families within the borough, but there is a greater concentration on shared working across the Northumbria region, to exchange best practice, support each other, and provide a continuity of service and approach across the region. Plans have been developed and followed to develop this new way of working, with a greater attention to improving the quality of direct practice that professionals of all agencies demonstrate in their work with children and families.

The Board's work covered its normal broad spread. Our attention the previous year had been on the very high demand for child protection services, and we commissioned work to explore whether we could "turn the curve". We focussed heavily on strengthening the multi-agency working of the Integrated Care and Referral Team (ICRT), and saw significant progress within a dedicated team.

We have overseen the partnership's introduction of "Signs of Safety" – a strength-based approach to working with children and families which is already bringing real benefits to all. The data suggests that we have indeed "turned the curve" on the demand into the system – whilst the level of initial contacts remains high (probably as a result of improved recording), the number of referrals has reduced, as has the figure for Children in

Need and the number of Child Protection Plans. Rates of children looked after remain high, but at least we have flattened that particular curve.

Then out of a clear blue sky came Covid-19. Although it appeared in Sunderland at the very end of the year that this report covers, it is relevant to discuss what we learnt from it in this report. In the crisis that hit our borough and our nation, our true nature was revealed, and the partnership within Sunderland proved itself to be extremely strong.

Covid-19 hit Sunderland hard. There are high levels of deprivation within the borough, and an age profile which has higher than the average proportion of elderly people; these factors meant we suffered high levels of infection and deaths. But it brought out the best in partners. Services adapted very rapidly to the new challenges, communications were fast and efficient, and partnership working flourished. Some of the new ways of working – using video systems for meetings, for example – have proved to be more efficient than the old ways. Schools remained open to support vulnerable children and the children of key workers.

Before this, though, the Board oversaw a year of progress and achievement. Early Help Services have continued to expand and improve. We have shone a light on access to mental health services, attracting an increase in funding and a reduction in waiting times, despite seeing a continuing rise in demand. Our consultations with children and young people have become firmly established: in this year we held a Children's Safeguarding Conference in June 2019 and a Young Person Safeguarding Conference in January 2020. We engaged with 96 children and 72 young people during these two events and some of these children and young people had additional needs.

We undertook rapid review meetings following serious child safeguarding incident notifications being made by the local authority. These rapid reviews led to decisions to convene two learning reviews and two Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has agreed with each of the SSCP's decisions. This is more review work than we have had for a time, and it will be important that we adopt a proportionate approach to these. Looking through the rear view mirror is a vital part of driving safely, but looking ahead, and planning for what is to come, are even more important.

As ever warm thanks are due to our central team – to Lynne Thomas, the Board Manager for many years who sadly left us in June, and her excellent team. The change in safeguarding arrangements brings a complete change in the staffing of the unit, ready to adapt to the new expectations of partners. The team was set up at a time of real challenge to services in Sunderland. It feels a bit strange to look back now, from a position of a strong and healthy partnership, and recall some of the stresses of those early days.

It is never possible to give a total assurance that all children in Sunderland are safe. As we discovered this year, situations can change in an instant. But the services in Sunderland provided by all partners continue to improve. The pandemic tested the strength of our partnership, and it was proven to be strong. Working with children and families in Sunderland can be challenging – there's no doubting that. But morale is good across the partnership, and the people of Sunderland have much to be proud of and grateful for within their local services.

As I leave Sunderland Safeguarding Children Partnership this autumn, I feel confident in the strength of the partnership, the quality of the services in place, and the engagement of the wider community with our work. It has been an honour and a joy to work with you all over the last three years.

Sir Paul Ennals Independent Chair

Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board

Introduction

This Annual Report covers a period of time when the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board ended, and the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) started on 5 August 2019. This change was required by statute in line with the implementation of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) have a statutory responsibility to publish an annual report¹. The three Safeguarding Partners² are also required to publish an Annual Report which includes:

- evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families from early help to looked after children and care leavers
- an analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities
- a record of decisions and actions taken by the partners in the report's period (or planned to be taken) to implement the recommendations of any local and national Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, including any resulting improvements
- ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision.

The report will be published on the [SSCP Website](#)

¹ The LSCB Annual Report must evaluate the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the local area. The report should provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services.

² The three Safeguarding Partners are Sunderland City Council, Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group and Northumbria Police

Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

Many local organisations and agencies have a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to ensure that they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their functions. The responsibility for this join-up locally rests with the three safeguarding partners who have a shared and equal duty to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area.

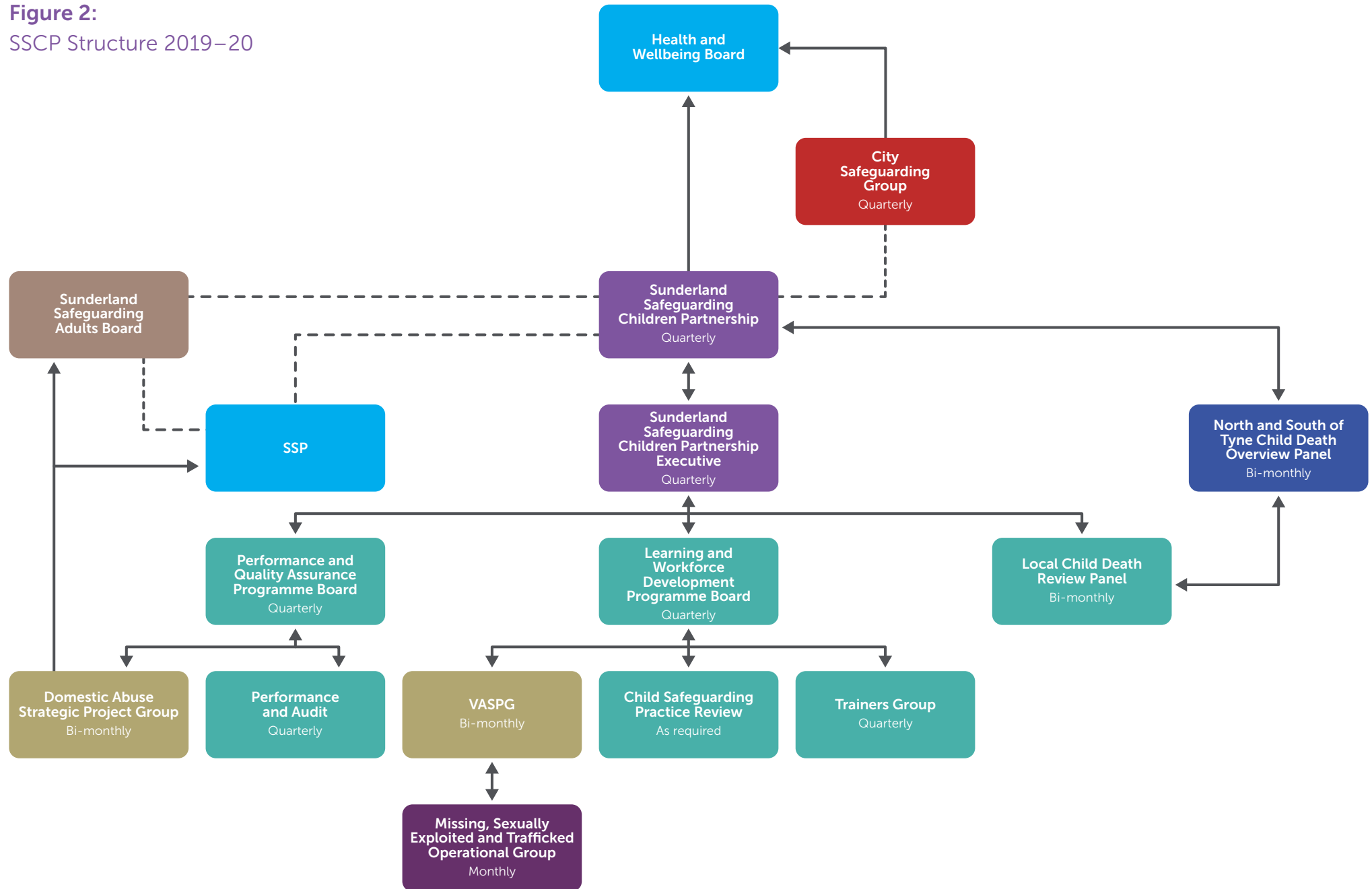
The three safeguarding partners must agree on ways to co-ordinate their safeguarding services; act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others; and implement local and national learning including from serious child safeguarding incidents. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 removed the statutory basis of LSCBs and required the statutory safeguarding partners (local authorities, Police and Clinical Commissioning Groups) in an area to agree their multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA).

The SSCB arrangements transitioned into the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) in 2019. Interim arrangements and plan, covering the period September 2019–September 2020, were put in place; the plan can be found [here](#) and the Strategic Priorities for the partnership and the SSCP Structure for the same period are included in Figure 1 and Figure 2 respectively.

Figure 1: SSCP Priorities for 2019–20



Figure 2:
SSCP Structure 2019–20



The multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for 2020–21 are being developed with a more streamlined structure already agreed:

SSCP Executive Board

A new Executive will be established comprising Chief Executives (or equivalent) from the three statutory partners and the Independent Scrutineer. Through bi-annual meetings, the group will seek assurance that system improvements have made a difference to outcomes for children and young people in Sunderland.

Sunderland Safeguarding Partnership Board

A streamlined Board will be established bringing together key senior officers of the three statutory partners, wider partners and the Independent Scrutineer. Meeting at least three times per annum, the remit of the Partnership Board is to receive updates on the work of the SSCP sub-groups and report activity and progress to the Executive.

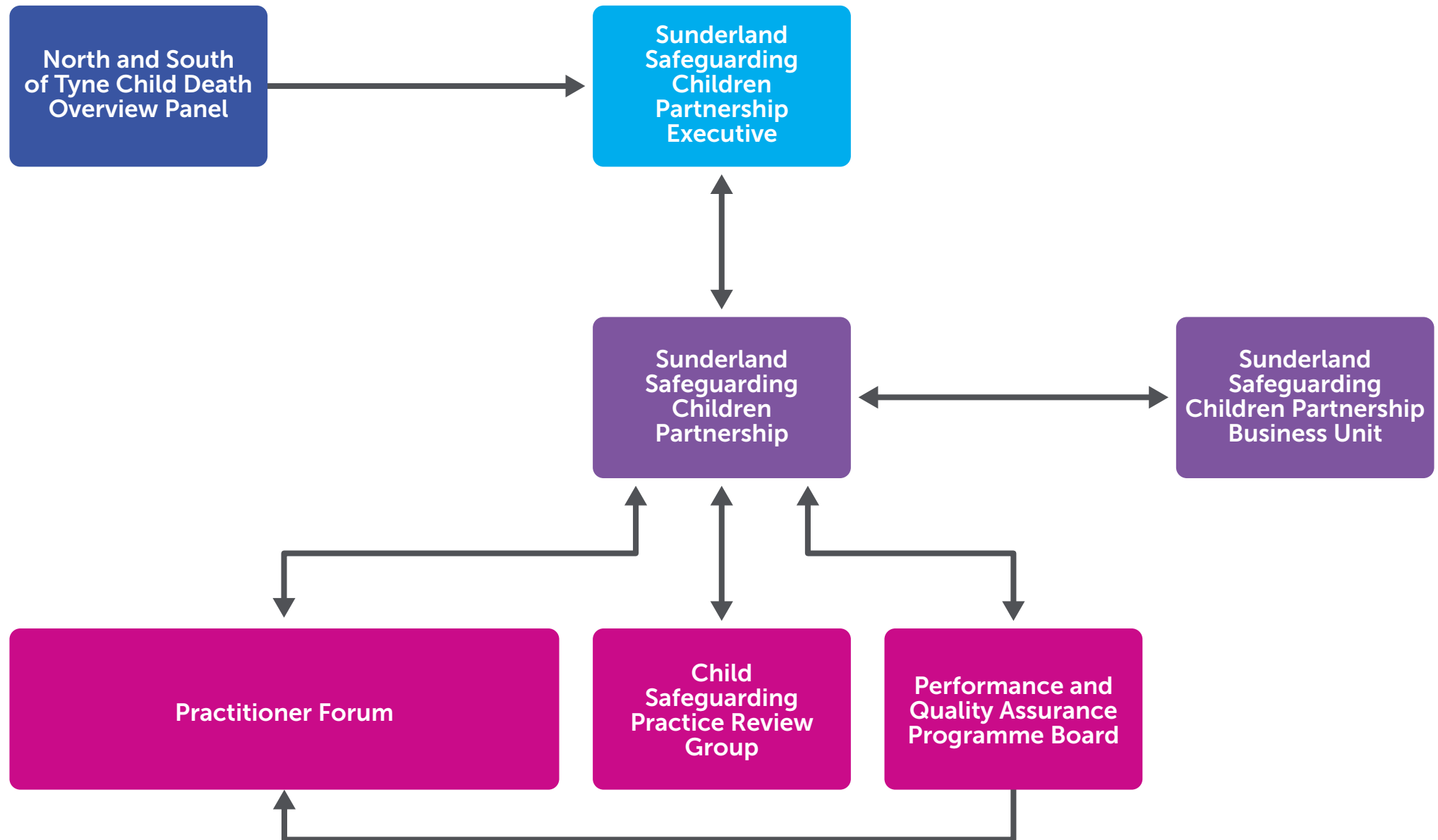
A practice-based approach will be taken to the overall work of the partnership at a local level. A 'learning hub' model will be developed focussing on thematic safeguarding priorities for the city to evidence impact for front line practice. This will not be a static model and could engage a wide range of partners at several different levels based on particular themes. The learning from the 'Bexley model' implemented in 2018 will inform the development of our approach. The SSCP structure from October 2020 is included at Figure 3.

Child Death Reviews

The Act also removed the statutory responsibility for the Child Death Review (CDR) process from LSCBs and gave it to local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups, who are known as the Child Death Review Partners.

As the CDR arrangements were robust under the three LSCBs, it was agreed by the Safeguarding Partners for the three areas to retain these arrangements within the LSCP structure. It was also agreed that the South of Tyne Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) would combine with the North of Tyne CDOP from April 2020 to comply with the statutory guidance to review at least 60 child deaths per year. The Annual (South of Tyne) CDOP report can be found [here](#).

Figure 3:
SSCP Structure – October 2020





What have we achieved?

What we said we would do	How we said we would do this	How do we know we have done it	Did we make a difference?
Implement the Sunderland multi agency safeguarding arrangements plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the work of the SSCP Review the support arrangements to the SSCP Implement the requirements of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding Partners consulted with the partnership agencies³, relevant agencies and the SSCP Independent Chair Options appraisal presented for decision making Raised awareness of changes to multi agency safeguarding arrangements 	<p>YES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed plan in place that meets statutory requirements
Strengthen regional work and maximise the use of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the Business Manager Collaboration Plan Implement Early Adopter regional work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding Partner attendance at Early Adopter work North and South of Tyne CDOP established Shared training pack developed based on learning from regional reviews Regional multi-agency scorecard, dataset and reporting templates agreed for implementation in 2020 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training pack used to inform 2019-2020 training offer Learning from practice is embedded into future training for the workforce Shared learning undertaken across the region

³ Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider may be required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children with regard to local need

What we said we would do	How we said we would do this	How do we know we have done it	Did we make a difference?
<p>Evaluate the impact of Operation Encompass to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit to be undertaken to evaluate the process and the outcomes for children and young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit planned and held in 2019 – sample of 30 children impacted on by domestic abuse Audit findings reported to P&QAPB in 2019 with clear actions for improvement 	<p>Further work is required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of child concern notifications is variable due to some challenges of identifying which school the child attends when there has been domestic abuse Quality of school support and engagement with the child is variable. Some schools are excellent at supporting children
<p>Implement Operation Endeavour</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver briefing sessions on the model Developed robust recording templates for schools Established evaluation process to understand impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model implemented on 05/11/19 as planned Briefing sessions delivered Audit planned for 2020-2021 	<p>YES</p> <p>Section 175 Audit findings –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full participation. All notices in term time responded to with actions and evaluations. Those out of term time recorded as information Staff are aware that the school is involved in Operation Endeavour all staff have had refresher training - notifications are received and appropriate actions have been taken

Work of the SSCP Groups and Programme Boards

Executive Group – comprising the three safeguarding partners, the Chairs of the two programme boards and the Independent Chair. The purpose of this group is to address: cross-cutting issues arising between the two Programme Boards; any hurdles in delivering the Business Plan on time; and some small-scale multi-agency issues that do not warrant consideration by the full Partnership but need collaborative resolution.

