

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to Executive Board

Date: 14th February 2014

Subject: Updated Statement of Purpose for the Private Fostering Service of Leeds City Council



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. This report seeks elected member approval of the revised statement of purpose for Leeds City Council's Private Fostering Service. The Statement of Purpose is attached at appendix 1.
2. The Statement of Purpose is required as part of the Private Fostering National Minimum Standards in order to be able to provide those services.
3. The Local Authority's elected members must approve annually the statement of purpose and any updates through the 'Executive side of the council'.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that the Executive Board approve the Statement of Purpose for Private Fostering services for October 2013 – 2014 for Leeds City Council.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report seeks Executive Board approval of the revised statement of purpose for Leeds City Council's Private Fostering Service. The Statement of Purpose is attached at appendix 1. The Statement of Purpose is required as part of the national minimum standards in order to be able to provide those services.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The Statement of Purpose for Private Fostering requires updating on an annual basis. The last Statement of Purpose was approved in February 2013.
- 2.2 This Statement of Purpose is a description of Private Fostering arrangements within Leeds City Council. It aims to meet the requirements as outlined in the 1989 Children Act, the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering which came into force on 18th July 2005 and the Children (private arrangements for fostering) Regulations 2005. This document provides key information about the service for the public, council members and external organisations.
- 2.3 This document describes how Private Fostering arrangements, the national requirements and the assessment processes will operate to ensure that sufficient support and advice is offered to Private Foster carers, privately fostered children and their parents, so that privately fostered children within Leeds City Council are safeguarded.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 It is a requirement of the Private Fostering Services Regulations 2005 (and National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005), that each Local Authority produces a Statement of Purpose, including its aims and objectives, a description of the service it provides and the facilities that are provided.
- 3.2 This Statement of Purpose gives an outline of those requirements and also how the service is managed and its fitness to provide Private Fostering services. It shows the policy and performance framework that underpins our work and shows how the welfare of children will be met.
- 3.3 The Statement also fits in with the best city plan, objective 3, building a child friendly city, with a particular emphasis in the statement on safeguarding children.
- 3.4 The Statement of Purpose provides a definition of Private Fostering, and the requirements to notify the Local Authority of all such arrangements. It also sets out how this department will ensure the welfare of privately fostered children are safeguarded; the assessment, supervision and support arrangements and the role of other agencies in this task.
- 3.5 Awareness raising of the notification requirements is a key responsibility of the service and this function is promoted through distribution of publicity materials and through undertaking information sessions with key professionals and partnership agencies, recognising that professionals working with children are more likely to refer children and families rather than the families themselves. Our publicity

materials have been updated in line with the vision for Leeds as a “Child Friendly City” in order to reinforce the messages and ensure privately fostered children are identified and included in the vision.

- 3.6 Private Fostering arrangements are known to be under reported nationally and this is so in Leeds. We now have a comprehensive Communications Strategy which will be instrumental in raising awareness. It will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure targeted communication and awareness raising is effective.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 The scrutiny board requested an enquiry into Private Fostering in August 2012 and reports were presented to the board from the Deputy Director of Children’s Services. Input into the enquiry was also provided by the Private Fostering expert from British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering. An interim report was provided at the beginning of the year and further reporting to the scrutiny Committee in July 2013 saw the signing off by Scrutiny committee who were satisfied that considerable improvements have been made in this service area.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 There are no specific equality issues identified in the Private Fostering Service.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 The statement of purpose supports the Child Friendly City, objective 3 of the Best Council Plan. See section 3.3.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 The service has 1 full time equivalent social worker in the Kinship Fostering Service, specifically for the delivery of private fostering requirements.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 There are no legal implications in accepting this Statement of Purpose other than the requirement to accept the statement as outlined in the background.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 No risks have been identified, other than the requirement to ensure the Statement of Purpose is fully endorsed by the Executive arm of the council.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The Private Fostering Statement of Purpose needs elected member approval annually for any updates.

5.2 Approval of this document is therefore required

6 Recommendations

6.1 That the Executive Board approve the Statement of Purpose for the Private Fostering service for Leeds City Council.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.