

Motion 11 - THE PLACEMENT MARKET IS NOT WORKING FOR CHILDREN OR FOR THE PUBLIC PURSE

Proposed by Councillor Tom Usher

Seconded by Councillor Liz Grey

For the past decade austerity has caused the numbers of children in care to increase drastically. This coupled with a national decline in foster carers has seen a steep rise in the demand for care placements.

Councils have in the past few years seen eye-watering increases in the cost of these placements, in a poorly regulated sector of the economy dominated by private providers. While many providers are providing quality placements, the focus for some is profitability. The cost of care placements for local authorities in the northwest have in some cases reported a 33% increase over three years, whilst the largest care provider boasts a 26% return on its children's services "investments".

Council welcomes the emerging strategy designed to tackle this issue including:

- Increasing our in-house capacity
- Bolstering our foster carer numbers
- Working with other local authorities to focus on the supply of services available and consider commissioning arrangements

Council also asks that the government does its part. Children's Services has not been allocated adequate funding by the government. It is also up to the government to provide central oversight and control of a market that is not, at present, working for children or for the public purse. Council requests that the leader and lead member write to government to express these concerns.