



#plymcabinet

**Democratic and Member Support**

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Published 09 March 2018

## Cabinet

Tuesday 13 March 2018  
4 pm  
Council House, Plymouth

**Members:**

Councillor Bowyer, Chair  
Councillor Nicholson, Vice Chair  
Councillors Mrs Beer, Mrs Bowyer, Darcy, Downie, Jordan, Michael Leaves, Ricketts and Riley.

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf.

This agenda acts as notice that Cabinet will be considering business in private if items are included in Part II of the agenda.

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**Tracey Lee**  
Chief Executive

## **Cabinet**

- 7. Plan for Plastic (Pages 1 - 6)**
- 10. Homelessness Delivery Plan (Pages 7 - 10)**
- 11. Regional Adoption Agency (Pages 11 - 40)**

**PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL**

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Britain's Ocean City – Our Plan for Plastics</b>
<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> March 2018
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Bowyer
<b>CMT Member:</b>	Anthony Payne (Director for Place)
<b>Author:</b>	Kathryn Deeney, Natural Infrastructure Manager
<b>Contact details</b>	Tel: 01752 304351 email: Kathryn.deeney@plymouth.gov.uk
<b>Ref:</b>	180312 Plan for Plastics Cab Report
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Part:</b>	I

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**Purpose of the report:**

This report highlights the Council's commitment to work with partners across the City to develop and deliver a 'Plan for Plastics'.

The purpose of the 'Plan for Plastics' will be to focus and drive a citywide effort to significantly reduce our use of plastics by 2020 and lead work to achieve our ambition of reducing plastic use to an absolute minimum by 2034.

It sets out the fundamental principles that will drive the work and this approach will enable Plymouth to be at the vanguard of the worldwide effort to eliminate plastics from the natural environment.

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**The Corporate Plan 2016 - 19:**

The development of the Plan for Plastics will support the aims of the Corporate Plan in the following ways.

**Pioneering Plymouth** – It will enable the Council to be accountable and environmental responsible in the way it delivers services.

**Growing Plymouth** – It will ensure the City is a great place to live for future generations and the natural environment is a valued part of the growth agenda.

**Caring Plymouth** – It will ensure a healthy natural environment for our residents, workers and visitors.

**Confident Plymouth** – It will place Plymouth at the forefront internationally for the work to solve this significant environmental issue.

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### **Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land:**

The Council's role in developing and delivering the Plan for Plastics will utilise existing Council resources and budgets. It is anticipated that organisations from across the City will also support the Plan's delivery utilising their available resources and partnership bids will be developed to access further external funding.

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### **Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:**

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### **Equality and Diversity**

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No, The Plan for Plastics sets out the fundamental principles that will drive work to significantly reduce plastics within the natural environment. The Action Plan that will be developed to deliver the principles will be subject to an EqIA.

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### **Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:**

Recommendation:

- It is recommended that the Plan for Plastics be finalised after consultation with and endorsement from organisation's across the City;
- A 'Ocean City Plastics Task Force' is formed to drive forward the principles set out in the Plan;
- An Action Plan be developed which sets out in detail how a significant reduction in plastic use will be achieved by 2020 and identifies work streams to achieve the aim of reducing plastic use to a minimum by 2034.

Reasons:

- To achieve a truly collaborative, citywide approach to tackling this issue;
- To ensure all opportunities to achieve the principles in the Plan are investigated and progress against the principles happens rapidly;
- To harness the current momentum around this issue to drive lasting change and enable Plymouth to be at the forefront of the solution to this world-wide problem

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### **Alternative options considered and rejected:**

**Do nothing** – This would not enable Plymouth to play its role in solving this significant environmental issue.

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### **Published work / information:**

**Background papers:**

Title	Part I	Part II	Exemption Paragraph Number							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Britain's Ocean City – Our Plan for Plastics (Draft)	Yes									

**Sign off:**

Fin	<b>p1171 8.227</b>	Leg	3006 8/ag/ 8.3.1 8	Mon Off		HR		Assets		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the contents of the report? Yes													

## **1.0 Introduction**

In recent months, there has been an increased international awareness of the volume of plastics entering the natural environment and the issues this is causing. This has resulted in to a greater focus on solutions to reduce our reliance on plastic use and a momentum to remove plastics from the natural world. As Britain's Ocean City with an enviable natural environment and world-renowned marine research and knowledge base we are perfectly placed to lead work to eliminate plastics from our environment.

## **2.0 The Plan**

To enable Plymouth to be at the vanguard of work to eliminate plastic from the natural environment a 'Plan for Plastics' has been produced in draft that sets out four fundamental principles for driving action, Avoid, Recycle, Innovate and Reclaim. These fundamental principles have been identified to help focus work to significantly reduce our use of plastics by 2020 and lead work to achieve our ambition of reducing plastic use to an absolute minimum by 2034.

The Plan will help focus and mobilise action across Plymouth and bring organisations together to find ways to reduce plastic use in the short term and identify innovative approaches to moving towards becoming a plastic free City

## **3.0 Next Steps**

The Plan will be shared with our partners across the City to gain support and endorsement for the principles identified. Organisations will also be asked to identify their role in supporting the Plan's delivery.

To assist with driving delivery and rapid change the 'Ocean City Plastics Task Force' will be established with representatives from public bodies, community groups, industry and research. One of the first key outcomes of the task force will be the development of a fully costed Action Plan that sets out how each of the principles in the Plan will be taken forward. This will be produced by summer 2018.

**INNOVATE** – This principle will drive forward a longer-term ambition to lead the development and production of plastic free alternatives and more innovative approaches to reducing the plastic waste already found within the natural environment.

- Support academic and industry led research and development into plastic alternatives using the significant knowledge base within the City.
- Investigate technical options for storing plastics for future re-use when the necessary technology and processing methods have been developed.
- Research and prototype new methods for removing plastics from the marine environment, including micro plastics, by capitalising on the world-renowned marine knowledge base in the City.

**RECLAIM** – This principle will drive forward work to ensure that everyone can learn from, enjoy visiting and connect with the natural environment that we are helping to protect through this Plan.

- Provide a programme for children and young people to access the marine environment through a range of water sports and events, partly funded through the contribution scheme from 'Britain's Ocean City' branded plastic alternatives.
- Deliver a coordinated programme of beach cleans that also include wildlife surveys and fun activities.
- Support an education programme that sits alongside the Plan for Plastics that engages young people of all ages and links strongly with the City STEM agenda.

