

PRIVATE FOSTERING SERVICE

Statement of Purpose

2018 - 2019

Placement Services
Bond Street
Wakefield

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR PRIVATE FOSTERING

INTRODUCTION

This Statement is designed to outline the duties and functions of the local authority in accordance with National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering and is separate from the Fostering Services' Statement of Purpose.

1.0 THE LEGAL DEFINITION OF A PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILD

1.1 The Children's Act 1989, The Children's Act 2004 and The Private Fostering Arrangements 2005 define a privately fostered child as:

"A private fostering arrangement is essentially one that is made privately (that is to say without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more. Private foster carers may be from the extended family, such as a cousin or great aunt. However, a person who is a relative under the Children Act 1989 i.e. parent, a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full or half blood or by marriage) or step-parent will not be a private foster carer. A private foster carer may be a friend of the family, the parent of a friend of the child, or someone previously unknown to the child's family who is willing to privately foster a child. The period for which the child is cared for and accommodated by the private foster carer should be continuous, but that continuity is not broken by the occasional short break."

Exemptions to this definition are set out in Schedule 8 of the Children Act 1989. For the purpose of The Children's Act the term 'parent' includes unmarried or putative father.

2.0 Examples of Private Fostering

2.1 Examples of Private Fostering may be:

- children who attend language schools;
- adolescents temporarily estranged from their parents;
- children at boarding schools who do not return to their parents during vacations;
- children on holiday exchanges;
- children brought from abroad with a view to adoption;
- children whose parents work unsocial hours and whose parents have chosen to make Private Fostering Arrangements as a consequence (the Chinese community, in particular, is known to foster privately);
- children of asylum seekers whose parents are not in this country but were brought in by someone and so were not unaccompanied at the time of arrival;
- minority ethnic children with parents working or studying in the UK who have chosen to make private fostering arrangements for their children;
- children with parents overseas;

- children living with host families for a variety of reasons

2.2 An arrangement is deemed as private fostering if it meets the criteria above, whether for reward (monetary or otherwise) or not.

2.3 A child is **not** privately fostered if the person caring for him (her):-

- has done so for a period of less than 28 days, and
- does not intend to do so for any longer period

3.0 Characteristics of a Private Fostering Arrangement

3.1 If the period of placement is less than 28 days, it may be one of a series of placements that add up to more than 28 days. A break in the period for the child to visit his (her) parents at the weekend would not affect the calculation or the interpretation of the private foster parent's intention. A period does not cease to be a period just because a child spends occasional weekends at the home of his (her) parents. For a break to cause a restart in calculating the period it must result in a genuinely fresh arrangement.

3.2 A private fostering arrangement is made by parents or a person with parental responsibility, directly with the private foster carers and not through a voluntary child care agency or a Local Authority Children's and Families Service. What distinguishes this type of placement from public fostering is that it is not paid for or arranged by the local authority. If the local authority is sufficiently involved in arranging or financing the placement, the young person may be more properly viewed as a 'child looked after' within the meaning of The Children's Act.

4.0 Duties and functions

4.1 In respect of privately fostered children the local authority has a duty to satisfy itself that the welfare of children who are privately fostered is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted, and to provide the necessary advice to those caring for them. This includes the duty to ensure that parents and carers fulfil their responsibilities to the child.

4.2 Local authorities do not arrange private foster placements as the arrangements are made between the parent or person with parental responsibility and the private foster carer. The assessment of carers and suitability of the household are undertaken by the Social Worker in the Fostering Service.

