

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE : 24 MAY 2001

NATIONAL STANDARDS IN ADOPTION

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Committee of a consultation document on Adoption Standards and the Council's response to this.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In December 2000, the Government White Paper "Adoption: A New Approach" was published. One of the key proposals of the White Paper was the introduction of a set of National Standards in Adoption.

The Scottish Executive issued "Draft National Adoption Standards for England, Scotland and Wales" for consultation in January and local authorities were invited to respond and comment by the end of April. Thereafter the standards will be finalised for publication in the light of the consultation responses.

- 2.2 The standards have been developed with an expert working group chaired by Dame Margaret Booth DBE and organised by the British Agency for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF). They have been developed to be "child centred, evidence based and intelligible".
- 2.3 They are structured to include separate sections for each of the key stakeholders:
- Children
 - Prospective Adopters
 - Adoptive Parents
 - Birth Families
 - Council corporate and senior management functions
 - Council "agency" functions and voluntary adoption agencies
- 2.4 Each section has an overarching statement followed by a set of standards that should be achieved.
- 2.5 The focus of the standard is based on what is in the child's best interests and not necessarily on present practices. Some of the standards are therefore very challenging.

- 2.6 It is also intended to put in place a number of mechanisms to monitor these implications.
- 2.7 It has been decided to develop a Code of Practice to support the national standards with the National Care Standards Committee and the Expert Working Group who have had responsibility for developing the standards. This should be published with the final adoption standards later this year.

3 GENERAL RESPONSE

- 3.1 East Ayrshire has responded in detail to the consultation document highlighting those standards which were found to be realistic and relevant and outlining those standards which were felt to require further consideration. Copies of the response are available in the Members library.
- 3.2 In the main, the document embraced and addressed the relevant issues in Adoption practice, some of which is built into current practice in East Ayrshire and much of which East Ayrshire would strive to achieve.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Some of the standards can be met immediately within existing financial budgets.
- 4.2 In the medium term, the majority of standards will however, have significant resource implications for local authorities in terms of staffing, increased adoption allowances, staff training needs and systems for supporting birth families and this has been made clear in the Council's response to the Scottish Executive.
- 4.3 In the longer term, consideration will need to be given in terms of resources for post adoption support, including training for adopters, respite provision, counselling for families and latterly a range of origin counselling services.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Many of the standards reflect current East Ayrshire Council policy, however, some amendments and additions will be required, especially in relation to timescales, working with birth families and post adoption support.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The National Standards in Adoption is a much welcomed document. Adoption is not a local issue but one which affects children across Scotland and the UK. It is hoped that these standards will bring a consistent quality of permanency planning and care to the children who require adoptive placements.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The Committee is asked to:

- (i) note the consultation document on National Standards on Adoption and endorse the response made by the Department of Educational and Social Services.
- (ii) require the Director of Educational and Social Services to bring forward progress reports on the implementation of the National Standards for Adoption including the implications for the Council in relation to resources.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services
24 April 2001
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Department of Health White Paper (2000): Adoption: A New Approach
2. East Ayrshire Council (1998): Adoption and Permanency Panel Policy and Procedures
3. Correspondence from Scottish Executive (26 January 2001): Consultation on Draft National Standards on Adoption

For further information regarding this report please contact Shelagh Halliday, Service Officer, Adoption & Fostering, Children and Families, Department of Educational & Social Services Services, Council Offices, John Dickie Street, Kilmarnock, KA1 1BY. Telephone: 01563 576905.

(A copy of the above papers will be available at the Members' Information Point)

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: Lesley Gibson

AGENDA