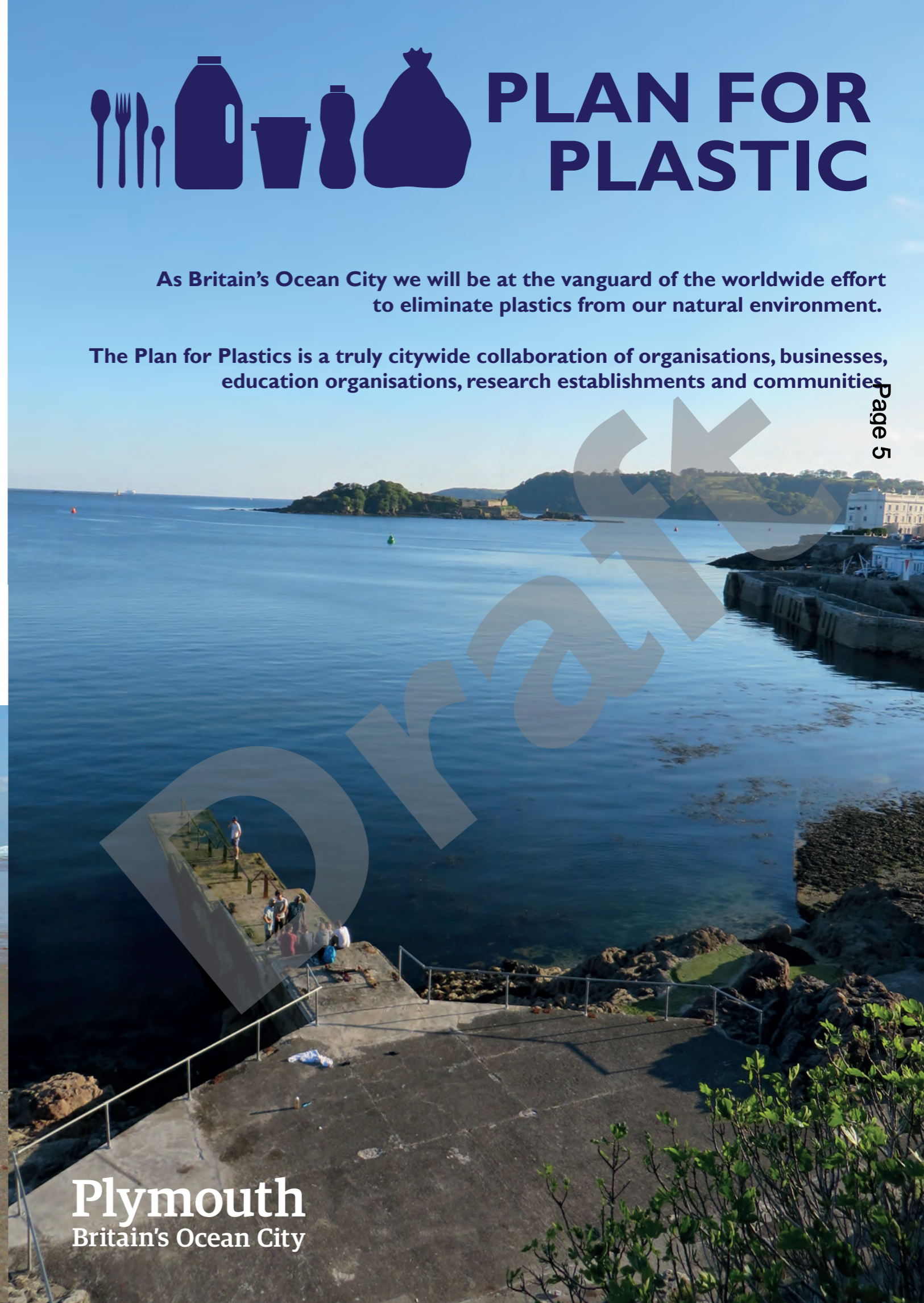
A detailed and fully costed Action Plan that will set out how each of the principles will be taken forward will support this Plan for Plastics. This will be produced by the Oceans City Plastics Taskforce for summer 2018. For more information or if you can contribute to the delivery of the Plan for Plastics please contact [plastics@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:plastics@plymouth.gov.uk)



# PLAN FOR PLASTIC

**As Britain's Ocean City we will be at the vanguard of the worldwide effort to eliminate plastics from our natural environment.**

**The Plan for Plastics is a truly citywide collaboration of organisations, businesses, education organisations, research establishments and communities**



**Plymouth**  
Britain's Ocean City

Over the last century our use of, and reliance on, plastic has grown to a point where we seldom consider its place in our everyday lives. Recently, there has been increased international awareness of the issues resulting from plastic pollution in the marine environment.

As an Ocean City with an enviable natural environment and world-renowned marine research and knowledge base we are perfectly placed to lead in eliminating plastics from our environment.

Plastic is a versatile synthetic material which comes in a wide range of forms and because of this versatility it has been used in many ways in almost every aspect of modern life. In some cases, such as food hygiene, plastics are vital products for which there are currently no viable alternatives. However the elements that make plastic so durable also make them resistant to natural processes of degradation. The sheer scale of plastic use and consumption by humans is now recognised as one of the most serious environmental challenges facing the Earth. We can however rapidly reduce our consumption of unnecessary plastic, such as single use plastic bottles, and together we can investigate new products and technologies to reduce our need for plastics to the absolute minimum and move towards its elimination. As an Ocean City this is our collective goal and Plymouth is committed to being a global leader in solving this problem.

**The Plan for Plastics will focus and drive a citywide effort to significantly reduce our use of plastics by 2020 and lead work to achieve our ambition of reducing plastic use to an absolute minimum by 2034.** The Plan for Plastics will also include an element of work to enable everyone, but particularly, children and young people to access and enjoy the natural environment so that they can reclaim their oceans and greenspaces for their generation and for their children.

The delivery of the Plan for Plastics will be driven, monitored and supported by an **Ocean City Plastics Task Force**. The Task Force will have representatives from public bodies, environmental sector voluntary sector, academia, industry and businesses.

The Plan is framed around four fundamental principles:

**AVOID**

**RECYCLE**

**INNOVATE**

**RECLAIM**

These fundamental principles will enable organisations, businesses, community groups and schools to develop their own detailed action plans to achieving our collective citywide ambition. The principles will drive short-term improvements and longer term goals.

**AVOID – This principle will drive an immediate reduction in plastic consumption in the City.**

- Drive forward a significant reduction of single use plastics by 2020.
- Develop ‘Britain’s Ocean City’ branded alternatives to single use plastics, such as coffee cups. These will not only highlight the aims of the Plan, but enable the ring-fencing of contributions from each item sold which will help fund the work to deliver against the ‘Reclaim’ and ‘Innovate’ principles.
- Ensure that plastic alternatives are available to everyone in a manner that is not cost prohibitive to anyone contributing to the goals of the Plan.
- Lead a wholesale change in the use of plastics within organisations and businesses across the City, initially focussing on the quick wins that can rapidly reduce plastic use.
- Utilise the buying power of a coordinated citywide approach to deliver a step change in plastic consumption.
- Encourage every individual in the City to do their bit in supporting the Plan for Plastics.
- Encourage every organisation and business in the city to sign the “Plastic Free Plymouth Pledge” at a conference to be held on World Ocean Day (8th June 2018).

**RECYCLE – This principle will drive a change in the short term, which will prevent plastics polluting the natural environment and enable plastic products to be reused or recycled while alternatives to plastics are investigated and developed.**

- Increase recycling rates, ensuring all plastics that can be recycled actually are.
- Encourage the re-use of plastics if there isn’t a short term alternative. At the same time work with the partners across the City and industry to identify the types of plastic products that do not currently have an identified recycling stream and develop recycling options, until new plastic alternatives can be developed.
- Review current recycling options for plastic and deliver new ways to make it easier for people to contribute to the Plan for Plastics goals.
- Deliver a plastic off-setting scheme for organisations across the City to compensate for the plastic use that is unavoidable in the short term. For example, for every tonne of plastic thrown away, there could be a commitment that two tonnes of plastic will be removed from the natural environment through sponsored beach cleans and litter picks.
- Deliver commercially-viable methods for recycling marine plastics.





**PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL**

<b>Subject:</b>	Plan for Preventing Homelessness
<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> March 2018
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Ricketts, Cabinet Member for Transport & Housing Delivery.
<b>CMT Member:</b>	Carole Burgoyne, Strategic Director for People
<b>Author:</b>	Matt Garrett, Head of Community Connections
<b>Contact details</b>	Tel: 01752 306733 email: matt.garrett@plymouth.gov.uk
<b>Ref:</b>	
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Part:</b>	I

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**Purpose of the report:**

This report seeks the support of cabinet to agree setting of a new Plan for Preventing Homelessness.

The purpose of the Plan for Preventing Homelessness is to implement and deliver against the Plymouth Plan. The Plymouth Plan sets the strategic direction for Plymouth between now and 2035 and reaffirms our commitment to tackle homelessness in the city. This plan sets out to build on previous actions initiated in our last Homelessness Strategies and fulfils Plymouth City Council's statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002, and detailed in the Code of Guidance to develop a strategic response to identified local causes of homelessness.

**The Corporate Plan 2016 - 19:**

Caring Plymouth – We will work with our residents to have happy healthy and connected communities where people lead safe and fulfilled lives. – In terms of themes the plan looks to focus on early intervention and prevention, keeping people protected and reducing inequalities

**Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:  
Including finance, human, IT and land:**

This plan will support minimising spend against the approved Bed & Breakfast budget and support the Council in meeting its agreed overall budget.

**Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:****Equality and Diversity**

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? Yes

**Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:**

It is recommended that Cabinet agree this plan

**Alternative options considered and rejected:**

- Do nothing – this was rejected as the negative impact of homelessness on households in Plymouth is detrimental
- Carry on as now – this was rejected. Homelessness is a current City issue and it is felt that a new plan will reinvigorate partners work in the City

**Published work / information:**

None

**Background papers:**

Title	Part I	Part II	Exemption Paragraph Number							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

**Sign off:**

Fin	djn17 18.22 5	Leg	NJ3 007 5	Mon Off		HR		Assets		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member; Matt Garrett													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the contents of the report? Yes													

# PLAN FOR PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS 2018-2020



## OUR VISION STATEMENT FOR HOMELESSNESS

Plymouth Plan sets our strategic direction between now and 2034 and this delivery plan reaffirms the City's commitment to tackle homelessness and all its causes

## OBJECTIVES

### PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

### IMPROVE HOUSING STANDARDS

### SUPPORT ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE HOUSING

## PRIORITIES

- Develop pathways and partnerships to support early intervention
- Work with Rough Sleeper Strategy Group to identify emerging trends and develop strategies to reduce rough sleeping
- Ensure the City's advice and information offer meets the needs of people who are facing or at risk of Homelessness
- Develop Collaborative Problem Solving to support and sustain communities
- Integrate with Health and Wellbeing Hubs to support early intervention and prevention
- Re-commissioning of Complex Lives system

- Develop HMO licensing in line with new legislation
- Work with Private Rented Strategy Group to identify emerging trends and develop strategies to improve the quality of private rented housing
- Improve the quality and management of properties in the private rented sector
- Support tenants to sustain private sector tenancies
- Work with partners to ensure robust enforcement of bad landlords in the private rented sector

- Work with partners to deliver specialist housing
- Develop pathways and partnerships to deliver and support independent living
- Deliver an increased range of accommodation solutions to those in most housing need
- To support people to access decent, safe and affordable homes that are suited to their needs
- Deliver a broad range of accommodation solutions to avoid the use of emergency accommodation

## OUTCOMES

- No one needs to sleep rough
- Increased number of people prevented from becoming homeless
- Advice and information is accessible for all
- Effective Collaborative problem solving framework in place
- Developed community offer embedded in health and wellbeing hubs

- Increased number of trained and accredited landlords and agents
- Increased number of properties improved
- Advice and information on landlords and tenants rights and responsibilities is accessible for all
- Robust and effective enforcement policy in place

- Fewer people in emergency accommodation
- Increased specialist housing provision in the City
- Improved adaptations delivery model
- Increased number of homeless households accessing social housing through DHC register

**The purpose of this plan is to ensure the city has an appropriate response to some of the most vulnerable people in Plymouth. We will do this by improving services through early intervention and prevention, where possible by preventing people becoming homeless in the first place, and by providing suitable solutions out of homelessness.**

- Homelessness is a reality faced by many more people than we would want. This can happen for a variety of reasons and often with circumstances out of the control of those involved. We recognise that in a time of crisis people are often more vulnerable and there is a need to ensure the right support is available at the right time to prevent homelessness wherever possible.
- Unfortunately prevention of homelessness is not always possible and this is evidenced by the increase in the number of people sleeping rough over the last few years. The number of Rough Sleepers (the most visible form of homelessness) recorded in Plymouth has risen from 20 in 2016 to 26 in 2017.
- Statutory Homelessness applications are also rising. Between 15/16 and 16/17 they increased by 106 applications. Alongside this the number of households in Plymouth accepted for the main housing duty was 238 in 2015/16 and this rose to 322 in 16/17.
- These increasing numbers are not acceptable and specific actions to rise to the challenge to reduce them are identified within the Plan for Preventing Homelessness, alongside existing operational work that is already making good progress.
- This is an integrated approach recognising the complex issues Plymouth citizens face around homelessness and housing need, securing new solutions to the issues and making more homes available for our most vulnerable residents.
- Plymouth has faced some difficult financial choices over the last few years and has decided to meet these challenges head on by transforming our services.
- Across the UK, people with multiple needs and exclusions are living chaotic lives and facing premature death because we fail to understand and coordinate the support they need. Yet evidence shows that by working together local services can transform lives. This is what we intend to do.
- The statistics related to health and wellbeing and homelessness speak for themselves and it is clear a different response is required to change this.
- The average age of death for homeless men is 48 years compared with 74 years for the general population. For homeless women it is 43 years compared to 80 for the general population.
- People who are homeless are more likely to have a mental health condition. 72 in every 100 who are homeless compared to 30 in every 100 for the general population.
- Making Every Adult Matter, (MEAM) is an approach which provides a responsive, person centred framework for developing a coordinated approach working with partners. The services are tasked with creating a system that deals with the whole person, preventing people from missing support and reducing repeat referrals. Partners will work together to change the system in order to make the framework a success.
- Partners will share ideas in order to identify how we can work better together for people with complex lives, regardless of current individual contracts and funding arrangements. We know that we need to transform the whole system. In 2018, homelessness services will be commissioned as part of the complex needs procurement which also includes substance misuse, offenders and some mental health provision.
- Using a new model the focus will be on creating a system where all services work together as one, this will in turn change the culture, funding structures, commissioning and policy which support a new way of working.



**PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL**

<b>Subject:</b>	Regional Adoption Agency
<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> March 2018
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Beer
<b>CMT Member:</b>	Carole Burgoyne (Strategic Director)
<b>Author:</b>	Caroline Kirsopp, Head of Service Children Young People and Families
<b>Contact details</b>	Tel: 01752 306860 email: caroline.kirsopp@plymouth.gov.uk
<b>Ref:</b>	
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Part:</b>	I

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**Purpose of the report:**

The purpose of this business case is to outline the Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council response to the Governments requirement for adoption agencies to come together and form Regional Adoption Agencies by forming the Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency. Throughout this process Trade Unions and Staff have been up-dated and actively engaged with through wide and extensive communication; for example there is a regular updating newsletter and recently a staff event for all 4 regions where staff where able to begin networking.

The business case describes-

- the benefits of 4 Authorities coming together as a regional service;
- options considered for the RAA model and the preferred outcome;
- what this means for Devon as the host authority and the functions delegated to Devon;
- the staffing transferred to enable delivery of services, and the related budget;
- the apportionment of the budget across the 4 authorities & financial risk management;
- the core content of the legal Inter Authority Agreement required.

Approval of the business case by the Authoritys' Cabinets will enable transition from 4 separate adoption services to a single local authority hosted [Devon] Regional Adoption Agency by October 2018.

The business case describes the background and context of the National Regional Adoption Agency programme, outlining the models defined by the Department for Education and considered by the partner Local Authorities and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the subsequent selection of a Devon hosted model. The regional context is then set out describing the current Ofsted performance, scale of staffing and 2018/19 adoption budgets of the partner local authorities. The required budget for operation of the RAA is then outlined and a description of the variance to the Local Authority budgets and the management of the required set up costs.

The goals of the hosted RAA are outlined and then operationalised with clear targets described that are both transparent and measurable. There follows a description of constituent service elements delivered by the RAA and the treatment of existing contracts.

The supporting governance arrangements to maintain accountability and scrutiny are laid out together with the planned organisation of the RAA and staff employment arrangements.

The ability of RAA staff to operate as a single service across the region drives the need for technology solutions as well as a specific information governance agreement. There is a description of key principles adopted in defining appropriate office bases i.e. that retain the key interfaces with Child Care social workers, and that are accessible to the public for required meetings with potential adopters to support them through the Adoption journey.

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**The Corporate Plan 2016-2019:**

Corporate Objectives	How the RAA aligns with the Corporate Plan
Pioneering Plymouth – we will be innovative by design, and deliver services that are more accountable, flexible and efficient.	The RAA’s vision is to deliver consistently good and innovative adoption practice that ensures improved life chances for children by drawing on the best practice delivered consistently across the region.
Caring Plymouth – we will work with our residents to have happy, healthy and connected communities where people lead safe and fulfilled lives.	Children are at the centre of this proposal. The emphasis is on improving their life chances through improved adopter recruitment, improved timeliness of placing children for adoption, more children achieving permanence through adoption and improved adoption support for adopters.

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**Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:  
Including finance, human, IT and land**

The financial impact of the recommendations are set out in the Part II report.