Work Task	Outcome
Monitored and challenged the work of the SSCP Strategic Integrated Contact and Referral Team (ICRT) Group to improve multi agency working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assurance provided that improvements in multi-agency practice were achieved and maintained Improved understanding of the reasons for the high level of referrals made
Produced the options appraisal report for the new model for the SSCP	Multi agency partners contributed to the new way of working
Agreed the SSP Business Plan 2019-20	Plan in place for the strategic work
Overseen development of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA) plan for Sunderland	MASA plan in place as per statutory requirements

Performance and Quality Assurance Programme Board (P&QAPB) – a multi-agency strategic programme group that leads, oversees and progresses the programme of activity related to the delivery of the Partnership's functions in relation to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of multi-agency practice in respect of safeguarding children in Sunderland on behalf of the SSCP.

Work Task	Outcome
Contributed feedback to a regional Section 11 Audit Tool that was undertaken in 2019-20	Assurance provided that all partner agencies are compliant with their statutory safeguarding children duties under Section 11 Children Act 2004
Contributed feedback to a regional Section 175 Audit Tool that was undertaken in 2019-20	Assurance provided that schools and education providers in Sunderland are compliant with their statutory duties under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002
Produced and reported on quarterly multi-agency performance reports to the SSCP Board	Provided assurance to the SSCP Board on multi-agency practice
Highlighted performance issues for further exploration such as discrepancies in missing from home and care data	Identified areas for improvement in multi-agency practice for resolution by agencies
Audited multi-agency practice around children with disabilities, MSET Framework and the work of the MSET Operational Group, and neglect etc.	Assurance provided in respect of some areas of multi-agency practice and identified actions required in other areas

Learning and Workforce Development Programme Board (L&WDPB) – responsible for leading, co-ordinating and evaluating workforce competence and multi-agency workforce development and improvement, needs analysis and learning activity in line with the SSCB priorities.

Work Task	Outcome
Contributed to the development of a safeguarding children procedure manual covering the North and South of Tyne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assurance provided that partnership members who cover the North and South of Tyne, practice within one shared safeguarding procedure manual Children and their families will be subject to the same guidance and procedures across the six areas
Oversaw the implementation of the new regional Missing, Slavery, Exploitation and Trafficking (MSET) Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Framework localised, implemented and embedded across the workforce Face to face training delivered with positive feedback received from multi-agency partners on the quality and impact of the training The new model has led to a significant reduction in the number of cases referred to the MSET Operational Group which appears appropriate The MSET Operational Group is focussing on those young people who are at most risk and in most need

Work Task	Outcome
Oversaw learning reviews into referred cases	Learning identified from practice that was added to training courses and disseminated through 7-minute briefings
Practical sessions held for partners to raise the awareness of the online safeguarding procedure manual	Staff are aware of how to access the online safeguarding procedure manual

Learning from practice, serious case reviews, child safeguarding practice reviews and audits

The SSCP has undertaken four rapid review meetings following serious child safeguarding incident notifications being made by the local authority. These rapid reviews led to decisions to convene two learning reviews and two Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has agreed with each of the SSCP's decisions.

The Learning Reviews have led to the development of a 7-minute briefing and quick guide on safeguarding babies and the MSET Framework. The findings of audits have led to a planned review of the regional MSET Framework in 2020, changes needed to recording the outcome of school's support to children through Operation Encompass to better understand the outcome of the activity for the child, deliver further Operation Encompass briefings for schools and undertake assurance work that children's records are being appropriately read coded by their GP. There has been a delay in progressing some of these actions due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown. Work that can be progressed has been moved on during the lockdown.

The SSCP collates the findings from learning and improvement activity into a Learning and Improvement Matrix to ensure an overarching record and response to the findings. Repeat learning/findings are monitored to ensure that if one approach to addressing findings is not successful an alternative approach can be made. This allows for a streamlined model for learning activity and measuring impact and ensures that improvements can be appropriately collated and evidenced.

Further evidence of the outcomes of Learning and Improvement activity can be found [here](#).

Workforce Development and Training

The SSCP has delivered a number of safeguarding children courses during 2019–20. These courses are all evaluated, and the recorded impact of some of these courses is outlined overleaf.

Training courses - evaluation and impact			
MSET	Thresholds	Sandstories	Vulnerable Babies
I will use this training to help me identify victims of MSET	Identifying how children are vulnerable	A greater awareness of what Disguised Compliance is and looks like	I will have more understanding of the roles other agencies involved dealing with difficult situations involving at risk children
Educate our young people on risk and how to keep them safe from harm	What to do should you discover bruising on a child	Remain focused on the child always	During assessment with families and if an infant presents with a bruise/mark.
I can use this daily as we look after vulnerable young people	Identify key areas on body of where children are most likely to be abused	Work with families on strengths then staff families will work with staff	Interaction and practical exercises worked well Group work was good
I will be more aware what to look out for surrounding MSET, I can also feedback to colleagues on the process of the new framework	I will be more vigilant when recording all aspects of the young people's care and anything which could build up a picture of any issues which could be happening in their lives. I would then report any patterns that I see to my manager and to the social worker who would ultimately make any decisions	Useful when in Supervision and using reflective practice	Identifying marks on infants The different areas of the body when may be common for injury, accidental and non-accidental. Development of infants

Data and performance in Sunderland

During 2019–20 the SSCP, through the Performance and Quality Assurance Programme Board (PQAPB), has overseen the review and reporting of the local performance framework (69 measures) and contributed to the development of a regional Performance Scorecard to be used in 2020–21. Whilst the SSCP dataset is comprehensive, the PQAPB reports to the Partnership Board on a by-exception basis to ensure a focussed approach to identifying where improvement is required. Key areas of focus during 2019–20 can be seen in the tables below and the accompanying mitigation/narrative.

Locally our data is provided from Together for Children (including Education and Youth Drug and Alcohol Services), Northumbria Police, Safe Lives, health agencies and the council (Public Health and Housing). Local data and performance has been used to influence the SSCP audit activity, for example, reviewing and supporting a refresh of our MSET arrangements.

During 2019–20 the “front door” for children’s services has undergone transformation with social workers, nurses, police, early help, education and domestic abuse staff working collaboratively as the Initial Contact and Referral Team (ICRT) – our children’s multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). This has led to improved communication, recording, reporting and timelier, more appropriate responses to children and their families. Better recording has resulted in almost 10,000 more contacts this year and reduced rates of re-referrals.

Whilst rates of children requiring statutory intervention in Sunderland remain high, they have reduced during 2019–20 with rates of Children in Need now being lower than the north-east and statistical neighbour averages for 2018–19; this is as a result of families being better supported by Early Help practitioners.

Measure	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	NE	Stat N/bours	National
No. of contacts received CSC	22,522	27,856	25,965	35,619	N/Ava	N/Ava	N/Ava
Total No. of referrals received to CSC	4,228	4,665	4,480	3,612	34,680	2,892	650,930
Rate of Child In Need (CIN) (per 10k)	536.1	532.5	463	412.6	445.10	436.55	334.2
Rate of Children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) (per 10k)	78.3	90.9	85.0	67.8	63.1	56.22	43.7
Rate of children looked after (per 10k)	98.3	106.4	109.8	108.1	95.0	99.8	64.0

The PQAPB has received regular updates from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Transformation Board due to local performance indicating that Sunderland children and young people were waiting longer for mental health support than previously. To support children and young people with their emotional and mental wellbeing, the KOOTH digital platform has been commissioned which enables them to receive confidential mental health support and advice.

In early Spring, Covid-19 hit Sunderland. As well as the physical impact of the virus, it is widely reported that lockdown has affected the mental health and wellbeing of many people, including children and young people. Lockdown also brought out the best in partners: services adapted very rapidly to the new challenges, communications were fast and efficient, and partnership working flourished. It is anticipated that as children and young people return to school in September there will be a surge in demand for mental health support and the enthusiasm partners found during lockdown must be harnessed to develop new ways of working to meet any increased demand. Going forward, the SSCP will analyse how Covid-19 impacted on children and young people's mental

health and how services responded to this. These findings will feed into the planned re-design of services in 2021.

Measure	16–17	17–18	18–19	19–20
Number of children receiving CYPS	3,194	2,468	4,043	3,922
Average waiting time for CYPS service (days)	71	118	105	137

Engagement with children and young people

The SSCP now holds annual safeguarding conferences to improve and strengthen our engagement with our children and young people. The purpose of these conferences is two-fold: firstly to seek their views to inform our future work; and secondly to provide workshops on issues they have previously identified as being the key safeguarding issues that concern them.

A Children's Safeguarding Conference was held in June 2019 and a Young Person Safeguarding Conference in January 2020. We engaged with 96 children and 72 young people during these two events, some of whom had additional needs.

Working with local partners, including statutory and voluntary groups and charities, we delivered workshops on mental health, community safety and online safety. The purpose of these workshops was to raise awareness and provide training in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our children and young people. The workshops were developed based on feedback from our children and young people about what the key safeguarding issues were for them, which demonstrates that we are listening and supporting them to strengthen their resilience.

Facilitators also shared relevant information with them e.g. community police arrangements, trading standards concerns around counterfeit equipment.

Feedback from the children and young people indicates that the sessions were useful, enjoyable and supported children and young people to safeguard themselves.

Safeguarding Partners and Relevant Agencies

Evaluation of Section 11 and Section 175 Audit Tools identify clear methods of engagement with children, young people and their families. This includes seeking their views and feedback on safeguarding issues as highlighted above, but also to develop services and improve practice.

Schools and Education providers

Young people have also participated in:

- School Councils
- Students representatives meeting with Headteachers
- Student voice surveys
- Termly Parents Forum meeting
- Social media to share messages and request feedback
- Active School Council with elected members.



Strategic Priorities 2020–2021

Figure 4: SSCP Priorities for 2020–21





Item 5

CHILDREN EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 NOVEMBER 2020

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY - UPDATE

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to receive an update on proposals to establish a Regional Adoption Agency.

2. Background

- 2.1 In setting its work programme for the year, the Committee requested on progress in establishing a Regional Adoption Agency.
- 2.2 Following consultation with the chair, a report on the establishment of a Regional Adoption Agency scheduled to be considered by Cabinet on 17 November has been included on this agenda for information.

3 Current Position

- 3.1 Jill Colbert Director of Education will provide an update for members on the current position.
- 3.2 The report considered by Cabinet on 17 November 2020 is attached for information.

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

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CABINET MEETING – 17 NOVEMBER 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

Full Business Case for a Regional Adoption Agency

Author(s):

Joint Report of the Director of Children's Services and the Executive Director of Corporate Services

Purpose of Report:

To seek Cabinet's approval to the Full Business Case for the Adopt Coast to Coast Regional Adoption Agency ("RAA") and the proposed next steps.

Description of Decision:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) Approve the Full Business Case as set out in Appendix A for establishing the RAA with Durham County Council and Cumbria County Council; and
- (ii) Authorise the Executive Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Portfolio Holder for Children, Learning and Skills, to:
 - a) Agree the detailed terms of the partnership agreement and any other legal agreements as required to establish and govern the operation of the RAA;
 - b) (Subject to prior consultation with the Department for Education), to issue the necessary consent on behalf of the Council to Together for Children Sunderland Ltd ("TfC") to enter into the agreement(s) referred to above; and
 - c) To execute any necessary legal agreement(s) as may be required in order to give effect to the above.

Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? Yes

If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework

Suggested reason(s) for Decisions:

In accordance with Government policy, the Council (in collaboration with TfC as its appointed provider of adoption services) is required to make arrangements for the development of a Regional Adoption Agency.

On 16th January 2019, Cabinet previously approved the Outline Business Case for the RAA and the establishment in principle of an Adopt Coast to Coast RAA model.

The updated proposals as set out in the Full Business Case will enable the Council to meet the revised Department for Education (“DfE”) deadline requirement for the establishment and operation of an RAA including Sunderland by 1st April 2021.

The proposals will deliver the following key benefits on a regional scale:

- Sunderland children will have the opportunity to be matched and placed with adopters from a wider pool, improving the quality of the match;
- The ability to share best practice and resources across the Adopt Coast to Coast area to enhance the service for vulnerable children in their adoptive families; and
- The establishment of a collaborative hub and spoke model which will secure the benefits of regional collaboration at a focused “hub” level, whilst allowing each authority to continue to operate at a local “spoke” level without service disruption and without any delegation of legal powers or transfer of existing staff required.

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:

The alternative option is to not approve the FBC and abandon or delay the RAA project. However, this option is not recommended given the requirement from DfE that all local authorities should develop and become part of an RAA by April 2021. This option would also leave the Council at risk of becoming subject to a direction from the DfE to require it to participate in another RAA.

Impacts analysed;

Equality Privacy Sustainability Crime and Disorder

Is the Decision consistent with the Council’s Co-Operative Values? Yes

Is this a “Key Decision” as defined in the Constitution? Yes

Is it included in the 28 day Notice of Decisions? Yes

FULL BUSINESS CASE FOR A REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY**JOINT REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES****1. Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet's approval to the Full Business Case for the Adopt Coast to Coast Regional Adoption Agency ("RAA") and the proposed next steps.

2. Description of Decision

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) Approve the Full Business Case as set out in Appendix A for establishing the RAA with Durham County Council and Cumbria County Council; and
- (ii) Authorise the Executive Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Portfolio Holder for Children, Learning and Skills, to:
 - a) Agree the detailed terms of the partnership agreement and any other legal agreements required to establish and govern the operation of the RAA;
 - b) (Subject to prior consultation with the Department for Education), issue the necessary consent on behalf of the Council to Together for Children Sunderland Ltd ("TfC") to enter into the agreement(s) referred to above; and
 - c) Enter into any necessary legal agreements as may be required in order to give effect to the above.

3. Background

- 3.1 As explained in the previous Cabinet report dated 16th January 2019, the Council has responded to the Government's requirements to move to Regional Adoption Agency models where the aspiration is to have fewer organisations recruiting and assessing adopters and having organisations that are operating at much greater scale. This legislative intention was set out in the Education and Adoption Act 2016 which introduced in March 2018 the power for the Secretary of State to require local authorities to carry out their adoption functions jointly in the event that local authorities do not establish RAAs on a voluntary basis.
- 3.2 The Government's vision for the future of adoption services and provision in England encompasses:
- (a) A system where children are matched with the most suitable adopter as quickly as possible;

- (b) Improved targeted recruitment taking place at an efficient scale to provide a pool of 'adoption ready' adopters large enough and well enough matched to the needs of children waiting;
 - (c) Improved and sufficient high-quality adoption support services available nationwide; and
 - (d) Potential for efficiency savings avoiding duplication and operating on a greater scale.
- 3.3 In seeking to comply with the national direction of travel for Local Authority Adoption Services, the Council, in collaboration with Together for Children ("TfC") as its appointed provider of adoption services, commenced discussions with Durham and Cumbria in 2016 regarding a potential RAA. The Adopt Coast to Coast vision was developed by the Councils and TfC (who all have Adoption Services rated Good by Ofsted) in close partnership via an Outline Business Case ("OBC") which set out the shared vision and objectives for the proposed RAA.
- 3.4 In January 2019, Cabinet subsequently approved the Outline Business Case ("OBC") for the proposed Adopt Coast to Coast Regional Adoption Agency ("the RAA") with Durham and Cumbria County Councils and agreed to the development of a Full Business Case for further consideration prior to the formal establishment of the RAA.
4. **The Full Business Case**
- 4.1 The Full Business Case for the RAA is attached for Cabinet's information in Appendix A. The shared vision for Adopt Coast to Coast is that:
- "children will achieve their full potential within a loving and secure family, and everyone affected by adoption will receive a high-quality innovative and sustainable service".*
- 4.2 Since the approval of the OBC, significant work has been undertaken to develop the detailed model for the RAA. As part of the original OBC, the potential options for the legal form of the RAA were previously assessed based on the specific models as set out in the Department for Education's (DfE)'s published guidance on RAAs. Based on the above, the initial recommendation within the OBC and as set out in the Cabinet report dated 16th January 2019 was that a potential hosted model involving a lead authority should be developed further.
- 4.3 However, the intervening period has enabled the Councils and TfC to explore alternative RAA models, in addition to those set out in the existing published guidance, in discussions with the DfE. These discussions on what is the optimum model for the Adopt Coast to Coast RAA have been positive and have enabled the Councils and TfC to subsequently develop their own bespoke Hub and Spoke model for the RAA, rather than implementing one of the models as set out in the DfE's guidance.

