

Private Fostering Statement of Purpose

This Statement of Purpose is designed to meet the statutory requirement established by the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 that:

The local authority has a written statement or plan, which sets out its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and the ways in which they will be carried out (at para 1.1)

At the issue of this Statement of Purpose, the Designated Manager for Private Fostering is: Martin Purbrick, Head of Service, Looked After Children Provision
martin.purbrick@bedford.gov.uk.

Any comments or enquiries regarding this Statement of Purpose should be passed to the Designated Manager.

1. The legal definition of a privately fostered child and a list of examples

'Private Fostering' is defined by The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 as a private arrangement made for the care of a child or young person under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) by someone other than:

- A parent;
- A person who has parental responsibility for the child;
- A close relative (i.e. an aunt / uncle / step-parent / grandparent / sibling)

The Regulations have been interpreted to include within the definition of 'parent' unmarried or putative fathers.

For the private arrangement to be within the statutory definition of Private Fostering:

- The child must have been cared for and accommodated by that person for 28 days or more; or
- The period of actual private fostering is less than 28 days but the private foster

carer intends to privately foster the child for a period of 28 days or more.

Private Fostering arrangements are diverse. However, arrangements which are private fostering include:

- Children and young people sent from abroad to stay with another family,

- usually to improve their educational opportunities
- Teenagers who, having broken ties with their parents, are staying in short term arrangements with friends or other non-relatives;
- Children of prisoners placed with distant relatives;
- Language students living with host families;
- Trafficked children and young people.

A child or young person who is Looked After or placed in any residential home, hospital or school is excluded from the definition.

2. Bedford Borough Council's duties and functions under the Children Act 1989 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and how they will operate in relation to privately fostered children

Bedford Borough Council has a duty to be notified about all private fostering arrangements in its geographical area of responsibility and to satisfy itself that the welfare of children who are being privately fostered are (Children Act 1989 Section 67(1)).

As soon as the Local Authority becomes aware of a proposed arrangement to privately foster a child or young person within their area, or where a child or young person is being privately fostered within their area, the Local Authority will assess the suitability of the arrangement.

Where a child or young person already has an allocated Social Worker, then the private foster carer, those with parental responsibility or any professional working with a child or young person must contact the Social Worker to notify them of the arrangement. The allocated Social Worker will be responsible for carrying out an Initial Visit and Private Fostering Assessment in conjunction with a Social Worker from the Fostering Team.

Where a child or young person does not have an allocated Social Worker, then the private foster carer, those with parental responsibility or any professional working with a child or young person must contact the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub [MASH] to notify the Local Authority of the arrangement:

An Assessment Service Social Worker will then be allocated to carry out the Initial Visit and Private Fostering Assessment in conjunction with a Social Worker from the Fostering Team.

Whilst local authorities do not formally approve or register private foster carers, Bedford Borough Council does have a duty to satisfy themselves that the welfare of a privately fostered child or young person within their area is being safeguarded and

promoted.

3. How relevant staff will be trained to ensure they have appropriate understanding and expertise in relation to private fostering

The Designated Manager for Private Fostering has lead responsibility for ensuring that relevant staff have appropriate understanding and expertise in relation to private fostering. The responsibilities include the review and updating of Practice Guidance and assessment documentation, undertaking briefing sessions of staff and maintaining awareness of Private Fostering. The Designated Manager reports annually on activities undertaken to the Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children's Board and the Director of Children's Services, through the preparation and presentation of the Private Fostering Annual Report.

4. The name of a person within Bedford Borough Council with expertise in private fostering, whom social workers can contact for advice

The Designated Manager for Private Fostering is a statutory requirement. At the issue of this Statement of Purpose, the Designated Manager for Private Fostering is:

Martin Purbrick

Head of Service, Looked After Children Provision

martin.purbrick@bedford.gov.uk

The Designated Manager has responsibility for co-ordinating the return of required Private Fostering data to the Department for Education and also for producing the Annual Report on Private Fostering.

Where it is unclear whether a care arrangement for a child or young person is or is not a private fostering arrangement, discussion will take place with the Designated Manager for Private Fostering. The Designated Manager may seek legal advice as to whether the arrangement does or does not fall within the statutory definition of private fostering. Learning from this process will then be shared by the Designated Manager as relevant.

5. The name of the manager(s) who will sign-off decisions about the overall suitability of an arrangement

The Designated Manager will authorise all professional decisions about the suitability of a private fostering arrangement, taking into account the statutory requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering, the Private Fostering

Regulations 2005 and the Children Act 1989.

6. How awareness of the notification requirements will be promoted with other agencies and within the wider local community

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to promote public awareness in their area of the statutory notification requirements regarding Private Fostering. The Designated Manager for Private Fostering is responsible for developing a strategy to raise public and professional awareness about private fostering. This will be done using a range of media, including posters, leaflets, web articles and training opportunities. The Designated Manager reports annually on activities undertaken to raise awareness to BBSCB and the Chief Social Worker through the preparation and presentation of the Private Fostering Annual Report.

Copies of the most up-to-date awareness raising publicity are available from the Fostering Team.

7. How the Council will determine the suitability of all aspects of a private fostering arrangement in accordance with the regulations

Private Fostering Regulations require that an 'Initial Visit' commencing the assessment must be made to the proposed or actual private foster carers within seven working days of Notification. This will be undertaken by a qualified Social Worker [assisted by a Social Worker from the Fostering Team] tasked with conducting a full assessment of the suitability of the Private Fostering arrangement.

It is locally determined that an assessment of the suitability of the Private Fostering arrangement should take no more than 45 days from the Notification. The primary record for the assessment of the Private Fostering arrangement is the Bedford Borough Council Single Assessment document. This will include a consideration of:

- Consideration of any issues emerging from the declarations required by Private Foster Carers;
- Consideration of any Issues resulting from DBS Certificate of Disclosure for all adult Household Members;
- Consideration of any issues resulting from Private Fostering Home Safety Checklist;
- Consideration of any issues resulting from two non-relative references obtained.

8. How the Council will satisfy itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in its area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted

Children and young people cared for by Private Foster Carers will be visited frequently to ensure that they are safe and appropriately cared for. The frequency of visits will be determined by the circumstances of the case and should take place whenever reasonably requested by the child or private foster carer. However, at a minimum a child or young person should be visited:

- a. Within 7 working days of the arrangement having commenced;
- b. Not less than every six weeks during the first year of the arrangement; and
- c. Not less than every twelve weeks after the first year of the arrangement.

The child will be seen alone on each visit unless this is not appropriate having regard to the young age of the child or if the child does not wish to see the Social Worker alone. The child's bedroom will be seen on some visits.

The care of a child or young person in Private Foster Carer will be reviewed regularly. The Review Private Fostering arrangements is dependent upon whether the child or young person is receiving services additional to the ongoing support and monitoring provided to comply with The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 or not. Where the child or young person is also receiving additional services under a Child in Need

Plan, the Plan will be reviewed every three months in accordance with Children In Need procedures.

Where however, there are no additional services provided to that of support and monitoring of the arrangement under the Regulations, the arrangement will be reviewed on a six monthly basis.

The Review of the arrangement will cover:

- Duration of placement
- Financial arrangements
- Contact arrangements
- How the child's health needs are being met
- How the child's educational needs are being met
- How the child's emotional social and behavioural needs are being met
- How the child's religious, racial, cultural and linguistic needs are being met
- Role of parents in exercising their parental responsibility
- How the placement will be monitored by Children's Social Care until the next Review

As in all reviews, parents, children and carers will be actively encouraged to participate and contribute to the review and planning process.

If an arrangement continues, the private foster carer's will be required to renew their DBS forms every 3 years.

9. The advice and support that will be available to private foster carers (including prospective private foster carers), parents and others with parental responsibility, and others concerned with the privately fostered child

The allocated Fostering Social Worker assisting in the assessment of the suitability of the arrangement and ensuring the privately fostered child is safe and well cared for has responsibility to identify the advice and support required by the private foster carers. During the assessment consideration will be given as to whether it is appropriate for the private foster carers to access specific training or information materials to support them in caring for the individual privately fostered child. Where appropriate the Fostering Social Worker will offer advice on benefit entitlement, parenting strategies and techniques. Wherever possible the assessing Social Worker will meet with the child's parents and offer advice about local service provision which may remove the need for the child to be privately fostered.

Advice to parents and others with parental responsibility, and others concerned with the privately fostered child will be provided by the allocated social worker.

10. The information and support that will be available to privately fostered children

Children and young people cared for by Private Foster Carers will be visited frequently to ensure that they are safe and appropriately cared for. The child will be seen alone on each visit unless this is not appropriate having regard to the young age of the child or if the child does not wish to see the Worker alone. Where appropriate, a privately fostered child or young person may be referred on for advocacy advice and support.

11. Any training that may be available to private foster carers (including prospective private foster carers)

During the assessment consideration will be given as to whether it is appropriate for the private foster carers to access specific training or information materials to support them in caring for the individual privately fostered child. This will be kept under review.

12. The role of other agencies in assisting the Council to carry out its duty under section 67(1) of the Children Act 1989, in particular

through notifying the Council of an arrangement where they are not satisfied that the Council have been, or will be, notified of that arrangement

The Designated Manager for Private Fostering is responsible for developing a strategy to raise multi-agency professional awareness about private fostering. This will be done using a range of media, including posters, leaflets, web articles and training opportunities. The Designated Manager reports annually on activities undertaken to raise awareness of Notification requirements to the Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children's Board and the Director of Children's Services, through the preparation and presentation of the Private Fostering Annual Report.

13. Monitoring and Evaluation of Private Fostering

The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 requires that:

The Local Authority provides a written report each year, for consideration by the Director of Children's Services, which includes an evaluation of the outcomes of its work in relation to privately fostered children within its area.

The Local Authority reports annually to the chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board on how it satisfies itself, that the welfare of privately fostered children in this area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted, including how it co-operates with other agencies in this connection.

Accordingly, the Designated Manager for Private Fostering will prepare and present an 'Annual Report' for consideration by the Director of Children's Services and the Local Safeguarding Children Board giving an overview of activities in relation to Privately Fostered children in the Borough over a twelve month period. The report will detail how the Council has complied with its duties and functions in relation to Private Fostering and include how the welfare of privately fostered children has been satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted over the past 12 months. The report will also outline the activities which have been undertaken to promote local awareness of the notification requirements regarding children who are living in Private Fostering arrangements.

Additionally, the report will include a summary of the statistics provided by Bedford Borough Council to the Department of Education, as part of the annual Private Fostering Return (PF1) required of all local authorities concerning numbers of new notifications, arrangements and visiting patterns. Historical and national comparative data is provided for context.