



**COUNCIL EXECUTIVE**

**RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS AGAINST FOSTER CARERS: PROTOCOL FOR CONSULTATION AND COMMENT**

**REPORT BY HEAD OF SOCIAL POLICY**

**A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The Council Executive is asked to consider the attached response, suggest amendments or additions before it is confirmed with the Scottish Government that this is West Lothian Council's formal response.

**B. RECOMMENDATION**

That the Council Executive approves the attached response to the Scottish Government's consultation document.

**C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

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|---|---|
| <b>I Council Values</b>   | Focusing on our customers' needs<br><br>Making best use of our resources<br><br>Working in partnership  |
| <b>II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b> |   |
| <b>III Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>   | none  |
| <b>IV Consultations</b>   | Children and Families staff members, Lead Officer for Child Protection, Chair of a Carer Panel and three representatives from the Foster Carers Consultative Forum attended a focus group to discuss the Protocol issued by The Fostering Network.<br>(The deadline for this consultation was extended.)<br>The report and consultation response were considered at a meeting of the Social PDSP held on 26 <sup>th</sup> February 2009 and were agreed |

unanimously that it be forwarded to the Council Executive for approval.

#### **D. TERMS OF REPORT**

The Fostering Network, led by Dr Moira Walker, was commissioned by the Scottish Government to develop a protocol which would be a national tool for ensuring the sensitive and efficient handling of allegations against foster carers, and which would be "capable of being adapted to fit local purposes".

The Scottish Government document 'Getting it Right for Children in Kinship and Foster Care' acknowledged the need for a protocol that put the protection of children at its centre while being supportive to carers.

Children and Families staff members, the Lead Officer for Child Protection, the Chair of a Carer Panel and two Foster Carers attended a focus group to discuss the protocol and consider the questions set by The Fostering Network.

As the response attached indicates, Section 3 of the protocol is incongruous with the Edinburgh and Lothians Interagency Child Protection Procedures whereby action following an allegation would be the same irrespective of whether or not the allegation involved a child in foster care/a foster care.

However it was concluded that the protocol highlighted some helpful suggestions that Resource Team staff intend to consider for local implementation.

#### **E. CONCLUSION**

It is anticipated that the response provided by West Lothian Council will be of interest to Dr Moira Walker and The Fostering Network as they progress this work.

#### **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

The Fostering network. Responding to Allegations Against Foster Carers: Protocol for Consultation And Comment.

Appendices/Attachments:

- The Fostering network. Responding to Allegations Against Foster Carers: Protocol for Consultation And Comment.
- The Fostering network. Responding to Allegations Against Foster Carers: Response to questions for consultation.
- The Fostering network. Respondent Information Form.

Contact Person: Jennifer Scott, Senior Manager C&F 01506 775675

[Jennifer.scott@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:Jennifer.scott@westlothian.gov.uk)

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