- 4.4 The new recommended Hub and Spoke partnership model as described below is one which the Councils and TfC believe better enables the necessary joint collaboration to achieve the vision for the RAA as set out in the Full Business Case, in comparison to the hosted model.
- 4.5 In particular, the Hub and Spoke model has the same principal benefits as the hosted model, namely it is a well-established and relatively simple model and has reduced set-up costs. In addition, it can also secure a true collaborative model and does not give rise to a perception of a potential loss of control to the host authority which is a potential disadvantage of the hosted model. However, as explained further below, it should be recognised that this model does not create a new or single legal entity so partnership decisions will need to be implemented collaboratively by the three Councils (or a lead partner is appointed on a case by case basis for the delivery of individual projects such as specific procurements).
- 4.6 It is therefore now recommended that the Adopt Coast to Coast RAA is delivered through a collaborative Hub and Spoke structure rather than a hosted model. The Councils would jointly operate a central RAA “Hub” for collaboration purposes. The proposed Hub has been deliberately designed as small and cost effective and will consist of the RAA Head of Service and a Communications and Marketing Officer (both to be employed by Durham Council on behalf of the partnership) and will have access to a number of support services which will be provided in kind from each of the three partners.
- 4.7 Under the RAA model, there will be three Spokes:
- Cumbria
 - Durham and
 - Together for Children (on behalf of Sunderland)
- 4.8 There is to be no single legal entity/ lead authority under this revised model and given that the adoption functions will continue to be discharged by each Council/TfC at the local “Spoke” level, there is no formal delegation of statutory powers required and no TUPE transfer of the relevant staff to any partner. The staff in the spokes will continue to be employed by their existing organisations but will work together collaboratively (and be matrix line managed through the RAA Head of Service) to achieve the shared vision for Adopt Coast to Coast.
- 4.9 The RAA Head of Service has been appointed and took up post on the 1st September 2020. The day to day line management of the RAA Head of Service will be undertaken by Head of Children’s Social Care, Durham, under the supervision of the RAA Governance Board which will comprise of equal representatives from each Council/TfC. The RAA Governance Board will be responsible for all key decision making in relation to the RAA Hub, including all policy and strategic decision making, to propose and recommend the annual RAA Hub budget to the three partners and to approve collaborative procurements by the Hub.

- 4.10 The Hub's costs will be shared equally by each Council/TfC. The financial implications of the proposals are considered later in this report. Subject to each Authority's Cabinet approving the Full Business Case, the detailed terms for the Hub and Spoke collaboration agreement will then be finalised in accordance with the key principles as set out in the Full Business Case.
- 4.11 The key milestones for the project up to establishment and formal implementation of the RAA are:
- Full Business Case to be considered and approved by all three partners – November 2020
 - Negotiation and completion of partnership agreement- December to March 2021
 - (Subject to the approval of each Cabinet) Shadow Go Live – 1st February 2021
 - Formal Go Live – 1st April 2021
- 4.12 To meet the Government's deadline for the RAA to go live in early Spring 2021, there has been a significant investment of time in developing an agreed model of practice for Adopt Coast to Coast. The modelling has had the advantage of the learning from the existing RAAs that have already gone live both regionally and nationally.

5.0 Together for Children Sunderland Limited and the DfE Direction

- 5.1 As Cabinet is aware, the Council has appointed TfC to perform its statutory adoption functions on its behalf pursuant to the service delivery contract dated 31st March 2017. The service delivery contract operates for an initial period of seven years until March 2024.
- 5.2 Under the new proposed Hub and Spoke model, the intention would be that TfC, as the Council's service provider, would operate the local Sunderland spoke on behalf of the Council. At this stage, it is anticipated that the RAA arrangements will operate for an initial period of three years up to March 2023. As a consequence, at this stage and subject to the financial implications set out later in this report, it is anticipated that TfC would enter into the proposed RAA partnership agreement with Durham and Cumbria on behalf of the Council.
- 5.3 The Board of Directors of TfC is to also consider the RAA proposals prior to the Cabinet meeting. The views of the TfC Board on the proposals will be reported verbally at the Cabinet meeting. It should be noted that the approval of the RAA proposals by TfC would constitute a reserved matter under its articles of association which would require the prior consent of the Council as the member of the company.
- 5.4 Prior to the Council determining this reserved matter, it will be required to formally consult the DfE on this matter as a result of the existing Direction dated March 2017 in respect of the Council's children's social care functions. However, the formal prior consent of the DfE is not required to the proposed new collaborative Hub and Spoke model, as there is no longer a requirement to delegate or sub-contract the performance of the Council's adoption

functions to another host authority as these will continue to be performed by TfC.

- 5.5 In relation to the above, it should be noted that throughout the business case process, informal dialogue has continued with the DfE on the RAA proposals involving key officers from both the DfE's intervention and regional adoption agency teams. It is therefore anticipated that the DfE will be fully supportive of the proposals.

6. Reasons for the decision

- 6.1 In accordance with Government policy, the Council (in collaboration with TfC as its appointed provider of adoption services) is required to make arrangements for the development of a Regional Adoption Agency. On 16th January 2019, Cabinet previously approved the Outline Business Case for the RAA and the establishment in principle of an Adopt Coast to Coast RAA model. The updated proposals as set out in the Full Business Case will enable the Council to meet the revised Department for Education ("DfE") deadline requirement for the establishment and operation of an RAA including Sunderland by 1st April 2021.
- 6.2 The proposals will deliver the following key benefits on a regional scale:
- Sunderland children will have the opportunity to be matched and placed with adopters from a wider pool, improving the quality of the match;
 - The ability to share best practice and resources across the Adopt Coast to Coast area to enhance the service for vulnerable children in their adoptive families; and
 - The establishment of a collaborative hub and spoke model which will secure the benefits of regional collaboration at a focused "hub" level, whilst allowing each authority to continue to operate at a local "spoke" level without service disruption and without any delegation of legal powers or transfer of existing staff required.

7. Alternative Options

- 7.1 The alternative option is to not approve the FBC and abandon or delay the RAA project. However, this option is not recommended given the requirement from DfE that all local authorities should develop and become part of an RAA by April 2021. This option would also leave the Council at risk of becoming subject to a direction from the DfE to require it to participate in another RAA.

8 Impact Analysis

8.1 Equalities

As part of the Full Business Case, an updated equalities impact assessment for the RAA proposals has been carried out.

A copy of this assessment is included for Cabinet's attention as part of the background papers. In summary, as the proposals are intended to improve the consistency and quality of service for all of those who may be affected by adoption there is no detrimental impact; rather a presumed positive impact as a consequence of a RAA's ability to campaign and recruit on a wider scale and footprint, with a consistency around marketing and communications to priority groups.

8.2 Co-operative Values

The collaborative hub and spoke RAA model with public partners will be in accordance with the Council's co-operative values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity.

8.3 Financial Implications

The initial annual Hub/Core budget associated with the Head of the RAA and the communications officer and support is estimated at circa £149,000 which will be funded equally by all three participating Authorities as detailed in the Table below.

Estimated Annual Core Budget	
Head of Service	£ 88,000
Comms Manager	£ 42,000
Miscellaneous	£ 3,800
Mobile Phones	£ 1,200
Mileage	£ 2,000
ICT	£ 2,000
Business Support Cost (HUB)	£ 10,000
Total	£ 149,000

A budget will be established in the Hub hosting authority with the Contributions from the two partner authorities recorded as income. Any over or underspends at the year-end will be distributed between the three partner authorities based on the proportion of the individual financial contributions. Based upon the above, any amounts would therefore be shared equally.

The budget will be monitored internally as part of the hosting authority's usual internal governance cycle with quarterly outturn reports being presented the RAA governance board for review.

The head of service for the RAA will produce an annual financial report – summarising adoption activity across the RAA including a breakdown of direct placement costs and statistics relating to the timeliness of the adoption process.

As noted the Hub costs will be shared equally and, as this is an unbudgeted cost, there will be a contract variation required under the Service Delivery Contract with TfC to finance this initiative.

TfC's contribution will ultimately be funded by the Council. The estimated cost of £50,000 has been factored into the social care demand growth in the medium term financial plan assumptions, which will be considered by Cabinet, Scrutiny and Council over the coming months before formal approval in March 2021.

8.4 Legal Implications

The updated RAA proposal is in accordance with current Government policy that all local authorities should form part of a regional adoption agency by 2020. The Education and Adoption Act 2016 makes provision for the Secretary of State to direct a local authority to make arrangements for its adoption functions to be carried out through a RAA where such arrangements have not been established voluntarily by the authority. It is therefore important for the Council to follow the Government's guidance and implement a RAA proposal.

As Cabinet is aware, the Council has already outsourced the provision of its adoption functions to TfC which is a registered voluntary adoption agency. It is expected that the initial period of the RAA agreement will be for three years which is within the remainder of the minimum term of the service delivery contract with TfC. As a consequence, it is anticipated that TfC would enter into the proposed partnership agreement and operate the local Sunderland "Spoke" on behalf of the Council. The partnership agreement will be capable of novation from TfC to the Council.

The recommended joint collaborative Hub and Spoke model for the RAA can be implemented in accordance with the Council's legal powers under Section 1(1) of the Localism Act 2011 (the general power of competence) and Section 111(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 (the power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of the Council's functions).

In addition, as demonstrated earlier in this report, the proposals are also fully consistent with public procurement law as a mutual collaboration between contracting authorities only in relation to the delivery of public services which is governed solely by considerations in the public interest (Regulation 12(7) of The Public Contracts Regulations 2016).

The detailed terms of the proposed partnership agreement with Durham and Cumbria will be finalised in due course. This will cover as a minimum, the agreement period, the scope of the Hub and its funding, governance and resourcing arrangements, commissioning, matrix management of the Spoke staff, information governance arrangements, dispute resolution and termination provisions.

8.5 Privacy

As set out above, the information governance issues surrounding the establishment of the RAA will be addressed as part of the development of the detailed terms of the partnership agreement.

9. **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Full Business Case

Appendix 2- Equalities Impact Assessment



Full Business Case

Date September 2020
Version 0.9
Status: Draft

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Executive Summary and Recommendations	4
2.1 Executive Summary.....	4
2.2 Recommendations.....	5
3. Context and Background	6
4. Delivery Model	7
5. Vision and Objectives	9
5.1 Strategic Objectives:.....	9
5.2 Outcomes and Benefits of the RAA	11
5.3 Services in Scope	11
5.4 Services Out of Scope	12
5.5 The Role of the Voluntary Adoption Agencies	12
5.6 Early Permanence	13
6. Design of the Regional Adoption Agency.....	155
6.1 Functions and Responsibilities	155
6.2 Staffing and HR Considerations	17
6.3 Accommodation and Property	17
6.4 ICT.....	18
6.5 Performance Management	19
6.6 Information Governance	222
6.7 Communications and Marketing	22
6.8 Governance Arrangements	23
7. Financial Implications.....	26
7.1 Approach	26
7.2 Hub Costs.....	28
7.3 Interagency Fees.....	27
7.4 Set Up Costs	29
7.5 Commissioning Arrangements.....	29
8. Plan and Next Steps / Risk Assessment.....	30
8.1 Overall Project Plan.....	30
8.2 Project Governance Arrangements	31
8.3 High Level Risk Register	32
Appendix 1 – Matrix Management Arrangements.....	34
Appendix 2 – High Level Function Map	378
Appendix 2.1 – Adopter Journey	38
Appendix 2.2 – Child Journey	39
Appendix 2.3 – RAA Management Function	40

1. Introduction

In June 2015, the Department for Education (DfE) published 'Regionalising Adoption' and asked all adoption agencies in England to consider how to work much more closely together on a regional basis. This was enacted as the Education and Adoption Act 2016 which advised authorities and voluntary adoption agencies to join together to form Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA).

The Vision for a Regionalised Adoption System:

'A system where matching is as quick as possible, recruitment is as effective as possible and adoption support quality is high'

The vision for the future of adoption in England encompasses:

- A system where children are matched with the most suitable adopter as quickly as possible
- Recruitment taking place at an efficient scale to provide a pool of 'adoption ready' adopters large enough and well enough matched to the needs of children waiting
- Enough high-quality adoption support services available nationwide

Adopt Coast to Coast is a Regional Adoption Agency between Cumbria County Council, Durham County Council and Together for Children / Sunderland City Council, working with a Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA) Alliance. The VAA Alliance is made up of the following VAAs; ARC Adoption NE, Barnardo's, Caritas Care Adoption and Adoption Matters.

Established on the 1st April 2017, Together for Children delivers children's services on behalf of Sunderland City Council. Together for Children is owned by Sunderland City Council but controlled by an independent board to ensure operational independence.

2. Executive Summary and Recommendations

2.1 Executive Summary

Cumbria County Council, Durham County Council and Together for Children / Sunderland City Council have been working together since December 2016 to consider how they could develop a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). In December 2017 a bid to establish a RAA was submitted to the Department for Education and this was approved in March 2018.

All three adoption services are judged to be GOOD by OFSTED, and as a partnership they value the strengths that each of the organisations brings to the RAA. Some of the benefits of an RAA include:

- Better outcomes for Children, Adopters and Birth Families
- More Adopters for our Children
- Ability to share resources
- Ability to share expertise and best practice

The RAA will be called Adopt Coast to Coast and it will have its own brand.

The vision for Adopt Coast to Coast is that children will achieve their full potential within a loving and secure family, and everyone affected by adoption will receive a high-quality innovative and sustainable service.

The overall objectives for Adopt Coast to Coast are to:

- Provide child-centred services
- Deliver a high-quality accessible service to adopters and potential adopters
- Provide an accessible independent service for birth families affected by adoption
- Create strong partnership working with Local Authorities, the Voluntary Adoption Agencies and universal services
- Offer a service which is high-quality and provides good value for money

It is recommended that Coast to Coast RAA is established as a Partnership Model with a Hub and Spoke delivery.

The Hub will consist of the RAA Head of Service and a Communications and Marketing Officer and will have access to a number of support services such as Performance and Finance.

There will be three spokes:

- Cumbria
- Durham
- Together for Children

The staff in the spokes will continue to be employed by their existing organisations.

The finance model proposed for Adopt Coast to Coast is that the current Adoption Service's budget shall remain in each respective Local Authority. As such and in the best interests of the partnership each Local Authority will agree that there will be no material changes to the current structure without consultation with the other partners where this may impact on the future managerial or financial arrangements.

The hub costs will be the responsibility of the RAA Head of Service, and each Local Authority will contribute 1/3 of these.

