



Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

***Tuesday, 16 September 2025 at 3.00 pm
Room 3 - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND***

If you wish to view proceedings, please click on this [Live Stream Link](#).
However, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

Items for Decision

The items for decision under individual Cabinet Members' delegated powers are listed overleaf, with indicative timings, and the related reports are attached. Decisions taken will become effective at the end of the working day on Monday 22 September unless called in by that date for review by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.

Copies of the reports are circulated (by e-mail) to all members of the County Council.

These proceedings are open to the public

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Reeves".

Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

September 2025

Committee Officer: **Email:**
committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Note: Date of next meeting: 21 October 2025

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, but please give as much notice as possible before the meeting.

Items for Decision

1. Declarations of Interest

See guidance below.

2. Questions from County Councillors

Any county councillor may, by giving notice to the Proper Officer by 9 am two working days before the meeting, ask a question on any matter in respect of the Cabinet Member's delegated powers.

The number of questions which may be asked by any councillor at any one meeting is limited to two (or one question with notice and a supplementary question at the meeting) and the time for questions will be limited to 30 minutes in total. As with questions at Council, any questions which remain unanswered at the end of this item will receive a written response.

Questions submitted prior to the agenda being despatched are shown below and will be the subject of a response from the appropriate Cabinet Member or such other councillor or officer as is determined by the Cabinet Member, and shall not be the subject of further debate at this meeting. Questions received after the despatch of the agenda, but before the deadline, will be shown on the Schedule of Addenda circulated at the meeting, together with any written response which is available at that time.

3. Petitions and Public Address

Members of the public who wish to speak on an item on the agenda at this meeting, or present a petition, can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection.

Requests to present a petition must be submitted no later than 9am ten working days before the meeting.

Requests to speak must be submitted no later than 9am three working days before the meeting.

Requests should be submitted to committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails, then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9am on the day of the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 1 - 2)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2025, resumed on 19 August 2025 to be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5. South Central Independent Fostering Agency Framework (Pages 3 - 10)

Cabinet Member: Children and Young People

Forward Plan Ref: 2025/174

Contact: Alison Walker, Commissioning Officer Promote and Prevent
(Alison.Walker@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Report by Director of Children's Services (**CMDCEYP**)

The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:

- a. **Approve the option to extend the South Central Independent Fostering Agency (SC-IFA) Framework for an extended period of 1 year (1st April 2026-31st March 2027).**

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

Members Code – Other registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

Other registrable interests include:

- a) Any unpaid directorships

- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.
- c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

Members Code – Non-registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under other registrable interests, then you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

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Agenda Item 4

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (RESUMED FROM 15 JULY 2025)

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 19 August 2025 commencing at 11.30 am and finishing at 11.45 am

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Sean Gaul – in the Chair

Officers: Jack Ahier (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Stephen Chandler (Executive Director of People and Transformation), Caroline Kelly (Head of Joint Commissioning – Start Well), Lisa Lyons (Director of Children's Services), Ben Piper (Democratic Services Officer).

The Cabinet Member considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting [, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting/the following additional documents:] and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports [agenda, reports and schedule/additional documents] are attached to the signed Minutes.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda No. 1)

There were none.

2 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS (Agenda No. 2)

There were none.

3 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS (Agenda No. 3)

There were none.

4 YOUNG PEOPLES SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION (YPSA) - CONTRACT EXTENSIONS (Agenda No. 4)

The Chair introduced the item to the meeting.

The Chair noted the concerns that he had regarding the proposed changes to the schemes and asked officers to revisit some aspects of the report, especially given his lived experience of the policy, to ensure the system would work as effectively as it could for all participants.

The Chair formally deferred the item until 11:30am on Tuesday 19 August.

Meeting deferred – 4:50pm, Tuesday 15 July 2025

Meeting resumed – 11:30am, Tuesday 19 August 2025

The Chair introduced the item to the meeting and thanked officers for making changes from the meeting held on 16 July.

The Chair noted that he had lived experience of these schemes and that it was extremely important to get the details right.

It was reiterated that the age change proposed in the report would only affect those children and young people not currently in the scheme.

The Director of Children's Services confirmed that this was an interim position within a transition phase, as the contracts were due to expire.

The Chair thanked officers for all of their work and agreed to the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED to:

- a) To delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Deputy Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal and Governance, to extend the YPSA contracts for 18 months from 1st October 2025 to 30th April 2027.**

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

Divisions Affected – N/A

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

16 September 2025

Extension of the South Central Independent Fostering Agencies Framework

Report by Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) Approve the option to extend the South Central Independent Fostering Agency (SC-IFA) Framework for an extended period of 1 year (1st April 2026-31st March 2027).**

Executive Summary

1. To approve the option to extend the current framework for a further year from 1st April 2026 to the 31st of March 2027.
 - The SC-IFA Framework was renewed in 2021, with its current term spanning from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2026, and an option for an extension of up to two years available.
 - The SC IFA Partnership Agreement includes 16 local authorities and sets out a framework for procuring Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements in the region.
 - Oxfordshire County Council has participated in the South-Central Independent Fostering Agency (SC-IFA) Framework for several years. Management of the framework was originally under Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, but responsibility transferred to Southampton City Council on 1 January 2024 after changes in management and a joint agreement among partner authorities.
 - Southampton City Council is requesting a one-year contract extension under current terms while talks continue with the Southeast Regional Care Co-operative about long-term framework management.

