

Report to:	Cabinet	Date: 14 October 2026
Subject:	Proposed creation of an End-to-End Greater Manchester Fostering Hub	
Report of	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	

Summary

1. This paper seeks agreement for Bury to progress with the transition from the current Greater Manchester Fostering Recruitment Hub model to an end-to-end fostering hub model. The current Greater Manchester Fostering Hub is hosted by Rochdale Borough Council on behalf of the ten Greater Manchester local authorities under an existing Memorandum of Understanding. This arrangement currently supports a regional recruitment model, focused on marketing, enquiry management, initial screening, and early applicant engagement. Building on the progress already made through the regional recruitment approach, the proposed model seeks to create a more integrated and consistent pathway for prospective foster carers, extending beyond initial enquiry and recruitment activity to encompass assessment, approval, and some elements of ongoing support.
2. This arrangement is consistent with the national policy context, and the establishment of Regional Care Co-operatives (RCC), Greater Manchester was an early adopter: sufficiency of homes, and Buying Better, market shaping and development are key workstreams of the developing RCC and which embraces the Government's very ambitious drive to create 10,000 additional fostering placements by 2029 (equivalent to a 25% increase in children in non-family-linked foster homes, or a 50% increase in the number of children in local authority and third sector approved foster homes); and the associated Department for Education funding opportunities available to participating authorities.
3. This represents a significant opportunity to strengthen the regional fostering offer, improve the experience of applicants and carers, and increase the availability of stable, local family-based placements for children. For context, should the national reforms achieve their aims and deliver the increase in foster homes envisaged, a 25% increase in children in local authority approved foster homes, would equate to 20 more children by 2029 (a rise from 81 to 101 children); a 50% increase would equate to 40 more children, or an increase to 121 children.

4. Agreement is sought to delegate its foster carer recruitment, assessment and approval function to the Greater Manchester Fostering that will continue to be hosted by Rochdale Council.
5. It is important to note that this proposal does not include the recruitment, assessment and approval of family and friends (Kinship) foster carers or support to Foster Carers once approved this will remain the responsibility of Bury's fostering service. In addition, Step Forward foster care recruitment will remain in Bury initially, the GM End-to-End hub is exploring opportunities to recruit Step Forward carers, but this is not yet in place.

Recommendation(s)

1. To endorse the proposal for the transition from the current Greater Manchester Fostering Recruitment Hub model to an end-to-end regional fostering hub model hosted by Rochdale Council.
2. To note the national policy context, including the Government's ambition to create 10,000 additional fostering placements and the associated Department for Education funding opportunities available to participating authorities.
3. To note and agree the delegation of agreement by the Director of Children's Services (in consultation with other authorities and the portfolio holder for Children's Services and the S151 officer) of the proposed funding formula and resource contributions for fiscal years 2026/27 and 2027/28.
4. To note and agree the proposed HR recommendation on 2-year secondment opportunities for the staff in scope. Secondment is subject to staff in scope consenting.
5. To delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and Education and the Monitoring Officer, to implement those arrangements and approve any operational matters necessary for their delivery.

1. Reasons for recommendation(s)

- 1.1 Securing sufficient fostering households remains a significant challenge for Bury and across Greater Manchester and beyond. By the end of 2024/25, the number of Greater Manchester children in mainstream fostering placements was 7% lower than six years earlier, with a sharper 10% reduction in in-house mainstream placements. Over the same period, mainstream residential placements across all provider types increased by 41%. The resulting

increased reliance on residential care continues to create significant financial pressure across all Greater Manchester Local Authority budgets. The latest published outturn figures for local authority revenue expenditure suggest that Greater Manchester collectively spent at least £920m on children's social care across 2024/25, including £530m purely on children in care, chiefly their homes.