The RAA wants to build and develop further its strong relationship with the Voluntary Adoption Agencies. Their involvement will support the RAA in meeting its sufficiency target. The VAA will work collectively as an alliance and will be key to the delivery of some of the functions. They will also be involved in the Governance of the RAA.

A Governance Board will oversee the RAA, set its strategic objectives, performance targets and ensure it delivers good outcomes for Children and Young People. Lead Members will meet every six months with the Governance Board and all Members will have oversight through existing arrangements such as Corporate Parenting Boards.

The aim is for Adopt Coast to Coast to go live on the 1st April 2021.

2.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that Members approve:

1. The Full Business Case for establishing Adopt Coast to Coast Regional Adoption Agency with Cumbria County Council, Durham County Council and Together for Children / Sunderland City Council

3. Context and Background

Cumbria County Council, Durham County Council and Together for Children / Sunderland City Council have been working together since December 2016 to consider how they could develop a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). In December 2017 a bid to establish a RAA was submitted to the Department for Education and this was approved in March 2018.

All three adoption services are judged to be GOOD by OFSTED, and as a partnership they value the strengths that each of the organisations brings to the RAA. Some of the benefits of an RAA include:

- Better outcomes for Children, Adopters and Birth Families
- More Adopters for our Children
- Ability to share resources
- Ability to share expertise and best practice

We are also working in partnership with the Voluntary Adoption Agency Alliance (ARC Adoption NE, Barnardo's, Caritas Care Adoption and Adoption Matters) to support us in the development of the RAA and then as partners in delivering good outcomes for children.

Adopt Coast to Coast RAA has significant challenges to overcome:

- An increasing number of Children Looked After
- A high number of Adoptions
- An increasing complexity of Adoption needs
- Ability to recruit sufficient Adopters

	Total Population (mid 2018 estimates)	Number of Children Looked After As at March 2020	Number of Adoptions 2019 - 2020
Cumbria CC	498,888	721 (+38)	32 (-6)
Durham CC	523,662	914 (+74)	55 (+10)
Together for Children	277,417	582 (-13)	35(-2)

(+/- difference on last year's figures)

Working collectively together as the Regional Adoption Agency with a strong partnership with the Voluntary Adoption Agencies through their Alliance, will help to ensure we meet the needs of our Children and Young People, our Adopters and our Birth Families.

4. Delivery Model

Regional Adoption Agencies have been set up in several different ways depending on the context and challenges facing the partner organisations.

The new preferred legal model for the RAA is based on a collaborative “hub and spoke” model between the three authorities and Together for Children (TfC).

Under this model, the three authorities/TfC would agree to collaborate in relation to the performance of their statutory adoption functions through a legally binding RAA partnership agreement.

The parties would jointly operate a central RAA “hub” for collaboration purposes which would comprise a joint Governance Board (which will be responsible for “key” RAA decisions), a regional joint RAA Head of Service (which would be employed by one of the authorities but would report to the Governance Board) and other relevant central services.

The funding and governance arrangements for the RAA “Hub” will need to be defined in the partnership agreement.

Each authority would then continue to operate at a local “spoke”, under the day-to-day co-ordination of the joint RAA Head of Service and implement the agreed joint plans, policies and strategies as approved by the Governance Board.

There is no single legal authority under this model and given that the adoption functions continue to be discharged by each authority at a local level, there is no formal delegation of statutory powers and no TUPE transfer of staff.

Detailed heads of terms for the partnership/collaboration agreement will be developed as part of the next stage of the process.

The Hub will consist of the RAA Head of Service and a Communications and Marketing Officer and will have access to a number of support services such as Performance and Finance.

There will be three spokes:

- Cumbria
- Durham
- Together for Children

The RAA Head of Service will manage the function through a Matrix Management approach as set out below:

- The hub costs will be the responsibility of the RAA Head of Service, and each Local Authority will contribute 1/3 of these.
- RAA Head of Service will line manage the lead adoption person (hereafter referred to as Adoption Manager, though this title is not used in all organisations) in each spoke for the delivery of the RAA function and some 1:1s and appraisals will be done jointly with the Local Authority line manager.
- If there are any major changes to staffing (i.e. beyond vacancy management) these would come back to Gov Board for approval.
- There will be an element of the budget such as Adoption Support and Interagency Fees which are jointly controlled by the Local Authority and RAA.

Further details of how the matrix management approach will work are set out in Appendix 1.

5. Vision and Objectives

Our vision is that children will achieve their full potential within a loving and secure family and everyone affected by adoption will receive a high-quality innovative and sustainable service.

5.1 Strategic Objectives:

Our overall objectives for Adopt Coast to Coast are to:

- Provide child-centred services.
- Deliver a high-quality accessible service to adopters and potential adopters.
- Provide an accessible independent service for birth families and others affected by adoption.
- Create strong partnership working with Local Authorities, the Voluntary Adoption Agencies and universal services.
- Offer a service which is high-quality and provides good value for money.

We will deliver our objectives by:

1. Providing child-centred services through:

- Placing the child at the centre throughout their adoption journey, including into adulthood.
- Securing early permanence to prevent delay and achieve the best possible outcomes.
- Recognising the child's voice in permanence planning and ensuring communication is effective to enable them to understand their life narrative.
- Creating a sense of belonging for the child, in a secure permanent family and in the wider adoption community.
- Ensuring access to support at the level and time that it is needed.
- Ensuring sufficient adopters to promote the best possible match for the child.

2. Giving a high-quality accessible service to adopters and potential adopters through:

- Ensuring applicants receive a sensitive, flexible and welcoming service.
- Responding to enquiries from potential adopters in a timely manner.
- Giving prospective adopters clear, realistic and timely feedback at all stages of their enquiry and application.
- Ensuring that adopters fully contribute to an evidence-based assessment, approval and matching process.

- Providing consistent quality of adoption support that is relevant to individual adopter family's needs.
 - Identifying and progressing potential matches at the earliest possible stage.
 - Providing qualified, skilled and experienced staff to support and guide adopters throughout their journey.
 - Offering consistent, high quality, up to date training throughout, to enable adopters to understand the lifelong impact of adoption.
3. Providing an accessible independent service for birth families and others affected by adoption which will include:
- Support for birth family members whose children have a plan of adoption and enabling them, at any point, to contribute to the child's understanding of their life story.
 - Intermediary services to birth family members and adopted adults.
 - A letterbox service to facilitate ongoing positive contact between birth families and children.
 - Facilitation of direct contact where this meets the child's needs.
4. Creating strong partnership working with Local Authorities, Voluntary Adoption Agencies and universal services by:
- Ensuring Voluntary Adoption Agencies have a full and active role in the delivery of Adopt Coast to Coast services.
 - Sharing learning and striving for evidence-based best practice.
 - Ensuring consistent and long-term sustainability of service delivery and funding to the Voluntary Adoption Agencies for the benefit of children.
5. Offering a service which is high-quality and provides good value for money through:
- Demonstrating consistently excellent practice which results in excellent outcomes for children.
 - Ensuring consistency of quality of service provision across Adopt Coast to Coast.
 - The efficient, effective and innovative use of resources.
 - Effectively commissioning and reviewing appropriate services.
 - Developing and implementing clear minimum standards.
 - Continually learning from stakeholders, best practice and adapting services accordingly.

5.2 Outcomes and Benefits of the RAA

There is commitment from each organisation to work together in a single RAA across the geographical area proposed, to achieve:

- A culture of early permanence planning in order to identify suitable adopters for children at the earliest possible stage during the care planning process to ensure the timeliness of the child moving in with their adoptive family.
- Marketing activity and recruitment of prospective adoptive families to meet the needs of the range of children, including sibling groups.
- Assessment and training of prospective adopters to a consistently high standard.
- Development of services across the range of adoption functions in the RAA through the capturing of stakeholder views and best regional and national practice.
- Matching, linking and adoption support that enables children to live in supportive and safe placements with their adoptive families.
- Pre and Post Adoption support tailored to meet the needs of the children and adoptive families and to deliver this as a consistent package of support across the RAA area.
- Effective and easily accessible Birth Family support.
- Access to consistent and responsive Intermediary Services.

5.3 Services in Scope

Included within the scope of the Regional Adoption Agency are:

- Early Permanence planning
- Marketing activity and recruitment of prospective adopters
- Assessment and training of prospective adopters
- Tracking, Linking and Matching
- Pre and Post Adoption Support
- Birth Family Support

- Intermediary Services

The expectation would be that all adoption functions as currently carried out by Cumbria County Council, Durham County Council and Together for Children / Sunderland City Council or commissioned by them would be in scope of the new RAA. The commissioning of interagency placements as undertaken currently would continue. It is anticipated that adoption support services currently commissioned, will remain so in the initial stages of the RAA to ensure consistency for children and adopters. The expectation would be that at some point the RAA would procure services across the region.

5.4 Services Out of Scope

Special Guardianship Order assessments and subsequent support services have not been included in the scope of the RAA at this point.

Fostering Services are also out of scope.

5.5 The Role of the Voluntary Adoption Agencies

It is envisaged that the Voluntary Adoption Agencies would play a key role in the Regional Adoption Agency.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to meet the demand and the increasingly complex needs of our children and young people. We believe that by working in partnership with the Voluntary Adoption Agencies through their Alliance, we will be in a stronger position to meet the needs of children with a plan of adoption.

We want a different relationship. We envisage that:

- The Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAA) alliance will work with us each year to look at our needs and help us develop our sufficiency plan.
- From this we will identify our gaps and plan our recruitment campaigns.
- We will have an agreement with the VAA Alliance to provide a specific number and type of prospective adoptive families over the year. The management of the process will be set out in the commissioning arrangements.
- We would include the VAA alliance in our regular tracking and matching meetings so that we can identify suitable matches at the earliest opportunity.
- We would develop our best practice collectively with all partners learning from each other. This would include some joint training and development days.

The benefits of this approach are:

- We would be able to match and place children more quickly.
- We would ensure the children have the most suitable prospective adoptive family to meet their needs.
- We have shared responsibility for the recruitment of prospective adopters with the VAA alliance supporting us by recruiting prospective adopters including for our 'harder to place' children.
- There would be a greater number of prospective adoptive families available across the RAA / VAA alliance.
- We would have a stronger relationship between the RAA and the VAA alliance.
- This approach would build stability in the VAA sector in the region.

In addition to the recruitment of prospective adoptive families (as described above), the VAA can potentially provide a range of additional services to the RAA. Initially it is envisaged that existing contracts are reviewed and then extended where appropriate. During the first twelve months, the RAA will assess its needs and contract services as appropriate.

5.6 Early Permanence

In working together to extend and improve the early permanence planning for children we can ensure that children have the best start in life by being part of a permanent, safe and loving family as early as possible in their lives. Our RAA will be focused on developing and maintaining strong links required with the teams who care plan for children, so we are involved and informed at the earliest possible stage.

Early permanence planning will ensure that we are working together to seek the right prospective adoptive family as early as possible. We will develop recruitment and marketing strategies that target recruitment of families who can best meet the needs of the children for whom we are seeking families. Together we can use our combined expertise to support staff who prepare children to move to their new families and as an RAA identify and deliver bespoke adoption support to meet the individual needs of the child and their prospective adoptive family.

Early Permanence will include:

- Early Placement Planning
- Concurrency

- Fostering for Adoption

We will work across the Local Authority partners to create a culture of Early Permanence planning in order to identify possible suitable prospective adopters for children at the earliest stage during the care planning process. Earlier placement supports the best outcomes for children.

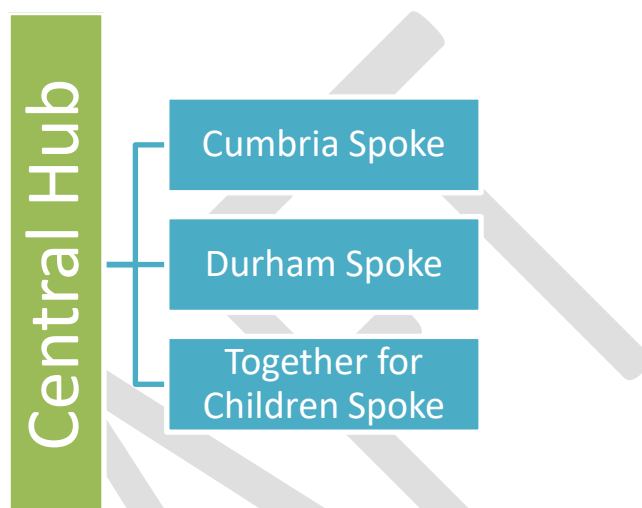
What this means in practice:

- Each Local Authority will have an Early Permanence Strategy which will include all children regardless of route to permanence.
- We need to support the embedding of early permanence thinking within each Local Authority, so this practice is integrated into the culture and practice of the organisation with senior managers and legal teams supporting the principles and the benefits of early permanence.
- We will do this by ensuring that early permanence is a fundamental part of social work practice.
- This will be achieved by:
 - Ensuring effective leadership around early permanence.
 - Constant raising of awareness – through meetings and other engagement opportunities.
 - Effective and ongoing training for all staff – recognising the turn-over in children's care planning teams.

6. Design of the Regional Adoption Agency

6.1 Functions and Responsibilities

In the Partnership Model which is being proposed for Adopt Coast to Coast some of the functions will be undertaken centrally in the Hub and other functions will be delivered locally in the Spokes.



The RAA wants to build and develop further its strong relationship with the Voluntary Adoption Agencies as described in section 5.3. As shown below, this means that the VAA, through its alliance, will be key to the delivery of some of the functions.

Set out in Appendix 2 are high-level maps of how this will work in practice.

Whilst delivery will be devolved to the localities the RAA Head of Service will have overall responsibility for quality management and practice oversight. It is expected that there will be high quality and consistent practice across the RAA.

Function	What	Responsible
Marketing	Brand Website Marketing	RAA Hub
	Events Campaigns Information Sessions	RAA Hub/ Locality

Function	What	Responsible
Adopter Recruitment	Enquiries	RAA Hub Locality
Adopter Assessment	Training Stage 1 (ROI/Statutory Checks) Stage 2 (Assessment) Panel Agency Decision Maker (ADM)	Locality
Early Permanence (EP)/Permanence planning	Early tracking Consideration if EP placement ADM /Child Should be Placed for Adoption	Locality
Tracking, Family Finding and Matching	Early Tracking Centralised Tracking Family Finding Linking and Matching	RAA Core Function undertaken jointly with Hub, Localities and VAA Alliance
Placement Planning	ADM for the Match Placement planning and Introductions Placement Court	Locality
Other Locality Work	Post Box Life Story Work Administration of Panels Management of Adoption Support Fund Birth Records and Intermediary work Independent service for birth families Administration and review of Adoption Allowances Adoption Support	Localities Some aspects of this work are currently provided through commissioned services. Head of Service to take lead in reviewing these and offer proposals for future commissioning activity.
Other RAA Core Functions	Sufficiency Planning Performance Management and Returns Governance Board Finance and Budget monitoring	RAA Core Function undertaken jointly with Hub, Localities and VAA Alliance.

6.2 Staffing and HR Considerations

6.2.1 Staffing Roles

The Hub will consist of two employees:

- RAA Head of Service
- Communications and Marketing Officer

All other adoption staff will continue to be employed by the localities.

6.2.2 HR Considerations

In the Partnership Model proposed for Adopt Coast to Coast, apart from the posts in Hub, all the staff will continue to be employed by their existing employer. This means that there is minimal impact on the staff and no changes to their terms and conditions.

There will still be a need to consult with staff and the Unions on the establishment of the RAA.

The detailed workplan and timescale will form a key part of the implementation and key tasks include:

- Staff and Union consultation
- Recruit Communications and Marketing Officer
- Training and development
- Staff team building

6.3 Accommodation and Property

Adopt Coast to Coast will operate across a very large geographical area and therefore needs to be fully flexible in the way it delivers services.

