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**Meeting:** Executive  
**Date:** 12 January 2010  
**Subject:** Adoption & Fostering  
**Report of:** Cllr Mrs Anita Lewis, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services  
**Summary:** The report proposes the adoption of the Statements of Purpose for the Council's adoption and fostering services. The policy of the council is to discharge its statutory duties in relation to adoption, fostering and private fostering through the provision of these regulated services. The statements of function and purpose need to be adopted by the Council in order to comply with regulations.

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**Advising Officer:** Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children Families and Learning

**Contact Officer:** Martin Pratt, Deputy Director of Children Families and Learning and Assistant Director, Specialist Services.

**Public/Exempt:** Public

**Wards Affected:** ALL

**Function of:** Executive

**Key Decision** Yes

**Reason for urgency/  
exemption from call-in  
(if appropriate)** N/A

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

These statements of function and purpose sit alongside the five Every Child Matters outcomes as listed within the Children and Young People's Plan which was adopted by Central Bedfordshire Council on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 2009. In addition they meet the Council priority.

- Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people.

### **Financial:**

A budget is allocated for the Adoption and Fostering Service. This budget covers staffing and operational costs and payments and expenses to foster carers and some adoptive families who qualify for adoption financial support. Under current arrangements with Bedford Borough Council recharges are made to Bedford Borough Council for the expenses paid to carers for each Bedford Borough Child placed in a foster home or adoptive home. Bedford Borough Council is also recharged for 62% of the overall cost of the Adoption and Fostering Service.

**Legal:**

Local authorities have a duty to provide adoption services for their residents. These include children for whom adoption is the plan, adults enquiring about adopting, prospective adoptive parents and adoptive parents, adopted children, their adoptive siblings and their birth relatives, and adopted adults.

Local authorities also have a duty to ensure that their looked after children are in placements where their physical and emotional needs are met, thus enabling them to achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes.

**Risk Management:**

In view of the refocus on child protection following the death of baby Peter, a greater number of children are becoming looked after. A consequence of this is that more foster homes and more adoptive families are required.

**Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

There are no staffing implications identified.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

The policies, procedures and work plans of both the adoption and fostering teams have an Equality Impact Assessment. These deal specifically with equalities issues. The adoption and fostering service needs to ensure that equalities issues, fair access to services across communities and appropriate 'matched' placements for children are monitored closely and any actions arising are swiftly addressed.

**Community Safety:**

There are no community safety issues identified.

**Sustainability:**

There are no sustainability issues identified.

**Summary of Overview and Scrutiny Comments:**

- These statements of purpose for regulated services have not been referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

that the Executive

- agree the Statements of Purpose for the Adoption and Fostering Services.**
- give delegated authority to the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children Families and Learning to approve any variations and review of the Statements of Purpose for the Adoption and Fostering Services.**

<i>Reason for Recommendation(s):</i>	<i>To ensure that the authority complies with regulations in respect of its Adoption &amp; Fostering Services.</i>
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## **Background**

### **Adoption**

1. The Adoption Agency is a regulated service subject to inspection by Ofsted. It functions in compliance with the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and its associated Regulations and Guidance and the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2005. The Statement of Purpose is attached at Appendix A.
  
2. The Adoption Agency recognises the lifelong nature of adoption and aims:
  - To provide a high quality adoption service for the residents of Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough.
  - To provide a suitable adoptive placement for every child with a plan for adoption.
  - To ensure that recruitment of adopters is targeted to meet the needs of children from Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough.
  - To recruit a range of prospective adopters able to meet the diverse needs of children.
  - To ensure safe, stable and consistent care for every child placed for adoption.
  - To ensure that the ethnic origin, cultural background, religious heritage and language of children are fully recognised and valued.
  - To provide support services that ensure successful outcomes for children placed for adoption and for adopted children.
  - To ensure that adoptive families are enabled to meet the health and education needs of children placed with them.
  - To provide a range of support services for adopted adults.
  - To offer timely information, advice and counselling to members of the public enquiring about adoption.
  - To ensure support is provided for the birth relatives of the children who were placed for adoption by Bedfordshire County Council and who are placed for adoption by Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council.
  - To ensure that at all times the Adoption Service complies with legislation and policy requirements which affect its activity.
  