- 1.2 In 2025/2026 the Greater Manchester Fostering Hub received 86 enquiries from carers interested in fostering for Bury and this led to 27 initial visits. The 27 initial visits led to 14 applications and assessments commencing and at the end of the year 3 approvals had been made, a further 2 assessments were ongoing. This shows that the Hub received a reasonable number of enquiries (86) and 43% (27) of these enquiries led to a home visit. 52% (14) of home visits to prospective foster carers led to an application and assessment but only 21% (3) led to approvals in year. This is an in-year enquiry to approval rate of 3.4%.
- 1.3 The Foster for Greater Manchester Hub is already demonstrating measurable improvement at the front end of the recruitment pathway in all aspects within its scope . Since launch, 99.8% of initial enquiries have been responded to within one working day, more than a quarter of initial enquiries have converted to an initial visit, and conversion from initial visit to application has increased by 10 percentage points, reaching its highest level in three years. The first-year review also found that 51% of initial visits converted to application, compared with 41% in the 12 months prior to May 2024, while initial enquiry to initial visit conversion improved by seven percentage points.
- 1.4 The introduction of foster carer ambassadors has strengthened applicant engagement, with application rates 36% higher for households supported by an ambassador. More recent performance data also shows a strengthening pipeline, with households in assessment increasing by 30% compared with the previous year and 11 household approvals recorded in May 2026. However, approvals remain below the DfE baseline, with 106 household approvals against a baseline of 116, and there remains significant variation in application-to-approval conversion across local authorities, ranging from 11.1% to 51.7%. This variation in performance supports the case for moving to an end-to-end model, which would allow Greater Manchester to build on improved early-stage performance, while creating greater consistency, grip and accountability across assessment and approval.
- 1.5 Further details on the activity required to deliver against the DfE minimum expectations of a regionalised fostering hub are provided below.

2. Alternative options considered and rejected

- 2.1 The first alternative would be to disband the existing hub and revert to the 10 Greater Manchester LA's undertaking all fostering recruitment work. The

declining number of fostering households and placements over several years and improvement in conversion rates in the initial stages of the process since the inception of the hub, would evidence this is not a workable option. Furthermore, scoping exercises regarding staff currently undertaking recruitment activity within each LA, would suggest that it is, in some LA's, under resourced and not prioritised in terms of staffing allocation to the task. In addition, this would not be consistent with the Governments expectations.

- 2.2 The second alternative is to continue with the Hub as is, undertaking enquiry to application, the hub has evidenced improvement in consistency and conversion rates from enquiry to application. This has not resulted in a significant improvement in approval rates, following the application being handed over to the respective LA for assessment. This option does not therefore provide improved sufficiency capacity, increased placement choice for children or budgetary benefits from reducing dependency on residential care and is therefore not recommended.

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3. Background

- 3.1 The proposal is aligned to the national policy direction set out by the Department for Education in *Renewing Fostering: homes for 10,000 more children*, which sets out the Government's ambition to create 10,000 additional foster care places by the end of this Parliament. The reforms respond to the sustained decline in foster carer numbers and the growing pressures on local authorities to secure the right placements for children, close to their families, schools, and communities. As at March 2025, the total number of fostering households continued to decrease, reducing by 7% nationally since 2021. In the Northwest, mainstream fostering recruitment declined by 2% from April 2024 to March 2025.
- 3.2 Local Authority fostering statutory duties derive from the Children Act 1989 under part 3, amendments to the 1989 Act, accompanying *Fostering Regulations 2011* and associated statutory guidance including *Guidance and Regulations: Volume 4: Fostering Services*. In summary, these are:

Section 22A CA 1989: when a child is in the care of a local authority, it is the duty of that authority to provide the child with accommodation.

Section 22C (5) CA 1989: sets out the accommodation at s22A must be provided in the accommodation 'most suitable' for the child if it cannot be with a parent. This includes the option of a Local Authority foster parent under s22C(6)(b).

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 as amended, detail at Part 5, how foster carers are to be approved, including the setting up and constitution of a fostering panel. The fostering panel makes recommendations about whether a prospective foster carer should be approved. The agency decision maker with fostering responsibility is the decision maker, who can approve foster carers considering the recommendations of fostering panel. The same applies for the de-registration of foster carers. Parts 3, 4 and 6 set out how a fostering service must function.

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 amended the 2011 Regulations, and the associated changes are summarised in Volume 4 of Practice guidance from page 6. In summary, the process to assess a foster carer consists of two parts – the stage 1 process is in effect an initial assessment process in which statutory checks must be completed within a two-month timescale, followed by the stage 2 in-depth assessment process, which can take up to an additional four months. Stage 1 and 2 can also run concurrently. The practice guidance usefully contains a flow chart to illustrate the assessment process.

