

## **Cabinet – 15 July 2009**

### **Walsall Children's Services review of the Statements of Purpose for Adoption and Fostering**

**Portfolio:** Councillor R Walker, Children's services

**Service:** Children's Services

**Wards:** All

**Key decision:** No

**Forward plan:** No

#### **1. Summary of report**

- 1.1 Walsall Children's Services Adoption agency is regulated by Ofsted to provide an adoption service. The National Minimum Standards for Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Local Authority Adoption Services in England and Wales 2003, and the Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003 require that there is a clear written statement of the aims and objectives of the Adoption Agency. A 'Statement of Purpose' describes accurately what facilities and services are provided by the adoption agency.
- 1.2 Walsall Children's Services Fostering Service, is regulated by Ofsted. The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2002 and the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 require that there is a clear statement of purpose, which clearly states the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide.
- 1.3 For both the adoption and fostering services there is also a requirement that the executive side of the council (the elected members), formally approves these statements of purpose, and reviews, updates and modifies them where necessary at least annually.
- 1.4 The annual review of the Statements of Purpose for the fostering and adoption services were undertaken in April 2009. This report sets out the revised Statements of Purpose for both services and seeks approval from the executive side of the Council (elected members) to revised statements.

#### **2. Recommendations**

Cabinet is asked to formally approve the Statements of Purpose for Walsall Children's Services Adoption and fostering Services.

### **3. Background information**

- 3.1 Walsall Children's Services Fostering and Adoption Services are registered, regulated and inspected by Ofsted in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000.
- 3.2 In accordance with the Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003, Regulation 3, Schedule 1 (see **appendix 1**) the adoption service must have a statement of purpose and review it according to Regulation 4.
- 3.3 In relation to the Fostering Service, this is in accordance with the Fostering Service Regulations 2002, Regulation 3 (see **appendix 2**) and the review is a requirement under Regulation 4.
- 3.5 An annual review of each of the Statements of Purpose was undertaken in April 2009 for approval by cabinet. The following information found at 3.6 and 3.7 outlines the significant changes made to the Statements of Purpose as a result of these reviews for the Adoption and Fostering Service respectively.

#### **3.6 Adoption Service**

- 3.6.1 The Adoption Service was inspected by Ofsted in December 2007. One of the good practice recommendations was that the adoption support service should be integrated into the wider adoption service. At that time, this function was part of the remit of the permanence support team within the Fostering Service.
- 3.6.2 The adoption service was re-structured and the review of the Statement of Purpose reflects this change. The review includes the integration of the adoption support service into the wider adoption team structure in terms of staffing information, including details about their relevant qualifications and experience.
- 3.6.3 Another minor amendment was to change the information about the regulatory body from CSCI to Ofsted.
- 3.6.4 A minor change was made in the process for the recruitment and assessment of prospective adopters, implemented as a requirement following the Ofsted inspection. This relates how applications being accepted prior to and not subsequent to their attendance at the training course.

#### **3.7 Fostering Service**

- 3.7.1 The Fostering Service was inspected by Ofsted in December 2007. The service was successfully re-structured in response to a key requirement of the inspection. This was that all foster carers are supervised by a named, suitably qualified social worker (Standard 22.3 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services).
- 3.7.2 An amended organisational structure of the Fostering Service was included in the reviewed statement of purpose. It reflected the changes in terms of staffing information including their relevant qualifications and experience.
- 3.7.3 Updated information in relation to the numbers of foster carers, and the numbers of children placed and the number of complaints and their outcomes was included in the review as a requirement.

- 3.7.4 Information was included in the reviewed Statement of Purpose about the new Child Work Force Induction Standards for foster carers, which were introduced in April 2008.
- 3.7.5 A minor amendment was made to information about the regulatory body showing a change from CSCI to Ofsted.

#### **4. Resource Implications**

- 4.1 **Financial:** The financial implications for the Council in securing best possible outcomes for children who require foster or adoptive placements are considered during the annual budget setting process and are in line with the medium term financial plan.
- 4.2 **Legal:** Both of the Statements of Purpose reflect statutory and regulatory requirements, current practice and future service developments.
- 4.3 **Staffing:** There are no specific staffing implications arising from the review of the Statements of Purpose for the adoption and fostering services.