3. It meets these objectives by providing
  - Advice/counselling to those enquiring about adoption.
  - Recruitment, assessment, approval and ongoing training and support of prospective adopters.
  - Support for families who have adopted and for adopted children through assessment of adoption support needs and provision of services. These services may include financial assistance, education support and a wide range of social work and therapeutic services.
  - Training opportunities for all adoptive parents.
  - Out of hours telephone support to prospective adopters with children placed for adoption and to adoptive families receiving adoption support.

- Access to birth records and counselling for adult adoptees.
  - Intermediary services for adults adopted through Bedfordshire County Council and for adopted adults living in Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough.
  - Support to birth relatives of Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough children with a plan for adoption.
  - A contact support service for all parties involved in ongoing contact for all adopted children.
  - A permanence planning/matching service for Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Council Children's Social Care Teams.
  - Through a Service Level Agreement with PACT (Parent and Children Together) Central Bedfordshire Council offers an adoption service to those wishing to adopt from overseas.
  - Through an Agreement with Adoption UK adopters and adoptive families are offered a "buddy scheme", support group, newsletter and family days.
  - Through a Service Level Agreement with Adoption Plus birth relatives are offered an Independent Birth Family Member counselling Service.
4. In addition to its regulated Adoption Agency functions the Adoption Service carries out local authority functions in respect of non-agency (mainly step-parent) adoptions and in assessing and supporting Special Guardianship arrangements.

### **Fostering Service**

5. Central Bedfordshire Council is a regulated Fostering Service Provider registered with Ofsted and subject to inspection by them. It functions in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 as amended in 2009 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2002. The Statement of Purpose is attached at Appendix B.
6. The Fostering Services aims
- To provide a high quality Fostering Service to children, their birth parents, foster carers and social work colleagues.
  - To provide foster placements that meets the needs of children requiring such a placement.
  - To ensure safe, stable and consistent care for every child placed in foster care.
  - To ensure that the ethnic origin, cultural background, religious heritage and language of children are fully recognised, valued and promoted.
  - To recruit a range of foster carers from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds to meet the needs of children needing placements.
  - To provide support services that promotes and enables the retention of foster carers.
  - To ensure that, at all times, the services provided are effective and that practices are clear, open, honest and fair to all Service users.
  - To ensure that foster carers are enabled to promote positive outcomes for children placed with them
  - To actively promote and support training opportunities for all foster carers.

- To ensure that the Fostering Service meets Fostering Regulations, National Minimum Standards and best practice.

7. In order to meet these objectives it provides the following services:

- Recruitment, assessment, approval, ongoing training and support of foster carers
- A matching / placement service for the locality teams
- The provision of emergency, short-term and permanent foster placements
- Approval and support as foster carers of family or friends, where this is deemed to be in the best interests of the child
- Support groups to foster carers
- Support groups for foster carers children
- Annual reviews of foster carer's approval
- The Respite Care Scheme which provides respite care to families with non-disabled children
- An out-of-hours telephone Support Service for foster carers
- An Advice Service to colleagues, other professionals and members of the public on fostering issues.

### **Private Fostering**

8. The Private Fostering function is discharged by the Fostering Service. It too requires a Statement of Function and Purpose which is attached at Appendix C.
9. Private Fostering is an arrangement made privately by the parents of a child and a person who is not a blood relation to look after them for 28 days or longer. This is not an arrangement made by the local authority.
10. The Fostering Service is required to publicise the duty on families who are privately fostering to notify the authority of the arrangements. The Service is also required to assess the suitability of those arrangements to ensure the wellbeing of children who are privately fostered and to offer on-going advice and support.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix A – Adoption Service Statement of Purpose 2009/2010

Appendix B – Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2009/2010

Appendix C – Private Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2009/2010

Background papers: None