Each of the Local Authorities will continue to provide accommodation for all the staff they employ, and agile working practices will continue to be a key aspect of successful service delivery. It will be equally important that staff groups can meet to review and develop service provision which will support a cohesive shared vision. This need can be met through a mixed model of engagement including face to face and virtual.

Maintaining a presence in their respective Local Authority accommodation will enable staff to continue to work closely with their respective Children's Social Care teams.

The features of the ways of working are set out below:

- Most staff need to continue to be fully agile using a laptop and phone.
- Business support / administration staff would continue to work as they currently do.
- Access to other partner's accommodation would assist Local Authority staff in working more agilely across the geographical footprint of Adopt Coast to Coast.
- The RAA Head of Service will need the flexibility to work across the geographical footprint of the RAA.
- Team meetings/service development sessions will be a mix of face to face and virtual depending on the activity and the needs of the staff.
- Supervision will be a mix of face to face and virtual taking into account the needs of the supervisee.

6.4 ICT

There are several elements to the ICT solution:

- A Single Point of Contact for the RAA
- Provision of Desktop / Equipment
- A Matching and Tracking System
- Website

A Single Point of Contact for RAA

The RAA will require a single point of contact which is supported by appropriate telephony, website and email arrangements. This also includes a single point of storage for relevant RAA document such as procedures, policies etc, which are accessible across the Adopt Coast to Coast Area.

Desktop / Equipment

The basic desktop and equipment need of each employee are expected to be the responsibility of the employer of the staff member who will provide the ICT needed which will include:

- Laptop or Desktop
- Ability to print to any device in their Local Authority buildings
- Mobile/Smart Phone

- MS-Office
- E-mail
- Video conferencing etc

Adoption Case Management System

Each of the spokes will continue to use their existing Children's Social Care system to record all Adoption activity.

There is a need to develop a system to support the Tracking, Matching and Family Finding.

Inherent in the above is the need to be clarify flows of data between the Hub and the Spokes, as well as clarity in relation to the recording of relevant data items between systems.

Website

The RAA will have its own website with its own brand and will be a customer portal including information about adoption and enquiry forms where appropriate.

6.5 Performance Management

Performance Management Framework

Adopt Coast to Coast must have a clear set of performance indicators which will help it to assess how well it is performing against its objectives. The indicators should give a balanced picture of performance that reflects all aspects of the service. Adopt Coast to Coast will use the Balanced Scorecard approach to make sure it has a rounded picture of performance.

The scorecard covers four key aspects of performance:

- **Customers** – this looks at the impact of the RAA in terms of the community, services users and customers. It involves looking at how well the RAA has met the needs of service users and the perception of the organisation from the viewpoint of the community / service user which will include outcome indicators like customer satisfaction, and other feedback from users such as review, compliments and complaints.
- **Business** – this focuses on how well the processes which are critical to effective service delivery are working and will include all the Adoption Scorecard measures. This encourages managers to identify what the key business

processes are, to look at performance in carrying out those processes and to establish targets for improving performance.

- **Resources** – these indicators focus on how well the RAA's resources are being used and might include finance, equipment or other physical assets.
- **People** – indicators in this aspect focus on actions or initiatives intended to deliver service improvements, these might for example include employees training and development.

There will be two types of performance measures:

1. Primary Measures – Balanced Scorecard as reported to Governance Board (set out below)
2. Secondary Measures – providing additional performance information to support wider business improvements

RESOURCES (R)	BUSINESS/PERFORMANCE (B)
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Interagency budget targets are achieved.2. Budget targets/savings achieved.3. Effective commissioning of services.4. Application to Adoption Support Fund (% of successful applications).5. Monitoring of numbers of externally provided workforce (agency staff).	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Adoption scorecard performance measures.2. Improved timeliness for children moving to adoption (measured at each stage in the process).3. Maintain the percentage of children who cease to be looked after by adoption.4. Improving the outcomes for siblings who need to live together, harder to place and older children.5. Ensure placement sufficiency for children who need an early permanence placement via Fostering for Adoption and Concurrency.6. Monitor the number of disruptions pre and post-order using learning to improve practice.7. Increase recruitment of prospective adopters from all sectors of the community.8. Ensure statutory timescales for assessments of adopters are met.9. Contribute to good Ofsted outcomes for Children's Services in the three Local Authorities.10. Develop measures to demonstrate impact and effectiveness of Adoption Support.

	11. Case Audits (number of case audits, judgement on quality of case recording).
EMPLOYEES (E) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employee satisfaction levels (via survey). 2. Number of team development/whole service days – feedback. 3. Sickness and capability levels. 4. % employees who have an annual appraisal (e.g., leading to shadowing to meet service objectives). 5. % of employees who have access to Supervision (monthly). 6. Training – satisfaction – meets service needs and PDP needs. 7. Timeliness of successful recruitment and appointment to first time advert. 8. Staff turnover. 9. Monitoring of numbers of externally provided workforce (agency staff). 	CUSTOMERS (C) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitor number and nature of complaints. 2. Ability to meet assessed need. 3. Customer satisfaction measures: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Adoptee b. Adopter c. Birth Parent 4. Partner Local Authority Children's Social Care satisfaction. <p>[How: questionnaires, Panel Member feedback, mystery shopper, user groups, feedback from Children's Social Work Teams, IRO's].</p>

OFSTED and Regulatory Framework

Each Local Authority will continue to be inspected by Ofsted under the ILACS framework and will be evaluated on the effectiveness of the recruitment, assessment and training of prospective adopters. As partners in Adopt Coast to Coast each Local Authority must demonstrate how the hub and spoke arrangement complies with their statutory responsibilities to meet the needs of their local children. In respect of the hub functions the inspectors will look at each Local Authority's arrangements to assure itself that the hub is meeting the needs of local children. To support the inspection process the RAA will need to provide the necessary information for each Local Authority.

6.6 Information Governance

Information governance protocols will ensure that outcomes are delivered with regards to:

- Data Protection registration
- Privacy Impact Assessment
- Information Sharing Agreements
- Records Management / Storage / retention
- Information and Data ownership
- Freedom of Information
- Complaints / customer feedback / escalation policy / role of Adopt Coast to Coast Governance Board
- Training and Awareness
- Lone Working policy
- IG policies and procedures

And compliance with:

- ISO27001 Information Security Management System standard,
- PSN and PCIDSS requirements,
- ISO9001 Quality Management System standard
- Compliance with HSCN connection requirements
- Adoption Agencies Regulations and National Minimum Standards

6.7 Communications and Marketing

Adopt Coast to Coast will have its own identity and its own brand and website.



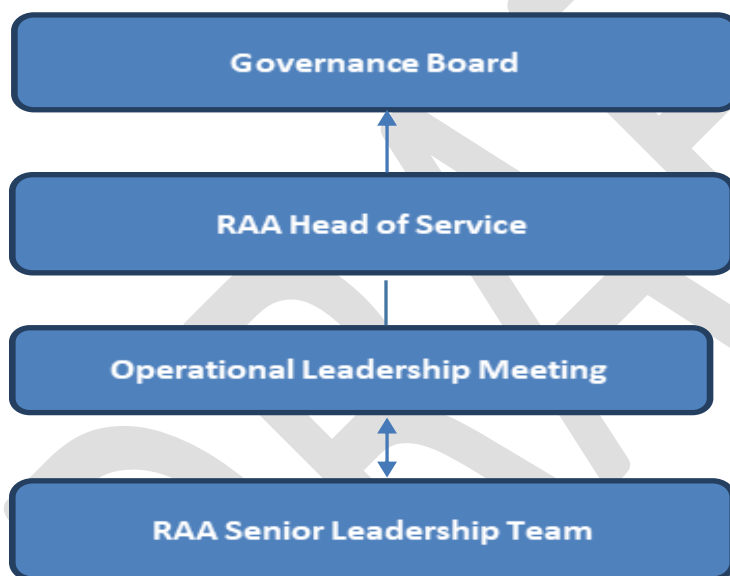
- Website and URL adoptc2c.org.uk

A detailed communications and marketing plan will be developed to support the implementation and operation of the RAA.

6.8 Governance Arrangements

6.8.1 Partnership Model

The Coast to Coast RAA will be established on the basis of a Partnership Model with a Hub and Spoke delivery.



6.8.2 Adopt Coast to Coast Governance Board

The purpose of the Board is to be responsible for the strategic oversight of Adopt Coast to Coast. It is proposed that the Governance Board meet at least every 3 months.

The main functions of the Board are to:

- Ensure children with a plan of adoption and their adoptive families receive a

good service from the RAA in partnership with the Local Authorities.

- Develop strategy and set strategic direction for Adopt Coast to Coast.
- Agree all policy decisions.
- Recruitment, suspension, dismissal of the RAA Head of Service.
- Ensure there is appropriate supervision, professional development and support provided to the RAA Head of Service.
- Propose and recommend the budget and other resources to the three Authorities.
- Recommend in year variations to the budget which are outside agreed limits, to the three Authorities.
- Any proposed procurement which is not expressly approved in the budget will be referred by the Governance Board to the three authorities depending on value.
- Agree the Commissioning Strategy.
- Agree the performance targets.
- Monitor performance and volumetric data.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the service in meeting strategic objectives.
- Agree to changes in service delivery.
- Agree any major staffing changes across the RAA.
- Ensuring that RAA is supported with sufficient resources to carry out its functions.

Governance Board Membership will be:

- Directors of Children's Social Care or their nominated officers
- RAA Head of Service
- Finance representative
- Voluntary Adoption Agency representative
- Staff representative

The Board will be responsible for appointing the chair of Adopt Coast to Coast Governance Board.

6.8.3 Local Authority Members

Local Authority Members have a key role in ensuring that the RAA delivers good outcomes for Children and Young People. Their involvement and oversight will be as follows:

- Lead Members will meet with the Governance Board quarterly to receive an update on progress and outcomes.

- Lead Members will receive regular briefings from their Directors of Children's Services.
- Corporate Parenting Boards will receive updates on the progress and outcomes of the RAA.
- Scrutiny panels will have oversight of the RAA as appropriate.

6.8.4 Head of Service Adopt Coast to Coast

The RAA Head of Service will be responsible to the Governance Board for the strategic development of the service. They will Chair Operational Leadership Meeting and manage the Senior Leadership Team.

The RAA Head of Service will:

- Manage the Adoption Service with the Adoption Manager in each of the three Local Authorities, within a matrix management arrangement with the Local Authority line managers.
- Deliver service improvements and outcomes as agreed by the Governance Board.
- Be responsible for the quality assurance and practice oversight across the RAA and over time ensure consistency of practice and common standards.
- Manage the core expenditure from within the budgets set by the Local Authorities.
- Submit quarterly performance reports and bi-annual adoption reports to the Governance Board.

6.8.5 Operational Leadership Meeting (OLM)

The RAA OLM will be responsible for considering local, regional and national drivers that may impact on the functions and responsibilities of the RAA. This group will maintain an overview of each Local Authorities key requirements and changing landscape in respect of adoption matters to support a timely response from the RAA.

The OLM will be chaired by the RAA Head of Service and will include, as a minimum, the three Local Authority strategic managers with responsibility for adoption, the Communications and Marketing Officer and a representative from the VAA Alliance. Invitations will be extended to leads in each of the three Local Authorities for IT, Performance, Recruitment and Marketing etc as necessary.

It will:

- Meet 6 weekly.

- Consider sufficiency and volumetric data to ensure effective forward planning.
- Highlight to the RAA Head of Service any challenges in embedding Early Permanence, highlighting Teams which require more support and guidance. For the benefit of the partners highlight any aspects of practice in Early Permanence which are working well.
- Act as a 'critical friend' and provide feedback and challenge from other areas of their respective Local Authorities to promote service improvement.

6.8.6 RAA Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

The RAA SLT will be responsible for monitoring and delivering the operational aspects of Adopt Coast to Coast. It will be responsible for ensuring that strong and effective links are developed and maintained between the RAA and the Local Authorities.

The SLT will be chaired by the RAA Head of Service and will include the three Local Authority Adoption Managers and the Communications and Marketing Officer.

It will:

- Meet monthly.
- Consider sufficiency and volumetric data to ensure effective forward planning.
- Be responsible, in partnership with the Local Authorities, for ensuring that Early Permanence is embedded across the partnership.
- Will agree procedures and ways of working including those which impact on the Local Authority, consistent with the RAA agreed policies.
- Will ensure quality of practice is consistently delivered across the RAA.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 Approach

The finance model proposed for Adopt Coast to Coast is that the current Adoption Team's budget shall remain in each respective Local Authority. As such and in the best interests of the partnership each Local Authority will agree that there will be no material changes to the current structure without consultation with the other partners where this may impact on the future managerial or financial arrangements. The hub costs will be the responsibility of the RAA Head of Service, and each Local Authority will contribute 1/3 of these.

The Head of the RAA will oversee one staff member directly, matrix manage the 3 Adoption Managers.

The RAA Head of Service will have oversight of the Interagency Adoption Fees, Adoption Allowances, and Post Adoption Support Commissioned Services for each of the Local Authorities, to enable efficiencies to be achieved with accountability through the Governance Board.

The table below summarises the current budgets associated with Adoption Team activity held within the three Local Authorities.

Expenditure Type	DCC	TFC	CCC	HUB	Annual Cost
Staff	£520,083	£488,683	£934,228	£140,709	£2,083,703
Non Staff Costs	£96,296	£156,512	£137,937	£5,000	£395,745
Interagency Adoption Fees	£1,531,000	£112,548	£100,000	-	£1,743,548
Adoption Allowances	£879,347	£483,266	£600,000	-	£1,962,613
Post Adoption Support Commissioned Services	£45,640	£91,500	£63,000	-	£200,140
Total	£3,072,366	£1,332,509	£1,835,165	£145,709	£6,385,749

7.2 Hub Costs

The initial annual 'Core' budget associated with the RAA Head of Service and the Communications and Marketing Officer and support is estimated at c£146K which will be funded equally by all three participating Authorities as detailed in the Table below.

Estimated Annual Core Budget	
RAA Head of Service	£ 86,514
Coms and Marketing Officer	£ 40,995
Misc.	£ 3,000
Mobile	£ 1,200
Mileage	£ 2,000
ICT	£ 2,000
Business support Cost (HUB)	£ 10,000
Total	£ 145,709

A budget will be established in the Hub authority with the Contributions from the two partner authorities recorded as income. Any over or underspends at the year-end will be distributed between the three partner authorities based on the proportion of the financial contribution.

The budget will be monitored internally as part of the hub authority's usual internal governance cycle with quarterly outturn reports being presented the RAA Governance Board for review.

The RAA Head of Service will produce an annual financial report – summarising adoption activity across the RAA including a breakdown of direct placement costs and statistics relating to the timeliness of the adoption process.

7.3 Interagency Fees

It is proposed that Interagency Budgets remain within each of the participating Local Authorities. The placements recruited by each Local Authority and the associated VAA's be pooled, with the best match for the child being the determining factor as to where the child is placed.

Currently the income received from an outside organisation utilising a placement recruited by another organisation varies depending on the status of the recruiting body i.e. VAA or Local Authority. It has been agreed that all of the Local Authority partners in Adopt Coast to Coast will employ a single pricing structure.

The proposed approach for dealing with Interagency Fees assumes each member of the partnership receives the benefit of a successful placement of a child with a prospective adopter they recruited, whether the child originates from the particular partner or from another partner within the RAA.

The recommended approach for dealing with Interagency Fees is based on the following agreed principles - no Local Authority is worse off as a result of how the RAA manages interagency fees, and our priority is always to place firstly through the RAA Partnership.

Cash Flow

In order to ensure none of the participating members of the RAA are negatively affected by Cash Flow issues - it is recommended that a quarterly reconciliation is undertaken to assess the activity in the year to date with the reporting of the current cost / income implications for each of the RAA partners.