The Regulations and Guidance set out the approval and decision-making processes that lead to the approval or de-registration of foster carers. Regulation 27 of the 2013 Regulations make it clear that the agency decision maker makes decisions about the approval and de-registration of foster carers on the recommendation of fostering panel.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 amends the Children Act 1989, section 22J allowing the Secretary of State to give regional co-operation directions requiring two or more local authorities to make regional co-operation arrangements "for the local authorities' strategic accommodation functions to be carried out by one of the local authorities on behalf of the others,...[which include] recruiting prospective local authority foster parents and supporting local authority foster parents.. developing, or facilitating the development of, new provision for the accommodation of children being looked after by the local authority, and...any other functions relating to a local authority's duties under section 22A, 22C or 22G that are specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State [section 22J(3)(d) -(f) Children Act 1989]".

Local Authorities have a sufficiency duty under section 22G, Children Act 1989 (as amended) to take steps as far as are reasonably practicable to provide

relevant children with accommodation that is in the authority's area and meets the needs of those children.

- 3.3 The Council's statutory activity which is already delegated to the existing regional fostering hub includes receiving, processing, and managing enquiries, undertaking initial visits, and doing a handover to the local authority at the point of application. Within the new arrangement the additional functions which will be delegated to the regional fostering hub are as follows: 1) organising recruitment events and comms activity; 2) receiving and processing the application on behalf of the Local Authority; 3) undertaking Form F assessments and all associated statutory checks and references including DBS and medical; 4) a regional panel hosted and managed within Rochdale Council as host local authority will consider all potential approvals (DFE non-negotiable); 5) the 'Agency Decision Maker' function will be carried out by the regional Hub Lead (DFE non-negotiable). The DFE have specified within their guidance certain aspects, considered non-negotiable, that the hub must meet as a condition of becoming a regional hub, a regional panel and Agency Decision Maker function being two such aspects.
- 3.3 The ongoing supervisory function of foster carers, matching of placements, reviews of approved foster carers, allegations management and deregistration of foster carers is proposed to remain the responsibility of the individual Local Authority as part of their ongoing statutory relationship with the foster carer.
- 3.4 All assessments undertaken by the regional hub will utilise the Coram BAAF Prospective Foster Carers Report (Form F) (2025) as defined and required in the DFE guidance document.
- 3.5 All recommendations for the approval of recruited foster carers being assessed through the regional hub will be considered by a regional panel, managed by Rochdale Borough Council, which will make a recommendation to the Strategic Head of Service who will act as a regional ADM for recruited foster carer approvals subject to our agreement.
- 3.6 The quality assurance of work produced by the regional hub will be developed and embedded as part of the hub practice design process. It will include but is not limited to management decision making at key stages; management supervision and quality assurance at sign off of all assessment work; panel advisory quality assurance as part of panel process; Fostering Panel scrutiny at the panel attendance stage and finally scrutiny and quality assurance from the Agency Decision Maker. Practice Standards will be developed, and a broader file audit and dip sample process will be implemented.
- 3.7 Within existing fostering regulations, only a fostering service can approve a foster carer – and the only type of fostering service are: Local Authority (LA) Fostering service; Independent Fostering Agencies.

- 3.8 As the regional hub is not a fostering service or an independent fostering service, it cannot approve carers. Participating Local Authorities within the hub will therefore need to delegate their approval to the host Local Authority (subject to section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972), which provides that LA's can arrange for other Local Authorities to discharge their functions. Statutory responsibilities remain with the local authority entering these arrangements notwithstanding their delegation.
- 3.9 In addition to a requirement to move towards a regionalised approach to fostering recruitment, the Department for Education have set out a range of wider fostering reforms, including the current consultation on revised fostering standards and guidance, to increase overall placement numbers. Greater Manchester has been successful in securing a significant amount of funding to support these reforms as summarised below. This funding is conditional on GM's participation in the end-to-end hub.
- **Fostering Innovation Fund** – secured £4.73m to deliver four projects to increase recruitment and retention of carers along with supporting young people to transition from expensive residential care into a family-based setting.
 - **Mockingbird funding** of £80,000 per Local Authority to create an additional mockingbird hub to support peer support and foster carer retention.
 - **Transitional funding** of £790,067 to support the expansion of the GM fostering hub.
 - **Room Makers funding** of £677,000 to create additional capacity across existing carers by expanding/ renovating existing properties.
- 3.10 The additional funding and shift towards a more regionalised approach are underpinned by ambitious targets, set by the Department for Education. This has moved away from the number of new carer households approved to the number of new placements created, whilst also focusing on total recruited fostering placement capacity, ensuring retention of foster carer households is as key as recruitment of new ones. The hub will be required to report progress towards targets on both a weekly and monthly basis.

