

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report :

Decision Maker:	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services
Date of Decision:	6 June 2011
Decision Title:	Statement of Purpose of the Hampshire Adoption Service Fostering Service and Children's Homes
Decision Reference:	2747
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1) Summary of Decision Area:

- 1.1. National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, Children's Homes and for Adoption Services require that the registered provider (in the case of a local authority, the elected members) formally approves the Statement of Purpose of Services, and reviews, updates and modifies it where necessary, at least annually.

2) Issues Covered in Report:

- 2.1. The aim of this report therefore is to present the updated Statement of Purpose of Hampshire's Fostering, Adoption Services and Children's Homes for approval by the Executive Lead Member, highlighting the key parts of the document that have been revised since it was last presented.
- 2.2. Provision of fostering services and children's homes in Hampshire supports the Corporate Priorities and enables and encourages all children and young people who are looked after by Hampshire Children's Services to stay safe, be healthy, enjoy and achieve, provide a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being, in line with the Every Child Matters five outcomes (Children Act 2004).

3) Recommendation:

- 3.1. It is recommended that the Executive Lead Member for Children Services and Families approves the updated Statement of Purpose of the Fostering Service, Adoption Service and Children's Homes.

MAIN REPORT

1) Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1. To agree the updated Statement of Purpose of the Fostering Service, Adoption Service and Children's Homes and highlight the key parts of the documents that have been revised since they were last presented.

2) Contextual Information:

- 2.1. The Regulations and Guidance for Fostering Service, Adoption Services and for Children's Homes state that the service provider (in this instance, Hampshire Children's Services Department) shall compile, in relation to the service, a written statement, referred to as The Statement of Purpose, which shall consist of:
 - i. A statement of the aims and objectives of the service; and
 - ii. A statement as to the services and facilities to be provided by the service.
- 2.2. The provider is responsible for providing a copy of the Statement of Purpose to Ofsted, the body which inspects the services, and the following key stakeholders:
 - i. Any person working for the purposes of the service;
 - ii. Any foster parent or prospective foster parent of the fostering service; Adopters, and staff member working within the services
 - iii. Any child placed within any of the services; and
 - iv. The parent of any such child.
- 2.3. A children's version of the Statement of Purpose is also available.
- 2.4. The proposals in this report are expected to support the County Council's corporate priorities as follows:

"Making Hampshire safer and more secure for all" – by enabling as many of Hampshire's children as possible, who are looked after, to remain in their local communities and to fully participate in and contribute to the life of those communities.

"Maximising well-being" – by ensuring that Hampshire's children who are looked after are provided with good quality family based care placements that meet their needs and enable them to move successfully through their transition to independence.

"Enhancing our quality of place" – through provision of high quality services that target those children who are the most vulnerable.

3) Key Issues:

- 3.1. Revisions to the Statement of Purpose are highlighted within section 4 below.

4) Revisions to the Statement of Purpose:

Fostering Services:

4.1 The fostering service uses the Statement of Purpose (Appendix C) as a competitive positioning tool, which benchmarks local authority and independent services. This is useful in recruitment terms as prospective carers can compare services more easily and is also helpful for placement commissioning. The order of content of the 2011 version has been changed to differentiate it from previous editions and present our service in a logical sequence from enquiry to post-approval.

The production of a Statement of Purpose is an annual requirement of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering (2011). Statistics given refer to the calendar year 2010 (Jan - December).

4.2 References to the fostering service and descriptions and diagrams of how the service is structured are presented in a way that is appropriate to the audience who are reading the statement of purpose and understanding how the fostering service operates. Some technicalities of our new internal structure may therefore not be explicit; for example we continue to refer to the family placement service and fostering recruitment team rather than the integrated placements team and adoption and integrated recruitment team.

4.3 There has been a decrease of 17 county carers in the past year. In January 2010, there were 374 carers, in December 2010, 357 carers. The reason for this includes:

- the county foster carer population has seen an increase in cases of age related retirement (a national trend, well documented by the Fostering Network). Retirement usually follows a period of significant service as a foster carer.
- Other reasons for deregistration of foster carers include family changes or placement breakdown and some children moving to special guardianship orders, and carers subsequently deregistering.

4.4 To increase the number of foster carers significant developments have been made in the manner in which family placement advertises for foster carers. Internet advertising and post code targeting techniques have been utilised to increase the potential pool of foster carers. There has been a significant increase in the number of enquiries to become foster carers over the last 4 months, breaking all previous records.

4.5 Since the last publication of the Statement of Purpose there has been an increase in the number of children and young people looked after by Hampshire's foster carers 634 (2010) vs 620 (2009).

Despite the falling numbers of foster carers the continuing support, training and management carers receive from the family placement service has enabled carers to increase the number of children and young people they care for.

- 4.6 We have added information about the distribution of those foster placements between in house, independent fostering agencies and friends and family placements. In 2010 56% live with Hampshire County Council carers, 25% in placements commissioned through independent agencies and 19% with Friends and Family carers.
- 4.7 More data is available this year to provide more detailed feedback on complaints, compliments and comments on the Family Placement Service. As such, we have been able to provide data on complaints made by children in care, and by parents, grandparents of children in foster care.
- 4.8 In 2010, 10 formal complaints were received about the Family Placement service. These complaints were typically about general operational aspects of the services such as policy, procedure or service delivery. Three foster carers complained and six complaints were received from parents or grandparents of children living in foster care. One child in foster care complained. All complaints were managed within the complaints policy and procedure. The complaints were resolved satisfactorily for all the complainants and services and policies were developed in the light of some complaints. In 2009, 11 complaints were received and four foster carers complained.
- 4.9 Information has been added to present the changing face of the fostering service and highlight key changes and developments in the service. The objective is to highlight the wide range of activities we undertake to support recruitment of new foster carers within the newly formed Gateway and assessment teams and support of the foster carers who work with Hampshire County Council provided by the new East and West area teams across Hampshire. We have included information about recruitment innovations, successes for our foster carers and current recruitment activity. We have included information about developments coming up in the future, and as a "last word" we have also included comment from a care leaver on his experiences of living in foster care, a truncated version of the full article which appears in full in the recruitment information sheet Foster with Hampshire.