At this point activity to date could be followed by all charges and payments between the partners being undertaken, or potentially just midyear payments to partner VAA's with an annual exercise undertaken by the participating Local Authorities to reflect the financial impact of the whole year.

It is proposed that the support services be provided by the hub and cost be equally shared with all three participating Authorities. Initial indicative support services costs are estimated at £18K as detailed in the table above.

7.4 Set Up Costs

Adopt Coast to Coast will have some one-off set up costs. These are yet to be fully quantified as some of these are dependent on decisions around working practices and any accommodation requirements.

Set-up costs will be funded by the DfE grant held by Durham County Council until this is exhausted and only if this insufficient should any remaining costs be shared between the three Local Authorities.

The most recent review of anticipated setup cost budgets indicates little likelihood of the budget overspending with the revised proposed hub and spoke delivery model requiring significantly less IT development than the previous hosted model.

The project set up budget will continue to be monitored with returns continuing to the DfE on a quarterly basis and outturn forecasts to the RAA Governance Board.

7.5 Commissioning Arrangements

Each organisation currently has in place contracts for commissioned services associated with the delivery of their Adoption Services.

It is proposed that these arrangements be recommissioned by each Local Authority for a further 12 months following the go live of Adopt Coast to Coast.

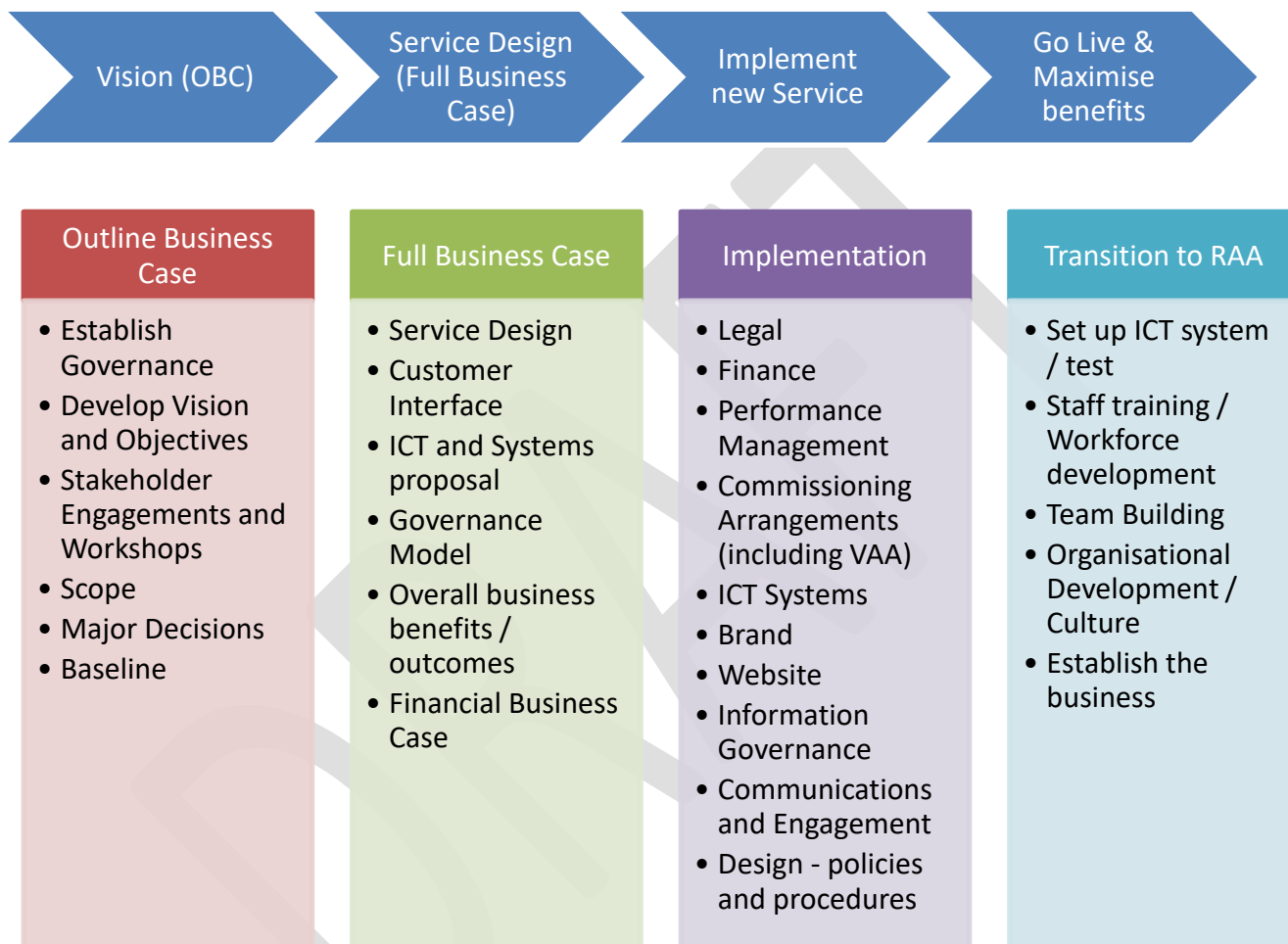
The reason for the proposal is:

- Provides stability to the current providers.
- Provides stability to customers and service delivery.
- Gives Adopt Coast to Coast time to determine which services it needs to commission in the future.

8. Plan and Next Steps / Risk Assessment

8.1 Overall Project Plan

There are four stages to the project:



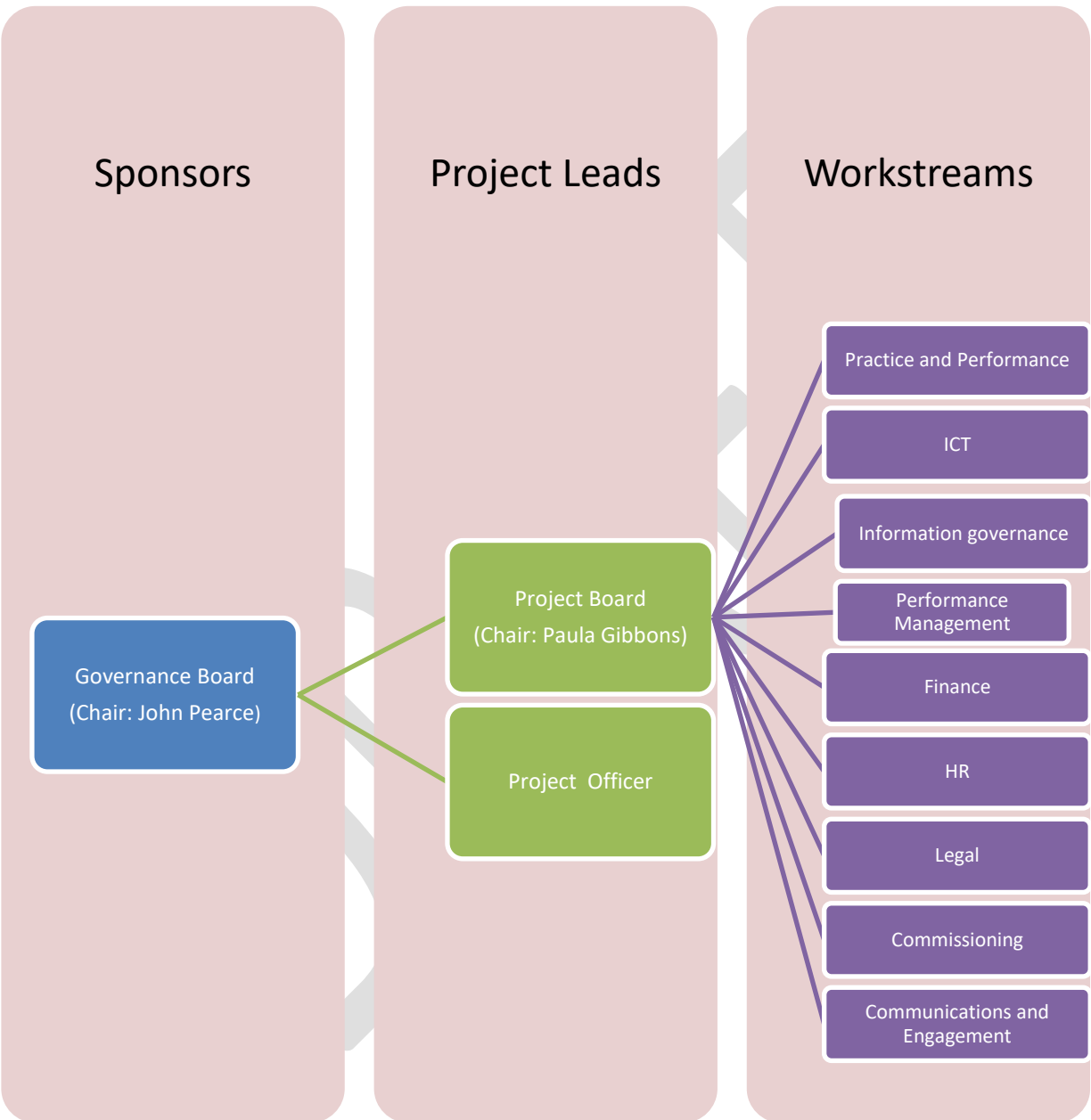
The Key milestones for the project are:

- Full Business Case approved by all three partners – November 2020
- Shadow Go Live – 1st February 2021
- Live – 1st April 2021

The Implementation Project Initiation Document sets out the detailed work which is needed to meet the go live date of 1st April 2021.

8.2 Project Governance Arrangements

The existing project management and governance arrangements will remain in place throughout the project until the go live date.



8.3 High Level Risk Register

The following risks have been identified for the next phase of the project:

Risk	H/M/L	Mitigation
Staff are not engaged and on board with the development of Adopt Coast to Coast.	M	Staff have previously been involved in the development of the RAA. Newly appointed RAA Head of Service will recommence engagement with staff from 1 st September 2020.
Costs of new service are too high and or unsustainable.	H	Detailed financial plans are developed for the Full Business Case.
Sharing risk and gain - there is a risk that one or more partners might not commit due to Adopt Coast to Coast lack of assurance on cost / benefit.	M	Transparency and option dialogue about the potential risk and gains for each organisation.
Fail to achieve buy-in from Adopters and Children.	L	Ensure there is the right level of engagement with Adopters and Children throughout the development of the service.
Children's Care Planning Teams fail to come on board with the RAA objectives.	M	Need strong leadership from all the Children's care planning team leads and need to involve them in the design of the service. Newly appointed RAA Head of Service to lead on Team Building and OD events and service delivery.
ICT system cannot be implemented in time, impacting on service delivery.	M	Work has already started on the specification of the ICT requirements and the hub and spoke model significantly reduces the critical nature of the go live date.
Lack of involvement of Medical Advisors is a risk to good continuity of service once live.	L	The hub and spoke model significantly reduces the impact on the day to day practice of the Medical Advisors in relation to their adoption role. The opportunity to share best practice across the 3 Local Authorities may be of positive benefit to their practice.

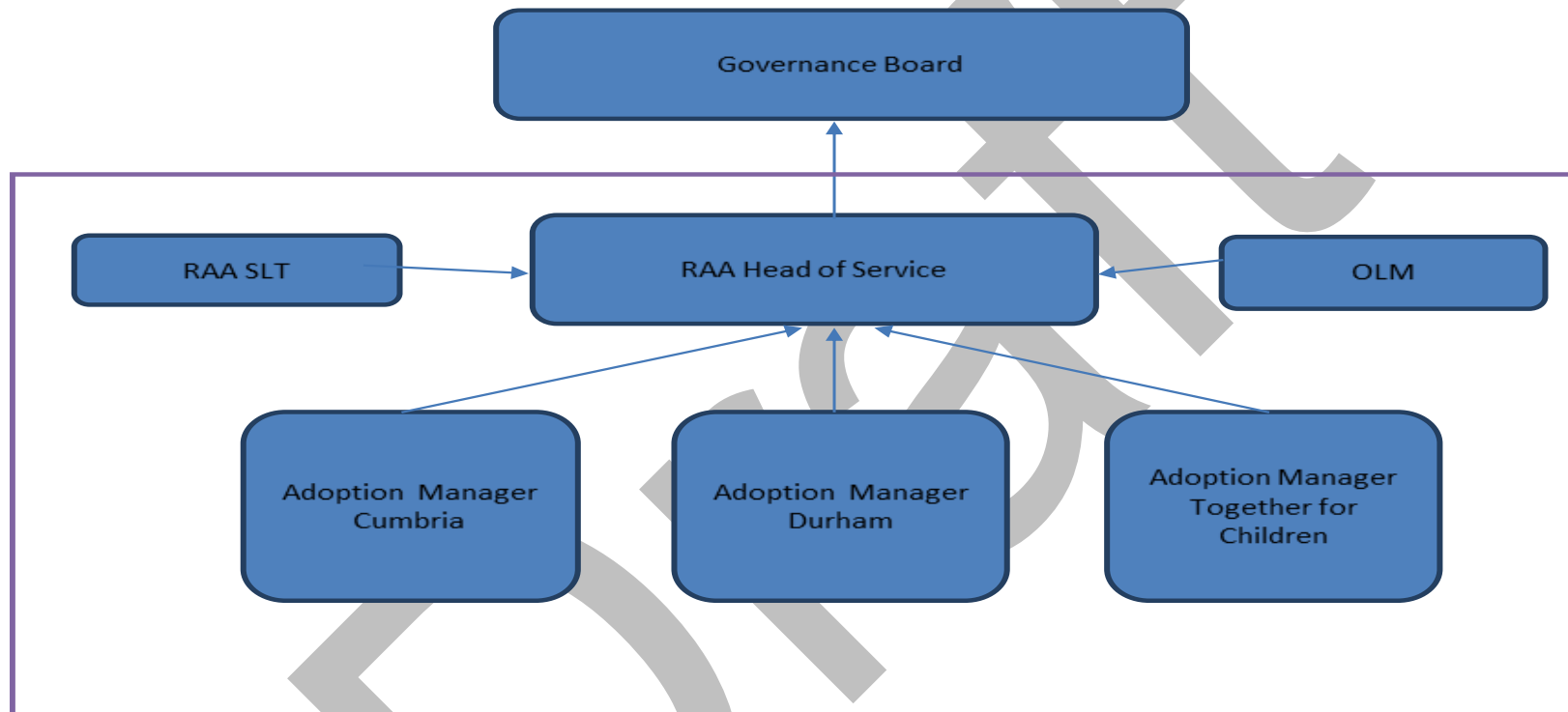
Risk	H/M/L	Mitigation
Communications and Marketing Officer post not filled	L	Job description to be reviewed and recruitment to commence in late September.
Adopter recruitment and sufficiency becomes an issue for the RAA prior to going live.	H	Each Local Authority recognises the need to continue consistent recruitment activity until such time as the brand is launched and RAA recruitment activity commences.
Information Governance issues may prevent effective working and sharing of data before and after going live.	H	IG group is already established and have commenced work on the Information Sharing Agreement.

