

City of London

Department of Community and Children's Services

Private Fostering Annual Report 2023-24

Author: Laura Demetriades,
Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

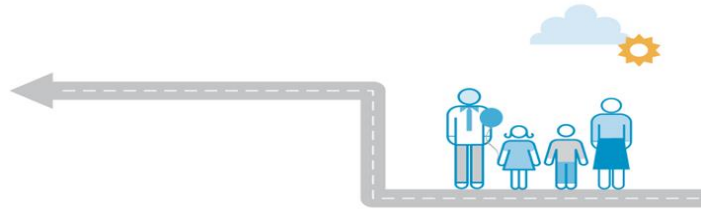
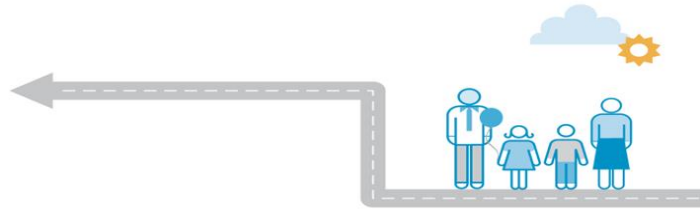


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1. Introduction

The Private Fostering Regulations apply when children or young people, aged under 16 years (18 if they have a disability) live with a person who is not a close relative for 28 days or more. The term 'close relative' has a specific definition within the legislation it includes grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts (whether of the full or half blood or by marriage) and stepparents. Children living with people who are not defined as a close relative, such as a cousin, great aunt or family friend need to be assessed and reviewed under the Private Fostering Regulations to ensure the arrangement is able to safeguard and promote their welfare.

This annual report gives an overview of activities in relation to privately fostered children in the City of London in the last financial year. The report details how the City of London has complied with its duties and functions in relation to private fostering. The report also outlines the activities which have been undertaken to promote awareness of the notification requirements regarding children who are living in private fostering arrangements. The responsibility for the promotion and awareness raising in relation to private fostering sits within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service which is part of the People's Directorate, within the Department for Community and Children's Services.

2. Context of City of London

The City of London is the smallest local authority area in the country at 1.12 miles, and the second smallest by population. We have 8600 residents and around 800 children and young people under the age of 19 years. We have one state maintained primary school and six private schools in the City.

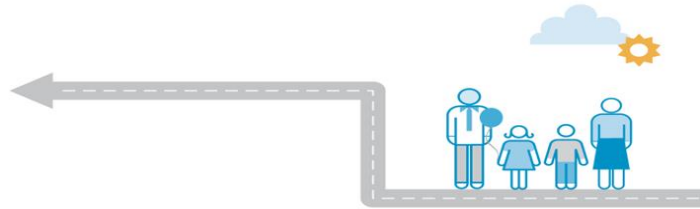
There are high levels of affluence with pockets of deprivation. More diverse communities live in the east side of the City and the younger population is growing there. The resident population of the Square Mile is predominantly white, though this is projected to decrease over the period to 2026. The Asian population (the largest Black and Global Majority 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. Older population is growing but overall high life expectancy.

3. 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 for Private Fostering' was reviewed and updated in April 2024. Raising awareness around Private Fostering is led by the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service and monitored by the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership. The key objectives are to ensure.

1. Professionals understand what their responsibilities are relating to private fostering and know how to report any arrangements appropriately.
2. Parents understand what private fostering is and whether it is a suitable option for them and their family.



3. Carers understand their responsibilities if they are offering care to someone else's child(ren).
4. Children know what to expect if they are cared for someone who is not their parent or a close relative, how they should be treated, and where they can get support if needed.

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.

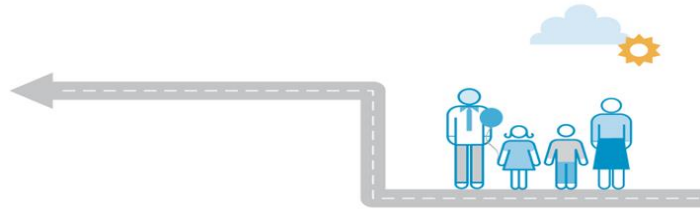
Information is available for professionals via the City of London website [Private fostering - City of London](#) and via the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership [Private Fostering | chscp](#), specifically an easy to use downloadable app which was developed in partnership with the Ineqe Safeguarding Group. The App aims to help everyone better understand this important safeguarding issue. Easy to access & simple to understand, the Private Fostering App is the go-to guide that fits right in your pocket. Get our new Private Fostering App by downloading the CHSCP poster or via the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).

Leaflets and posters available are sent out periodically to schools, early years settings, religious establishments, libraries, housing offices, and community centres for display and to remind them of their reporting duties.

In January 2024 an in-person People's Directorate Induction was held, with 29 attendees from internal staff to external partners and commissioned services, within this there was a specific section on private fostering and duty to notify. There has also been in person visits to all primary and secondary schools in the City this year which highlighted private fostering as a priority.

The Aldgate School	03/10/2023
City of London School for Girls	31/10/2023
City of London School for Boys	01/11/2023
Charterhouse Square School & Nursery	07/11/2023
St Paul's Cathedral School & Nursery	05/10/2023
David Game College	04/10/2023
Guildhall School of Music and Drama (Higher Education)	03/08/2023
Bright Horizons City Child	18/07/2023
Newpark Childcare Centre	26/10/2023
The City of London Child and Family Centre	03/10/2023

Responds effectively to notifications; and deals with situations where an arrangement comes to their attention, which has not been notified.



