

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) to Cabinet on 9th January 2018

**Agenda
Item No.**

Report prepared by: Diane Keens, Group Manager,
Placements Resources and John O'Loughlin, Director of
Children's Services

Journey of the Child Bi-Annual Report and updated Statements of Purpose for Adoption & Fostering People Scrutiny Committee Executive Councillor: Councillor James Courtenay *A Part 1 Public Agenda Item*

1. Purpose of Report

To report on the activities of Children's Services, 2016/17 and for the first 6 months of 2017/18 and to review the updated Statements of Purpose for Adoption & Fostering in line with Standard 18.3 of the Adoption National Minimum Standards and Standard 16 of the Fostering National Minimum Standards.

This is the first report of this nature and covers an 18 month period. Future reports will be provided on a bi-annual basis.

2. Recommendation

1.1 That the Bi- Annual Report, as at Appendix 1, is noted.

2.2 That the updated Statements of Purpose, as at Appendices 2 & 3, are approved.

3. Background

2.1 The provision, standards and operations of the adoption service is governed by:

- The Local Authority Adoption Services (England) Regulations 2003 (updated 2005);
- The Adoption Agencies regulations 2005 (updated 2013 & 2014);
- The Adoption Agencies and Independent Review of Determinations (amendment) regulations 2011;
- The Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential amendments) Regulations 2012;

- The Adoption Minimum Standards 2011.

3.2 National Minimum Standard 25.6 states that the Executive side of the Local Authority should:

- a) receive written reports on the management and outcomes of the agency twice a year;
- b) monitor the management and outcomes of the service in order to satisfy themselves that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users;
- c) satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration.

3.3 Fostering National Minimum Standard 18.3 requires that that the Executive side of the Local Authority formally approves the Statement of Purpose and reviews it at least annually.

The provision, standard and operations of the Fostering service is governed by:

- The Local Authority Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (updated 2013)
- Fostering minimum Standards 2011 and the
- Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Volume 4, 2011

3.2 National Minimum Standard 25.7 states that the Executive side of the Local Authority

- a) receive written reports on the management and financial state of the fostering service every 3 months
- b) monitor the management and outcomes of the service in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users
- c) satisfy themselves that the provider is complying with the conditions of registration.

3.3 Members annually receive a number of reports from children's services regarding the outcomes for children and families in Southend through the variety of services provided. For 2017/18 a new report has been developed which will allow members a much clearer overview of the services and how they work together to support children and their families. It is intended that this will be a bi-annual report and will combine the following reports:

- Adoption Annual Report
- Fostering Annual Report
- Sufficiency Strategy
- Marigold Annual Report

- Work of the Virtual School (although a more detailed report will be provided in this area)
- Private Fostering Annual Report

3.4 Alongside the above formal reports, the new report will cover all areas of Children's services including the Independent Reviewing Officers; Early Help; Statutory Child Care Services; Audits and financial management.

3.5 The aim of the new Report format is to help members to see the "Journey of the Child" and to be able to more easily challenge senior managers, with all information being in one place.

4. Other Options

4.1 The other option is to continue to present a number of independent reports to meet the statutory requirement for fostering and adoption services to present a report to the Executive twice yearly and to update the Statement of Purpose annually.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

5.1 The new format will allow for Fostering and Adoption regulations to be fully met, whilst ensuring that members have a clear overall picture of children's service in Southend and how these two services are embedded in the wider service.

5.1 The Adoption and Fostering Statements of Purpose have been updated and require cabinet approval.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

The new Bi-Annual Report provides evidence of the annual activity of children's services which directly supports the delivery of the Corporate Priority to 'Improve Outcomes for Vulnerable Children'.

6.2 Financial Implications

If children's service does not work efficiently there will be significant financial impact for Southend Borough Council. The format of the new report allows members a much clearer overall picture of the service and the areas of financial pressure

6.3 Legal Implications

It is a statutory requirement to present a report in respect of the adoption & fostering to the Executive twice yearly and to update the Statements of Purpose annually. This new format ensures that this statutory requirement is met whilst embedding the work of these services solidly within the whole of children's services.

6.4 People Implications

The new format will ensure a clearer picture as to any pressures within children's services and implications arising from this. At present there are no implications identified as a result of this report.

6.5 Property Implications

None

6.6 Consultation

Consultation across children's services is addressed within the body of this report. Over coming reports this element of children's services will be strengthened to ensure that the voice of the child and their families are clearer heard and addressed in service development. This will ensure that the experience for children and their families remains at the centre of all that we do.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

Sufficiency planning in fostering and adoption has identified the need to target families for children from Eastern European countries as well as those willing to care for children with additional needs and those who are older at the point of placement. Changes in demographics will be closely monitored within this bi-annual report and changes more clearly evidenced throughout.

6.8 Risk Assessment

No significant risks identified.

6.9 Value for Money

The format of this report will allow members to have clearer overall picture of the service offered and how value for money remains a high priority. Developments within individual services will highlight areas where there is the development of income generation and where national policies impact on the ability to deliver both value for money and savings.

None

6.11 Environmental Impact

None

7. Background Papers

8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Journey of the Child Bi-Annual report

Appendix 2: Updated Statement of Purpose- Adoption December 2017

Appendix 3: Updated Statement of Purpose - Fostering December 2017