Appendix 1 – Matrix Management Arrangements

Area	Ideas
Strategic Direction / Oversight / Implementation	<p>RAA Head of Service accountable to Governance Board (GB).</p> <p>RAA Head of Service meets regularly with the Operational Leadership leads.</p> <p>RAA Head of Service develops ideas/solutions with Senior Leadership Team (SLT).</p> <p>RAA Head of Service shares ideas/solutions with Operational Leadership leads.</p> <p>RAA Head of Service presents ideas/solutions to GB.</p> <p>RAA Head of Service delivers agreed strategy on behalf of the GB.</p>
Line Management of RAA Head of Service 1:1 and Professional Development	<p>Provided by the Head of Social Care for the employing organisation.</p>
Line Management of Adoption Managers	<p>Direct line management is provided by employing organisation – includes all employment issues.</p> <p>RAA line management (function) is provided by RAA Head of Service.</p> <p>Adoption Managers are part of RAA SLT.</p> <p>RAA Head of Service involved in recruitment to vacant posts.</p> <p>RAA Head of Service alongside LA line manager to undertake joint appraisals and joint 1:1 meetings.</p>
Line Management of Hub Staff	<p>Provided by RAA Head of Service.</p>

Area	Ideas
Line Management of all other staff teams	<p>Provided by Adoption Managers in the Local Authority.</p> <p>RAA Head of Service is responsible for the overall Organisational Development / Team ethos of the organisation – shared with SLT for delivery.</p>
Workload / Pressures	<p>RAA Head of Service sighted on workload and pressures in the spokes.</p>
Resources	<p>Any changes to resources – budget / staffing – will be the responsibility of the RAA Head of Service but managed through OLM and SLT. For example, vacancies will be discussed, and the approach agreed by OLM and SLT.</p> <p>Significant changes to resources will be agreed by GB.</p>
Quality Assurance and Practice	<p>RAA Head of Service will be responsible for Quality Assurance and practice oversight across the whole RAA. They will ensure consistency of practice and common standards.</p> <p>OLM will be a 6-weekly meeting with strategic managers responsible for Adoption and RAA Head of Service and this gives the opportunity to provide feedback and challenge from other areas of their respective Local Authorities as a 'critical friend' to promote service improvement.</p> <p>Adoption Managers are part of RAA SLT with shared responsibility for implementing agreed RAA practice in their teams.</p>
Budget	<p>The finance model proposed for Adopt Coast to Coast is that the current Adoption Service's budget shall remain in each respective Local Authority. As such and in the best interests of the partnership each Local Authority will agree that there will be no material changes to the current structure without consultation with the other partners where this may impact on the future managerial or financial arrangements.</p>

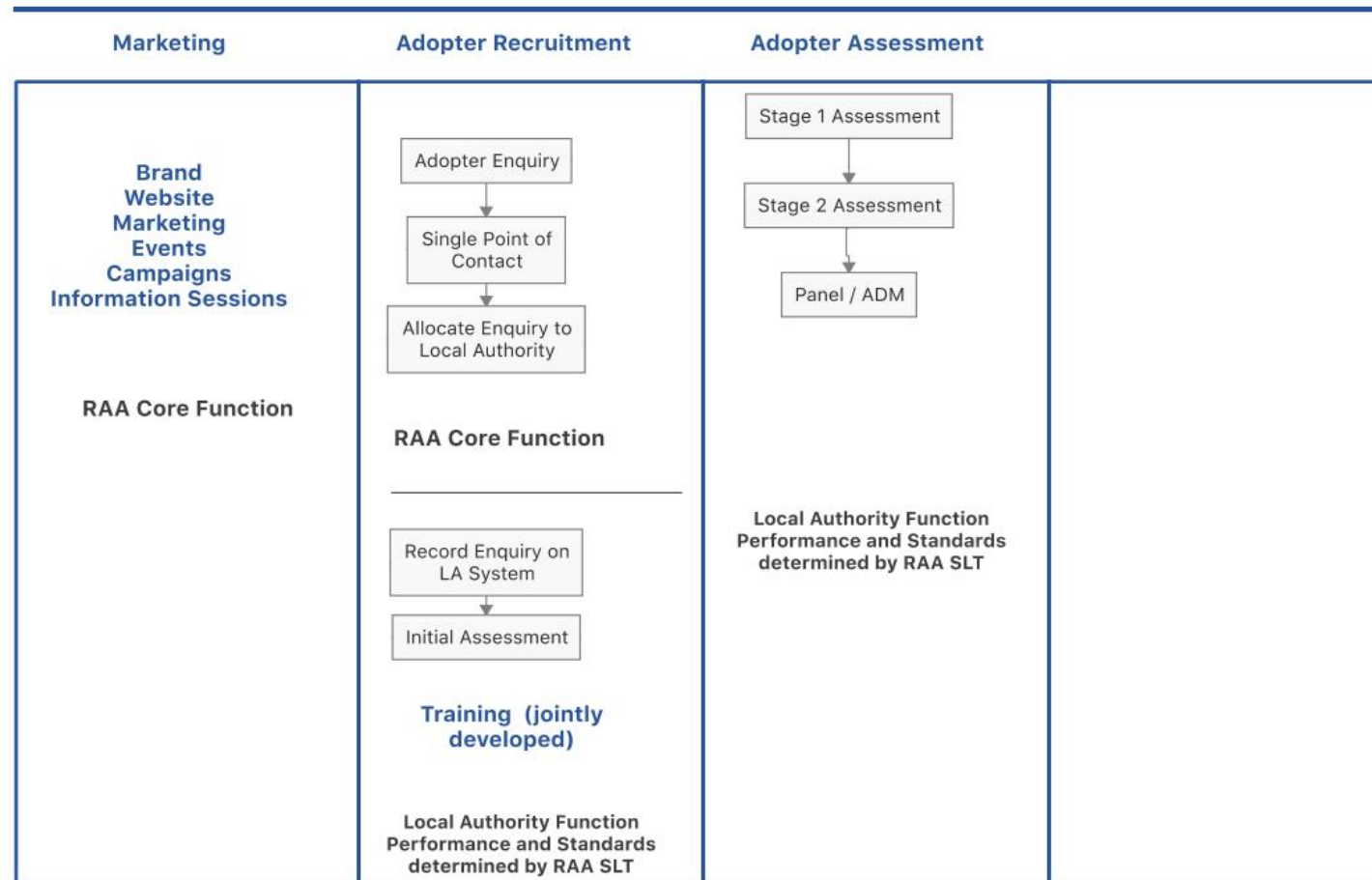
Area	Ideas
	The hub costs will be the responsibility of the RAA Head of Service, and each Local Authority will contribute 1/3 of these.
Performance	<p>RAA Head of Service is responsible for ensuring that performance targets set by the GB are met.</p> <p>Collective responsibility through RAA SLT.</p>
ADM decisions	<p>All ADM decisions will be made by the ADM in the Local Authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be placed for adoption decisions • Prospective adopter approvals • Approvals of matches • Approval of prospective adopters as foster carers for a named child under FfA arrangements.
Disputes	<p>RAA Head of Service will have full leadership responsibility for the function of the RAA. However, the implementation of the service is the joint responsibility with the RAA SLT.</p> <p>Any unresolved issues will be dealt with by Governance Board.</p>



Appendix 2 – High Level Function Map

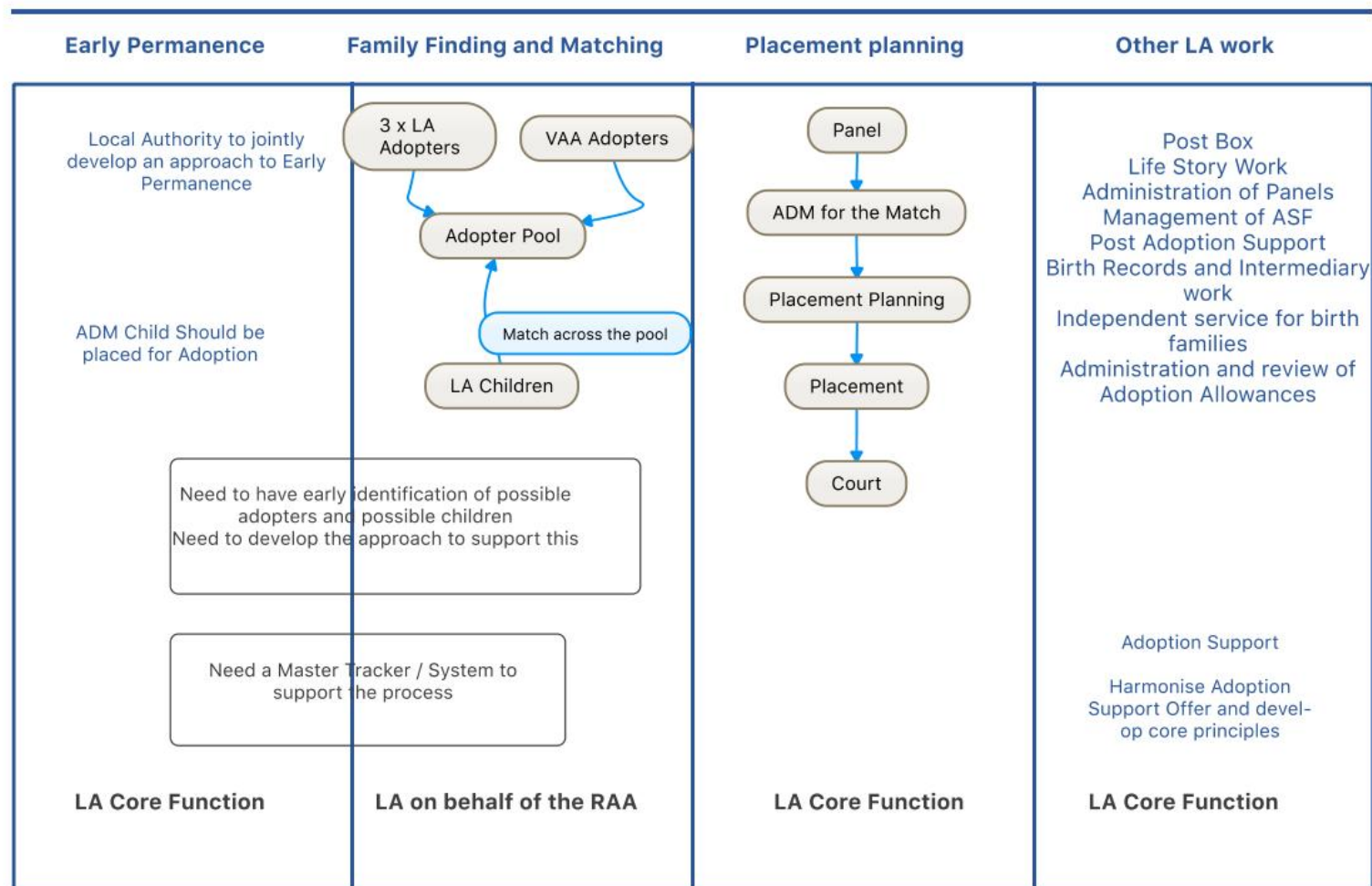
Appendix 2.1 – Adopter Journey

Adopter Journey



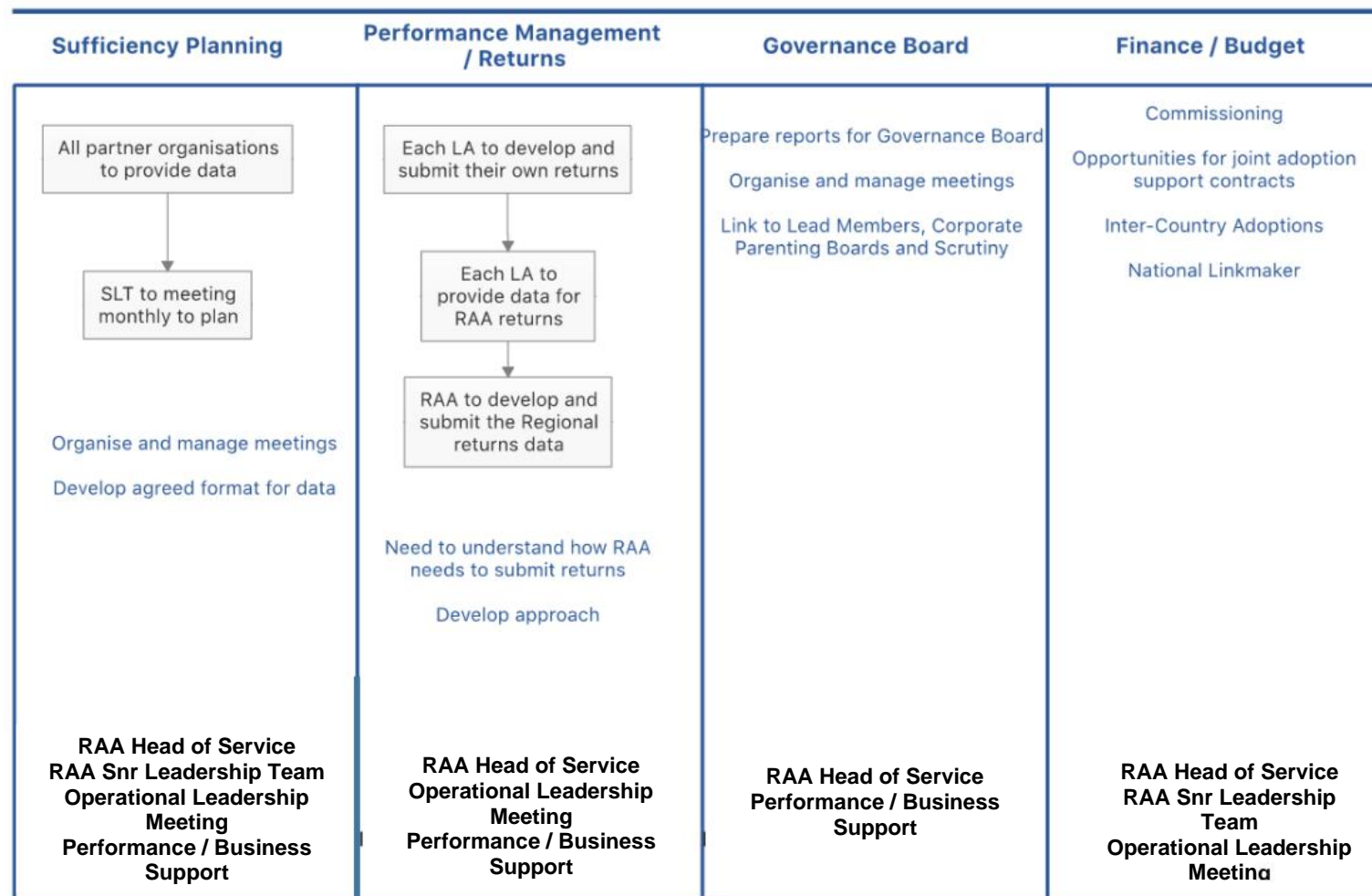
Appendix 2.2 – Child Journey

Child Journey



Appendix 2.3 – RAA Management Function

RAA Management



Equality Impact Assessment

NB: The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires Sunderland City Council to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people from different groups. Assessing impact on equality and recording this is one of the key ways in which we can show due regard.

Section One: Description and Screening

Service/Team or Section	Adoption Team
Lead Officer	Kathryn McCabe
Title	Service Manager, Together for Children
Cabinet Date (if relevant)	17 th November 2020
Start Date	20/10/20
Review Date	29/01/21

Subject of the Impact Assessment

Please give a brief description of the policy, proposal or practice as appropriate (a copy of the subject can be attached or insert a web-link):
The full business case for the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) – Adopt Coast to Coast sets out the Partnership Model agreement reached by Durham, Cumbria and Together for Children/Sunderland to work collaboratively to develop and deliver their respective adoption services under the leadership of the Regional Adoption Agency, Head of Service, whose joint appointment all have agreed.

Who are the main stakeholders? (e.g. general public, staff, members, specific clients/service users):
Current adoptive families Prospective adopters currently in process with each children's service Adoption Social Workers and wider team members National representative groups General public

Screening

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics?		
Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure
Age	N	?
Disability	N	Y
Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)	N/A	N/A
Pregnancy and maternity	N	N
Race (ethnicity)	N	Y
Religion or Belief	N	Y
Sex (gender)	N	Y
Sexual orientation	N	Y
Transgender	N	Y

Please provide **brief** details of any potential to cause adverse impact. Record full details and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

Adopt Coast to Coast will not cause adverse impact on approved adoptive families currently receiving a service or likely to need a service in the future. Nor will it cause adverse impact on the birth families or children with a plan of adoption.