Background

2. The South Central Independent Fostering Agency Framework (SC_IFA) was renewed in 2021, with its current term spanning from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2026, and an option for an extension of up to two years available.
3. The SC IFA Partnership Agreement includes 16 local authorities and sets out a framework for procuring Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements in the region, as managed by brokerage officers.
4. The framework is divided into four LOTS/Categories:
 - Standard placements
 - Disability placements
 - Parent & Child placements
 - Enhanced placements
5. Oxfordshire County Council has partnered in the South-Central Independent Fostering Agency (SC-IFA) Framework for many years. Originally managed by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, responsibility shifted to Southampton City Council on 1 January 2024 following changes in management and a joint decision by partner authorities.
6. Southampton City Council is seeking a one-year extension of the contract under the existing terms and conditions while discussions with the Southeast Regional Care Co-operative about the long-term management of the framework are ongoing.
7. The continuation on the framework will maintain service continuity, market stability, and placement quality and sufficiency for vulnerable young people.
8. Each South Central Independent Fostering Agency placement is priced according to an annual rate card per LOT or is pre-determined for off contract placements. Upon confirmation of a framework placement, the agreed price remains fixed for the duration of the contract, as there is currently no mechanism for annual price adjustments. Off contract placements may be subject to an annual uplift under most circumstances, typically initiated by the provider; however, the specific increase is determined through agreement between the local authority and the IFA, generally becoming effective from the following April.
9. Annual inflation (fixed maximum percentage) adjustments are agreed upon starting in September for new placements made from 1st April of the following year.

10. Each local authority is required to pay an annual single management fee of £1095 and quarterly costs that reflect proportional usage and core costs under the framework, typically ranging from £4,000 to £5,000 each quarter.
11. This framework includes a fully compliant list of providers with fixed prices for placements, ensuring price stability throughout the contract duration. The framework facilitates the purchasing of individual placements from providers on a call off basis, rather than through a block contract arrangement.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

12. The proposed Approved Provider List incorporates two of the key priorities set out by the Start Well Commissioning Team and aligns with three of the priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan, as below:

Priorities of the Start Well Commissioning Team

- increase number of children placed in county.
- Improve access to services to reduce inequality.

Priorities of the Corporate Plan.

- Priority 3 - Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents.
- Priority 7 - Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.
- Priority 9 - Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefits.

To achieve the priorities set out above and to address the gaps identified in the Sufficiency Strategy, the Start Well HESC team are working with operational colleagues in Health, Social Care and Education on the following:

- OCC will work positively and collaboratively with existing and potential providers to develop a range of appropriate provision to meet the needs of Oxfordshire's children within County (ensuring access to services, continuity of schooling, maintenance of support networks).
- OCC will share what we are learning about our children's needs and features through the Valuing Care needs assessment tool, to identify what is needed from the local market to support those needs and that the needs assessment tool needs updating more regularly following the original placement request.

Vision and Strategic Objectives

The Oxfordshire Children and Young People's Plan (2018-2023)¹ outlines a

¹ [Oxfordshire Children and Young People's Plan](#)

vision to make Oxfordshire a great place for children and young people to grow up in and to have the opportunity to become everything they want to be'. To achieve this, our strategic objectives are:

Be Successful

To ensure children have the best start in life; ensure they have access to high quality education, employment and motivational training; go to school feeling inspired to stay and learn; and have good self-esteem and faith in themselves.

Be Happy and Healthy

Services are available to promote good health and prevent ill health; learn the importance of healthy, secure relationships and having a support network; have access to services to improve overall wellbeing, and easy ways to get active.

Financial Implications

The financial implications section should be completed by a member of the finance service

13. A revenue budget has been established for Independent Fostering purchases; detailing expenditure related to both the South-Central Framework and SPOT providers. The following table presents the expenditure for 2024-2025 along with comparative usage data for the same period.

Table1: Spend and usage 2024/2025

2024-2025	Figures	Percentage of Spend		Breakdown of usage	Comment
South Central Spend	6,617,205.00	60	%	76% usage	More for Less
SPOT Spend	4,446,711.00	40	%	24% usage	Less for more
TOTAL	11,063,916.00				
Framework usage costs	18,900.00				
Other Misc	17,204.00				
Overall Spend	11,100,020.00				
Budget	10,019,600.00				

Variance/Overspend	1,080,420.00				

Data has been analysed and demonstrates regular use and benefits of finding placements via the framework.

Table 2: Oxfordshire's usage to date.

Contract year & quarter	Number of South-Central placements	Number of SPOT placements	Total IFA usage	Percentage of South-Central placements
Year 1 Q1	207	53	260	80%
Year 1 Q2	219	51	270	81%
Year 1 Q3	212	59	271	78%
Year 1 Q4	211	53	264	80%
Average use for year 1 per Quarter 22-23	212.25	54	266.25	80%
Year 2 Q1	209	48	257	81%
Year 2 Q2	200	45	245	82%
Year 2 Q3	190	44	234	81%
Year 2 Q4	189	40	229	83%
Average use for year 2 per quarter 23-24	197	44.25	241.25	82%
Year 3 Q1	192	42	234	82%
Year 3 Q2	178	58	236	75%
Year 3 Q3	196	65	261	75%
Year 3 Q4	191	69	260	73%
Average use for year 3 per quarter 24-25	189.25	58.5	247.75	76%*
Year 4 Q1 25-26	206	69	275	75%

*There is a slight decline in usage observed in Year 3 and the beginning of Year 4, primarily because several providers have withdrawn from the contract due to the uplift clause not applying to existing placements.

Comments checked by: Lewis Gosling

Lewis Gosling Assistant Finance Business Partner,
Lewis.Gosling@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

- The Council's powers and duties to purchase fostering services are set out at Part III of the National Assistance Act 1948, the Care Act 2014, the Children and Families Act 2017 and the Children Act 1989.

Southampton City Council undertook the original procurement exercise to set up the framework arrangements as lead commissioner and is the purchasing

contracting party in the existing framework agreement. Such procurement exercise was conducted in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended).

Although the Council is a named purchaser in the framework agreement it is not a party to that agreement and has no contractual obligation to use the framework. This will also be true for any extension of the framework agreement.

The only contractual commitment for the Council arising from the extension of the framework agreement and the ancillary access agreement is the Council's financial obligation to pay the administration fees to Southampton City Council in accordance with such access agreement (as set out at paragraph 11 above).

The extension of the framework agreement will permit the Council to continue to lawfully purchase fostering services under call-off contracts provided suppliers are selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the framework agreement.

The use of the framework agreement by the Council reduces the Council's reliance on direct award spot contracting. Such spot contracting is by its nature neither competitive nor fair and, when aggregated, runs the risk of breaching procurement rules.

Jonathan Pool, Solicitor (contracts), jonathan.pool@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Equality & Inclusion Implications

15. The Independent Fostering Agency Providers commit to providing inclusive and equal services to a diverse range of children and young people, and to promote equality and diversity as part of their recruitment and employment practices (including staff, potential staff, children or foster carers) on the basis of a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2020.

All Independent Fostering Agencies encourage children to develop respect for themselves and for others.

All Independent Fostering Agencies deliver services that recognise and build on the strengths of children and young people from all cultures, religions, gender, age sexual orientation, ability and backgrounds in ways that meet their needs and help them to achieve their full potential.

All Independent Fostering Agencies ensure children are given the opportunity to be cared for and educated in order to develop their full potential.

All children are encouraged and supported to understand their rights and be well-informed about ways to challenge discrimination.

All Independent Fostering Agencies ensure that children are cared for with foster carers who have been suitably trained in all aspects of equality and diversity including legislation and their responsibilities.

Sustainability Implications

- Independent Fostering Agencies ensure sustainability by adopting strategies to minimise their environmental impact, such as reducing waste and utilising sustainable resources. Creating nurturing environments that are resource efficient, ensuring that every aspect of foster care aligns with sustainability principles. They also encourage involving the community and fostering relationships. These practices not only contribute to sustainability but also prepare children for a future where environment consciousness is increasingly important.

Risk Management

- If the Council do not continue as a partner on the South Central Independent Fostering Agency Framework, it will face additional financial pressures. Legally, we are required to provide suitable foster homes for most children we care for. Without this approval, the Council would continue using Independent Fostering Agencies on an off framework basis, which is less cost-effective and offers less control over fees and annual inflation increases.

1. Options Appraisal

The preferred option is option 2.

	OPTIONS	BENEFITS	RISKS	MITIGATION
1.	Do Nothing – Allow the framework to continue without Oxfordshire being on the framework – end date would be 31.03.2026	We would not have to pay the one off and quarterly fees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the authority decides not to participate in the framework and withdraws, the cost and number of off framework placements will increase. 	Continue to work closely with providers to ensure that OCC remains their preferred LA when considering placements. To broker comparative rates to ensure best value.
2.	Continue to be part of the framework for an additional year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fixed prices for a set period Compliant providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extending the contract under the same conditions may lead to some 	Risk is reduced due to great working relationships with many

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralised contract management instead of 16 separate contracts • Information sharing among authorities • Non-negotiable prices, except for LOT 4, which has specific parameters and conditions 	providers withdrawing due to the uplift clause not covering existing placements.	providers on the framework, and those who have already come off of the framework.
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Lisa Lyons
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Ally Walker Commissioning Officer, Start Well
Commissioning Team
Alison.walker@oxfordshire.gov.uk

September 2025