

Committee:	Dated:
Safeguarding Sub Committee	08/02/2019
Subject: Private Fostering Annual Report 2017 to 2018	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Pat Dixon, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager, Department of Community and Children's Services	

Summary

There have been no private fostering arrangements identified in the City of London for 2017 to 2018. Therefore, this report will inform Members about how the City of London has met the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering by raising awareness of private fostering arrangements with professionals and residents in the City of London. In 2016/2017 the annual report identified the potential barriers to raising awareness within the community, whereby residents associated 'private fostering' arrangements as being akin to being a local authority foster carer. In 2017/2018 the City produced publications and banners featuring 'Somebody Else's Child'. to support the engagement of residents.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

Definition of Private Fostering Arrangements

1. A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (that is to say without the involvement of the local authority), for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if the child is 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, or they may be a friend of the family or other non-relative, such as the parents of the child's friend. A person who is a close relative of the child, as defined by the Children Act 1989 (a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt – whether by full- or half-blood or by marriage or civil partnership – or step-parent), is not a private foster carer.

2. Examples of private fostering arrangements are:

- children sent from abroad to stay with another family, usually to improve their English or for educational opportunities
- asylum-seeking and refugee children
- teenagers who, having broken ties with their parents, have short-term arrangements to stay with friends or other non-relatives
- children living with host families, arranged by language schools or other organisations
- children living with members of the extended family, e.g. a great-aunt.

3. The primary responsibility of the local authority is to safeguard and promote the welfare of these children and young people by:

- meeting the duty to promote public awareness of the requirement to notify the local authority of private fostering arrangements and, therefore, to reduce the number of 'unknown' private fostering arrangements
- responding to notifications and assessing the private fostering arrangements
- meeting the duty to support private fostering arrangements.

4. This responsibility is underpinned by: the Replacement Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering; Children Act 2004 (Section 44 amends Section 67 in the 1989 Act); the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005; and the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005.

Current Position

5. Over the past 12 months, there have been no private fostering arrangements identified in the City. Given the City's demographics, it is highly unlikely that this is a true reflection of the situation. The City of London is ensuring that it is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering, and this is an area that has been identified by the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board (CHSCB) as a priority. The attached annual Private Fostering Report goes to the City Executive Board of the CHSCB.

6. In 2016 to 2017 it was identified that parents' and carers' initial response when being informed about private fostering arrangements would be to align it to becoming a foster carer for the local authority. This perception often prevented potential private foster carers from reading any further than the headlines, as they considered it would not apply to them. In 2017 to 2018 a review of the

leaflets for parents, carers and young people was completed. Rather than the headlines coming under the banner of Private Fostering, the leaflets asked whether they were looking after 'Somebody Else's Child'. or if their child was being cared for by somebody other than a parent or close relative. The information inside the leaflets has remained the same, as it was considered that the terminology would be suitable for use with the family should they be involved in a private fostering arrangement.

Conclusion

7. During Private Fostering Week, stalls were set up in libraries across the City and at Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School. Many library visitors were not City residents, but City workers; however, the libraries did prominently display information on private fostering, with information about what to do if someone was caring for a child. Information on private fostering arrangements were sent out on a regular basis through resident publications. When there were events involving residents, leaflets and banners were displayed prominently. In 2018/2019 there will be continued effort made to engage residents through established networks.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Private Fostering Report 2017/2018

Pat Dixon

Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager
Department of Community and Children's Services

T: 020 7332 1215

E: pat.dixon@cityoflondon.gov.uk