The RAA will be pooling resources, knowledge and expertise of the four local authorities in the partnership. This means at the least the best practice from across the region can be adopted and in practice further improvements developed. The RAA will also provide consistency to the adopter experience.

The outcomes required of the RAA are:

- Improved life chances for children
- Developing services with Adopters to achieve better outcomes for Children
- Reduced delays for children and adopters throughout the Adoption journey
- Taking what we do best and making it consistent across the region;
- Taking opportunities for innovative practice across the spectrum
- A cost-effective service for all Local Authorities
- Improved practice and support, regardless of the permanence option
- Improved support for Adopters, Birth Parents and their families
- Place children with families more effectively and with minimal disruption
- The RAA will work together with Voluntary Adoption Agencies, Adopters and Parents to improve practice

The achievement of these outcomes for children and adults affected by adoption will see benefits for each Local Authority. There will be benefits reflected in LAC performance and budgets and there will be a clear link to the Early Permanence agenda and strategies. The financial performance of the RAA and delivery of efficiencies will be overseen by the Governance Board.

**Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:**

The development of the RAA will enable Plymouth adopted children to have access to the best possible adoption practice, shared across Devon, supporting them to maximize their life chances.

**Equality and Diversity**

Devon County Council have drafted an Equality Impact Assessment in their capacity as prospective host of the Regional Adoption Agency.

**Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:**

Recommend that Cabinet –

1. approve business case;
2. agree that DCC shall host the regional adoption agency for implementation 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018.

**Alternative options considered and rejected:**

**Published work / information:**

Not applicable.

**Background papers:**

Title	Part I	Part II	Exemption Paragraph Number							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Draft Equality Impact Assessment	x									
The financial impact paper					x					

**Sign off:**

Fin	djn1718.228	Leg	30071/ag/ 8.3.18	Mon Off		HR	AM 080318
Originating SMT Member Alison Botham, Director for Children Services							
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the contents of the report? Yes							

## I.0 INTRODUCTION

### I.1 National context

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. [The Adoption and Children Act 2002 makes provision for authorities and voluntary adoption agencies to join together to form Regional Adoption Agencies \(RAA\).](#)

Section 15 of the [Education and Adoption Act 2016](#) once fully in force will give the Secretary of State a new power to direct one or more named local authorities to make arrangements for any or all of their adoption functions to be carried out on their behalf by one of the local authorities named, or by another agency.

The Government's view is that structural change will improve the process for children and adopters. Key elements will be:

- service delivery has at its heart innovation and practice excellence;
- highly skilled professionals who make high quality, evidence based decisions and do not tolerate delay for children in their care; matches are made without unnecessary delay;
- Regional Adoption Agencies provide a large pool of adopters for every child in need of a new family;
- where a match is not immediately available within the Regional Adoption Agency, the search is extended nationally without delay;
- every adoptive family has access to an on-going package of appropriate support with a right to a high quality, specialist assessment of need. This support is delivered from day one and continues throughout childhood whenever it is required;
- the voice of adopters and their children is at the heart of national and local policy decision making and delivery of services.

The DfE expects the Regional Adoption Agency programme to deliver consistently good and innovative adoption practice that ensures improved life chances for children.

The Adoption Leadership Board, who collate and analyse adoption statistics on behalf of the national adoption agencies, reported the following trends<sup>1</sup>.

- \* **Adoption numbers are falling.** Data suggest that the number of adoptions fell slightly between quarter 4 2015-16 and quarter 1 2016-17, from 1,120 to 1,060. 4,690 adoptions in 2015-16 is a decrease of 670 from 5,360 in 2014-15
- \* Data suggests that the **number of new decisions has continued to fall** from 1,850 in quarter 2 2013-14 to 1,080 in quarter 1 2016-17, a decrease of 42%
- \* Quarterly data also suggest **new placement orders granted have continued to fall** from 1,630 in quarter 2 2013-14 to 890 in quarter 1 2016-17, a decrease of 45%
- \* Projected uplifts suggest that new decisions and placement orders may have plateaued between quarter 4 2015-16 and quarter 1 2016-17
- \* The number of **adopter registrations decreased** by 14% between quarter 4 2015-16 and quarter 1 2016-17, from 840 to 730. The number of adopter approvals increased by 1% from 700 to 710.

Alongside the Regional Adoption Agency agenda, the national challenges facing the sector outlined through analysis by the National Adoption Leadership board are:

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<sup>1</sup> ALB Headline Measures and Business Intelligence Ref: DFE-00038-2017 Accessed 16/03/2017 at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/584616/ALB\\_Business\\_Intelligence\\_Quarter\\_1\\_2016\\_to\\_2017.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/584616/ALB_Business_Intelligence_Quarter_1_2016_to_2017.pdf)



- Since September 2013, the number of decisions for adoption has almost halved because of the impact of recent court cases.
- The number of Placement Orders granted has also declined nationally. The Government argues this “highlights weaknesses in the way permanence decisions are being made, and raises questions about whether social workers are being supported to develop the skills and knowledge they need to make and defend robust professional judgments”.
- Workforce development and close work between the Regional Adoption Agencies, the children’s social care teams, and Local Family Justice Boards will be key to addressing this issue, and to the success of Regional Adoption Agencies.

## 1.2 Regional Context

The [Adopt South West](#) co-operative regional adoption partnership was launched in April 2015. The adoption agencies in the Adopt South West partnership were Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council, Torbay Council, Somerset County Council, Barnardo’s and Families for Children. The scope of the Adopt South West partnership has been the co-operation and co-delivery in marketing and recruitment of adopters and the running of information days and training events for adopters to develop the support available for adopters and improve the matching of children. All other adoption services remained within the discrete organisations.

## 2.0 CURRENT PERFORMANCE

It is not possible to compare the performance of the group of 4 Local Authorities to national performance more recently than 2015/16 due to the way that the National Adoption Leadership Board reports, current data is only available for 2015/16.

Across the Adopt South West region, between 2012 and 2017, there has been a 43% increase in the number of looked after children to 2,692 and a 31% increase in the number of adoptions; however, in line with national trends the number of adoptions over the past 3 years are declining, this is evidenced in Table 1 below that depicts the number of Children approved for placement and the number of Adopters approved over the past 4 years.

**Table 1: Children approved for placement and number of adopters**

Data for the region	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Children needing placements	165	139	150	140
Adopters approved	126	127	104	74

It is evident that there is more work to be done in the level of adoptions of Children needing placement, as performance has dropped consistently across the area since 2015. This is an example where best practice will be sought out, looked at for improvement and then become standard practice across the area.

Over the past 3 years the number of Looked after Children has continued to increase whilst the number of Looked after Children adopted has reduced by 4.13% returning to levels seen in 2013/14 from a peak in 2014/15. This is in line with government expectations that no more than 10% of Looked After Children be adopted, with the majority supported to remain in the birth family environment.

**Table 2: Looked After Children adopted**

	2015	2016	2017	% LAC adopted 3yr Variance
<b>Plymouth</b>	10.13 %	5.98%	7.30%	-2.83%
<b>Devon</b>	8.57%	3.72%	4.85%	-3.72%
<b>Somerset</b>	11.22 %	6.99%	4.67%	-6.55%
<b>Torbay</b>	6.56%	7.50%	3.58%	-2.98%
<b>Total</b>	9.26%	5.59%	5.13%	-4.13%

Statistically the region overall is performing better than 3 years ago and this trend will look to be continued.

Similar trends in statistical performance are being seen across the partners in the Adopt South West Region, however one of the key issues for the development of a RAA is the current differential in adoption performance across the Local Authorities with varying grades in Ofsted Inspection; Torbay, Plymouth and Somerset 'Require Improvement' and Devon is 'Good'. The Voluntary Adoption Agencies in the region perform well and will remain an important partner of the RAA.

It is clear there is a need to secure best practice and outcomes and share this across the region, whilst guarding against any deterioration in performance for individual agencies. This is a key outcome for the RAA.

### 3.0 OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The work began early in 2016 with an appraisal of the four models for a Regional Adoption Agency defined by Government, using the prescribed scoring tools. This was completed by the Director/ Heads of Service in Plymouth, Torbay, Somerset and Devon together with Families for Children and Barnardo's the leading Voluntary Adoption Agencies in the area and informed by engagement with adoption services staff, adopters and Adoption Panel Chairs.

