



Annual Report Private Fostering Arrangements April 2021 to March 2022

Context of City of London

The City of London has a relatively small resident population of just over 9000 people (2021 estimates), of which just over a 1000 are under the age of 19 (accounting for around 11% of the population in 2021 estimates). Both younger and older population numbers have increased since 2010. The younger population has risen from 9% of the population in 2010 and the older population (over 65's) has grown from 14% in 2010 to 19% in 2021.

The resident population of the Square Mile is predominantly white, though this is projected to decrease over the period to 2026. The Asian population (the largest minority ethnic group in the Square Mile) is projected to remain as a similar proportion of the population (around 13%) and groups which are relatively under-represented, including Black and other populations, are projected to increase.

DEFINITION OF PRIVATE FOSTERING

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 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) would not be considered a Private Foster Carer.

Examples of private fostering arrangements include:

- 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, are staying in short term arrangements 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. great aunt.

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; and meeting the duty to support private fostering arrangements.

This responsibility is underpinned by the Replacement Children Act 1989 Guidance 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.

Meeting National Minimum Standards on Private Fostering,

Standard 1: The local authority has a written statement or plan, which sets out its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and the way in which they will be carried out.

The City of London's 'Statement of Purpose' on private fostering was reviewed and updated in October 2022. Raising awareness around Private Fostering is reviewed within the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership and is a key priority within the City of London Corporate Plan 2018 -23, Priority 1 "People are Safe and Feel Safe" (d) safeguarding children, young people, and adults at risk. The key objectives in achieving this has been to ensure.

- young people know what to expect if they go through private fostering and how they should be treated
- professionals understand what their responsibilities are relating to private fostering
- parents understand what private fostering is and whether it is a suitable option for them and their family.

Standard 2: The local authority: promotes awareness of the notification requirements and ensures that those professionals who may come into contact with privately fostered children understand their role in notification; Responds effectively to notifications; and deals with situations where an arrangement comes to their attention, which has not been notified.

As we have emerged from the pandemic there has been increased face to face activity in raising awareness around Private Fostering over the past year, Fig 1 shows some of the activity that has taken place to raise awareness around Private Fostering. There has also been information sent out about Private Fostering in resident publications and internal publications, promoting the City and Hackney Safeguarding Partnership App, which contains information on Private Fostering.

Fig 1 below shows some of the activity that took place over the past year to raise awareness:

Event	Date	Resident or Professionals	Activity
Safeguarding Education Forum	October 2022	Professionals, Designated Safeguarding Lead's in Schools.	Verbal briefing on Private Fostering to the forum from Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Early Years Providers Forum	November 2022	Managers Early Years settings	Early Years Managers Forum due to attend Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance to raise awareness around Private Fostering and the CHSCP App.
Estate Resident Meetings	Various dates throughout 2021 to 2022	Residents	Leaflets and bookmarks containing information about Private Fostering have been distributed.
Staff Induction	Various dates throughout 2021 to 2022	Professionals	Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance meets with new staff to explain about Private Fostering.

Private fostering data is reviewed through the Quality Assurance Subgroup of the CHSCP; there have been no private fostering referrals this year.

Standard 3: The local authority determines effectively the suitability of all aspects of the private fostering arrangement in accordance with the regulations.

There have been no referrals received by the City for 2021 to 2022; however, there are procedures in place to assess the placement and ascertain the views of the young person. Assessments completed would include and cover the expectations within the National Minimum Standards by:

- Ascertaining the wishes and feelings of the child about the proposed/actual private fostering arrangement. The young person being privately fostered would be spoken to alone as part of the assessment process, this would occur when they are visited by the social worker.
- Establishing the child's physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development is essential and this would be addressed as part of the assessment process.
- The child's needs arising from their religious persuasion; racial origin and cultural and linguistic background are being met by the placement.
- That consideration has been given and where necessary steps have been taken to make arrangements for the child's education.
- A risk assessment has been carried out on the home conditions and the standard of care offered within the arrangement.
- The young person is registered with a G.P and Dentist.
- That DBS checks are completed in respect of all the adults within the household.
- The social worker supports the young person in accessing leisure activities in their locality.

Standard 4: The local authority provides such advice and support to private foster carers and prospective private foster carers as appears to the authority to be needed:

The Children's Social Care and Early Help Service are aware that it is within their role to assist and advise all private foster carers with general parenting skills and provide advice on an on-going basis. There would also be assistance with practical issues for carers around benefits, housing and immigration status if required. The City would ensure that all carers have support in accessing education and health provision for the child or young person.

Standard 5: The local authority provides advice and support to the parents of children who are privately fostered within their area as appears to the authority to be needed:

Where possible all parents would be seen and spoken to during the course of establishing the arrangements (if living abroad contact would be made by telephone, if domiciled in the UK then the expectation is that a visit would take place).

A leaflet designed for parents, carers and young people about private fostering arrangements is available and would be given to anyone entering into such an arrangement. There is also information available about services and activities in the

City of London which would be provided for parents, carers and young people from the Family and Young Peoples Information Service.

Contact details of the allocated social worker would be provided to all parents where possible.

Standard 6 Children who are privately fostered are able to access information and support when required so that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted. Privately fostered children are enabled to participate in decisions about their lives:

The allocated social worker would consult with all children and young people individually about their views and ensure that their private foster carers understood their needs and wishes. Children and young people's views and wishes would be incorporated into the assessment report.

As part of the on-going involvement the social worker would be expected to make termly contact with the education provision to discuss the child/ young person's progress.

If required, the social worker would undertake direct work with the child or young person in the community.

Children who are subject to private fostering arrangements would be given information about what they should expect if they are being privately fostered, where age appropriate. Children and young people who are privately fostered in City of London would also have access to the advocacy and independent visitor service.

Contact details for the social worker will be provided to all children where appropriate and to all parents (who are in contact with the service).

Standard 7 The local authority has in place and implements effectively a system for monitoring the way in which it discharges its duties and functions in relation to private fostering. It improves practice where this is indicated as necessary by the monitoring system:

All information pertaining to children and young people is placed onto Mosaic, the integrated children's system used by the Children's Social Care and Early Help Service. There are no paper files and the information stored on this system can be utilised for performance reports and National Indicator returns for the Department of Education, PF1. This includes age of the child, place of birth, ethnicity, first language and any disability.

As part of the Quality Assurance Framework any private fostering arrangements would be subject to an auditing process and the qualitative and quantitative information obtained would be reported into the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership via the quality assurance subgroup.

Summary

As evidenced within this report there have been no private fostering arrangements identified in the City over the last 12 months, given the demographics of the City of London it is likely that there are private fostering arrangements taking place, but these arrangements haven't been reported. The City of London has endeavoured to raise awareness with professionals and residents over the past year, however, due to the confines of the pandemic this has been difficult. For this reason, there has been a concerted effort to engage in more face-to-face awareness sessions with partner agencies as we emerge from the pandemic.

Priorities going forward will be to link with communities through established links, to ensure that residents in the City of London are aware of what a Private Fostering arrangement is, and what they need to do should they be involved in such an arrangement. Through the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP) there will be continued raising awareness sessions with partners, and the promotion of the CHSCP app. The lead on Private Fostering in the City of London also attends the CHSCP sub groups and will report on the update of these raising awareness sessions.

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City of London