

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Report to Executive Board

Date: February 2013

Subject: Updated Statement of Purpose for the Private Fostering Service, 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 2005 (attached at appendix 2) 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

1. It is recommended that the Executive Board approve the Leeds City Council's Statement of Purpose for Private Fostering Services 2012-2013.

Purpose of this report

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. The Statement of Purpose is required as part of the national minimum standards in order to be able to provide those services.

2.0 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 2011.
- 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.

3.0 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** Elected members must formally approve the statement annually.
- 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 are currently being 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. It is therefore imperative that the Communications Strategy continues to be implemented by the service and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure targeted communication and awareness raising is effective.

3.7 Since the change in our procedures this last year, locating specialist workers in the kinship care team to undertake the private fostering assessments and working jointly with fieldwork colleagues, the numbers of notifications and arrangements have increased from previous years.

4.0 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. The Scrutiny board also made recommendations for work to be undertaken in relation to the communication strategy and involvement by young people who are privately fostered. Further consultation is planned with Private foster carers and privately fostered children in respect of new publicity materials that are currently being developed.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1 There are no specific equality issues identified as the Statement of Purpose purely provides a description of private fostering arrangements in Leeds.

4.3 Council policies and City priorities

4.3.1 This is covered in sections 2.1 - 2.3

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 There are some limited additional resource implications required for carrying out the services described in the statement. An additional member of staff needs to be recruited to the Kinship Care Team to replace the existing temporary agency staff member appointed in April 2012. This will ensure that all new referrals concerning private fostering and all required assessments will be dealt with in line with the regulatory framework governing private fostering and the new procedures governing private fostering arrangements in Leeds.

4.4.2 The statements themselves do not require extra budgetary provision.

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.

5.0 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.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1** It is recommended that the Executive Board approve the Leeds City Council's Statement of Purpose for Private Fostering Services 2012-2013.

7.0 Background documents

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.