



## **Annual Report Private Fostering Arrangements 2014 to 2015**

### **Context of City of London**

The City has a relatively small resident population of approximately 7,600 (including 1,370 people who occupy a second home outside the City of London). There are approximately 4,400 households and large numbers of people of working age. The average household size is small and many people (56%) live alone.

The City has proportionately more people aged between 25 and 69 living in the square mile than Greater London. Conversely there are fewer young people. Approximately 800 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in the City. This is 10.84% of the total population in the area.

The resident population is predominantly white. The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are Asian/Bangladeshi and Mixed - Asian and White. The City has a relatively small black population, less than London and England and Wales. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 43.63% of all children living in the area, compared with 21.47% in the country as a whole.

### **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 step-parent) will not be a Private Foster Carer.

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, 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;
- 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' on private fostering was reviewed and updated in 2014. A communications plan has been developed for 2015 to 2016 to ensure there is a sustained campaign to raise awareness about private fostering with professionals and potential carers.

**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.**

The City has promoted private fostering with professionals through the distribution of leaflets and posters. Fig 1 shows the activity that has taken place in raising awareness about private fostering with City of London staff and residents and how this has been linked into established activities.

The City and Hackney Safeguarding Children's Board Independent Chair, Jim Gamble has also sent out an annual survey to all the Independent Schools to establish whether any of the pupils at the School are being privately fostered.

Fig 1

Event	Date	Resident or Professionals
City Library	18.08.14	Staff
Barbican Library	18.08.14	Staff
EIP Partnership Day	25.09.14	Staff
Health Watch, Artizan Library	15.10.14	Residents
Resident Celebration Day	18.10.14	Residents
Health Watch, Green Box	25.10.14	Residents
L&D Week Barbican	28.10.14	Staff
Health Watch, Dutch Church	29.10.14	Residents

Private fostering data is reviewed through the Quality Assurance Sub Group. To date there have been no notifications of any private fostering arrangements in the City of London as from April 2014 to March 2015. However, there are procedures in place to take referrals and staff in the Contact Centre have received training on private fostering. The CHSCB has identified that private fostering is a key priority for 2015 to 2016.

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

The City has not received a referral for 2014 to 2015; however there are procedures in place for staff in regard to assessing the placement and ascertaining the young person's views. All assessments would include and cover the expectations within the National Minimum Standards:

- The ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child about the proposed/actual private fostering arrangement.
- That the child's physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development is appropriate and satisfactory.
- The child's needs arising from his religious persuasion; racial origin and cultural and linguistic background are being met.
- That consideration has been given and necessary steps taken to make arrangements for the child's education.
- The standard of care provided for each privately fostered child.

- The project ensures that all children and young people who are registered with the GP and all children and young people are registered with a dentist.

Where age appropriate the children would be seen alone by their Social Worker and their views obtained. Where children are considered to be at risk or in need of intervention those cases are considered in line with S17 and S47 Children Act 1989.

DBS checks would be completed on all carers.

As part of our assessment process and on-going case work the Children and Families Team will ensure that children are actively encouraged and involved in leisure activities, and that they receive appropriate stimulation in the Private Fostering arrangement. The allocated social worker will research age appropriate activities and inform the carers.

**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 and Families Team social worker would assist and advise all private foster carers with general parenting skills, and provide advice on an on-going basis in regard to local resources and activities. 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 had 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 and carers of children who are privately fostering would be provided and where possible this would be given to all parents.

Contact details of the allocated social worker would also 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 will also have access to the advocacy 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 Frameworki, the integrated children's system used by the Children and Families Team. 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 CHSCB quality assurance sub group. It is through this group that concerns have been raised around about the lack of referrals in the City and the low number of referrals in Hackney. A priority for the CHSCB for 2015 to 2016 will be to promote awareness around notification of Private Fostering for professionals, carers and young people.

## **Summary**

Over the last 12 months there have not been any private fostering arrangements identified in the City; it is highly unlikely given the demographics of the City that this is a true reflection of the situation. This has been identified by the CHSCB as being a priority for 2015 to 2016 and there will be concerted effort to raise awareness with professionals and residents in the City around their responsibility in notifying the local authority of private fostering arrangements.

## Future plans

1. A key priority for 2015 to 2016 will be to strength links with Community Health, Hospital's, Independent Schools and Secondary Schools where City young people go or are placed when they leave Primary School. This will be achieved through establishing links close links with these agencies, to ensure that young people are tracked through schools and health establishments.
2. The City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board will be sending out leaflets and posters to all professionals outlining their expectation around professionals knowing their responsibility around notification. This is due to take place in City and Hackney in April 2015.
3. The City of London will develop the communication plan for Private Fostering for 2015 to 2016, establishing a rolling plan for notifying professionals and City of London residents about their responsibility in notifying the local authority about private fostering arrangements. This will be done by May 2015.
4. The City of London provides training for staff on Private Fostering, additional to the training provided by the CHSCB.
5. Provide an annual private fostering report to the Local Safeguarding Children Board and Director of Children's Services.

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