

SUBJECT:	CREATION OF BUSINESS SUPPORT OFFICER POST
MEETING:	SINGLE MEMBER DECISION
DATE:	
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To gain agreement to employ a full-time Business Support Officer within Children's Services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To create a permanent Business Support Officer post funded from within the current staffing budget to support the work of Children's Services.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 In 2013 a new Public Law Outline was implemented which reformed Family Justice procedures and required Local Authorities to complete much more work prior to any application to the Family Court.
- 3.2 At a similar point in time the number of looked after children and care proceedings being brought also increased.
- 3.3 Consequently the number of legal meetings held within the Service has increased significantly from an average of ten per month in 2013 to an average of seventeen in 2015. These meetings are all formal decision making meetings which require careful minuting from a skilled administrator as the minutes are expected to be made available to the Court should care proceedings have to be initiated.
- 3.4 In early 2014 it became apparent that the Service did not have sufficient administrative capacity to manage the workload with a sustained backlog of legal minutes that was causing delay in some cases and impacting upon the professional reputation of the Authority. It was therefore agreed by the Chief Executive that a Business Support Officer could be seconded into the Service on a temporary basis to assist with the backlog.
- 3.5 Since that time it is evident that the workload demands have continued with no evidence that they will reduce. The seconded Business Support Officer is in constant demand to support the legal work within the service from initial planning through to adoption.
- 3.6 Children's Services have seen a sustained increase in the amount of care proceedings that have been initiated.

4. REASONS:

- 4.1 Legal reforms and a sustained increase in legal proceedings for Children's Services have significantly altered the demands for business support and in particular the need for skilled administrators to minute legal meetings.
- 4.2 If sufficient capacity is not available from the business support team then there will be a delay in progressing legal proceedings required to keep children safe and the Local Authority's reputation will be damaged within family justice arenas.
- 4.3 Additional capacity brought into the service in 2014 has proved effective in managing the increased workload and expectations of the Service and it is therefore recommended that the temporary secondment is changed into a permanent position.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 The budget resource for this post have been met within Children's Services budget since the secondment in 2014 and so there are no additional resource implications.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

No significant equality impacts were identified in the assessment.

7. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This post will enable Children's Services to effectively carry out its statutory safeguarding duties.

8. CONSULTEES:

Rob Long – SCH directorate accountant
Tracy Jelfs/Jane Rodgers – Head of Children's Services
Claire Marchant – Director of Social Care and Health

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Not applicable

10. AUTHOR:

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11. CONTACT DETAILS:

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