The option preferred was a Single Local Authority Hosted Regional Adoption Agency with Devon identified as the most appropriate host. The submission to DfE for grant funding of the development of this solution by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 was accepted and £607,000 grant funding achieved for 2016/17 and 2017/18. The release of the allocation for 2017/18 was subject to acceptable progress being made by March 2017, this checkpoint was successfully achieved.

The Devon hosted model sees certain Adoption services transfer from Torbay Council, Plymouth City Council and Somerset County Council to Devon as the host of the Regional Adoption Agency. The "Adopt South West" brand has been retained as it is known and understood by adopters and the public; this was previously used for partnership arrangements between the local authorities and Voluntary Adoption Agencies for the purpose of marketing for, and recruitment of, Adopters that expired in March 2017.

Adopt South West is one of 19 such groups funded to achieve a Regional Adoption Agency, and one of the early decisions required was which delivery model to select. The DfE prescribed four possible options for a delivery model for a Regional Adoption Agency and provided a national scoring system

as a tool to aid discussions, the purpose of which was to examine the desirability, feasibility and viability of each option.

### **DfE Prescribed Options:**

- 1. A Local Authority single host, on behalf of several Local Authorities e.g. Aspire, Dorset hosts services for three Local Authorities.
- 2. Joint Venture between Local Authorities; a new public sector owned Local Authority Trading Co. e.g. Achieving for Children, Kingston and Richmond's Children's Services
- 3. A new Voluntary Adoption Agency; possibly a Joint Venture with flexibility for public & third sector ownership, e.g. Entrust Schools Service in Staffordshire.
- 4. Existing Voluntary Adoption Agency; Local Authorities involved commission an existing Voluntary Adoption Agency to deliver the RAA, e.g. Coram.

### **4.0 RECOMMENDED OPTION**

The six partners in the Adopt South West adoption agency partnership scored the benefits of each option against an agreed set of assessment criteria. This was completed by the Regional Adoption Agency project governance group, consisting of the Local Authorities Director/ Heads of Service, Executives of Families for Children and Barnardo's Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Chaired by the Director of Children's Services from Somerset.

Following consideration of each possible model, the preference was for Option 1: A Local Authority single host on behalf of several Local Authorities.

There has been consideration of this arrangement as an interim step to considering Option 2 further, however this has been further reflected upon drawing on others experience and DfE learning from the broader Nation RAA Programme in the autumn of 2017 and is not to be progressed.

The clear benefit of the Local Authority Hosted model identified would be to achieve the integration of the four Local Authority adoption services into one service, providing a best practice model that maintains and develops the current relationship with Voluntary agencies established in the delivery of the Adopt South West partnership.

Further to this, it was proposed that Devon County Council host the Regional Adoption Agency as Devon;

- Operates an adoption service rated Good;
- Has successfully innovated in many areas (e.g. foster to adopt, young people's engagement);
- Has the capacity to deliver given the size of the agency and the Local Authority;
- Has the experience of developing other services that Devon hosts for the region;
- Is centrally placed geographically.

The development of the RAA will not absolve each Local Authority of its statutory responsibilities but will allow for certain functions to be delegated to Devon as the host authority. Devon will then become responsible for the performance of those functions, on behalf of the partner Local Authorities, subject to the governance arrangements set out later in this document.

**By becoming the 'host' Devon allows for all relevant functions and resources of each Local Authority to be transferred to it as host in 2018 and** is responsible for ensuring effective arrangement for, and the transfer of, services to the RAA within the expected timescales as set out to the Department for Education.

## 5.0 DELEGATED FUNCTIONS

In summary after the required agreements are in place, the host (Devon) will become responsible for:

- Providing leadership for all adoption services across the RAA;
- Recruitment, assessment and training of adopters;
- Post Adoption support for all children within the designated boundaries;
- Oversight of Adoption Support Fund applications;
- Family finding and matching child with adopter;
- Agency Decision Maker for the adopters;
- Adoption support for any child that moves out the RAA area, for a period of 3 years;
- Quality assurance framework for adoption;
- Accountability for the adoption service aspect of a Local Authority Ofsted inspection framework.

The details of the functions being delegated to Devon by the other three authorities will be recorded in the Inter Authority Agreement.

## 6.0 VISION FOR THE DEVON HOSTED REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

The Government's view is that structural change will improve the process for children and adopters. The Department for Education expects the Regional Adoption Agency programme to deliver consistently good and more innovative adoption practice that ensures improved life chances for children, through:

- Improved adopter recruitment
- Improved timeliness of placing children
- More children achieving permanence through adoption
- Improved adoption support

The stated vision agreed by the partner authorities for the RAA to achieve improved outcomes for children and families is to-

- Create a system where children are matched with the most suitable adopter as quickly as possible.
- Achieve sufficient scale of adopter recruitment to provide a pool of adopters, well prepared and well matched to the needs of children waiting.
- Offer sufficient, high quality adoption support services; effective short-term interventions, sign posting and enabling access to appropriate support

This will be achieved with a value for money service, that

- encourages innovation in practice;
- actively listens to and learns from children, adopters and staff to develop and improve the services provided;
- draws on the best practice across the region and make this the standard; and
- , delivers consistently across the region.

The RAA will create a system where recruitment takes place at a sufficient scale to provide a pool of 'adoption ready' adopters that are well matched to the needs of children waiting; that is large enough so that children are matched with the most suitable adopter as quickly as possible and that offers an adoption support service that is of a high quality.

## 7.0 OUTCOMES

The key outcomes set for the RAA reflect DfE intentions for the Regional Adoption Agencies programme, national performance standards as well by what a successful adoption service looks like as told by partners, children and adopters:

- Improved life chances for children;
- Developing services with Adopters to achieve better outcomes for Children;
- Reduced delays for children and adopters throughout the Adoption journey;
- Taking what we do best and making it consistent across the region;
- Taking opportunities for innovative practice across the spectrum;
- A cost-effective service for all Local Authorities;
- Improved practice and support, regardless of the permanence option;
- Improved support for Adopters, Birth Parents and their families;
- Place children with families more effectively and with minimal disruption;
- The RAA will work together with Voluntary Adoption Agencies, Adopters and Parents to improve practice.

The achievement of these outcomes for children and adults affected by adoption will see benefits for each Local Authority. There will be benefits reflected in LAC performance and budgets and there will be a clear link to the Early Permanence agenda and strategies.

Ofsted will not inspect the RAA as an entity but as the provider of services to the Local Authority being inspected.

