

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services
Date:	17 May 2022
Title:	Statements of Purpose for Hampshire's Children's Homes, Fostering, and Adoption Services
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to present the updated Statement of Purpose of Hampshire's Children's Homes, Fostering, and Adoption Services (see Appendices B-M) for approval by the Executive Lead Member.
- 1.2. The significant changes are presented in this report whilst Appendix A highlights the specific parts of the Statements that have been revised since they were last presented for ease of reference.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services approves the updated Statements of Purpose for Children's Homes, the Fostering Service, and the Adoption Service.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1. The Children's Homes (England) Regulations and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Adoption Services require that the registered provider (in the case of a Local Authority, the Elected Members) formally approves the Statement of Purpose of Services and reviews, updates and modifies it where necessary.

4. Contextual Information

- 4.1. The Regulations and Guidance for the Children's Homes, Fostering Services, and Adoption Services state that the service provider (in this instance, Hampshire Children's Services Department) shall compile, in relation to the service, a written statement, referred to as The Statement of Purpose, which shall consist of:

- a) A statement of the aims and objectives of the service; and
 - b) A statement as to the services and facilities to be provided by the service.
- 4.2. The provider is responsible for providing a copy of the Statement of Purpose to Ofsted, the body which inspects the services, and the following key stakeholders:
- i) Any person working for the purposes of the service.
 - ii) Any foster/adoptive parent or prospective foster/adoptive parent.
 - iii) Any child placed within any of the services; and
 - iv) The parent of any such child.
- 4.3. A children's version of the Statement of Purpose is also available.
- 4.4. The proposals in this report are expected to support the County Council's Strategic Plan as follows:
- Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity.
 - People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives.
 - People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment; and
 - People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities.

5. **Performance**

- 5.1. Ofsted assesses the extent to which each Statement of Purpose is an accurate reflection of the service provided.

6. **Consultation and Equalities**

- 6.1. The proposal in this report does not require consultation and equality and diversity objectives are not considered to be adversely affected by the proposal. The Statements of Purpose ensure that all needs are met and address the protected characteristics where relevant.

7. **Revisions to the Statement of Purpose**

- 7.1. The information within the Statement of Purpose (SOP) is used to identify that the home is the right home for the child and that the home will be able to respond effectively to the child's needs.
- 7.2. Hampshire has eight mixed gender children's homes offering between two, four and five places to children and young people aged between 10 and 17 years old:
- Abenrise, (Appendix B)
 - Amani, (Appendix C)
 - Berry View, (Appendix D)
 - Candle Lodge, (Appendix E)

- Crofton House, (Appendix F)
- Ferne Lodge, (Appendix G)
- Cypress Lodge, (Appendix H)
- The Mead, (Appendix I)

7.3. As part of the continuum of overnight resources supporting children and young people with complex learning difficulties and their families, in conjunction with Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hampshire County Council also provides one residential respite unit (Firvale – Appendix K). Firvale provides five social care respite placements / beds and nine health beds though is temporarily closed as is discussed later in the report.

7.4. In addition, Hampshire provides a secure children's home; Swanwick Lodge (Appendix J). This is a national resource for up to 16 young people of either gender aged 10* – 17 years who need to be placed in a secure setting to safeguard their welfare.

**the appropriate Minister of State must approve the placement of children aged under 13 years"*

8. **Children's Residential Care and Covid-19**

8.1. As a response to the Covid 19 pandemic, the Statements of Purpose of three homes were changed, they are now being changed back to where they were before the pandemic. The changes involved consolidating staffing within the residential service to increase the resilience of the service as a whole and maintain the care of the children. Two long stay homes were temporarily closed for this reason:

- Candle Lodge – 9 April 2020
- Abenrise – 15 April 2020

8.2. A further home was closed, Firvale, on 6 April 2020, that provided overnight respite for children with disabilities. This was due to the difficulties in managing the operation of that home safely during the pandemic, however, the staff were also redeployed to our long stay homes to increase their resilience.

8.3. Children and young people who were living at Candle Lodge and Abenrise were placed in other Hampshire Children's Homes and staff were deployed across the residential service to ensure sufficient capacity during the pandemic. Children and families who were receiving respite care at Firvale and who had not already withdrawn in response to social distancing guidance were supported to identify alternative support by the relevant Disabled Children's Team.

8.4. The loss of capacity of closing Candle Lodge and Abenrise was partly offset by temporary variations in registration so that five rather than four

places could be offered in three of the homes – Crofton House, Ferne Lodge and Amani.

- 8.5. These arrangements provided sufficient capacity and flexibility to respond to substantial numbers of residential and support staff who were subsequently required to shield or self-isolate or who contracted Covid-19. These changes required the amendment to the Statements of Purpose for these homes, that has now been removed.

9. Children’s Residential Care and Capacity

- 9.1. Occupancy of Swanwick Lodge was aligned with staff availability during the pandemic; admissions were suspended from December 2020 to end January 2021 following outbreaks of Covid-19 in the home.
- 9.2. As a result of these changes, new staffing arrangements have been agreed for Swanwick Lodge to ensure ongoing stability and these are reflected in the revised Statement of Purpose for Swanwick Lodge.
- 9.3. In light of the easing of Covid restrictions, both Abenrise and Candle Lodge were re-opened on 5th July 2021. The children who were placed at the homes when they temporarily closed in April 2020 either remained in placement at the home they moved to or were transitioned to foster care.
- 9.4. Use of the five social care respite beds at Firvale has not occurred since April 2020 when the home temporarily closed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. As noted by Ofsted in April 2019, Firvale impresses as institutional and privacy for the children has been compromised following housing developments surrounding the unit. Issues with outside drainage continues to present a health and safety risk in the winter and works are needed to upgrade fire doors and widen doorways to improve access.
- 9.5. On 17 January 2021 and with the agreement of the Executive Lead Member for Children’s Services a public and staff consultation regarding Firvale commenced. The County Council is proposing that the unit could remain closed, with respite care offered in alternative accommodation or through the provision of alternative services. The consultation ended on 28 March 2022 and a decision will be made later this year once the responses have been analysed.