4.3 The duties placed on local authorities are supervisory and regulatory and will be provided to the required legal obligations and according to available resources. These duties include the following:

- Raise public awareness of the need to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement;
- Receiving and responding effectively to notifications and situations that arise involving un-notified arrangements;
- Assessing the suitability of private fostering arrangements, private fostering carers and their households;

- Monitoring placements through visits and keeping secure case file records that document the continuing suitability of the placement;
- Supporting private foster carers, parents and children by offering advice and giving information that ensures the child's welfare is safeguarded and promoted;
- Prohibition & disqualification of a person proposing to become, or is acting in the capacity of a private foster carer to safeguarding the needs and welfare of the child;
- Being accountable to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and the executive side of the local authority as to how the service discharges its duties in relation to private fostering through the provision of annual reports.

4.4 In fulfilling these duties the local authority will seek to establish good partnership arrangements not only with the private foster carers, the children and young people and their parents but also with other organisations and agencies.

5.0 Training and awareness for staff

Staff have access to the Statement of Purpose and to on-line procedures, which are up to date and clearly outline the roles and responsibilities for all staff. The procedures will be kept under review following the outcome of service reconfigurations and the implementation of the new Continuum of Need document due to be published later in 2016.

Relevant multi-agency training undertaken by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board will continue to include a component on Private Fostering to support the dissemination of raising awareness to frontline practitioners.

6.0 Named person within local authority to contact for advice

The designated senior manager/agency decision-maker for Private Fostering is Pauline Martin (Service Manager, Children's Locality Safeguarding Teams)

7.0 Signing off arrangements

7.1 Completed Assessment reports will be initially signed off by the Fostering Team Manager and then presented via the Service Manager responsible for placement to the Designated Private Fostering Senior Manager. The report will need to comply with the requirements for core assessment identified in The Framework of the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (DH, 2000). The full report must be written and the following points should be addressed: -

- Date child placed/to be placed;
- The purpose and intended duration of the fostering arrangements;
- The child's physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development;
- Whether the child's needs arising from his religious persuasion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background are being met;

- The financial arrangements for the care and maintenance of the child;
- The standard of care which the child is being given;
- Whether the foster parent is being given any necessary advice;
- Whether the contact between the child and his parents, or any other person with whom contact has been arranged is satisfactory;
- Whether the child's parents or any other person, are exercising parental responsibility for the child and;
- The ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child regarding the fostering arrangements;
- The environmental factors and its influence on the child

8.0 Promoting Awareness of notification requirements

8.1 Other agencies and the wider community will be informed of notification requirements on an on-going basis through a series of activities, which will include:

- Promotional literature/briefings distributed and/or delivered to staff in educational settings, Early Help Hubs, Children's Centres, and via the LSCB and subcommittees.
- Specific professional meetings e.g. Stakeholders events, conferences.
- News briefs to local authority staff.
- Attendance at core group meetings e.g. staff meetings, management group meetings.
- Local and national networking.
- Use of single and multi-agency training to raise awareness of Private Fostering
- Reviewing of systems, including those of partner agencies, to ensure that where appropriate they capture the relationship between adults and children i.e. GP registration process

9.0 Determining suitability of arrangements.

9.1 The local authority's role is to satisfy itself that private fostering arrangements are satisfactory, and that foster carers and premises are suitable. To this end, people who wish to become private foster carers will be required to take part in a Private Fostering Assessment and then cooperate with regular visits from a Social Worker thereafter (every 6 weeks for the first year and every 12 weeks for thereafter).

9.2 The practical responsibility of the local authority in a private fostering arrangement includes the following:

- Receive notification from parents, which will be dealt with within the statutory timescale of 7 days;
- Assess the suitability of the placement, which should be completed by a Social Worker within the statutory timescales of 42 working days from notification;
- Visit the child in line with statutory requirements;
- Ensure that carers are aware of the child's racial, cultural linguistic and religious needs and are helped to meet them;

- Offer advice and support to parents, carers and children involved in private fostering arrangements;
- Make the appropriate checks on all adult members of the household

10.0 The welfare of privately fostered children is safeguarded

10.1 Assessment of suitability of person and issues to consider in completing the assessment.

In considering the welfare of the children privately fostered within Wakefield the general principles and values will inform such practice: -