### Success measures

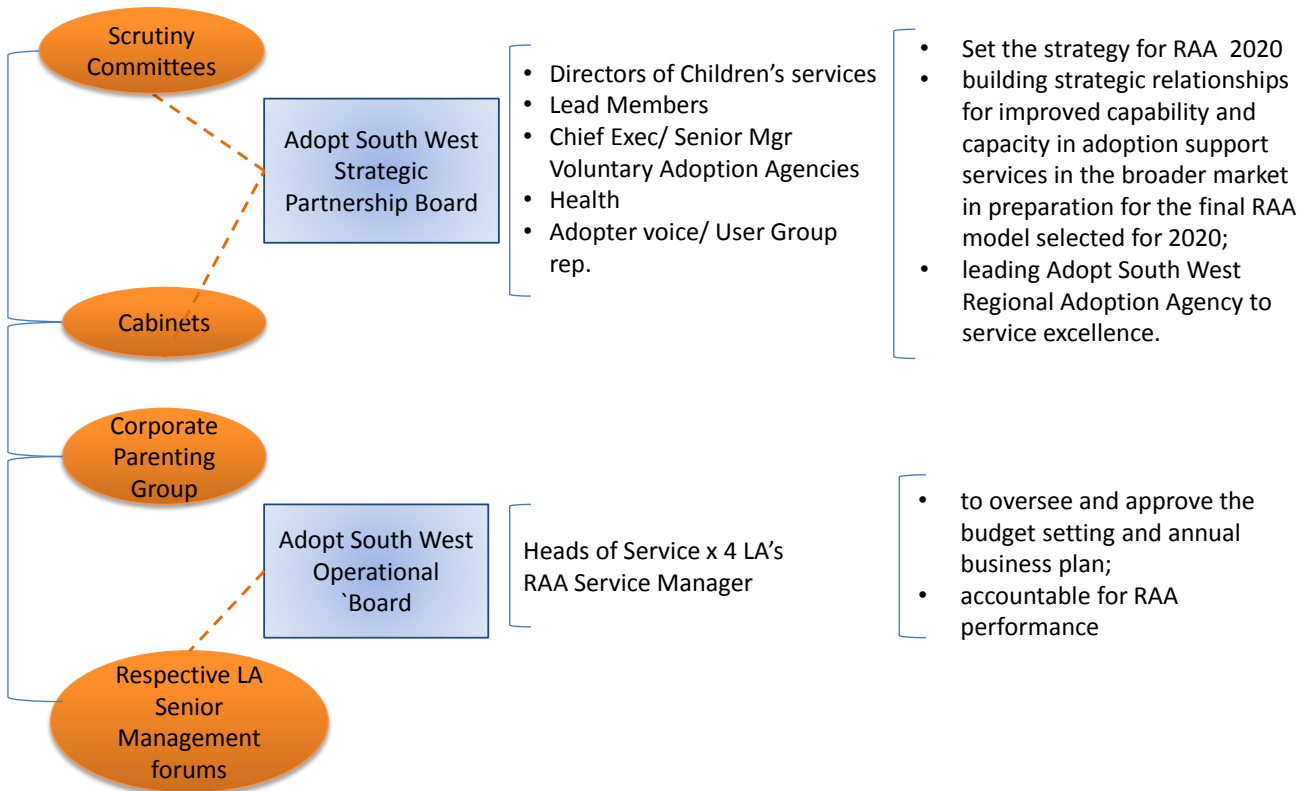
The RAA will target improved performance in areas that will reflect the vision and outcomes described for the RAA at national and local level. The planned process of building RAA data from the ground up will ensure robustness of data provided for national reporting purposes.

Each service area has a clear target set for Year 1 and a method of measurement identified and agreed. A further target is to improve the collection of key data to improve reporting across the service supporting managers in early identification of success or of areas for rapid improvement focus.

The outcomes described in section 5 have resulted in the following measures being selected-

- Improved timescales for second time adopter assessments;
- Higher conversion rate from enquiry to approval of prospective adopters;
- Early identification of children with potential adoption plans;
- More children placed on an Early Permanence (Fostering to Adopt) basis;
- Reduction in the number of children with their placement order revoked;
- More timely matching of approved adopters;
- Reduced length of time from adoption placement to adoption order for children;
- Improve the percentage of children adopted from care;
- Fewer Adoption de-registrations because a match has not been identified for the family;
- Fewer Adoption placement disruption;
- Increase in birth family referrals;
- Improved number and quality of adopters;
- More timely step-parent adoption assessments;
- Improvement in number of placements available for harder to place/ priority children;
- Improved performance measurement and management across the service.

These measures will deliver into the National Adoption Scorecard, Adoption Leadership Board records or act as quality makers for the RAA.



# Impact Assessment

Version 2016

<b>Assessment of:</b>	<b>Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency</b>
<b>Service:</b>	<b>Children's Services</b>

<b>Head of Service:</b>	Jo Olsson
<b>Date of sign off by Head Of Service/version:</b>	V1
<b>Assessment carried out by (incl. job title):</b>	Darryl Freeman, Head of Children's Social Care

## Section 1 - Background

<b>Description:</b>	Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency is a development of adoption agencies in response to the <a href="#">Education and Adoption Act 2016</a> which advised authorities and voluntary adoption agencies to join together to form Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA). Devon County Council, as part of the Adopt South West partnership, is one of 19 groupings of local authorities and voluntary sector adoption agencies working on the regionalisation agenda nationally. The regional grouping also includes Plymouth, Torbay and Somerset.
<b>Reason for change/review and options appraisal:</b>	In June 2015, the Department for Education (DfE) published ' <a href="#">Regionalising Adoption</a> ' 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 <a href="#">Education and Adoption Act 2016</a> . The Act gives the Secretary of State a new power to direct one or more named local authorities to make arrangements for any or all of their adoption functions to be carried out on

their behalf by one of the local authorities named, or by another agency.

The Government's view is that structural change will improve the process for children and adopters leading to

- improved numbers of children being adopted
- an improved experience for adopters and improved timeliness overall
- to deliver consistently good and innovative adoption practice that ensures improved life chances for children.

The Department for Education describes 4 models for delivery of a Regional Adoption Agency.

1. A Local Authority single host, on behalf of a number of Local Authorities; e.g. Aspire, a Dorset hosted service for three Local Authorities.
2. Joint Venture between Local Authorities; a new public sector owned Local Authority Trading Company. e.g. Achieving for Children, Kingston and Richmond's Children's Services
3. A new Voluntary Adoption Agency; possibly a Joint Venture with flexibility for public & third sector ownership e.g. Entrust Schools Service in Staffordshire.
4. Existing Voluntary Adoption Agency; where Local Authorities commission an existing Voluntary Adoption Agency to deliver the Regional Adoption Agency e.g. Coram.

Nationally, all agencies used a scoring system as a tool to aid discussions, the purpose of which was to examine the desirability, feasibility and viability of each option. Following consideration of each possible model by the Local Authorities Directors/ Heads of Service and Executives from Families for Children and Barnardo's the preferred option was identified as a 'Single Local Authority Hosting the Regional Adoption Agency on behalf of a number of Local Authorities'.

The clear benefit identified is to achieve the integration of the four Local Authority adoption services into one best practice model, whilst maintaining the current partnership with Voluntary agencies which had been established in the delivery of the previous Adopt South West partnership.



	<p>Further to this, it was proposed that Devon host the Regional Adoption Agency. It was recognised that Devon County Council -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operates the highest graded Local Authority adoption service (Good);</li> <li>• Has successfully innovated in a number of areas (e.g. fostering for adoption, young people's engagement);</li> <li>• Has the capacity to deliver given the size of the agency and the Local Authority;</li> <li>• Has the experience of developing other services that Devon hosts for the region;</li> <li>• Is centrally placed geographically.</li> </ul>
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## Section 2 - Key impacts and recommendations

Social/equality impacts:	<p>The Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency will deliver improved outcomes for children and families -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a system where children are matched with the most suitable adopter as quickly as possible.</li> <li>• Improve the scale of Adopter recruitment to provide a broader pool of adopters, well prepared and well matched to the needs of children waiting and;</li> <li>• Offers sufficient, high quality adoption support services</li> </ul> <p>This will be achieved by employing best practice, improving processes and practice quality and by encouraging innovation. Better shared resources across the region will also improve cost effectiveness with the potential to invest further in service developments.</p>
Environmental impacts:	<p>There are no negative environmental impacts envisaged, staff will continue to travel to meet with children and potential adopters in the course of their work, they will operate out of offices across the 4 Local Authorities as they do now. The workforce will continue to work with technology that minimises the need to travel where possible.</p>

Economic impacts:	<p>Better shared resources across the region will improve cost effectiveness with the potential to invest further in development of services. There is a wish to increase the volume and type of services available to better support families post adoption, these may be secured from the market and this would see a need for growth and development of new capabilities by the service providers and may offer opportunities for jobs in the area.</p>
Other impacts (partner agencies, services, DCC policies, possible 'unintended consequences'):	<p>The introduction of the Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency involves Plymouth City Council, Torbay Council, Somerset County Council and Voluntary Adoption agencies and other adoption service providers across the area.</p> <p>There will be changes to improve and standardised practice across the region with themed participation groups across the region with Adopters, Special Guardians and Parents to improve practice of the Regional Adoption Agency.</p> <p>The system will be reviewed to ensure children can be placed with families more effectively and with minimal disruption. Support to adopters and Special Guardians and their families will be improved, for example There will also be changes to the paperwork required for court decisions, to help people applying to one, or at times more, courts for decisions as currently the paperwork has to be changed to meet each Local Authority and Courts requirements. This will also make it easier for the staff supporting the adopters.</p> <p>There will be "joint adoption panels" across the area to bring more consistency to the preparation required of staff and Adopters for decisions and align the terms such as payment for those acting on adoption panels across the area.</p> <p>There will be no Adopt South West specific impact on existing Devon County Council Policies, this does not preclude changes that may be required to meet National Policy relating to Regional Adoption Agencies.</p>
How will impacts and actions be monitored?	<p>A set of objectives has been agreed and the mechanism to collect the required information to regularly report on performance will be put in place. These will support the existing national statutory reporting required from all Adoption Services in England.</p> <p>Ofsted currently inspect Adoption Services and a new framework is being developed for inspection of Regional Adoption Agencies.</p>

