

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE : 29 JANUARY 2004

REVIEW OF CHARGES FOR PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS FOR HOME STUDY REPORTS

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To request Committee approval to increase charges to Prospective Adopters for Home Study Reports related to the adoption of children from overseas.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In October, 1996, Social Work Committee accepted the principle of charging for such Home Studies at a cost of £1,000.
- 2.2 In July 2002, all Local Authorities were asked for comment on the implementation of 'The Adoption (Inter-country Aspects) Act 1999. These new arrangements came into effect on 1st June 2003.
- 2.3 In our response, East Ayrshire Council had no enquiries from people considering adoption from overseas in 5 years. This has now changed with there being 4 enquiries in 2003.
- 2.4 Within the previous Committee report (September 1996), there was no provision for increasing the charge at the rate of inflation or otherwise. It has long been acknowledged that the cost of such a report is well in excess of the amount previously agreed.

3.0 HOME STUDY REPORT

- 3.1 The National Care standards (Standard 34) outlines 8 criteria which should be met when "Adopting a child from another country".
- 3.2 The Home Study Report for Domestic Adoptions involves a full assessment of the suitability, skills and qualities of the applicants proposing to adopt. It is an indepth piece of work which requires a significant time commitment.
- 3.3 The Home Study Report for Inter-country Adoptions makes additional demands in terms of time and expertise. The worker as well as working with the couple has to gain up-to-date information relating to the current criteria and legislation pertaining to adoption from the country of origin. This is often different for each country and can change from year to year.

- 3.4 The issues of placing a child from a different ethnic background and in preparing the couple for post adoption issues are all more complex when considering a child from overseas.

4.0 COSTING

- 4.1 At the present time, Local Authorities and Voluntary Organisations are charging a minimum of £1,000 and in excess of £4,000.

There are differences across Authorities as to what exactly the charge covers ie/some charge £2,000 then couples are required to pay for their own medical and police checks.

- 4.2 It is proposed that East Ayrshire Council set a charge of £3,500. This amount can be evidenced in the most recent case, which due to limited staffing and lack of expertise in this area, resulted in the Authority employing a worker to undertake this specific task. Refer to Appendix 1.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Adoption (Inter-country Aspects) Act 1999 provides for the regulation of Inter-country adoption in England, Wales and Scotland. The main provisions of the Act are:

- 5.2 Enable the UK to ratify the Hague Convention (together with similar legislation in N Ireland).

- 5.3 Amend the Adoption Act 1976 to place a duty on Councils with Social Services responsibilities to provide, or arrange to provide, an Inter-country adoption service.

- 5.4 Enable certain children who are the subject of a Convention Adoption to receive British Citizenship from the date of the adoption.

- 5.5 Enable those who adopt children in accordance with the Hague Convention or from a designated country to apply to register the adoption at the Office of the Registrar General.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The proposed fee levied will ensure that no additional costs fall to the Council when responding to requests for Home Study Reports in relation to Overseas Adoptions.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that the Committee

- (i) Agree the increase from £1,000 to £3,500 to meet the true costs involved in undertaking a Home Study Report and the associated tasks.
- (ii) That these new charges be implemented immediately.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services
Enc (0)
12 January 2004

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Dept of Health Circular – New Arrangements for Inter-country Adoption and Adoption Support Services
- Committee Report (11/09/96) Charges for Prospective Adopters for Home Study Reports

For further information please contact Lesley Gibson, Service Unit Manager, Children and Families Services, Council Offices, Civic Centre, Kilmarnock. (Tel 01563 576901).

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: BILL EADIE

APPENDIX 1

COST OF INTER-COUNTRY ADOPTION ASSESSMENT

Payment to Worker	£1,400
Travelling Expenses (estimated)	£ 630
Post Adoption Support (estimated)	£1,040
Police Checks	£ 30
Medical Checks	£ 144
Admin Support (estimated)	£ 61
Management Support (estimated)	£ 122
TOTAL	£3,427