- The suitability of the carers and the household members.
- The suitability of the accommodation in which the child is to be privately fostered.
- The needs of the individual child.
- The proposed and actual arrangements.
- The Private Fostering Regulations specify the information, which the local authority has to obtain during their enquiries. The regulations also state that the same issues are addressed at all visits made to the private foster placement.
- The welfare of the child is considered as paramount.
- Parents and guardians primary responsibility for their child is recognised and respected.
- Children have a right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Children should be valued as individuals with regard to race, culture, language, religion, gender and disability.
- Children have a right for their physical and emotional needs to be met.
- Children have a right to a safe, child-centered environment.
- Children need opportunities for independence and exploration within safe boundaries.
- Due consideration should be given to the wishes and feelings of children and parents/guardians.
- Previous experience of looking after or working with children and young people.
- Knowledge of and attitude to multicultural issues and people of different racial origins.
- Commitment and knowledge to treat all children as individuals and with equal concern.
- Physical health.
- Mental stability, integrity and flexibility.
- Known involvement in criminal cases involving abuse to children including persons living or working on the premises.

10.2 Assessment of suitability of household factors and issues to consider in completing the assessment.

- The Local Authority is required by law to inspect the premises where a privately fostered child is being, or is proposed to be accommodated and to satisfy itself about the suitability of the accommodation.

- When deciding the suitability of the accommodation, social workers need to consider age appropriate requirements depending on stages of development of the privately fostered children. The National Fostering Minimum Standards can be used as a framework.

11.0 Advice and Support for Private Foster Carers

- 11.1** Private Foster carers can access training through the Fostering Service that is relevant to the needs of them and the child.
- 11.2** As a part of initial contact and assessment of the carers, the fostering Social Worker will ensure that the prospective private foster carers have received a copy of the application form that must be completed so checks can be undertaken. A copy of the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering can be provided to carers so that they are aware of their duties and responsibilities as a private foster carer.
- 11.3** The Fostering Team will undertake the private fostering assessment and the necessary checks that are needed. The Fostering Team will supervise the private foster carer and offer support as needed.
- 11.4.** The responsibility for the child will remain with the assessment and child protection team. The child must be seen by the allocated social worker within 7 days of the beginning of the placement and then at least every 6 weeks during the first year of placement. During the second and subsequent years, visits are required to take place at least every 3 months or as frequently as necessary.
- 11.5** Where the child has been identified as a child in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and requires additional support the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their families will be followed. There might be some circumstances that the case will need to be worked jointly with the Edge of Care Team for Family Group Conferencing.
- 11.6** In all private fostering cases the fostering service will work collaboratively across the service areas to ensure that the placement is suitable and the needs of the child are being met.

12.0 Advice and support for parents and others with parental responsibility

- 12.1** There is no statutory obligation with regards to visiting frequency to the parents or those with parental responsibility to discuss the progress of their child. However social workers will visit as necessary when reasonably requested at the request of the parents/those with parental responsibility. Parents can be provided with an information guide on private fostering.

13.0 Information and Support for privately fostered children

13.1 All children and young people privately fostered will be given a copy of the leaflet Private Fostering. The allocated social worker for the child will support the child in reading it and will obtain a copy in other languages if deemed necessary. If required an interpreter can be accessed if this is deemed more appropriate.

13.2 Children and young people will also be able to access information on private fostering via Wakefield's Care4us website, which is a website specifically for children and young people to access advice and support on what it is like to live in care or with somebody other than their birth parent(s), and to access information on events and consultations that are being held.

14. Role of other agencies

Good links and partnership working arrangements, including campaigns with other agencies and professionals will take place to ensure that they are aware of their duty of care to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement that comes to their attention where they are not satisfied that the local authority have been, or will be, notified of the arrangement. This will allow the local authority to discharge its duty to satisfy itself that the welfare of the privately fostered child concerned is satisfactorily being safeguarded and promoted.