### Section 3 - Profile and views of stakeholders and people directly affected

<p>People affected:</p>	<p>Children with an adoption placement order in Devon, Somerset, Torbay and Plymouth and those people wishing to adopt a child from the area.</p> <p>Local Authority Members and Chief Officers responsible for Children’s Services and accountable to the Ofsted inspection regime and national achievement required by the Department for Education.</p> <p>Staff in Adoption Services in the 4 Local Authorities, Adoption Panel Chairs and Members.</p>
<p>Diversity profile and needs assessment of affected people:</p>	<p>Adopters are considered regardless of age, gender, disabilities, race, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion/belief</p> <p>Children considered for adoption are aged up to maximum age of 18 when the adoption order is made.</p>
<p>Other stakeholders:</p>	<p>Families of those people who have adopted a child/ children; birth families of a child/ children that have been adopted.</p> <p>Providers of support to adopters and birth families.</p> <p>Partner agencies e.g. Health, Education</p>
<p>Consultation process:</p>	<p>There were dedicated Adopter engagement sessions early in the journey and the Adopter’s first priority is to ensure adequate support is available throughout the whole adoption process and beyond. They also prioritise improving support on offer and awareness of adoption in schools and CAMHS services and would like to be recognised as experts on the needs of their children. Adopters also mentioned getting rid of the post code lottery</p>

	<p>across the region because of funding variations, and ensuring the RAA adds value, rather than an additional layer of bureaucracy.</p> <p>Similarly Staff have and continue to be engaged with many events held. They have welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the plans for the development of an RAA. Staff from the Local Authorities and the two Voluntary Adoption Agencies are working together to design the service improvements and for example this has seen the approval for Joint Panels to be introduced during October 2017 ahead of the formal launch of the Regional Adoption Agency.</p> <p>The staff priorities are to have respect for the adopter at forefront of the re-design of process and consideration of new/ different support services. The key benefit is the ease of looking for best match for children and adopters across the region together and keeping more solutions local. Early permanence and joint working with child care social workers across the region will bring improved outcomes for the child and families and they are keen to work on breaking down any barriers to this whilst designing the Regional Adoption Agency way of working and protocols.</p> <p>The Adoption Panel chairs hope that the shift to a Regional Adoption Agency will lead to better outcomes for children and higher quality services, they welcome the opportunity to work together and focus on what works well.</p> <p>We have engaged with adopters and panel members in engagement workshops, to help shape joint panels and contributed to further ideas on improving the services of the Regional Adoption Agency.</p> <p>Local Authority Members have also been engaged across the authorities</p>
Research and information used:	<p>Adopt South West is following the single Local Authority Hosting model for a Regional Adoption Agency.</p> <p>The required Inter Authority Agreement is informed by legal, financial, practice and commissioning representatives from each Local Authority. The Regional Adoption Agency Service has been specified based on the expertise and experience of all the Local Authority partners and informed by the key involvement the Voluntary Adoption Agencies, Families for Children and Barnardo's. The best practice available from across the area is to be adopted, and adapted through further innovations, to deliver a consistent high quality adoption support service.</p>

As a national programme there has been support provided by the Department for Education and their nominated advisors, Deloittes. There are shared learning forums in place for all 19 Regional Adoption Agency development teams to share and learn from one another.

Each Local Authority responds to the Children and Social Work act and this is carried through into the ethos, practice and approach to improvement in development of the Regional Adoption Agency . A further reference employed is the Children and Family Bill 2013 – this sets out regulations around Fostering for Adoption and the principle of every child should be considered for fostering for adoption if Adoption is a permanence option is central to the Regional Adoption Agency practice. The family finders role is key in working in partnership with the Local Authority Child Care Social work staff for identification of these children at the earliest point possible and to provide guidance to the Local Authority around the potential of Foster for Adoption placements.

All practice reviews are guided by the adoption minimum standards and the adoption regulations 2005 ensuring the Regional Adoption Agency will continue to meet statutory guidelines.

## Background Analysis

This section describes how relevant questions and issues have been explored

### Section 4a - Social Impacts

<b>Characteristics</b>	<p><b>In what way are you eliminating or reducing the potential for direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or disadvantage? Are there any reasonable and proportionate, unavoidable negative consequences?</b></p> <p><b>In what way are you advancing equality (meeting needs, encouraging participation, making adjustments for disabled people, ‘closing gaps’).</b></p> <p><b>In what way are you fostering good relations between groups (tackling prejudice and promoting understanding), if relevant?</b></p>
<p>The Regional Adoption Agency will operate within clear standards laid down in law regarding Adoption</p>	

**Children Act 1989**

Sets out many of the duties, powers and responsibilities local authorities hold in respect of their looked after children and care leavers. In 2015 new regulations relating to the Children Act came in to force. Among other things, these regulations set out arrangements for local authorities considering ceasing to look after a child.

[View the Children Act 1989](#)

**Children (Leaving Care) 2000**

Sets out duties local authorities have to support young people leaving care from 16 to 21 years of age.

[View the Children \(Leaving Care\) Act 2000](#)

**Adoption and Children Act 2002**

Updated the legal framework for domestic and inter-country adoption, and places a duty on local authorities to maintain an adoption service and provide adoption support services.

[View the Adoption and Children Act 2002](#)

**Children and Adoption Act 2006**

Gives courts more flexible powers to facilitate child contact and enforce contact orders when separated parents are in dispute.

[View the Children and Adoption Act 2006](#)

**Children and Young Persons Act 2008**

Legislates for the recommendations in the Department for Education and Skill's 2007 Care Matters white paper to provide high quality care and services for children in care.

[View the Children and Young Persons Act 2008](#)

[Download the Care Matters white paper \(PDF\)](#)

**Children and Families Act 2014**

Encourages 'fostering for adoption' which allows approved adopters to foster children while they wait for court approval to adopt. Introduces a 26 week time limit for the courts to decide whether or not a child should be taken into care. In some cases, this limit may be extended by eight weeks. Introduces 'staying put' arrangements which allow children in care to stay with their foster families until the age of 21 years. This is provided that both the young person and the foster family are happy to do so.

[View the Children and Families Act 2014](#)

All residents (include generic equality provisions):

The Regional Adoption Agency will operate within clear standards laid down in law regarding Adoption

An Adopter does not have to be a British citizen to adopt a child, but:

- you (or your partner, if you're a couple) must have a fixed and permanent home in the UK, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man
- you (and your partner, if you're a couple) must have lived in the UK for at least 1 year before you begin the application process

You will not be allowed to adopt if you, or an adult member of your family, have a criminal caution or conviction for offences against children or certain sexual offences against adults but, with the exception of these specified offences, a criminal record will not necessarily rule you out.

Smoking will not necessarily rule you out from adopting. Consideration will be given to this and to all health- and lifestyle-related issues, and the agency will want to know of any specific health risks to you or to the children who may be placed in your care.

There is no single national policy on smoking, but all agencies will apply some restrictions. According to national medical advice children under five and those with particular medical conditions should not be placed in smoking households. You will usually need to be smoke-free for at least six months before adoption from these groups can be considered.

To adopt a step child you must tell your local council at least 3 months before applying to a court for an adoption order. Also the child must also have lived with both of you for at least 6 months.

If you disagree with an adoption agency's decision, you can either:

- challenge their decision by writing to them
- apply to the [Independent Review Mechanism](#), which will look into your case

**Staffing** of the RAA will be achieved through TUPE transfer of Somerset County, Plymouth City & Torbay Councils staff to Devon County Council which along with existing DCC staff will complete the workforce. Although the majority of the workforce is largely mobile all require an office base, there will be staff that may be required to use different offices as their work base, this will be determined through the TUPE consultation process and this impact will be managed through existing HR policies in each Local Authority.

