

Fostering Wakefield



Wakefield Metropolitan
District Council Private Fostering Service

Statement of Purpose

2023–2024



Placement Services
Queens House

wakefieldcouncil
working for you

Fostering Wakefield

BE MY CARER



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.

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1.0 The Legal Definition of Privately Fostered

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 Definition and examples of Private Fostering

A Private Fostering arrangement is one that is made privately for the care of a child under the age of 16 (or 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 a great aunt. 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.

However, a person who is a close relative under the Children Act 1989, i.e. a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or a step-parent will not be a private foster carer.

The period for which the child is cared for and accommodated by the private foster carer should be continuous, but if a child receives an occasional short break this is not considered to break that continuity.



In a private fostering arrangement the parent retains parental responsibility for the child or young person.

Private Fostering arrangements are diverse; examples of 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 are staying in short term arrangements with friends or other non-relatives.
- Language students living with host families.
- A single parent who has chronic health problems arranges for her 9 year old son to live with a friend on a permanent basis.
- A single parent working away from home for 2 months at a time arranges for his three children to live with an extended member of the family (Great Aunt to children).

Local authorities do not formally approve or register private foster carers. However, it is the duty of the local authority to satisfy themselves that the welfare of the children who are, or will be, privately fostered in their area is being, or will be, satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

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.

4.3 Private Fostering Referrals are received and screened by MASH. If a Private Fostering arrangement is required this is picked up by the Fostering Team and the Locality Safeguarding and Family Support Teams.

The Fostering Team undertakes the statutory assessment to determine the suitability of the arrangement in line with Private Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards.

Where there are no concerns and CIN plans do not apply Fostering undertake the supervision and support of these cases in accordance with statutory requirements.

Where Child Protection plans or CiN plans are in place then the Locality Safeguarding and Family Support Teams retain responsibility for the children in placement including compliance with statutory visit requirements.

4.4 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.

4.5 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.

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 contact for Private Fostering can be found through the MASH at 0345 8 503 503.

7.0 Signing off arrangements

7.1 The Child and Family assessment is quality assured by the Team Manager within the localities Social Work Team. The Private Fostering Arrangement Assessment is quality assured by the Team Manager of the Fostering Service.

All of the Private Fostering arrangements are assessed using the Assessment Framework and therefore include the expectations within the National Minimum Standards:

- The ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child about the proposed/actual private fostering arrangement.
- That the child's physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development is appropriate and satisfactory.
- The child's needs arising from his religious persuasion; racial origin and cultural and linguistic background are being met.
- The child's education needs.
- The standard of care provided for each privately fostered child.
- The physical and emotional health of children.
- Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS), Health and local authority checks are completed on all carers; in addition any member of the household over the age of 18 years is subjected to a DBS and local authority check.



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 via the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership.
 - 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.

The initial visit will be undertaken by a Social Worker in Localities to see the child and private foster carer at the private foster home. This takes place within 7 working days of the placement, or the date when the notification was received if later.

Visits will be made every 6 weeks in the first year by the social worker.

In subsequent years, visits must be at least 3 monthly. The need to visit more frequently will be decided by the social worker and their manager depending on the circumstances and the need to visit unannounced and/or to choose times when all members of the household are likely to be present should also be considered.

Additional visits should be arranged at the request of the child or the private foster carer.

Regular visiting should be maintained until the child reaches 16 (or 18 if disabled) or the private fostering arrangement ends.



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-centred 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 the stages of development of the privately fostered children. The National Fostering Minimum Standards can be used as a framework.
- Assessments will be completed within 42 days from notification to the Fostering Service.

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 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 Relevant Team will undertake the private fostering assessment and the necessary checks that are needed.
- 11.4** In all private fostering cases the 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.

