



COUNCIL – 16TH MARCH 2022

**SUBJECT: NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR
WELSH LOCAL AUTHORITY ADOPTION AND FOSTERING
SERVICES**

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR – SOCIAL SERVICES & HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The attached reports cover the proposal to establish national collaborative governance arrangements for the National Adoption Service (NAS) and Foster Wales (FW) through the creation of a Joint Committee supported by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The delivery of statutory Adoption and Fostering Services are a key component of Local Authority Children's Services' and are closely aligned in terms of regulation, guidance and operational practice.
- 2.2 The Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru (ADSSC), through the Heads of Children's Services Group have led the way in relation to service delivery and improvement in both Adoption and Fostering through the establishment of a National Adoption Service (NAS) and Foster Wales (FW). Both NAS and FW provide national strategic direction including policy and practice frameworks that are subsequently delivered regionally and locally.
- 2.3 Given the stage of these developments, it is appropriate and necessary to formalise the governance arrangements for both NAS and FW. The WLGA, Cabinet Members, Directors of Social Services and Heads of Children's Services have been fully engaged in the consultation and development of the proposals set out in the attached reports.
- 2.4 In summary, the proposal is to establish a Joint Committee to oversee NAS and FW and this is underpinned by every Welsh Local Authority signing the formal Joint Agreement.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Council approve the proposed governance arrangements for the National

Adoption Service and Foster Wales through the establishment of the Joint Committee facilitated by WLGA.

- 3.2 That Council approve the signing of the Joint Agreement.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To improve the collaborative governance arrangements for Welsh Local Authority Adoption and Fostering Services and provide assurance to the Council that service developments and improvement will continue to be overseen by the National Joint Committee.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The National Adoption Service (NAS) has been in place since 2014, hosted by Cardiff City Council on behalf of all 22 local authorities. A review undertaken in 2018 recommended that the governance arrangements needed to be strengthened in order to support the hosting and service delivery relationship and both the WLGA and ADSSC agreed with the recommendation that a Joint Committee should be established. Work to develop this model has now been completed.

- 5.2 During this same period, the National Fostering Framework (NFF), now known as Foster Wales (FW), was established and the Director of NAS has played a critical role in supporting the development of FW. The links between the two services are very clear; Fostering and Adoption have always been closely aligned and the current service models are based on National strategic co-ordination of policy and practice standards supporting regional and local delivery of services. It was logical therefore, to take the opportunity to expand the remit of the proposed Joint Committee for NAS to include FW.

- 5.3 It is proposed that the Joint Committee will be comprised of Council Members and will oversee the production of annual reports, work programmes and the budgets for the Central Support Team for both NAS and FW, the funding for which is top sliced from the RSG and administered through the WLGA.

- 5.4 The full detail underpinning the development of the Joint Committee is outlined in the WLGA Report attached at Appendix 1 and the legal Joint Agreement is attached at Appendix 2. The next and final step is to legitimise the proposal through the signing of the agreement by each local authority in Wales which naturally requires political approval hence the presentation of the attached reports to Council.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 It is assumed that the implementation of enhanced collaborative governance arrangements for both the National Adoption Service and Foster Wales through the establishment of the Joint Committee supported by WLGA will provide greater assurance to the Council in relation to both the delivery and the development of these services going forward.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The agreement to cooperate with the other Welsh Local Authorities through the

establishment of collaborative governance arrangements has no direct impact on users of either NAS or FW and an Integrated Impact Assessment is therefore not required.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 As outlined above and detailed in Appendix 1, funding for the governance arrangements and the Central Support Team is provided from the WLGA via a top slice of the Rate Support Grant plus grant funding from Welsh Government. There is no expectation that individual councils will incur additional costs in relation to these functions.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no specific personnel implications arising as a result of this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been included in this report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 The Local Government Act 2000.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 WLGA Report: National Collaborative Arrangements for Welsh Local Authority Adoption and Fostering Services

Appendix 2 Legal Agreement to establish a Joint Committee