

Item No. 9.	Classification: Open	Date: 8 November 2011	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Fostering Services - Statement of Purpose	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Assistant Director Children's Specialist Services & Safeguarding	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Corporate Parenting Committee notes Southwark's Fostering Service Statement of Purpose (as required under National Fostering Regulations, see Appendix 1).
2. That the Corporate Parenting Committee notes that the statement of purpose for the Southwark Fostering Service will be reviewed and submitted to the Corporate Parenting Committee on an annual basis.
3. That the Corporate Parenting Committee notes Southwark's Fostering Services current strong performance for delivering good outcomes for children placed with the service (Appendix 2)

KEY MESSAGES

4. The Statement of Purpose is a requirement of the new DFE Fostering Services Regulations 2010, introduced in April 2011.

The Regulations require that the statement of purpose (SOP) must include:

- i) the aims and objectives of the fostering service, and
 - ii) what facilities and service it provides.
5. The SOP is required to be kept under review and revised annually. Any revision to Southwark's SOP statement of purpose has to be sent to the National Care Standards Commission within 28 days, following approval.
 6. The Fostering Service will be subject to an Ofsted inspection in December 2011.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The legal framework

7. The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 came into force on 1 April 2011, replacing the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. These Regulations require all Fostering services to publish a "statement of purpose", which spells out the aims and objectives of the service and lists the services and facilities that are provided. This includes any provision for family and friends foster carers and for parent and child arrangements.

The new Regulations were accompanied by new statutory guidance contained in the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services (2011), and also by the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (2011).

8. The Regulations, Guidance and National Minimum Standards emphasise the importance of the Statement of Purpose in guiding all the work of the fostering service, its staff and foster carers. The statement of purpose is expected to explain for everyone how the service goes about meeting the needs of children and so help people to understand how they can best work as a team and make use of the support available to children and foster carers.
9. There is also a requirement to publish a children's guide to the fostering service, which includes a summary of the statement of purpose and of the representation and complaints procedure. Southwark's fostering service has a children's guide in three different versions for children in different age groups. The revised statement of purpose (Appendix 1) contains a summary, written in straightforward language, intended to accompany the existing children's guides.

Review of statement of purpose

10. The regulations merely require the statement of purpose to be kept under review, and revised when appropriate. However, the guidance says that both must be reviewed at least annually, although there is no particular method by which the review must take place. In practice, most local authorities present their Fostering Service statement of purpose, on an annual basis, to their equivalent of Southwark's Corporate Parenting Committee or Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Requirements for the statement of purpose and children's guide

Requirements	Statement of purpose	Children's guide
Publication	Must be published on website, if there is one	Good practice to publish on website
Send to all foster carers?	Not required, but good practice	Must be sent
Send to children placed?	Not required	Must be sent at the time of placement, subject to age and understanding
Copy to Ofsted	Must be sent	Must be sent
Available on request to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anyone working for the fostering service - Prospective and approved foster carers - Children placed - Parents of children placed - Anyone else (good practice) 	Anyone interested (good practice)
Provide to children's social workers and others working with children in foster care	Good practice	Good practice

11. The revised statement of purpose once approved by Committee, will be distributed widely, including to all Council staff who work with looked after children, foster carers and prospective foster carers.

12. Southwark's Statement of Purpose has been thoroughly reviewed and rewritten to take account of the new Regulations and Guidance and also to reflect changes in the structure and operation of the service that have been implemented since 1 April 2011.
13. Key changes in the structure and delivery of the service implemented since 1 April 2011:
 - Deletion of one Practice Manager post and five social worker posts.
 - Establishment of 3 new senior practitioner posts to support retention of experienced staff.
 - Establishment of a new Fostering Recruitment Manager post to spearhead the recruitment and assessment of new foster carers.
 - Commissioning social work assessments of new foster carers from independent agencies – enabling a quicker and more efficient response and freeing up staff time for the support and supervision of existing carers.
 - Establishment of a new Fostering Duty Information Officer post to improve the efficiency of the fostering duty service and to release professional social work time for supporting carers.
 - Deletion of Fostering and Adoption Service Manager post.
 - Establishment of a new post of Service Manager (Foster Care and Children's Disability), initially for one year and to be reviewed in the light of service needs and new guidance and regulations.
 - Separation of management responsibility for Adoption and Fostering at Service Manager level.
14. Southwark's Fostering Service also produces a "Fostering Handbook" (also required under fostering regulations) which provides detailed procedures and expectations relating to care provision in the home and working arrangements.
15. Southwark's Fostering Service is also required under regulations to provide an annual report for the Corporate Parenting Committee which provides a comprehensive strategic overview of the services capacity to deliver the statement of purpose and positive outcomes for children placed within the service.
16. Appendix 2 provides a detailed analysis of Southwark's fostering services strong performance in delivering key outcomes for children in care including stability, health and education outcomes.

Community impact statement

17. The Fostering Service continues to target recruitment of foster carers from within Southwark and is one of the largest services in London (reflecting Southwark's strong reputation of supporting their foster carers) The greatest challenge for the service is to recruit and develop local foster homes which fully

reflect the diverse range of Southwark's cultural heritage and additional needs of children looked after. Consequently we target our advertising to reflect and attract foster carers from all of Southwark's community.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance

18. The legal implications are contained in the body of the report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Fostering Services Statement of Purpose 2011-12
Appendix 2	Southwark Fostering Service - Annual Performance Report 2010/11

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Rory Patterson, Assistant Director Children's Specialist Services & Safeguarding	
Report Author	Chris Saunders, Head of Service for Children in Care	
Version	Final	
Dated	25 October 2011	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Finance Director	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date report sent to Constitutional Team	26 October 2011	