

**Private Fostering Statement of Purpose**

**2020**

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**Designated Manager for Private Fostering**

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**1. Introduction**

* 1. This Statement of Purpose is a description of the management of private fostering arrangements within Coventry City Council. The Statement of Purpose is designed to meet the statutory requirement established in 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* (para 1.1).

* 1. This document defines what constitutes a private fostering arrangement, the requirement that the local authority is notified of all private fostering arrangements, the assessment process and the support and advice offered to parents, private foster carers and private fostered children and young people in Coventry.

**2.Overview of the Service**

* 1. There is a clear process in place within Coventry Children’s Services in respect of the management and assessment of private fostering arrangements. Referrals are received into MASH who will then transfer the case to the appropriate area team based on the address of the private foster placement. The receiving team will then complete the private fostering assessment.
  2. In circumstances where the child already has an allocated social worker case responsibility remains with the allocated area team.
  3. An advanced social worker has been identified in each of the area teams who is lead on private fostering. These leads have been meeting regularly with the operational lead, who is the designated manager for private fostering, in order to develop their knowledge within the area. In the coming year (2020) it is envisaged that the private fostering leads will complete all private fostering assessments and case hold all private fostering cases in their respective areas.

**3. Legal Definition of a Privately Fostered Child**

* 1. As defined by the Children Act 1989 a privately fostered child is:

*A child, under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) who is cared for, or proposed to be cared for, and provided with accommodation for a period of 28 days or more by someone other than:*

* *His/her parent.*
* *A person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for him/her.*
* *A close relative of his/hers.*
  1. The term ‘close relative’ is defined as a step-parent (by marriage or civil partnership), grandparent, sibling, uncle or aunt (whether of full blood, half-blood or marriage/affinity). Private foster carers may be from the extended family, such as a cousin or 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.
  2. The reasons why parents seek private foster carers for their children are diverse but can include:
     + Children from overseas attending schools in the UK.
     + Children at boarding schools who do not return to their parents during school holidays.
     + Children living apart from their families due to parental or family problems.
     + Teenagers living with friends, or friend’s parent/carer, where relationships at home have broken down.
     + Unaccompanied minors who are living with friends or relatives.
     + Children being carer for by extended family or family friends whilst a parent is serving a prison sentence.
  3. A child or young person who is Looked After by a local authority or placed in a residential home, hospital or school is excluded from the definition.

**4. The Local Authority’s Duties and Functions under the Children Act 1989 and Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulation 2005**

* 1. The duties of the local authority in relation to private fostering are set out in the Children Act 1989, the Children (Private Arrangements Fostering) Regulation 2005 and amendments within Children Act 2004.
  2. The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 set out a number of standards to be met by all local authorities in discharging their duties which cover the following areas:
* Statement of Purpose
* Notification
* Safeguarding and promoting welfare
* Advice and support
* Monitoring and compliance
  1. Local authorities have a duty to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are privately fostered is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted, and to provide necessary advice to those caring for them.
  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.
  3. The duties placed on the local authority are supervisory and regulatory and will be provided to the required legal standard. These duties include:
* Receiving and responding effectively to notifications and situations that may arise involving un-notified arrangements.
* Assessing the suitability of private fostering arrangements, private foster carers and their households.
* Visiting placements within statutory timescales to ensure the placement remains appropriate and stable.
* Supporting private foster carers, parents and children by offering advice and providing information that ensures the child’s welfare is safeguarded and promoted.
* Raise public awareness of the requirements regarding notification of private fostering.

**5. Training and Awareness**

* 1. Regularly meetings are held between the designated manager and the advanced social workers from each area team who are responsible for the oversight of private fostering. The meetings are used to discuss any issues and to develop the offer to private foster carers, parents and privately fostered children.
  2. Private fostering is presented at the Children’s Services Practice Development Forum on an annual basis.
  3. An awareness raising session is completed with each new cohort of ASYEs in the Social Work Academy.
  4. Information about private fostering will continue to be circulated to relevant professionals within Children’s Services and in partner agencies. Additional, specific training to staff across the service can be provided if there is a request or as a result of any themes or issues identified via auditing.
  5. Staff have access to the Statement of Purpose and to online procedures.
  6. A communication strategy for 2020 is being developed to raise awareness of notification requirements within the wider community. This will include publicity posters to be displayed at key access points (schools, GP surgeries, family hubs, community centres, health centres and council offices). There is also information available on the City Council website.

**6. Assessment of the Suitability of Private Foster Carers and their Household**

* 1. The local authority has a duty to assess the suitability of all potential or actual private fostering arrangements that are brought to its attention or that it has been notified of.
  2. The local authority will undertake checks and enquires to ensure that the private foster carers identified by the parent(s) are able to provide a satisfactory standard of care.
  3. Where the local authority is notified of a private fostering arrangement, an assessment will be undertaken, which will include:
* Visiting the premises where it is proposed that the child will be residing.
* Visiting and speaking to the proposed private foster carer and to all members of their household.
* Visiting and speaking to the child, alone unless it is considered it inappropriate.
* Speaking to and, if it is practicable to do so, visiting every parent of or person with Parental Responsibility for the child.
  1. The assessment will ascertain that the private foster carer(s), their household and premises, provide an environment in which the child’s welfare will be safeguarded and promoted and to determine:
* The carer’s capacity to look after the child and the suitability of his/her household.
* The suitability of the premises in which the child will be, or is being, privately fostered.
* Whether it would be prejudicial to the welfare of the child to be, or continue to be, cared for by the private foster carer(s) in those premises.
* That the arrangements or proposed arrangements are likely to provide a safe and stable environment for the child.
  1. Assessments of private fostering arrangements will include ensuring that the child or young person’s physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development is satisfactory and needs arising from relationship with their family including contact, his/her religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic background are being met. The assessments will include evidence that the accommodation as well as the parenting capacity of the private foster carers are suitable and meet the needs of the child.
  2. When complete, private fostering assessments will be sent to the designated manager for approval.

**7. Ensuring the Welfare of Privately Fostered Children is Safeguarded and Promoted**

* 1. In considering the welfare of children who are privately fostered within Coventry regard has been given to Section 1(3), Children Act 1989. Other values and principles that will be considered in order to inform good practice are:
* The welfare of the child is considered as paramount.
* The needs of the individual child.
* Parents/guardians primary responsibility for their child is recognised.
* Children are valued as individuals and are treated with dignity and respect.
* Children have a right to a safe, child centred environment.
* Children have a right to consistent care.
* Partnerships between parents/guardians, private foster carers and the Local Authority are valued.
  1. Private foster carers will be responsible for providing the day to day care to the child in a way that will promote and safeguard their welfare.
  2. When the Local Authority receives notice that a child is being privately fostered it will make enquires and visits to satisfy itself that their welfare is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted. This will involve completing a private fostering assessment and undertaking DBS checks of private foster carers and household members.
  3. Privately fostered children will be visited at least once every six weeks in the first year of their placement and at least every 3 months in the second and subsequent years. This is the minimum requirement however the frequency of visits be determined by the needs and circumstances. Additional visits will be made to a privately fostered child when reasonably requested by the them, the private foster carer, the child’s parent(s) or any other person with Parental Responsibility. The child/young person should ordinarily be seen alone as part of these visits unless the social worker considers it to be inappropriate.
  4. When the care of a privately fostered child is considered unsatisfactory and this cannot be addressed the Local Authority will inform the parent(s) or other persons with parental responsibility and advise that alternative arrangements should be made. A Children & Family Assessment may be completed, or Child Protection Procedures invoked. Legal services will be consulted in determining action when necessary.

**8. The Role of Other Agencies in Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Privately Fostered Children**

* 1. It is important that all those who might come into contact with a privately fostered child are aware of the need for such arrangements to be notified to the local authority. In particular professionals working in universal services such as health and education have a pivotal role as they will often be the first to become aware of such arrangements.
  2. Such agencies share the local authority’s responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of privately fostered children. Other agencies need to be aware of the importance of a private foster carer or parent notifying a local authority of a private fostering arrangement.
  3. Education, health and other professionals should 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 safeguarded and promoted.
  4. Awareness raising/briefing workshops will be provided for professionals and voluntary agencies that have regular contact with children, young people and carers to ensure that they are clear about their role and responsibilities in relation to private fostering arrangements. Additional training will be provided to key professionals as required to provide an appropriate understanding of the policy and procedures, which can be disseminated to their agencies.
  5. In addition, other agencies may also be responsible for the provision of services for privately fostered children where there is an assessed need.

**9. Advice, Support and Information for Private Foster Carers, Parents (or others with Parental Responsibility) and Privately Fostered Children**

* 1. As part of our work with children and young people, the local authority will provide advice, guidance and support to the private foster carer and parent(s). Private foster carers will be given the contact details of the allocated social worker from whom they can seek advice and support. The private fostering process will be explained to the carer as part of the assessment process.
  2. Parents will also be provided with the contact details of the allocated social worker. There is no statutory requirement with regard to visiting frequency to parents of children who are privately fostered. However social workers will visit as necessary when reasonably requested.
  3. Children will be seen within 7 days of notification, at a minimum of 6 weekly for the first year and a minimum of every 3 months in subsequent years. Children will be able to seek advice, information, help and support from their social worker. The child will also be made aware, if of sufficient age and understanding, how they can contact their social worker if they have any worries about their care; if they would like the social worker to visit them to check on anything that is concerning them about their care or there are other matters about which they want to talk about.
  4. The local authority is in the process of developing private fostering guides that will be given to private foster carers, parents and children when an arrangement is notified to ensure that they have received all relevant information.

**10. Designated Manager**

10.1 At the issue of this Statement of Purpose, the Designated Manager for Private Fostering is Seth Harris-White, Operational Lead East ([seth.harris-white@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:seth.harris-white@coventry.gov.uk)).

10.2 The Designated Manager has responsibility for authorising private fostering assessments that are completed.

10.3 Any comments or enquires regarding this statement of Purpose should be passed to the Designated Manager.

10.4 Private fostering notification should be directed to the MASH.