4. Finance

- 4.1 It is proposed that local authority contributions to the end-to-end fostering hub are calculated through a combination of weighted average, and an equal ten-way split. This approach has been developed to provide a fairer distribution of costs by averaging a set of indicators, including children looked after numbers and working-age population, so that no single factor disproportionately determines an authority's contribution.

- 4.2 The weighted formula proposed on children looked after numbers will be applied to the total operating cost of the hub encompassing all new staff posts and associated costs e.g. facilities, equipment, panel costs. Based on known operational costs this equates to a contribution for each Local Authority covering September 2026 - March 2027. The existing costs associated with the current fostering hub will be covered by an equal ten-way split, with future DfE Funding dependent on all 10 Authorities agree to the new weighted formula and sign up to this delivery model.
- 4.3 The total budget contribution for 2026/27 should be delivered via previously confirmed Local Authority allocation of £45,000, DfE Transitional Funding allocation of £790,067 with the remaining estimated £92,153 to be covered by Bury via transfer of existing staff moving into the Hub as our contribution in kind based on 1st November 2026 implementation, this covers a 5-month period until the end of year and all Authorities in agreement. The existing staffing resource is estimated to be £87,206.85. This is additional to the 45k we already contribute to the Greater Manchester fostering hub. There is an additional cost of approximately £5k.
- 4.4 The financial contribution for 2027/28 is estimated at £4,735,728, excluding staff-in-kind contributions and DfE funding. Whilst additional DfE Hub Sustainability funding is expected, this has not been confirmed and there are no known amounts. The expectation at this stage is for all Local Authorities to resource the Hub through the transfer of existing staff resource and/or financial information. Assuming all Local Authorities engage in the Greater Manchester End to End Fostering Hub Bury's percentage contribution is 6.9%, £313,640. If all four staff in scope are seconded, we estimate Bury would pay £225,590 via staffing and would have to pay £88,050 via additional cash funding. This is in recognition of the GM Hub's role in replacing all Local Authority mainstream fostering recruitment and assessment activity. The recommended approach to staff transfers and engagement is provided in section 5 of this report. Part of the hub running costs will be met from the release of budgets where individual Local Authorities will no longer have the responsibility for the function, such as for DBS and Medical checks for recruited foster carers in assessment.
- 4.5 It is recommended that the funding formula, Local Authority contributions and Hub performance are reviewed at the two-year point from implementation. This will provide adequate time for evaluation to accurately assess impact, intended financial savings secured through increased fostering sufficiency and local looked after children rates which will impact the formula weighting and financial contribution for future updated agreements.

5. Legal

- 5.1 The relevant statutory framework governing fostering services is set out at paragraph 3.2 of this report. The recruitment, assessment and approval functions proposed to be undertaken through the Greater Manchester Fostering Hub are capable of being discharged through arrangements made under section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972, which permits a local authority to arrange for the discharge of its functions by another local authority.

The functions proposed to be delegated relate primarily to the recruitment, assessment and approval of mainstream foster carers and associated activity. Family and friends fostering arrangements and Step Forward foster carer approvals are excluded from this proposal.

Whilst functions may be delegated under section 101, the ultimate statutory responsibility for the discharge of children's services functions remains with the individual local authority. Participation in the Greater Manchester Hub therefore does not remove Bury Council's statutory responsibilities under the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 or associated statutory guidance.

The proposed arrangements are therefore intended to provide a mechanism for the discharge of specified operational functions through Rochdale Borough Council as host authority, whilst preserving the statutory accountability of each participating authority.

Whilst the proposed operational fostering functions appear capable of delegation under section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972, further legal consideration is being given to the proposed regional Agency Decision Maker arrangements in light of the statutory fostering approval framework. Any such arrangements will be subject to confirmation of their legal viability and appropriate provision within the final inter-authority agreements.

- 5.2 Implementation of the end-to-end fostering hub is contingent upon Bury and all participating Greater Manchester local authorities obtaining the necessary approvals through their respective governance arrangements.

The decision sought by Bury Council cannot create binding obligations upon the remaining Greater Manchester authorities. The proposal will only become operational once the relevant approvals have been obtained and the necessary legal documentation has been completed and executed by all participating authorities.

- 5.3 Before the end-to-end Greater Manchester fostering hub, expansion can commence operation, a comprehensive suite of legal documentation will need to be prepared, negotiated, and completed.

