

Cabinet – Supplementary Agenda No. 1

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held on:

Date: Tuesday, 25 August 2026

Time: 7.00pm

Venue: St George's Centre, Pembroke Road, Chatham ME4 4UH

Agenda

- 4. Questions to the Cabinet** **(Pages 3 - 4)**
Appendix 1, previously marked to follow, is now attached.
- 6. Annual Fostering Report 2025–2026** **(Pages 5 - 6)**
An addendum is enclosed setting out the draft minutes of discussion of the report by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 7. Adoption Partnership South East – Annual Report – 2025/2026** **(Pages 7 - 8)**
An addendum is enclosed setting out the draft minutes of discussion of the report by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

For further information please contact Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer/Vanessa Etheridge, Democratic Services Officer on Telephone: 01634 332715/332115 or Email: democratic.services@medway.gov.uk

Date: 21 August 2026

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Public Questions

Question A – Milo O'Connor, of Rochester, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson, the following:

“Would you be able to inform me if Medway Council has protocols in their contracts with private funeral directors that would enable Medway Council’s environmental health officers to:

- Routinely enter and inspect local funeral home backrooms and mortuaries.
- Issue local compliance orders on behalf of the national regulator.
- Shut down premises that fail to meet statutory hygiene or care standards.

This question is in light of the crimes of Robert Bush in Hull Yorkshire, who was sentenced to 20 years in prison, where around 20 bodies and 100 ashes left to rot in a Hull mortuary.

The Government itself is pushing for a review of the funeral industry led by the Department of health.

This is a pressing issue, Medway Council reviewing their contracts with private funeral directors would be a good first step to facilitate crucial regulatory changes needed in the funeral sector.”

Member’s Questions

Question B – Councillor Spalding will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Maple the following:

“I was grateful to address the recent meeting of the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority and highlight how the Grain on call firefighters got to an incident locally and were ‘getting water on’, before any help from full time stations arrived, even though they were at work and were not actually on call or on roster. This demonstrates not only how vital the on-call stations are to the rural community but how, with changes to operational procedures and other factors I have been proposing, availability for these stations can be improved. Since then, there have been field fires, including a major one in my ward the day after the fire authority meeting requiring ten fire engines and a water carrier and took over twelve hours to extinguish.

Given that prevention is better than cure, and to ensure our on call fire crews are available to support incidents elsewhere rather than having to attend any locally, will you arrange for the Council’s communications team, working with others as necessary, to raise awareness of fire risk not just generally but especially in the current spell of weather?”

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Cabinet

25 August 2026

Annual Fostering Report 2025–2026 – Addendum Report

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Adam Price, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

Report from: Dr Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People and Deputy Chief Executive

Author: Chi Chiringa, Head of Provider Services

1. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.1. The report was considered by the Children and Young People Overview and scrutiny Committee on 12 August 2026, the draft minutes of the discussion are set out below.

1.2. The Committee considered the report which detailed activities of the fostering service during 2025-2026. The report also highlighted the aims and objectives of the service for the 2026/2027 financial year.

1.3. Members raised several comments and questions which included:

1.3.1. The service was praised for its continued work and the quality and dedication of foster carers.

1.3.2. **Barriers to recruitment** - it was asked what the greatest barrier to increase of conversion rate of enquiries to registered foster carers were. The Committee was informed that Medway compared quite well nationally in recruitment of carers, but continued efforts were needed to attract more carers. Work was being undertaken to streamline the process and reduce the time taken for assessments whilst maintaining the robustness of the assessment process to ensure the right people were being supported through the process.

1.3.3. **Recruitment strategies**- in response to a question on what was being done differently to recruit and retain foster carers, the officer said that they continued to actively listen and be accessible to foster carers. There were improvements to the level of support provided for those caring for children with complex needs. There were plans to extend the 'Mocking Bird' programme and increased peer support for foster carers. There was work to be undertaken on establishing a select group of carers to co-produce support activities.

1.3.4. **Kinship** - it was asked how the scheme was progressing and what support was being provided to grandparents, those that live in Medway and outside of Medway and young people, in particular, being mindful to ensure that extra pressures were not created of circumstances where young people go from being cared for to being carers themselves. The Officer said that the Kinship pilot had provided a valuable learning experience for everyone involved. The potential and opportunities for growth were extensive. There had been many benefits to children, young people and families, as well as positive effect on social care practice. Families were being consulted and worked with in partnership to identify suitable packages that were tailored to their individual needs, with wider support packages and financial support provided as needed.