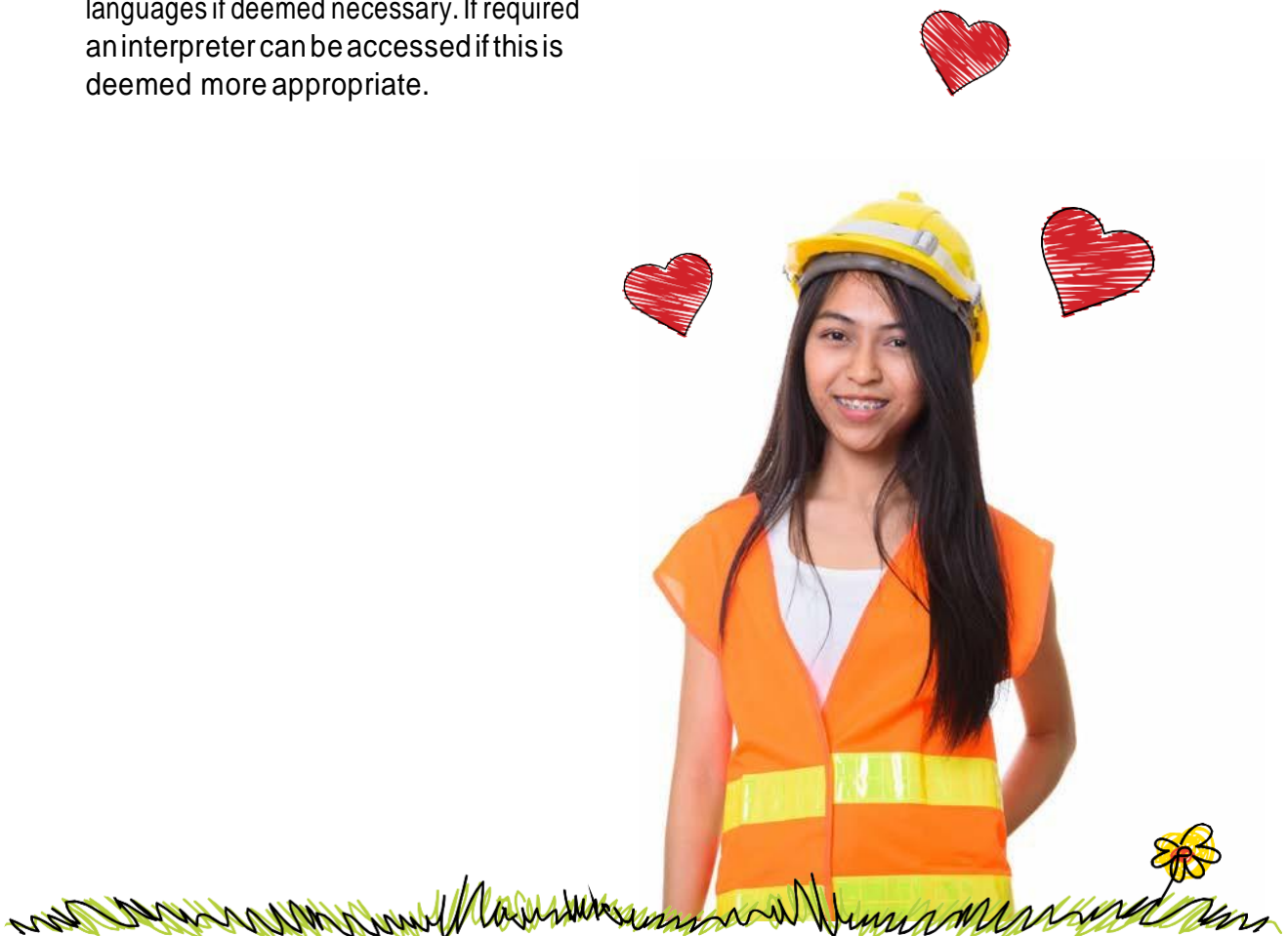
However social workers will visit as necessary when reasonably requested at the request of the parents/those with parental responsibility.

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.

14.0 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.



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