This work will include, but may not be limited to:

- a Partnership Agreement between Bury and the other Greater Manchester local authorities;
- a Section 101 Delegation Agreement defining the precise functions delegated to Rochdale Borough Council as host authority;
- funding and financial contribution schedules;
- governance and decision-making arrangements;
- arrangements relating to the operation of the regional fostering panel;
- arrangements governing the exercise of the Agency Decision Maker function, including confirmation of the legal basis upon which that function may be exercised on behalf of participating authorities; liability, indemnity, and insurance provisions;
- dispute resolution procedures;
- performance monitoring and reporting requirements;
- termination and exit arrangements;
- business continuity provisions; and
- arrangements dealing with future legislative or policy changes.

No expanded hub arrangements will be implemented until those agreements have been completed to the satisfaction of the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer.

- 5.4 The report contemplates the secondment of staff from Bury fostering service into the regional hub via secondment agreements and all necessary employment advice and consultation processes.
- 5.5 The Department for Education requires the operation of a regional panel and regional Agency Decision Maker function as part of the proposed hub model.
- 5.6 The proposal will involve the sharing and processing of special category personal data and criminal offence data relating to prospective foster carers, approved foster carers and members of their households.

Prior to implementation, Bury and other Greater Manchester authorities will be required to complete:

- a Data Protection Impact Assessment;
- an Information Sharing Agreement;
- appropriate Data Processing Agreements where required;
- records of processing activity;
- information security assessments; and
- arrangements governing retention, deletion, access requests, complaints, and data breaches.

The arrangements must comply with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Council's information governance framework.

- 5.7 Whilst the proposal represents a local authority collaboration and is not currently considered to require a procurement exercise, the legal structure and operational arrangements will require further review as they develop to ensure continued compliance with public procurement legislation and subsidy control requirements.

6. Information Governance and Data Protection Considerations

- 6.1 The Hub will process the following data on behalf of the ten Local Authorities:

- foster carer household information;
- safeguarding information;
- DBS information;
- health information;
- special category personal data

- 6.2 The following will be in place regarding the gathering, holding, and processing of the data

- a Data Protection Impact Assessment will be completed;
- an Information Sharing Agreement will be put in place;
- all arrangements will comply with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018;
- security and access controls will be established between authorities; we will establish single sign on between all ten Local Authorities and GMCA.

7. Human Resource

- 7.1 The proposal has several workforce implications and Fostering and HR leads have been involved in discussions and joint workshops to develop a fair and proportionate approach to resourcing the Hub, while maintaining service resilience and continuity during implementation.

- 7.2 It is proposed that the End-to-End Hub will initially be resourced from existing Bury staff and staff from across the ten Greater Manchester local authorities who are currently undertaking the relevant fostering recruitment, assessment and approval functions and/or are employed at an equivalent grade. This approach recognises the existing skills, knowledge and experience within local authority fostering teams and is intended to provide the capacity required for the Hub to operate from go-live, while maintaining a fair and consistent approach across participating authorities. The entire proposal is subject to each Authority following their own governance processes and securing the requisite approval.

- 7.3 It has been agreed that the appropriate workforce approach is for Bury staff and staff from other Greater Manchester local authorities in scope to be seconded

from their employing local authority into the End-to-End Hub for an initial two-year period. Bury has identified four staff as being in scope, if agreed these Staff will remain employed by their current local authority during the secondment, with appropriate secondment agreements put in place to confirm working arrangements, management responsibilities, pay, terms and conditions, continuity of employment and arrangements at the end of the secondment period.

- 7.4 The legal partnership agreement for the End-to-End Hub between Bury and the ten local authorities will need to reflect the agreed secondment model, including responsibilities for employee and trade union consultation, management and supervision, funding, liabilities, exit arrangements and any costs arising from the operation or conclusion of the secondments. Any vacancies within the Hub structure that cannot be filled through secondment will be recruited to as Rochdale Borough Council employees, subject to the agreed governance and funding arrangements.

8. Sustainability Impact

- 8.1 An increased number of fostering households available to Bury children will be the overall desired impact.

Links with the Corporate Priorities:

Placement sufficiency is a key priority for the council in terms of fulfilling its statutory duties; ensuring the welfare of its Cared for Children population and is a key factor in managing budgetary pressures.