#### **5. Citizen impact**

In accordance with regulations, the Statement of Purpose for adoption service should be made available to Ofsted, staff, children, who may be adopted, their parents and guardians, persons wishing to adopt a child, adopted persons, their parents, birth parents and former guardians, any local authority.

The Statement of Purpose for the fostering service should be made available to Ofsted, staff, any foster carer or prospective foster carer, any child placed by the fostering service, and the parent of any such child.

This improves public information and the transparency of the service the Council provides for its citizens.

#### **6. Community safety**

There are no issues arising from this report which have been identified as impacting upon community safety.

#### **7. Environmental impact**

There are no issues that impact upon the environment from this report.

#### **8. Performance and risk management issues**

- 8.1 **Risk:** There are no identified risks arising from the proposed amendments to the revised Statements of Purpose for Adoption and Fostering.

- 8.2 **Performance management:** The Adoption Service in Walsall is registered, inspected and regulated by Ofsted in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000, the National Minimum Standards for Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Local Authority Adoption Services 2003, and the Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003.

The Fostering Service in Walsall is registered, inspected and regulated by Ofsted in accordance with the provision of the Care Standards Act 2000, the National Minimum standards for Fostering Services 2002, and the Fostering Service Regulations 2002.

The Adoption and Fostering Services were both judged to be “satisfactory” in the inspections by Ofsted in December 2007.

## 9. **Equality implications**

Looked after Children are a vulnerable group at risk of social exclusion and poor life chances. Continued development of the Statements of Purpose for the fostering and adoption services ensures a relevant range of appropriate local placement options for looked after children and supports the focus on outcomes. This forms a critical part of the regulatory assessments of children’s services by Ofsted and the objectives within the Children and Young People Plan.

Developing and maintaining positive outcomes for children and young people in fostering and adoptive placements will have a direct impact on their stability, emotional health and their educational achievement and attainment in accordance with the requirements of the Children Act 2004. The Statements of Purpose reflect the Council’s commitment to providing equality of opportunity for Looked after Children living within foster care placements within Walsall or those children placed for adoption by the local authority.

## 10. **Consultation**

Ofsted, Children, Staff groups and Finance have been consulted as an aspect of the review of the Statements of Purpose.

## **Background papers**

Statement of purpose Adoption Service – April 2009  
Statement of purpose Fostering Service – April 2009

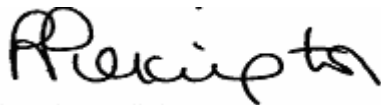
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pauline Pilkington'.

Signed:

Interim Executive Director

Pauline Pilkington

Date: 18 June 2009

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Walker'.

Signed:

Portfolio Holder

Councillor R Walker

Date: 3 July 2009

The Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003

SCHEDULE 1

Regulation 3

INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IN THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

1. The aims and objectives of the local authority in relation to the adoption service.
2. The name and address of the manager.
3. The relevant qualifications and experience of the manager.
4. The number, relevant qualifications and experience of the staff employed by the authority for the purposes of the adoption service.
5. The organisational structure of the adoption service.
6. The system in place to monitor and evaluate the provision of services to ensure that services provided by the adoption service are effective and the quality of those services is of an appropriate standard.
7. The procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective adopters.
8. A summary of the complaints procedure established in accordance with section 26(3) of the Children Act 1989(a) and the complaints Procedure Directions 1990(b).
9. The address and telephone number of the Commission.

### The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2002

The statement includes details in respect of the fostering services of:

- Its status and constitution (for agencies)
- Its management structure
- The services it provides
- Its aims and objectives, principles and standards of care
- Numbers, relevant qualifications and experience of staff
- Numbers of foster carers
- Numbers of children placed
- Numbers of complaints and their outcomes
- The procedures and processes for recruiting, approving, training, supporting and reviewing carers.