

Committee:	Dated:
Safeguarding Sub-Committee	09/02/2023
Subject: Private Fostering Annual Report 2021 to 2022	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Outcome 1
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N/A
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Clare Chamberlain, Interim Executive Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Pat Dixon, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service	

Summary

There have been no private fostering arrangements identified in the City of London for 2021 to 2022. Therefore, this report will inform Members about how the City of London has met the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering by raising awareness. There have been some difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the limited opportunities to have face-to-face contact through conferences and training events. However, the City of London has been promoting private fostering through the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP) app and the distribution of leaflets to partner agencies, there have also been opportunities to raise awareness with partners through multi-agency meetings.

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, without the involvement of the 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, 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 stepparent), 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, such as 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. As evidenced within this report, there have been no private fostering arrangements identified in the City over the last 12 months. There have been concerted efforts to promote awareness around private fostering throughout the year. Schools in the City of London have information on private fostering displayed in parent areas. Libraries also have posters and leaflets displayed in public areas. The Strategic Communications Officer also ensures that information on private fostering is distributed within publications that go out to City residents.

6. The CHSCP has included information about private fostering arrangements within their safeguarding training for Designated Safeguarding Leads. Children's Social Care and Early Help staff are also informed about private fostering as part of their induction and, as we come out of the pandemic, there will be more opportunities to raise awareness through staff induction days, conferences, and resident events.

Options

7. N/A

Proposals

8. N/A

Key Data

9. N/A

Corporate & Strategic Implications

10. Financial implications – N/A

11. Resource implications – N/A

12. Legal implications – N/A

13. Risk implications – N/A

14. Equalities implications – N/A

15. Climate implications – N/A

16. Security implications – N/A

Conclusion

17. As identified within this report, there have been no referrals regarding private fostering arrangements in the City of London from April 2021 through to end of March 2022. When reviewing this in the context of other London boroughs, it is evident that they are also experiencing a low number of referrals in relation to private fostering. Therefore, given our size and demographics, the absence of referrals may well be proportionate to what other local authorities are experiencing.

18. However, the City of London continues to raise awareness about private fostering and, in the recent Ofsted focused visit in November 2022, they reviewed the work in this area, identifying “The local authority and the safeguarding partnership are exploring innovative ways to raise awareness of private fostering in the area, given the very low number of referrals”.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Private Fostering Annual Report 2021 to 2022.

Background Papers

- Statutory guidance – National minimum standards for private fostering.

Available at this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-minimum-standards-for-private-fostering>

Pat Dixon

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

T: 020 7332 1215

E: pat.dixon@cityoflondon.gov.uk