10. Children’s Residential Care and Service Developments

- 10.1. The Statement of Purpose for the Mead has been revised following some building and grounds work and a review of its function. In August 2021, works were completed at The Mead to provide the home with separate parking to the garden, improve the garden area, convert the home from oil to gas supply and address the industrial nature of the kitchen.

- 10.2. Rather than continue to provide long-term care, following the completion of those works, The Mead has operated as short term and emergency provision for young people whose Care Plan is known but the placement that they need is not immediately available. This new model was developed in part in anticipation of the ban on unregulated placements for children under 16 years of age. Whilst these were very rarely used in practice, it was sensible to develop a local provision to ensure they are never required in future.
- 10.3. The last Decision Report regarding the Statement of Purpose for the children's homes dated 16 September 2020 referred to the development of a new model of Urgent and Extended Care. This service is under review and is being addressed as part of a 5-year Residential Strategy which is being developed in response to high placement demands, limited placement availability and an increasing complexity of need. Simultaneously a strategy is being developed to improve staff recruitment and retention (as a key element of placement sufficiency) to build on several initiatives already undertaken to improve staff capacity.
11. **Children's Residential Care and Changes to the Statements of Purpose**
 - 11.1. In summary, the following revisions to the Statements of Purpose for the Children's Homes have been made:
 - 11.2. A Statement of Purpose detailing the model of care provided at The Mead has been devised (appendix I). This explains the 'offer' of emergency (accelerated) and short-term placements in circumstances where the child's Care Plan is known and agreed but a relevant placement is not yet available.
 - 11.3. The Statements of Purpose for the remaining Children's Homes have been updated to reflect changes to the workforce. This includes new management appointments (The Mead, Candle Lodge, Cypress Lodge and Swanwick Lodge) and workforce development (training and qualifications achieved).
 - 11.4. In addition, each SOP now refers to the prevention and management of Covid-19.
 - 11.5. Detailed amendments to the Statements of Purpose for each of the Children's Homes are listed in Appendix A
 - 11.6. Further revisions to the SOPs will be required this financial year to reflect a change of manager at Berry View (recruiting).

11.7. Additionally, we anticipate potentially substantial revisions to the home's Statements of Purpose following the development of the 5-year Residential Strategy.

12. Fostering Services

12.1. The Fostering Service uses the Statement of Purpose as a competitive positioning tool, which benchmarks local authority and independent services (see Appendix L).

12.2. Prospective carers can use the Statement of Purpose to compare services more easily by reviewing the aims of the service, understanding the process, support and training we offer and reading Ofsted report highlights. This assists in placing Hampshire County Council in a more favourable position within the marketplace.

12.3. An organisational chart of the Fostering Service and descriptions of the teams within the service are presented in a way that is appropriate to the audience, to better understand how the service operates.

12.4. An update has been provided regarding the Hampshire Hives, a new support model for Foster Carers which replicate the support of an extended family approach. The aim of this model is to improve placement stability, improve support for Foster Carers and improve recruitment and retention of Foster Carers.

13. Adoption Service

13.1. The Adoption Service Statement of Purpose sets out the core aims and objectives of Hampshire's Adoption Service (Appendix M). It explains the range of services that are provided to children, prospective adopters, adoptive parents, adopted adults and birth parents through the different strands of the adoption agency.

13.2. The principles and standards within the Statement of Purpose apply to all agency placements.

13.3. The Statement of Purpose reflects the emphasis that the Adoption Service places on the welfare of Hampshire's children who require adoptive placements and the importance of minimising delay for children and meeting statutory timescales. In addition, the support services that are being offered to children and adoptive family's post-adoption, which continues to be a growing area in Hampshire's adoption agency, are described.

13.4. An updated organisational structure has been provided to provided clarity regarding the various team's line management structure.

14. **Adoption Service**

- 14.1. The Statements of Purpose will drive the delivery of children's residential care and the Fostering and Adoption services during 2022-23. As required, they will be updated in one year to reflect the development of services and needs.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Strategic Plan**

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes
OR	
This proposal does not link to the Strategic Plan but, nevertheless, requires a decision because:	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
Statement of Purpose Executive Member Reports	<u>Date</u> 20/09/2020 27/03/2019 09/05/2018 19/06/2017
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Care Standards Act	2000
Children's Act	1989/2004
Children's Home Regulations	2015
The Fostering Services (England) Regulations	2011
The Adoption and Children Act Register Regulations	2017

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

Guide to the Children's Homes
Regulations 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-quality-standards-guide>

Fostering Services: National Minimum
Standards

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fostering-services-national-minimum-standards>

Adoption: National Minimum Standards

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-national-minimum-standards>

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

The decision to approve the updated Statement of Purpose for Hampshire's Children's Homes, Fostering Service and Adoption Service will have no impact on groups with protected characteristics.