

Committee(s)	Dated:
Community & Children's Services Safeguarding Sub Committee	09.10.2015 25.09.2015
Subject: Private Fostering Report	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information

Summary

This report will inform Members about Private Fostering arrangement and the duties that are placed on partner agencies and parents and carers in notifying the local authority of any such arrangement or proposed arrangements. This report will explain the Local Authorities function in safeguarding children and young people when they have been Privately Fostered, by assessing the arrangements that have been put in place.

Member will be informed of how the City of London is meeting National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering by raising awareness around this agenda with professionals and City of London residents. This is being achieved through briefing sessions at multi-agency events, specific training and through established events for residents and City of London staff.

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 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.
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, 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.
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; and meeting the duty to support private fostering arrangements.
4. 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.

Current Position

5. 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. The City of London is ensuring that it is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering, and this is an area that has been identified by the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children's Board (CHSCB) as being a priority for 2015/2016.
6. In May 2015 the CHSCB sent out a letter on behalf of Jim Gamble, the Independent Chair of the CHSCB, explaining to all partners the expectation placed on them to raise awareness and identify any private fostering arrangements in the City of London. This letter was accompanied by leaflets for professionals, parents/ carers and young people explaining what constitutes a private fostering arrangement and what was required should a private fostering situation be in place. The City of London has also instituted a rolling programme of awareness raising events for 2015/2016 to raise the profile of private fostering, which consists of;
 - Partnership events, where briefings are being given to partner agencies as part of a wider conference event.
 - Articles about private fostering in publications of magazines which will be going out to residents across the City of London.
 - Raising awareness with the police, schools, early years settings and general practitioners in the City through the distribution of posters and leaflets.
 - Training events for City of London Corporation staff and partner agencies which specifically focuses on private fostering. Two such events have already occurred and further events are planned for the City for 2015/2016.
 - Utilising partnership events to distribute leaflets to professionals and residents in the City.
7. Any contacts or referrals about private fostering would be directed to the Children and Families team and information on private fostering is captured as part of the performance data set.

Conclusion

8. As this report has identified there have not been any private fostering arrangements identified in the City of London for the period of April 2014/March 2015. There have been continued efforts to raise awareness around private

fostering in the City of London, with professionals and residents throughout this time period. This has been achieved through established events such as Health Watch information sessions and the “Notice the Signs” campaign.

9. The focus for 2015/2016 is to create a sustainable programme of events that will keep private fostering on professionals and resident’s agenda and support the City of London in ensuring it is meeting its responsibility in raising awareness about private fostering arrangements. In achieving this it is envisaged that any private fostering arrangement that is in place in the City will come to the attention of the Children and Families team.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Private Fostering Report

Background Papers

Private Fostering leaflet for Professionals, Parents and Carers and Children and Young People.

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