How will this policy/proposal/practice promote our commitment to our legal responsibilities under the public sector equality duty to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between people from different groups?

Adopt Coast to Coast will act as a central hub for the recruitment of prospective adopters on behalf of the 3 children's services from Sunderland/TfC, Durham and Cumbria. It is intended and hoped that acting as one recruitment agency will increase the number of successful adopters as it will make approaching an adoption agency simpler and more attractive. Consequently it is more likely that

children who need a forever family will be matched and placed more quickly and achieve permanence successfully.

The hub will welcome and support applications from all prospective adopters and in doing so identify the strengths in their uniqueness and the lifelong commitment they wish to make to a child. In recruiting through a central point, the specific needs of children e.g. ethnicity, disability etc who have a plan of adoption will be given more focus within the recruitment activity undertaken on behalf of the 3 children's services. The RAA will also be able to undertake adoption campaigns to attract adopters from specific demographic groups, with protected characteristics (for example, race or sexuality) therefore improving the impact of the RAA on children and adopters with protected characteristics.

Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your findings?
Please **outline** your data sets and/or proposed evidence sources, highlight any gaps and say whether or not you propose to carry out consultation. Record greater detail and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

As part of the development work prior to the formal launch of the RAA in April 2021, the Head of Service will take the lead in developing and maintaining the active participation of stakeholder groups who are affected by Adoption which will assist in providing qualitative intelligence. The RAA business case has been developed over several years however and takes account of current best practice and the collective experience and expertise of the 3 children's services. As such there is reasonable confidence that potential gaps have been accounted for.

As part of ongoing development and regular reviews of practice, equality monitoring data will be regularly reviewed to identify if there are any potential gaps in Adopt Coast to Coast's engagement with adopters with protected characteristics.

Screening Summary

On the basis of this screening is there:	Confirm which refers (Y/N)
Evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics which will proceed to full assessment?	Y
No evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics?	N

Sign Off

Lead officer sign off: Kathryn McCabe	Date: 23/10/2020
Service equality representative sign off: Jill Colbert	Date: 25/10/2020

Section Two: Data analysis and assessment of impact

Please provide details on impacts for people with different protected characteristics relevant to your screening findings. You need to decide if there is or likely to be a differential impact for some. Highlight the positives e.g. benefits for certain groups, advancing equality, as well as the negatives e.g. barriers for and/or exclusion of particular groups. Record the evidence you have used to support or explain your conclusions. Devise and record mitigating actions where necessary.

Protected Characteristic: Age		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Record of evidence to support or explain your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
None	Adopt Coast to Coast will continue to welcome and support applications from prospective adopters regardless of age as long as they meet the statutory requirement to be over 21 years of age.	Monitor data to identify potential gaps.

Protected Characteristic: Disability		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
None	Adopt Coast to Coast will continue to welcome and support applications from prospective adopters who have a disability. Where appropriate recruitment campaigns will be undertaken to target adopters with disabilities to improve the ability of the service to match children with adopters with disabilities.	Monitor data to identify potential gaps.

	The 3 Local Authority Adoption Agencies take a strengths-based approach to applications from prospective adopters who identify themselves as having a disability. In doing so support services are considered holistically when considering a match with a child.	
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Protected Characteristic: Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
N/A		

Protected Characteristic: Pregnancy and maternity		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
N/A		

Protected Characteristic: Race (ethnicity)		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
Positive	Adopt Coast to Coast will continue to welcome and support applications from prospective adopters from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. Though the practice of adoption agencies is not to delay children so a match with an adoptive family who share their ethnicity can be achieved, the centralised recruitment activity will support a wider engagement with a wide range of communities to increase the	Monitor data to identify potential gaps.

	<p>knowledge and understanding of adoption with the hope that this increases interests in adoption from members of these communities.</p> <p>On behalf of the national pool of adopters Adopt Coast to Coast will actively encourage and assess applicants who wish to adopt a child who is not represented in the children who wait across the 3 children services partners.</p>	
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Protected Characteristic: Religion or belief		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
Positive	<p>Adopt Coast to Coast will continue to welcome and support applications from prospective adopters from a wide range of religions and belief systems.</p> <p>As part of future recruitment activity Adopt Coast to Coast will share and develop best practice around engagement with faith groups to highlight the need for adoptive parents from specific faith groups and encourage applications.</p>	Monitor data to identify potential gaps.

Protected Characteristic: Sex (gender)		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
Potentially positive	Adopt Coast to Coast will continue to welcome and support applications from prospective adopters regardless of their gender.	Monitor data to identify potential gaps.

	Through recruitment the lived experiences of single adopters are highlighted to give single prospective adopters the confidence to apply. Post adoption support needs are recognised and Adopt Coast to Coast will be looking at regional support opportunities for single adopters.	
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Protected Characteristic: Sexual orientation		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
Positive	Adopt Coast to Coast will continue to welcome and support applications from prospective adopters with different sexual orientations. Each of the Local Authority Adoption Services actively encourages applications through highlighting that sexual orientation is not a bar to adoption within recruitment campaigns, and uses adopter voice in information sessions, training and ongoing service delivery. Through the Hub model it is hoped more adopters from different sexual orientations will be attracted to apply.	Monitor data to identify potential gaps.

Protected Characteristic: Transgender		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
Potentially positive	Adopt Coast to Coast will continue to welcome and support applications from prospective adopters who identify as transgender. Each of the children services Adoption Services are regular	None required

	attendees at regional events that champion issues of LGBTQ+ and enhancing these opportunities will be a key aspect of the recruitment and marketing strategy for Adopt Coast to Coast.	
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Section Three: Conclusion and Review

Summary

Please provide a brief summary of your findings stating the main impacts, both positive and negative, across the protected characteristics.

The opportunity to work across the region to recruit, assess, approve and support prospective adopters and to match them with the children of the 3 Local Authority partners under the Regional Adoption Agency Adopt Coast to Coast will support the continued positive practice each of the partners already demonstrate.

Will this promote positive relationships between different communities? If so how?
Adopt Coast to Coast will not impact on this.

Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescales for implementation	In which plan will the action appear?
Develop and maintain the active participation of Stakeholder groups who are affected by Adoption.	RAA Head of Service	Will commence in December 2020	Reports to the Governance Board.
Monitor data to identify potential gaps	RAA Head of Service	Will commence in early 2021	Reports to the Governance Board.
Should any identity gaps be identified then Adopt Coast to Coast will increase engagement work with groups that may not have been engaged with utilising the lived experience of adopters.	RAA Head of Service	Will follow monitoring activities.	Reports to the Governance Board.

Review

Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken? (Y/N)	N
When will this assessment be reviewed? Please also insert this date at the front of the template	Pre shadow go live which is 1 st February 2021.

Sign Off

Lead officer sign off: Kathryn McCabe	Date: 23/10/2020
Service equality representative sign off: Jill Colbert	Date: 23/10/2020

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 26 NOVEMBER 2020

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020-2021

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY AND MEMBERS' SUPPORT COORDINATOR

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The report sets out for members' consideration the work programme of the Committee for the 2020/21 municipal year.

2. Background

- 2.1 The work programme is designed to set out the key issues to be addressed by the Committee during the year and provide it with a timetable of work. The Committee itself is responsible for setting its own work programme, subject to the coordinating role of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee.
- 2.2 The work programme is intended to be a working document which Committee can develop throughout the year, allowing it to maintain an overview of work planned and undertaken during the Council year.
- 2.3 In order to ensure that the Committee is able to undertake all of its business and respond to emerging issues, there will be scope for additional meetings or visits not detailed in the work programme.
- 2.4 In delivering its work programme the Committee will support the Council in achieving its corporate outcomes.

3. Current position

- 3.1 The current work programme is attached as an appendix to this report.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The work programme is intended to be a flexible mechanism for managing the work of the Committee in 2020-21.

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 That Members note the information contained in the work programme.

Contact: Gillian Robinson, Scrutiny and Members' Support Co-ordinator

REASON FOR INCLUSION	9 JULY 20	3 SEPT 20 (CANCELLED)	1 OCT 20	22 OCT 20	26 NOV 20	7 JAN 21	4 FEB 21	4 MARCH 21	APRIL 21 (DATE TO BE CONFIRMED)
Policy Framework/ Cabinet Referrals and Responses	Scrutiny Annual Report – 19/20 (JD)								Scrutiny Annual Report – 20/21(JD)
Scrutiny Business	Covid 19 – Update (Martin Birch)		Impact of Covid on Children and Young Families (Jill Colbert) Preparations of Schools in Response to Covid 19 (Simon Marshall)	Impact of Covid 19 on Young Carers and SEND (Carers Centre Parent Carers Forum)	Safeguarding Children Partnership Update (Sir Paul Ennals) Regional Adoption Agency (Jill Colbert)	Impact of Covid 19 on Child Mental Health (CCG)	Youth Offending Service ASB – Drugs and Alcohol Impact of Covid 19 on School Attendance	Operation of Assessment Services for CYP with ASC and ADHD	Apprenticeships
Performance / Service Improvement						Together for Children – Performance Monitoring Report (Jill Colbert) Children Services Complaints Ofsted Improvement Plan – Update (Jill Colbert)			Together for Children – Performance Monitoring Report
Consultation / Awareness Raising	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 20-21	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 20-21	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 20-21	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 20-21	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 20-21	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 20-21	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 20-21	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 20-21	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 20-21

26 NOVEMBER, 2020

**CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE****NOTICE OF KEY DECISIONS****REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY AND MEMBERS'
SUPPORT CO-ORDINATOR****1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide Members with an opportunity to consider the items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Holding the Executive to account is one of the main functions of Scrutiny. One of the ways that this can be achieved is by considering the forthcoming decisions of the Executive (as outlined in the Notice of Key Decisions) and deciding whether Scrutiny can add value in advance of the decision being made. This does not negate Non-Executive Members ability to call-in a decision after it has been made.
- 2.2 To this end, the most recent version of the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions is included on the agenda of this Committee. The Notice of Key Decisions is attached marked **Appendix 1**.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 In considering the Notice of Key Decisions, Members are asked to consider only those issues where the Scrutiny Committee or relevant Scrutiny Panel could make a contribution which would add value prior to the decision being taken.
- 3.2 In the event of Members having any queries that cannot be dealt with directly in the meeting, a response will be sought from the relevant Directorate.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 To consider the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions at the Scrutiny Committee meeting.

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Cabinet Agenda
-

The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Notice is given of the following proposed Key Decisions (whether proposed to be taken in public or in private) and of Executive Decisions including key decisions) intended to be considered in a private meeting:-

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision-maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision-maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
170927/212	To approve in principle the establishment of a new police led Road Safety Partnership (Northumbria Road Safety Partnership) embracing the Northumbria Force Area.	Cabinet	Y	During the period from 17 November to 31 December 2020.	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
190823/385	To approve the proposed Governance Arrangements for the Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Advanced Manufacturing (CESAM) and related matters.	Cabinet	Y	During the period from 17 November to 31 December 2020.	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision-maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision-maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
190906/402	To consider expansion proposals by an existing Council tenant in respect of a strategic property and the associated capital funding and revised lease term proposals.	Cabinet	Y	During the period from 17 November to 31 December 2020.	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
201013/525	To extend the contract for the provision of Public Health Services in Primary Care for a period of 24 months, utilising available optional extension periods of 2 x 12 month set out within the contract, which is held with various GPs and Pharmacies within Sunderland.	Director of Public Health	Y	During the period 11 to 30 November 2020. (Previously published on Notice dated 13 October 2020).	N	Not applicable.	Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision-maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision-maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
200813/493	To approve the Triggering of pre-emption rights to acquire HCA interests in Sunnyside and disposal of land to facilitate regeneration proposals.	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2020	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
200813/494	To approve the establishment of a funding mechanism for the acquisition of residential properties.	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2020	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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200827/498	To approve the strategic acquisition of property interests at High Street West, Sunderland	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2020	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
200827/499	To approve the strategic acquisition of property interests at Robinson Terrace, Hendon	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2020	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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200902/500	To approve the acquisition of Bridge House, Bridge Street	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2020	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
200903/506	To approve the Capital Programme Planning 2021/2022 to 2024/2025 and Capital Strategy	Cabinet	Y	During the period 17 November to 31 December 2020	N	Not applicable	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
200914/515	To consider grant support for voluntary sector organisations.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 17 November to 31 December 2020.	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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201008/518	To seek approval for the procurement and award of a framework agreement for the provision of Commercial and Residential Property Advisory Services for Council, Siglion and other Council related organisations.	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2020	N	Not applicable	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
201014/527	To seek approval to award a contract for the Redevelopment of Parson's Depot and Electric Vehicle Hub Installation	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2020	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
201008/519	To approve the Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/2022 to 2024/25.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 17 November to 31 December 2020	N	Not applicable	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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201015/528	To seek approval to procure a design and build contractor for the delivery of the proposed new Wear footbridge.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 17 November to 31 December 2020	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
201013/526	To seek approval to a proposal to Amend the Sunderland Council's Code of Conduct for the Issue of Penalty Notices Relating to Unauthorised School Absences.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 8 December 2020 to 28 February 2021.	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
200929/517	To approve the undertaking of public consultation on proposals to designate new local wildlife sites and proposed amendments to existing local wildlife sites.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 17 November 2020 to 31 January 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
201012/521	To approve the introduction of an E-Scooter Pilot Trial	Cabinet	Y	During the period 17 November 2020 to 31 January 2021	N	Not applicable.	Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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200914/513	To approve the updated business plan for Siglion LLP and related matters.	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2020	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
201105/514	Supply of power to the Hillthorn Business Park site to facilitate the subsequent development of this key strategic site as a primary employment area.	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2020	N		Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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201106/535	To seek approval to submit an offer the University of Sunderland to acquire the Precinct site to deliver a range of housing and supported accommodation	Cabinet	Y	8 December 2020	N		Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
201015/529	To adopt the Riverside Sunderland Supplementary Planning Document.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 8 December 2020 to 31 March 2021.	N	Not applicable.	Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
201015/530	To approve consultation on the Draft Allocations and Designations Plan.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 8 December 2020 to 31 March 2021.	N	Not applicable.	Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
201015/531	To approve consultation on the North East Washington Supplementary Planning Document Scoping Report.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 8 December 2020 to 31 March 2021.	N	Not applicable.	Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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201015/532	To approve the Sunderland City Council Low Carbon Action Plan.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 8 December 2020 to 31 March 2021.	N	Not applicable.	Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
201015/533	To adopt the Homes In Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 8 December 2020 to 31 March 2021.	N	Not applicable.	Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
201015/534	To approve consultation on the Draft Development Management Supplementary Planning Document.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 8 December 2020 to 31 March 2021.	N	Not applicable.	Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

Note; Some of the documents listed may not be available if they are subject to an exemption, prohibition or restriction on disclosure. Further documents relevant to the matters to be decided can be submitted to the decision-maker. If you wish to request details of those documents (if any) as they become available, or to submit representations about a proposal to hold a meeting in private, you should contact Governance Services at the address below.

Subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure, copies of documents submitted to the decision-maker can also be obtained from the Governance Services team PO Box 100, Civic Centre, Sunderland, or by email to committees@sunderland.gov.uk

***Other documents relevant to the matter may be submitted to the decision maker and requests for details of these documents should be submitted to Governance Services at the address given above.**

Who will decide;

Councillor Graeme Miller – Leader; Councillor Paul Stewart – Deputy Leader/Cabinet Secretary; Councillor Louise Farthing – Children, Learning and Skills; Councillor Geoffrey Walker – Healthy City; Councillor Linda Williams – Vibrant City; Councillor Rebecca Atkinson – Dynamic City.

This is the membership of Cabinet as at the date of this notice. Any changes will be specified on a supplementary notice.

Elaine Waugh,
Assistant Director of Law and Governance

9 November 2020