1.3.5. **Support for Kinship carers** – in response to a question on whether Kinship care was more sustainable and if the same level of support was provided to carers, the Committee was informed that all carers received the same level of supervision and access to support. Kinship was a welcomed alternative to traditional foster carers due to the benefit for young people in maintaining their culture, wellbeing and identity.

1.3.6. **Placement costs** – It was noted that there were 10 fewer current active in-house foster placements and at a higher average cost than budgeted. It was asked at what point does stabilising capacity becomes overly optimistic and what is the financial cost to Medway of those 10 placements once the cost of independent placements were included. The Committee was informed that the average cost of placements was made up of the average cost of all fostering placements as the amount paid to providers varied dependant on age of the child with older children costing more. On average, every child placed with an external independent fostering agency costs £600 -£800 per week per child more than an internal agency foster carer. However, this increase amounted to 0.8% overspend on the fostering budget.

1.4. **Decision:**

The Committee noted the Annual Fostering Report 2025–2026 and the Annual Private Fostering Report for 2025–2026



Cabinet

25 August 2026

Adoption Partnership South East – Annual Report – 2025/2026 – Addendum Report

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Adam Price, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
(including statutory responsibility)

Report from: Dr Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People and Deputy Chief
Executive

Author: Amy Coombs, Head of Adoption Partnership South East

1. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.1. The report was considered by the Children and Young People Overview and scrutiny Committee on 12 August 2026, the draft minutes of the discussion are set out below.

1.2. The Head of Adoption Partnership South East introduced the annual report which detailed the service activity and practice development for the period April 2025 – March 2026.

1.3. Members raised several comments and questions which included:

1.3.1. The level of detail contained in the report was praised. The continued high level of progress made and support being offered to families despite challenges was commended.

1.3.2. **Sibling groups** – in response to a question on what was being done to recruit more adopters for siblings and what support was provided for those potential adopters, the Committee was informed that extensive information and support was provided to potential adopters. Monthly online marketing events took place with details on adoption and opportunities to attend meet and greet sessions. Sibling groups were more complex to place and there was targeted work being undertaken in that area as it was crucial to ensure that the right people were supported to take on caring responsibilities for siblings. There was additional preparatory training available for adopters to ensure that they understood the complex dynamics they may face and all adopters were encouraged to stay connected as they would require support at different stages of a child/ children's lives.

1.3.3. In response to a further question on data on harder to adopt groups, the officer said that all adopters were approved to take on any child. The focus and priority of the service was on having the right pool adopters and to support each individual through any preconceived ideas about the age of child they would like to adopt.

1.3.4. **Average wait time for adoption** – in response to a question on how long Medway children that had been waiting a long time, had to wait for an adoptive match and what the common characteristic were in relation to that cohort, the officer said that there were currently 10 Medway children with a placement order with no match. One of the areas of pressure was in placement of siblings. When children were granted placement orders, extensive work was undertaken both internally and externally to find a potential match.

1.3.5. **Average time between placement order and decision made** – it was asked what had changed in terms of the average days from placement order to matching decision and adoption order granted as the total average wait time had significantly reduced. The Committee was informed that the data presented was due to the significant work undertaken by the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care working with the judiciary to address issues with court timetabling and reduction in care proceeding timelines. There had also been extensive work undertaken on developing a robust and timely process to ensure that when a match was identified, they were progressed without delay. Tracking of those children had also contributed to reduction in timescales. Adopters were able to use the online portal to apply for an adoption order which reduced delay when they were legally ready to adopt.

1.3.6. **Feedback** – in response to a question on what adjustments were being taken to improve adopters experience at the end of the assessment process due to the negative feedback received, the officer said that this data was from 12 months ago. The data was presented to show transparency and evidence experiences after an adoption order had been granted and related to delays between stage 1 and stage 2 of the process. Following that feedback, mechanisms had been put in place to address those issues and ensure prompt assessment between stage 1 and stage 2. It was anticipated that this adjustment would translate to a difference in experience in next year's reporting.

1.4. **Decision:**

The Committee noted the Adoption Partnership South East - Annual Report - 2025/2026.