There are effective processes in place to respond to notification when they arise. This reporting period there have been 0 private fostering notifications, so these processes have not needed to be enacted. However, there is a duty worker available every day to respond to any queries or notifications in relation to privately fostered children. An annual refresher in terms of awareness is undertaken with the Children's Social Care and Early Help team, there is also training available through the CHSCP for staff members to attend if they need additional clarity, as is guidance and advice from the lead for Private Fostering in the organisation.

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 Private Fostering Assessments completed in the City during 2023 to 2024; however, there are procedures in place to assess the placement and ascertain the views of the child. Assessments would include and cover the expectations within the National Minimum Standards by:

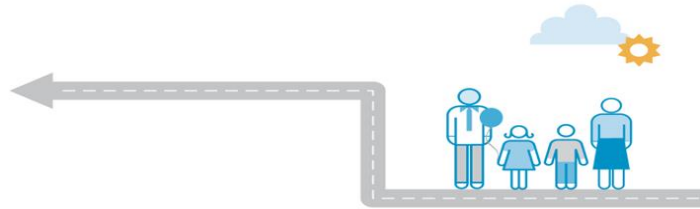
- Ascertaining the wishes and feelings of the child about the proposed/actual private fostering arrangement. The child would be spoken to alone as part of the assessment process.
- Understanding the child's physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development needs, and the carers capacity to meet these needs.
- Assessing the child's religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic needs and how these are being met in the care arrangement.
- Ensuring that consideration has been given and steps taken to make arrangements for the child's education.
- Conducting a risk assessment of the home, those within the household and the standard of care offered from the care arrangement.
- Ensuring that the child is registered with appropriate health services.
- Completing DBS checks in respect of all the adults within the household.
- Supporting the child to access local leisure activities and engage in age-appropriate extra-curricular activities.

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 their role to assist and advise all private foster carers with general care 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 as required. The City would ensure that all carers have support in accessing education and health provision for the child(ren). All team members have access to the CHSCP Private Fostering App [Private Fostering | chscp](#). All new starters in Children's Social Care have an induction with the lead for Private Fostering and all workers are able to access advice and guidance from the lead at any time.

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 parent(s) would be met with as part of the Private Fostering Assessment, and their understanding and written consent gained as part of this process. Where parent(s) are not living in the UK contact would be made via phone/video call as able. In any case it would be essential



that the parent(s) can be contacted and provide their informed consent for the arrangement, if parent(s) were not able to do this then consideration to seeking legal advice would be required.

A leaflet designed for parents, carers and children about private fostering arrangements is available and would be given to anyone entering 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 children from the Family Information Service.

Parent(s) would be included as far as possible in any meetings pertaining to their child and would be required to give consent to any decisions made in relation to their child, as they retain Parental Responsibility. They would also be responsible for any financial support needed to maintain the arrangement.

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 any privately fostered child about their views and ensure that their carers understood their needs and wishes and could meet this appropriately. The child's view would be a core part of the assessment report and on-going monitoring visits. They would be seen and spoken to on their own, with direct work being completed to best understand their experiences and wishes for the future.

Children who are living in private fostering arrangements would be given information about what they should expect, where age appropriate, and how they can access support from their social worker or other services. Children who are privately fostered in City of London would also have access to the advocacy and independent visitor 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:

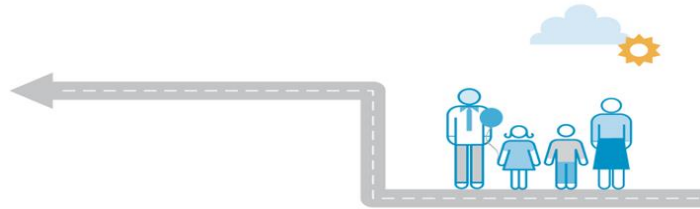
All information relating to children who are privately fostered is recorded on Mosaic, the integrated children's system used by the Children's Social Care and Early Help Service. This information can be utilised for performance reports and National Indicator returns, including age of the child, place 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.

4. Oversight

CHSCP Quality Assurance and Training, Learning and Development Subgroups and Safeguarding Partnership Board

The Private Fostering Annual Report is taken to the CHSCP Quality Assurance Subgroup and Safeguarding Partnership Board Meeting for review. Any themes or emerging trends are raised at the



Quarterly Subgroups as required, specifically any learning needs being identified across the multi-agency partnership or new ideas for raising awareness.

Safeguarding Sub-Committee

The Private Fostering Report is taken to the Safeguarding Sub-Committee for consideration of Members, to ensure that there are safe and effective working practices should a notification be received, and to monitor the ongoing awareness raising of the need to notify in relation to private fostering arrangements.

5. Progress against 2022-23 Priorities

- Outstanding action from previous report 2021 to 2022, was to raise awareness around private fostering with faith leaders. This would require cross borough working with neighbouring local authorities. – Links have been made with the Safeguarding Teams for both the Church of England Diocese and the Catholic Church Diocese. A list of religious institutions within and bordering the City have been drawn up and leaflets and posters will be sent, once the information has been updated.
- Information on Private Fostering will be available on the Family Information website. – The Family Information website links to the information available on the City of London website. Updates have been provided for the website content but have yet to put in place.

6. Priorities for the next 12 months

1. Update the Private Fostering information available both as paper copies and online.
2. Send out updated information to all religious institutions within and bordering the City.
3. Utilise Private Fostering Awareness Day to promote awareness and training for staff internally and across the partnership.
4. Ensure internal procedures in relation to Private Fostering are up to date and accessible on the TriX Library for staff to utilise as needed.