

meeting **ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**

date 13th July 2011. agenda item number **6 (a)**

REPORT OF SERVICE MANAGER, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

TRAVEL REQUEST FOR SOCIAL WORKER AND INTERPRETER

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for one social worker and an interpreter to visit Poland to place three children (EO, KO, BM) with their extended family members. A Special Guardianship assessment of the extended family members, to care for the three children who are currently in foster care was undertaken and was very positive and they are now to be placed there permanently.
- 1.2 Approval is also sought for travel for the three children to Poland under the supervision of the social worker to be placed with their extended family members and begin their new life.

2. Background

- 2.1 Under the Travel and Accommodation Policy and other arrangements approved by Full Council on 18 June 2009, the Administration Committee is the appropriate body for approving staff travel

3. Reason for travel

- 3.1 Approval is sought for one social worker and one interpreter to visit Poland for the reasons set out below.
- 3.2 The three children are currently on an Interim Care Order and are placed with foster carers. The Local Authority has a duty to assess any suitable family members who may well be able to provide care of the children. Extended family members who have been identified in Poland have requested an assessment to care for the children.
- 3.3 The social worker went to Poland and completed an assessment in August 2010. This travel and accommodation was approved through the Committee's urgency procedures. It was agreed by all parties to the case that this assessment was sufficiently thorough and would have met the Court's expectations in normal circumstances. However the Court ordered that further work and assessment to be completed. This further work reflects the international dimension and overall

complexity of the case, and is more than would be expected in a case of this nature based solely in the UK.

- 3.4 Further work was completed which included meetings with Polish officials. Matters of law, legal mechanisms and subsequent agreements were discussed.
- 3.5 The IRO at the Looked After Child Review (07th April 2011) recommended that the children have some form of introductory sessions re their repatriation to Poland.
- 3.6 The Local Authority proposed that EM and KO return with the social worker, where EM would be allowed to take her communion as well as both having an introductory session with their maternal grandmother and extended family. Their cultural needs were addressed, and it provided them with the chance to re-familiarise themselves and acclimatise with their native country, culture and tongue. This travel was also authorised through the Committee's urgency procedures.
- 3.7 This option avoided the problem of sending the children alone to Poland to achieve the above outcomes, or paying for the family or maternal grandmother to come to the UK to make the introductions. In addition it allowed the Local Authority to undertake the assessment with the extended family and the child on the ground giving further robustness and rigour to the assessment.
- 3.8 With the assessment of Special Guardianship complete it is anticipated by the Local Authority and other parties that the Court will be satisfied enough to make an Order for the children to reside in Poland with their extended family.
- 3.9 Consequently, this is a request for flights for the children, the social worker and interpreter and accommodation for the latter.
- 3.10 The next court date is 06th July which will be followed by a Looked After Child Review on 21st July. The Local Authority hopes to be able to act quickly to secure the children with their extended family as soon as possible after this date and wishes to avoid the unfortunate timing of the previous request for approval to travel and accommodation.
- 3.11 The only other option would be for the Local Authority to pay for the extended family to attend the UK and remove the children paying for their flights and accommodation and as well as board. In addition it would be necessary to pay an Independent Social worker to place the children and hand over the children and their legal files to the Polish Courts and Polish Social Services.
- 3.12 This request is subject to a Special Guardianship Order being made. The timing of the expedition would also depend on acquiring a passport for the youngest child BM who having been born in the UK faces a more complicated procedure for obtaining a passport.

4. **Financial implications – Travel and accommodation requirements**

4.1 The estimated costs are shown below. Final costs will depend on costs of flights etc at the time of booking.

Description	Approximate Cost
Flights	£450
Accommodation, meals etc	£700
Total	£1150

4.2 The costs are based on one-way tickets for the children and return travel for the social worker and interpreter. The cost will be borne by Children and Young People's Services.

5. **Statutory and policy implications**

5.1 Under the Children's Act 1989 the Local Authority has a duty to consider relatives or significant others to care for these children. Under the Children's Act 2004 and the Every Child Matters, the Local Authority has a duty to consider and meet the cultural and developmental needs of children.

6. **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that

- I. Approval is given for one social worker and one interpreter to travel to Poland for four nights, together with any necessary travel and accommodation arrangements
- II. Approval is given for travel for the three children to Poland to enable them to be settled with their new family.
- III. Travel to be made as soon as feasible after the court order has been made and the Looked After Children Review has confirmed this course of action.

Amanda Collinson
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Children and Young People's Services

Service Director (Finance) Comments (NDR)

The financial implications are set out in section 4

Legal Services Comments (SG 05.07.11)

The Committee is the appropriate body to consider the matters set out in the report. The Delegation to Administration Committee contained in Part III of the Council's Constitution, Responsibility for Functions, includes approval for officer travel outside the UK

Background Papers Available for Inspection

Nil

Electoral Divisions Affected