

City of London

Department of Community and Children's Services

Private Fostering Annual Report 2024-25

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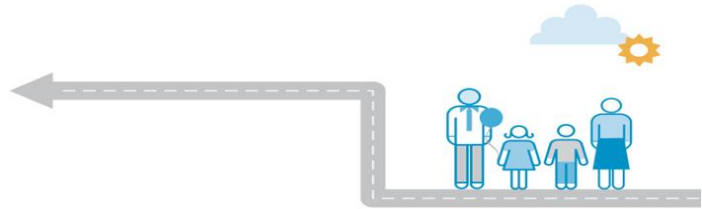
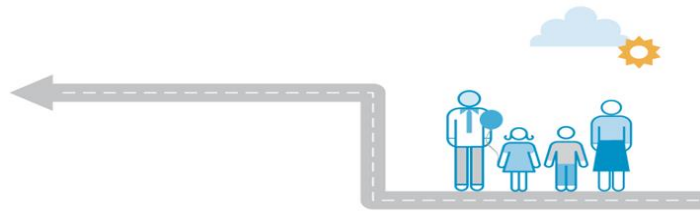


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1. Introduction

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. A private fostering arrangement is essentially one that is made privately (without the involvement of a local authority). 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 2024-25. 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

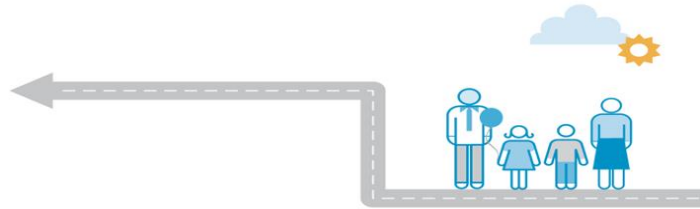
The City of London is the smallest local authority area in the country at 1.12 miles, and the second smallest by population. The City of London is home to just under 9,000 residents, with 713 children and young people aged 0–18 (Census 2021). Most children attend one of over 66 different schools outside the City of London. Our Children and Families Service supports a small but complex group, including a high proportion of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). We have one state maintained primary school, six private schools in the City, and nine nurseries.

There are high levels of affluence with pockets of deprivation¹. 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 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 the National Minimum Standards¹

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 ways in which they will be carried out.

¹ [national_minimum_standards_for_private_fostering.pdf](#)



The City of London's 'Statement of Purpose for Private Fostering' was reviewed and updated in April 2024 and remains fit for purpose. This is available for all members of the Children's Social Care and Early Help Team via the online TriX Document Library². There is clear information available on the City of London Corporate website pages which layout information about what private fostering is, the role of private foster carers, parents and the Local Authority³.

This is also supported by the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership [Private Fostering | chscp](#), specifically an easy-to-use downloadable app. The App aims to help everyone better understand this important safeguarding issue. It is easy to access and simple to understand, the Private Fostering App is the go-to guide that fits right in your pocket. Anyone can access the Private Fostering App by downloading the CHSCP poster or via the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).

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.

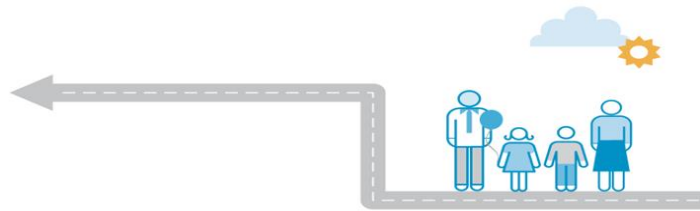
Raising awareness around Private Fostering is led by the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service and monitored by the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership. The key objectives are to ensure.

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.

Within this reporting year a presentation has been given to the Children's Social Care and Early Help Team to remind them of the private fostering criteria and action to be taken when a private fostering arrangement is identified. In November 2024 an in-person People's Directorate Induction was held, with 22 attendees from internal staff to external partners and commissioned services, within this there was a specific reference to private fostering and the legal duty to notify. We have attended three Corporate Induction Breakfast's where general safeguarding information is shared with new starters including information in relation to private fostering. All new starters in the People's Directorate have an induction with the lead for Private Fostering and all workers can access advice and guidance from the lead at any time.

² [Documents Library](#)

³ [Private fostering - City of London](#)



Training on private fostering is run bi-annually through the CHSCP and information in relation to private fostering shared through internal Corporate communication channels to coincide with private fostering day. An overview presentation in relation to private fostering has been shared with multi-agency partners for their internal use, and regular private fostering updates are given to the Safeguarding in Education Forum.

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

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.

Whilst there were 0 notifications we did have a referral this year which raised queries about whether it might be a private fostering situation, as there were questions around the validity of the relationship between the adult and child. Strong curiosity was demonstrated during the assessment and significant attempts made to verify the relationship, including liaising with authorities and parents abroad. This piece of work was subject to an independent practice review through our Quality Assurance processes, the social work practice was found to be 'Outstanding'. Therefore, demonstrating that whilst the volume of work in this area is low when it does arise it is scrutinised robustly and sensitively to ensure children's safety.

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 private foster carers around benefits, housing and immigration status as required. The City would ensure that all private foster carers can access education, and support would be offered by the Virtual School in this. Social workers would also ensure that children in private fostering arrangements are able to access adequate health provision, and this would be supported by the local Safeguarding Nurse. All team members have access to and promote the CHSCP Private Fostering App [Private Fostering | chscp](#) as an information sharing tool as well as signposting to services such as [City Advice - helping you to manage everyday problems - City of London](#).

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.

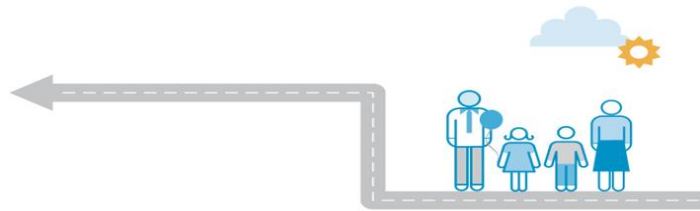
The allocated social worker would consult with any privately fostered child about their views and ensure that their carers understood their needs and wishes and could meet these appropriately. The child's view would be a core part of the assessment report and on-going monitoring visits. They would be seen and spoken to on their own (subject to their age and understanding) 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. They would be signposted and support to access services as appropriate including Youth Services, participation support, and enrichment activities.

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 etc.

As part of the Quality Assurance Framework any private fostering arrangements would be subject to a practice review process and the qualitative and quantitative information obtained would be reported into the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership via the Quality Assurance subgroup. As can be seen above this process was implemented this year and reassurance as to the practice and curiosity in relation to potential private fostering arrangements was evidenced and found to be strong, although the arrangement ultimately did not fall into the required criteria.



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 2024-25 Priorities

- **Update the Private Fostering information available both as paper copies and online** – In Progress updated copy has been provided but due to other commitments and a change in personnel this has not been implemented
- **Send out updated information to all religious institutions within and bordering the City** – Due to the above this priority has not been met, however as outlined above there has been awareness raising activity in this area throughout the year.
- **Utilise Private Fostering Awareness Day to promote awareness and training for staff internally and across the partnership** – Completed this was highlighted to multi-agency partners and a presentation and other promotional materials shared for their use and dissemination across their organisations.
- **Ensure internal procedures in relation to Private Fostering are up to date and accessible on the TriX Library for staff to utilise as needed** – Completed internal procedures are up to date and available on the online system.

6. Priorities for 2025-26

- **Ensure that online information and promotional materials are updated by June 2025 this year**
- **Once the material is updated this is to be shared with all religious institutions within and bordering the City by July 2025**
- **Schools and libraries to also receive copies of the updated promotional information by July 2025**
- **Continue to review and update as required internal procedures and expectations in relation to private fostering**
- **Continue to raise awareness of private fostering through various internal and external channels**