Equality Impact and Considerations:

*Please provide an explanation of the outcome(s) of an initial or full EIA and make **specific reference regarding the protected characteristic of Looked After Children**. There must be a signed off EIA template appended with a full analysis or explanation as to why an analysis is not needed for the report to be put forward to Cabinet. Sign off to be completed by the Council's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Manager (contact l.cawley@bury.gov.uk for advice).*

A full equality impact assessment has been completed which identified mostly positive impacts across several characteristics. Where immediate impacts are not as positive, mitigations have been identified to reduce negative impacts to neutral or create further positive impact as the activity progresses. There are no equalities concerns at this stage.

Environmental Impact and Considerations:

Please provide an explanation of the Environmental impact of this decision. Please include the impact on both **Carbon emissions** (contact climate@bury.gov.uk for advice) and **Biodiversity** (contact S.Tinsley@bury.gov.uk and Dennis.whittle@bury.gov.uk for advice)

Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Placement sufficiency	There is a legal requirement under Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 that mandates local authorities to secure, as far as reasonably practicable, enough suitable accommodation within their own area to meet the needs of cared for children. Placement pressures and an inability to evidence this requirement is met, puts the Local Authority at risk both from a budgetary and Ofsted perspective.
Governance Risk	Failure to establish a legally robust governance framework could expose participating authorities to challenge, financial liability, and operational disruption.
Information Governance Risk	Failure to establish appropriate information sharing arrangements could lead to breaches of UK GDPR, safeguarding concerns and regulatory intervention
Workforce Risk	The success of the model is dependent upon securing sufficient staffing resources from participating authorities.
Funding Risk	Future DfE funding beyond currently confirmed periods has not yet been secured and may require increased local authority contributions.

Procurement Implications:

Not applicable

Legal Implications:

The proposed Greater Manchester Fostering Hub arrangements are intended to enable participating local authorities to collaborate in the delivery of fostering recruitment, assessment and related functions through a hosted regional service model. Subject to completion of the final governance and contractual arrangements, there appears to be a sound legal basis for the delivery of operational functions through inter-authority arrangements, including under section 101 of the Local

Government Act 1972 and associated local authority powers to cooperate in the discharge of children's social care functions.

The Council will need to enter into a suite of legal and governance documents to give effect to the proposed arrangements. These are expected to include the inter-authority agreement, governance framework, financial arrangements, information sharing provisions, data protection arrangements, liabilities and indemnities, decision-making processes, withdrawal and dispute resolution mechanisms and any associated operational protocols. The final form of these arrangements remains subject to legal review and agreement.

Whilst there appears to be a sound legal basis for the delegation of recruitment, assessment, checking and fostering panel functions to the Regional Hub, further legal analysis is required in relation to the proposed delegation of the Agency Decision Maker function. As the Agency Decision Maker role involves the exercise of individual statutory approval powers under the fostering regulatory framework, it represents the aspect of the proposal most susceptible to legal challenge or query. The Council's legal advisers will therefore undertake further scrutiny of the proposed arrangements before implementation. Any final arrangements will be supported by legal advice and appropriately reflected within the relevant legal documentation. Should that review identify material legal risks, unresolved issues of principle, or a requirement for a materially different approach from that approved by Cabinet, the matter will be referred back to Cabinet for further consideration and determination.

Legal Services are awaiting detailed instructions regarding the full suite of legal and governance arrangements required to implement the Regional Hub model. Consequently, legal review of the detailed documentation has not yet been completed. The Council's position on the legal robustness of the final arrangements will therefore remain subject to review of the completed documentation and supporting operational proposals before implementation. Any material legal concerns identified through that process will be reported through the Council's governance arrangements as appropriate.

Financial Implications:

There is a current estimate £88,050 negative impact from CYP directorate discussions and initial outline agreements from this proposal.

This needs to be assessed against planned net increase in foster placements that will result in reduction of required Independent Fostering Placements, (based on

current average costs this is difference of £35,818, so 3 or more additional net increase in internal places would pay back initial investment required.

Those placements that stop a residential placement would save £391,465 annually based on current average figures. One placement diverted to additional net capacity would more than cover cost of investment and statistically proven to improve the young people's opportunities and life chances being in family-centric environment.

The Internal Fostering service numbers at Quarter 1 reporting are 162 (including both In-House Fostering 80, and Friends & Family Placements 82) which is slightly higher than budget (160) and forecasted to overspend by £285,100 (8.4%) against budget of £3,378,200

Appendices:

Appendix A – Funding Formula Options

Appendix B – Financial Contributions Breakdown (estimated)

Background papers:

Please list any background documents to this report and include a hyperlink where possible.

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning