

# Our City, Our Wellbeing



**Creating Shared Wealth, Reducing Inequality**

## Scheme of Delegation



Version	13
Approved by	PSW/DLT/PPP
Publication Date	May 2025
Review Date	September 2025
PH No.	

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Scheme of Delegation is:

- to set out which Officers within Children's Social Care are authorised to make binding decisions on behalf of the Council.
- to identify the lowest level of management that can take responsibility for a specific decision or action in respect of an individual child's case. Whenever possible the decision/action will be made within the case responsible person's line management, but the document permits any officer at the appropriate level or higher to make a decision, in order to avoid delay.

## 2. Framework for reporting

This is set out in the protocol for Officer delegation in Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Constitution. Staff below the Decision Maker's level of authority are expected to make informed recommendations to the Decision Maker and to take forward the implementation of the decision. They should not take responsibility for the decision itself.

## 3. Limitations and conditions

Designated Managers are managers who have delegated authority to approve certain decisions and/or give consent in certain circumstances. There will be other circumstances in which designated managers must be notified of events. In all cases, authorisation and/or consent should be sought directly from the officer named below as having the delegated authority, e.g. where consent is needed for blood tests on a looked after child, the responsible Team Manager should refer directly to the Head of Service. Similarly, notification should be made directly to the officer named as the individual to be notified. In addition, other managers in the line management chain should be informed, for example by copying them into correspondence.

All delegated functions within this scheme must be exercised:

- in accordance with all parts of the Council's Constitution, and in particular Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) which sets out the Responsibility for functions;
- to comply with the policy framework of the Council and the Council's corporate strategies;
- within approved budgetary provision and with regard to the Council's Financial and Contract Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Financial Standards;
- having regard to agreed arrangements for recording decisions made;

- having regard to advice received from the relevant Director or his/her staff on professional and technical aspects of the matter in question.

Any emails should be distinct and the subject line should state clearly that the message concerns an authorisation, request for consent or a notification.

Any additional paperwork required by procedures must be made available.

Unless stated otherwise, references to Head of Service and Principal Manager are to those managers responsible for the child, i.e. the social worker's line managers although in their absence another manager of the same level can substitute.

## 4. Delegation of Officers

Delegation of Officers is subject to:

- any statutory provisions which apply;
- the exclusion of any matters which remain for decision by the Council or where the function, powers and duties are the responsibility of the Cabinet or within the Terms of Reference and delegations of a Committee, unless specifically delegated by the person or body responsible to a particular Officer;
- accountability to the Cabinet in respect of executive decisions made under the Scheme of Delegation.

## 5. General Principles

In any situations shown as requiring consent or authorisation, these must be secured prior to any action.

In all cases, designated officers can only authorise expenditure within the limits of the usual budget delegation framework and any temporary financial controls.

The Press Office must be notified of circumstances thought likely to attract public/media attention. The purpose is to forewarn the Press Office and to prepare for any media enquiries.

## 6. Clear record of decision making

It is important to maintain a clear and accurate record of our decision-making process. This practice supports defensible decision-making and assists in addressing any challenges that may arise. For all decisions set out within this scheme of delegation, it is essential to document what was considered, who considered it, and how the decision was reached. This documentation should be saved as **management oversight or senior management oversight within 24 hours**. Clear record-keeping ensures transparency and accountability in our processes

		Decision-maker						Planning forum
	Decision	Corporate Director	Director	Head of Service	Principal Manager	Social Worker	Other/Comment	
Children in care/about to become children in care/leaving care								
1	Approving the matching of a particular foster home with the needs of a particular child.				Fostering Principal Manager Fostering (FPM)	✓		Matching meetings, CIC/CSS PMs and fostering and/or adoption PMs.
2	To agree the registration of a foster home/household (General)			✓ HOS - Fostering Negative rec.	✓ FPM Positive rec.		The LA cannot delegate their authority to another person but they can appoint more than one decision maker	Fostering Service to present to Fostering Panel which makes their recommendation. ADM approval then required.
3	To agree the suspension of fostering approval.		✓	✓ HOS Fostering				In cases of S47, consultation with LADO and Director.
4	To recommend the termination of fostering approval.			✓ HOS Fostering				Fostering PM and Fostering Panel make recommendations to ADM (HOS) Fostering for their decision.  If they agree to terminate approval, they agree access and payment for referrals to the Independent Review Mechanism, if required.
5	Agree the continuation of a carers assessment with a negative outcome from a DBS.				✓FPM			FPM and Fostering Panel
6	To decide whether to approve kinship carers persons as temporary foster carers under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.		✓	✓ HOS Childrens team				FPM makes recommendation on (IVA), HOS Children's makes decision for Temporary Approval/progress to full Connected Carer assessment.  It is for a 16-week period only: if extension required (max 8 wks.) This to be approved by FPM.
7	To grant a temporary exemption to the usual fostering limit.			HOS Fostering				Subsequently ratified at Fostering Panel if permanent approval of variation is required.
8	To agree the seeking of an external residential placement.	✓	✓					Accommodation Profile signed off by TM and Service Manager for the child involved.

		Decision-maker						
	Decision	Corporate Director	Director	Head of Service	Principal Manager	Social Worker	Other/ Comment	Planning forum
Children in care/about to become children in care/leaving care								
9	To agree the seeking of an Independent Fostering Agency placement.		✓	✓				Accommodation Profile signed off by HOS for the child involved.
10	To sign off and agree Annual Foster Carer Review for continuance of approval				✓			Signed off by the Fostering IRO, reviewed by Principal Manager
11	To end placement of a young person from a children's home.		✓	✓	✓			In consultation with IRO
12	To agree the use of an Out of Area Placement.	✓	✓				To be presented at High Needs Panel	Resources Panel.
13	To agree the permanence plan for a child who is in care.			✓	✓		IRO Based on PM recommendation	Needs to be agreed at (2 <sup>nd</sup> / 4 month) Statutory Review.
14	To approve an unregulated placement of a young person.	✓	✓					Reg 24 must be considered
15	To agree a planned placement change for a young person in Years 10 or 11.		✓	✓			Having been discussed with Head of the Virtual School and IRO	Exceptional circumstances. CA Guidance Vol 2 & Reg 10 "a decision to change placement that would have the effect of disrupting arrangements for education (at KS 4) must not be put into effect until it has been approved by a nominated officer, except in an emergency/ where the placement is terminated because of an immediate risk of serious harm to the child or to protect others from serious injury). Subject to care planning procedures and in consultation with the Virtual Head
16	To approve placement of child on Care Order with parents.			✓			In consultation with IRO	Decision fed back to a Statutory Review Schedule 3 Assessment report approved.

		Decision-maker						
	Decision	Corporate Director	Director	Head of Service	Principal Manager	Social Worker	Other/ Comment	Planning forum
Children in care/about to become children in care/leaving care								
17	To permit child or young person in care to leave UK for holiday of up to 1 month, during school holidays				✓		It is best practice to obtain parental consent for any holidays, but for trips up to one month, we can overrule parents if the child is on a care order. For children cared for under S20 – Parent with PR must consent	Decision fed back into Statutory Review Parents' views should be obtained even where SoTCC has PR. If S20, only parents or those with PR can give consent. Social worker to discuss with school and seek permission from Virtual School. Permission granted from Head of service to sign the permission letter.
18	To permit a child or young person in care to take holiday during term time	✓	✓					Social worker to discuss with school and Virtual School. Permission granted from the Corporate Director or Director to sign the permission letter.
19	To permit a child or young person in care to leave UK for holiday of more than 1 month, during school holidays			✓			Any holiday for over a period of more than one month requires either the written consent of every person with PR for the child or a Court Order	As above.
20	To permit child or young person to attend activities such as school trips or camps.				✓	Snr Social Worker	Foster Carer or Residential Social Worker	Suggested decision maker - to be agreed at Placement Planning Meeting. If S20 only parents can give consent to those with PR.
21	To permit child or young person to stay overnight with friend's family.				✓	✓ Snr Social Worker	Foster Carer or Residential Worker in consultation with Principal Manager and Social Worker	Subject to any restrictions agreed at Placement Planning Meeting/Statutory Review. The principal manager has oversight. Delegated Authority – placement agreement meeting

		Decision-maker						
	Decision	Corporate Director	Director	Head of Service	Principal Manager	Social Worker	Other/ Comment	Planning forum
Children in care/about to become children in care/leaving care								
22	To consent to planned/unplanned emergency/non-emergency surgery, treatment for life threatening conditions, sensitive medical treatment or invasive health screening (e.g. blood tests) and routine surgery – for child or young person on a Care Order - NB Fraser implications.		✓	✓	✓		For both emergency and non-emergency medical treatments, we will always seek parental consultation and agreement, but if the child is under an Interim Care Order (ICO) or care order, we retain the final decision-making authority, especially in emergencies where parents cannot be reached, while also considering the child's Gillick competence and overriding their consent if necessary to safeguard their welfare.	Children in Care Nurse or Doctor may need to be consulted. Decision fed back into Statutory Review as appropriate.  Consultation with parents is important in serious and life-threatening situations, time allowing. Subject to child protection considerations and if in doubt parents should be consulted. The attending medic has overriding responsibility.
23	To consent to turn off life support for a looked after child subject to a care order.	✓						Legal advice and court ordered to be confirmed prior to any decision making.
24	To agree to religious custom or ritual requiring parental consent (e.g. baptism) – child or young person on Care Order.			✓				Decision fed back in to Statutory Review. Consultation with parents where appropriate.
25	To sign passport application (child on Care Order).				✓			Decision fed back in to Statutory Review.
26	To support/not support foster carer application for residence order or Special Guardianship Order.				✓		In consultation with IRO	Statutory Review and/or Permanency Panel
27	The financial element of the SGO support plan has to be agreed at permanence panel and signed off by the Head of Service			✓HOS Adoption and Fostering				Permanency Panel

Decision-maker								
	Decision	Corporate Director	Director	Head of Service	Principal Manager	Social Worker	Other/ Comment	Planning forum
Children in care/about to become children in care/leaving care								
28	Foster carer mileage is signed off by the supervising SW and can then be sent to finance					✓		Social worker to check mileage
29	To support child's application for British citizenship (child in care).			✓				Decision fed back into Statutory Review. Consultation must take place with parents and those with PR
30	To seek publicity in respect of a search for missing children.	✓	✓				If the child is subject to an Interim Care Order (ICO) or a care order, we are authorised to exercise our parental responsibility to approve the media release.  However, it is imperative that the press release does not include any information pertaining to the court proceedings.	DCS informed in accordance with separate protocol. Seek consent from family where possible and for those who cared for under S20. Out-of-hour seek approval from On call Service Director.  If the case is still within court proceedings, we must promptly update the Court regarding the child's circumstances. This update should be provided without delay and should include consideration of whether a Recovery Order is necessary.  We are to inform the Court that we have taken the step to issue a press release. The welfare of the child remains our paramount concern, and therefore, we must act swiftly and decisively.
31	To agree discharge from care of a child aged 16 or 17 years, who has been accommodated under section 20.	✓	✓				IRO to be consulted	The Young person must have requested or must agree with this decision. Decision must be ratified at a review.
32	To authorise the change of name of a child in care.	✓	✓				Legal Services	In consultation with parents/those who hold PR.  Legal advice should always be sought as a court application may be required
33	To authorise the provision or end family contact between child in care and parents.			✓			Legal Services Section 34.4 order	Head of Service to agree in principle and IRO endorses for up to 7 days prior to legal support.



		Decision-maker						
	Decision	Corporate Director	Director	Head of Service	Principal Manager	Social Worker	Other/ Comment	Planning forum
Children in care/about to become children in care/leaving care								
34	To authorise placement of a child outside England and Wales.	✓	✓					As part of Care Planning Process.
35	To agree for a young person subject to a Care Order to join the armed forces.	✓	✓					Oversight from DCS but delegated to Director. Must be discharged from care prior to joining.
36	To authorise a staying put agreement.			✓	✓			
37	To agree planned accommodation (Section 20) arrangements		✓					Legal Gateway A planning meeting must first be held to consider kinship placements.
38	To change the prospective date of LAC reviews which will be out of statutory timescales			✓				In consultation with the IRO
39	To initiate care proceedings where child or young person is accommodated		✓					Legal Gateway Panel Decision fed back in to statutory child care review
40	To use an independent visitor					Social Worker	with IRO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>In consultation with the IRO</li><li>Recommend a view from CIC Review</li></ul>
41	To bring placements to an end (concern for child) - foster placement			✓	✓			Head of service and if an in-house carer, consultation with HOS Fostering, , IRO and Legal services. Discussed at a Strategy Discussion.
42	To end the placement of a child placed for adoption, not yet legally adopted (concern for child)			✓				Professionals meeting is required to include the Head of service Fostering and Adoption and HOS Childrens team, which will look at the concerns of the adoptive placement and any planning and support that has been offered. All decisions must be recorded on LiquidLogic. <a href="#">Adoption Disruptions Policy</a>
43	To approve prospective Adopter's		✓	✓HOS Adoption PSW				ADM Process following Adoption Panel
44	ADM decision that a child is suitable for adoption		✓	✓HOS Adoption PSW				ADM sits at Service Director, but can be delegated to Head of service for Adoption or the PSW


		Decision-maker						
	Decision	Corporate Director	Director	Head of Service	Principal Manager	Social Worker	Other/ Comment	Planning forum
Children in care/about to become children in care/leaving care								
45	To bring placement to an end (concern for child) - child placed with prospective adopters		✓	✓				Head of service Corporate Parenting, IRO and Legal Services.
46	To approve temporary placement with relatives/friends (Reg. 24)			✓				IRO to be consulted with and decision fed back in to statutory child care review.
47	To approve Reg25a – Approve an adopter as a temporary foster carer		✓	✓HOS Fostering / Adoption				
48	To consent to a termination of a pregnancy (young person looked after)	✓	✓	✓				Consultation with Corporate Director and Director and legal  Decision feedback into statutory review and in consultation with the IRO.  Privacy for young person must be maintained. Fraser guidelines must be reviewed as part of decision making and management oversight.  Legal advice should always be sought when considering consent to a termination of pregnancy for a Cared For Child
49	To consent to contraception (young person looked after)				✓			With consultation with Head of service Decision fed back in to statutory review
50	To support/ not support foster carer application for Child Arrangement Order (child looked after)				✓			Looked After Children panel Via Legal Gateway Panel Interim agreement (maximum of seven days) before case is presented at LAC panel
51	To write a Child’s Permanence Report for the purposes of potential adoption				✓	✓	The social worker must be three years post qualified. QA process undertaken by a Team Manager and Adoption Service Manager	Consultation with IRO through Statutory review process

		Decision-maker						
Decision		Corporate Director	Director	Head of Service	Principal Manager	Social Worker	Other/ Comment	Planning forum
Children In Need								
1.	To commence a Section 47 investigation				✓			Strategy Discussion and subsequent outcome.
2.	To convene a Children in Need meeting					✓ Snr Social Worker and SW	As part of assessment and direct work with children and families.	
3.	To convene a family group conference (FGC)					✓	Manager to be consulted	
4.	Decision to go to Legal Gateway Panel (LGP)			✓	✓		In consultation with the team manager	
5.	To convene a child protection conference (CPC)				✓		In consultation with SQA Service	
6.	To change the date of a planned child protection conference (CPC)			✓			In consultation with SQA Service	
7.	To commission a residential family assessment			✓			Via Legal Gateway Finance Panel	

		Decision-maker						
	Decision	Corporate Director	Director	Head of Service	Principal Manager	Social Worker	Other/ Comment	Planning forum
Court Orders							All decisions should be made following consultation with legal services	
1.	To apply for protection orders – emergency protection order (EPO) or Police Powers of Protection through police		✓	✓	✓ EDT			To be reviewed at the Legal Planning Meeting if a decision is made outside of the meeting following the application.  Legal advice should always be sought when considering applications for an Emergency Protection Order
2.	To apply for recovery orders			✓	✓		-	Via a strategy meeting or case discussion, legal advice should always be sought when considering applications for a Recovery Order
3.	To apply for a child assessment order			✓			Decision based on discussion in a multi-agency meeting, e.g. child protection conference, Children in Need meeting.	Legal Gateway Panel
4.	To apply for a care or supervision order		✓				Decision following discussion in a legal planning meeting	Legal Gateway Panel
5.	To approve interim care plan				✓			
6.	To approve care plan for the court (court order having been applied for) initial and final				✓			
7.	Children Subject to a Care Order who require a Mental Health Act Assessments acting as the nearest relative		✓	✓				Legal advice should be sought to determine the correct application, as this could be a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) application or a Court of Protection application, depending on the child's age. Early legal advice will help identify the appropriate court application, if any, that may be required
8.	To seek discharge of care order or supervision order				✓			Placement Review, Placement with Parents or High Needs Panel to be aware of planning and circumstances.  Legal advice should always be sought when considering an application to discharge a care order or supervision order

		Decision-maker						
	Decision	Corporate Director	Director	Head of Service	Principal Manager	Social Worker	Other/ Comment	Planning forum
Court Orders							All decisions should be made following consultation with legal services	
9.	To use secure accommodation without an order (maximum 72 hours)	✓					S25 Children Act 1989 / Children (Secure Accommodation) Regulations 1991, Vol. 4 CA 89 Guidance <i>Decisions to place a child in a secure accommodation should be authorised by a nominated senior manager of the LA children's services department</i>	Based on a strategy meeting, legal advice should always be sought when secure accommodation is being considered
10.	To seek secure accommodation (maximum 72 hours)	✓	✓				Statutory child care review recommends if child already looked after. Planning meeting for non-looked after child.	<i>Legal advice should always be sought when secure accommodation is being considered</i>
11.	To seek a Section 34 order concerning contact			✓	✓		Statutory review to be consulted with the IRO	Consultation with IRO through Statutory review process Legal advice should always be sought when a Section 34(4) order is being considered
12.	To quality assure and sign off Section 7 reports				✓		In consultation with the Court Progression Officer.	
13.	To quality assure and sign off Section 37 reports			✓				<b>Via legal gateway</b>
14.	To quality assure and sign off all other court reports				✓		In consultation with the Court Progression Officer.	
15.	Appeal a Court decision		✓					In consultation with legal services
16.	Sign off SGO assessment, support plan and financial support plan			✓HOS Fostering and Adoption			Presentation to the Permanency Panel.	

Decision-maker								
	Decision	Corporate Director	Director	Head of Service	Principal Manager	Social Worker	Other/ Comment	Planning forum
SAFEGUARDING								
1.	Decision to withhold the whereabouts of a child in care from a person, usually the parent			✓	✓		Schedule 2 S15 (4) Children Act 1989. A local authority is not required to inform any person of the whereabouts of a child if-the child is in the care of the authority; and the authority has reasonable cause to believe that informing the person would prejudice the child's welfare <i>NB This does not apply to children accommodated under S20 Children Act 1989 when there is no power to withhold this information unless an order has been applied for and obtained</i> IRO and Legal to be consulted	
2.	Decision to refuse parental contact with a child subject to a Care Order for up to seven days in an emergency when it is necessary to do so to safeguard or promote the child's welfare			✓	✓		Where the child is subject of an ICO or full Care Order an application to the Court for authority to terminate the contact will always be necessary if contact is to be suspended for more than 7 days.  IRO, Head of service, Principal Manager and Legal to be consulted	Legal advice should always be sought when considering ending contact between parents and a child in care. This advice should be obtained before making any decision to cease contact, except in emergency situations. Decision fed back in to Statutory Review
3	To agree packages of children in need or cared for children support costing less than £78,000			✓ Up to £78,000	✓ Up to £39,000			High Needs Panel If Health contribution Tri-Partite Panel In consultation with the responsible Head of service
4	Act as guarantor for tenancies		✓	✓				
5	Signing of any correspondence with local/national elected members, Ombudsman, Children's Commissioner, Information Commissioners Office.		✓					In discussion with Information Governance team
6	Complaints – Response by Principal Manager, approved by Head of service			✓	✓			

		Decision-maker						
	Decision	Corporate Director	Director	Head of Service	Principal Manager	Social Worker	Other/ Comment	Planning forum
MISCELLANEOUS								
1.	To agree delegated authority for foster carers			✓	✓			 Delegated_Authority_for_foster_carers_P
2.	a) Legal Gateway b) Permanency Panel c) Tri-Partite Panel d) High Needs Panel e) Placement Review Panel		✓  ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓			All of the Panels are held weekly, chaired by the Director other than b, d and e which are delegated to the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting. All Terms of reference are located on the Practice Hub.
3.	Updates to the Practice Hub			✓ PSW				Delegated to the Principal Social Worker by the Director.