Children's Home

- 4.10 Children's homes must have a Statement of Purpose that sets out the home's overall ethos, values and principles, which play a core part in promoting children's safety and welfare. They should be child focussed and able to demonstrate how the care offered to each child by the home will address their social, emotional, educational and behavioural needs. It must set out details of the home's aims and objectives and the services and facilities provided and must be regularly kept under review and revised whenever necessary. Due to

the size and number of these documents, they are available on request and copies will be placed in the Members Lounge for Councillors to view.

4.11 Hampshire has six children's homes for local children whose needs cannot be met within a family environment. They are all mixed sex units and range from 4-7 beds located throughout Hampshire, accommodating a total of 35 children. In addition there is a secure children's home for 16 children. This is a national resource and accommodates children under both criminal and welfare orders.

- Godbey House is located in Hayling Island. This six bedded unit accommodates children from the younger age range.
- Glendalyn Children's Home is in New Milton. This accommodates seven young people, including one emergency bed for young people who cannot be placed elsewhere and require emergency accommodation.
- Milesdown Children's Home is in Winchester. This is a six bedded unit.
- The Greenhouse is located in Chandlers Ford and accommodates six children .
- The Mead is located in Odiham and accommodates six children.
- Cypress Lodge is our smallest children's home located in Basingstoke and accommodates four children.

4.12 Swanwick Lodge is a secure children's home. It accommodates 12 children through a contract with the Youth Justice Board and has provision for a further four beds for children who need to be secured for their own safety, under section 25 of the Children Act. Both criminal and welfare beds are a national resource and the home is a self financing business unit. The unit is subject to the same regulations and inspection regime as open children's homes.

4.13 There are three respite children homes for children with disabilities which provide short term carer for children and young people to provide breaks for their families.

- Firvale is a nine bedded respite home for children and young people.
- Merrydale is a 16 bedded respite complex with four self contained living areas.
- Sunbeams can accommodate four children overnight and provide day care.

- 4.14 There have been no significant changes to the children's homes Statement of Purpose to highlight within this report.

Adoption Service

- 4.15 The adoption service uses the Statement of Purpose (see Appendix E) as a position statement explaining the important principles which underpin the service. The Statement of Purpose is available to the public on our adoption website and to other partner organisations.

- 4.16 Hampshire County Council acts as an Adoption Agency to provide adoption services as required under the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005, and the Adoption National Minimum Standards (Care Standards Act 2000).

The Agency aims to fulfil its range of duties and responsibilities under the above legislation and the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004 in meeting the needs of those children who have or may be adopted, their birth parents and guardians and those people who are or may be adoptive parents.

- 4.17 The 2011-12 Statement of Purpose has been updated to reflect the new structure of the service and its delivery. It also reflects the new contracted partnership arrangements to provide adoption support services for all those affected by adoption.

- 4.18 Adoption continues to be a positive alternative for those children unable to be cared for within their birth families. The position as of 31 March 2011 is that 37 adoption orders have been made, 66 children have had new plans for adoption agreed and 58 children were matched with prospective adopters in the last year. This shows an upward trend in terms of the numbers of children with new plans for adoption and numbers of children matched. However, the numbers of adoption orders made have decreased since last year(2010-11): this could be due to more complex care proceedings and needs of the children. Given the high numbers of children placed for adoption last year this will impact on the numbers of adoption orders achieved in the next year.

- 4.19 One of the trends also noted, is the increase in adoptive families seeking support services post-adoption order. Therefore the ability of Hampshire County Council to provide services to all those affected by adoption through additional independent contracted services continues to remain an important part of our service delivery as reflected in the Statement of Purpose.

5) Outline of Options:

- 5.1. Not applicable

6) Option Analysis / Comparison:

6.1. Not applicable

7) Conclusions:

7.1. This report presents the updated Statement of Purpose of Hampshire's Fostering Service, Adoption Service and Children's Homes .

7.2. Ongoing work is taking place to develop Hampshire's Fostering, Adoption services and Children's Homes and the Statement of Purpose for each service will be revised at appropriate times in order to reflect these developments.

8) Recommendations:

Please see Executive Summary for recommendations

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:

LINKS TO THE CORPORATE STRATEGY

		Yes	No
Hampshire safer and more secure for all		X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corporate Business plan link no (if appropriate)	<input type="text"/>		
Maximising well-being		X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corporate Business plan link no (if appropriate)	<input type="text"/>		
Enhancing our quality of place		X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corporate Business plan link no (if appropriate)	<input type="text"/>		

OR

This proposal does not link to the Corporate Strategy but, nevertheless, requires a decision because:

OTHER SIGNIFICANT LINKS:

Links to Previous member decisions:

Title	Ref	Date
None		

Direct Links to Specific Legislation or Government Directives

	Date
The Children Act	2004
The Fostering Services Regulations	2002

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None.	

COMPREHENSIVE RISK & IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

A race and equality impact assessment has been considered in the development of this report and no adverse impact has been identified.

Hampshire Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

See separate document.