<p>Age:</p>	<p>The Regional Adoption Agency will operate within clear standards laid down in law regarding Adoption.</p> <p>You may be able to adopt a child if you're aged 21 or over (there's no upper age limit)</p> <p>Your own family- having children of your own (of any age) will certainly not exclude you from adopting, whether they are living at home with you or have grown up. Consideration will, however, be given to the age gap between your own children and the age of the child(ren) you wish to adopt and the position of each child within the family in accordance with the child(ren)s' needs.</p> <p><b>Staffing-</b> there will be no change to existing HR workforce policy</p>
<p>Disability (incl. sensory, mobility, mental health, learning disability, ill health) and carers of disabled people:</p>	<p>The Regional Adoption Agency will operate within clear standards laid down in law regarding Adoption</p> <p>Being disabled should not automatically exclude anyone from becoming an adopter and it is widely recognised that disabled people can often provide a very loving home for a child.</p> <p>Disability is only one of the many issues that will be considered by an adoption agency so don't rule yourself out before you have had a conversation with your agency of choice. Even if you believe that you might need some additional assistance to adopt a young person, social services may be able to provide this support.</p> <p>It is recognised that the life experiences of disabled people can give them a unique insight into the lives of children in care, who often have a sense of themselves as 'different' or who may also have a disability. Living alongside disability in the context of positive relationships can teach children the importance of inclusivity and how to value difference.</p> <p>The Medical Adviser will assess the information provided through a medical on a disabled applicant and an assessing social worker will also explore with you any potential impact this may have on parenting and how these would be managed. Similarly if you have had treatment for a serious illness, the agency will seek full information from your GP and will want to establish the impact of the illness and future prognosis and their Medical Adviser may want to contact your hospital consultant for further details before being able to make a recommendation. If there is a significant risk that you may not be able to care for a child throughout their dependent years, the Medical Adviser will seek further information and advise the Adoption Agency accordingly.</p> <p>As well as existing health conditions, an agency will want to discuss lifestyle issues such as weight, smoking and alcohol consumption. These issues are not barriers to adoption but they could present health risks in the future. If you have resolved any problems with such issues in the past, the agency may consider that you have shown</p>



	<p>strength and motivation to deal with problems which would enhance your application.</p> <p><b>Staffing-</b> there will be no change to existing HR workforce policy</p>
Culture and ethnicity: nationality/national origin, skin colour, religion and belief:	<p>The Regional Adoption Agency will operate within clear standards laid down in law regarding Adoption.</p> <p>You can be matched with a child with whom you do not share the same ethnicity, provided you can meet the most important of the child's identified needs. All families should be able to get support to help their adopted child to understand and appreciate the important cultural, religious or linguistic values of their birth community.</p> <p><b>Staffing-</b> there will be no change to existing HR workforce policy</p>
Sex, gender and gender identity (including men, women, non-binary and transgender people), and pregnancy and maternity (including women's right to breastfeed).	<p>The Regional Adoption Agency will operate within clear standards laid down in law regarding Adoption.</p> <p>The Adoption and Children Act 2002 gave unmarried couples, including same sex couples, the right to adopt, and this became law in December 2005. If you are a same sex couple you don't need to be in a Civil Partnership or married to adopt, you will need to show that you are living together in an enduring relationship.</p> <p>Single adopters are also welcome whatever their sexual orientation.</p> <p>You should not experience discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. All agencies are committed to equal treatment of all potential adopters and in fact may positively welcome applications from LGBT adopters.</p> <p><b>Staffing-</b> there will be no change to existing HR workforce policy</p>
Sexual orientation and marriage/civil partnership:	<p>The Regional Adoption Agency will operate within clear standards laid down in law regarding Adoption.</p> <p>You may be able to adopt if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• single</li> <li>• married</li> <li>• in a civil partnership</li> <li>• an unmarried couple (same sex and opposite sex)</li> <li>• the partner of the child's parent</li> </ul> <p><b>Staffing-</b> there will be no change to existing HR workforce policy</p>
Other socio-economic factors such as families, carers, single	<p>The Regional Adoption Agency will operate within clear standards laid down in law regarding Adoption.</p> <p>You may be able to adopt whether you are a homeowner or living in rented accommodation.</p>

<p>people/couples, low income, vulnerability, education, reading/writing skills, 'digital exclusion' and rural isolation.</p>	<p>Your financial circumstances and employment status will always be considered as part of an adoption assessment, but low income, being unemployed or employed do not automatically rule you out. You can be an adoptive parent while on benefits. The agency will want to discuss how the responsibility of caring for a child would be managed. Some agencies want a child to have their own bedroom but this is not a requirement and in some circumstances sharing can be considered. Your local authority may provide support, especially for adopters of sibling groups or of children with a disability or special need of some kind. You would also be encouraged to look into what benefits you may be entitled to. A number of other allowances are available for children with disabilities.</p> <p>Adoption Agencies need to be sure that any pets that you own do not pose a threat to children's health or safety. Also, some children may suffer from allergies which would prevent placement with some pets. A report from a vet may be requested.</p> <p><b>Staffing-</b> there will be no change to existing HR workforce policy.</p>
<p>Human rights considerations:</p>	<p>None</p>

### Section 4b - Environmental impacts

	<p><b>Describe any actual or potential negative consequences. (Consider how to mitigate against these).</b></p>	<p><b>Describe any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes.(Consider how to improve as far as possible).</b></p>
<p>Reduce waste, and send less waste to landfill:</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>
<p>Conserve and enhance biodiversity (the variety of living species):</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>
<p>Safeguard the distinctive characteristics, features and special qualities of Devon's</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>

landscape:		
Conserve and enhance the quality and character of our built environment and public spaces:	n/a	n/a
Conserve and enhance Devon's cultural and historic heritage:	n/a	n/a
Minimise greenhouse gas emissions:	n/a	n/a
Minimise pollution (including air, land, water, light and noise):	n/a	n/a
Contribute to reducing water consumption:	n/a	n/a
Ensure resilience to the future effects of climate change (warmer, wetter winters; drier, hotter summers; more intense storms; and rising sea level):	n/a	n/a
Other (please state below):	n/a	n/a

### Section 4c - Economic impacts

	<p><b>Describe any actual or potential negative consequences. (Consider how to mitigate against these).</b></p>	<p><b>Describe any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes. (Consider how to improve as far as possible).</b></p>
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Impact on knowledge and skills:	Although bringing together 4 Local Authority Services to operate as a DCC hosted single Service the location of demand and distribution of staff will still be across the existing local authority boundaries. It is therefore unlikely there will be either a positive or negative impact on knowledge and skills within Devon.
Impact on employment levels:	Although bringing together 4 Local Authority Services to operate as a DCC hosted single Service the location of demand and distribution of staff will still be across the existing local authority boundaries. It is therefore unlikely there will be either a positive or negative impact on employment levels within Devon.
Impact on local business:	Although bringing together 4 Local Authority Services to operate as a DCC hosted single Service the location of demand and distribution of staff will still be across the existing local authority boundaries. It is therefore unlikely there will be either a positive or negative impact on local business within Devon.

#### Section 4d - Combined Impacts

Linkages or conflicts between social, environmental and economic impacts:	n/a
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#### Section 5 - 'Social Value' of planned commissioned/procured services:

How will the economic, social and environmental well-being of the relevant area be improved through what is being proposed? And how, in conducting the process of procurement, might that improvement be secured?	Presently each Local Authority has contracts for services with the Adoption support services provider market but not necessarily for the same services. These contracts will be aligned so that all 4 Authorities procure the same services, this sees an opportunity for existing providers to review the scope and scale of their service offer and may see these businesses grow. There may also be new businesses created through interest in the opportunities these contracts afford.
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The following relates to exempt or confidential matters (Para(s) 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Govt Act 1972). Any breach of confidentiality could prejudice the Council/person/body concerned & might amount to a breach of the councillors /employees codes of conduct.

Document is Restricted

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