



Annual Report Private Fostering Arrangements April 2016 to March 2017

Context of City of London

The City has a relatively small resident population of approximately 9,400 (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 1,200 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in the City. This is 12.4% 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 42.6% of all children living in the area, compared with 21.5% in the country as a whole.

In 2016 the City of London was subject to the Ofsted "Single Inspection Framework" of Local Authorities children's services. In this inspection the low number of private fostering arrangements was acknowledged. However assessments that had been completed were judged as being thorough and timely in providing ongoing support.

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) 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 2017. A communications plan was developed for 2016 to 2017 to ensure that there was a sustained campaign to raise awareness about private fostering with professionals and potential carers. The objectives identified in this plan were for;

- 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.

There has been considerable 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.

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

Event	Date	Resident or Professionals	Activity
Residents Meeting	May 2016	Residents	Distributed leaflets and information on Private Fostering.
Community Fair Event	July 2016	Residents	Distributed leaflets and information on Private Fostering.
Children's Social Care had input into Private Fostering App	July 2016	City of London Corporation Staff	Staff tested function and content of app.
Launch of Private Fostering App across DCCS	September 2016	DCCS	Promote Private Fostering App
Information Distributed through Health Watch new letter	September 2016	City of London staff and Health Partners	Digital distribution
Partnership event with DCCS Staff, City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board, Police and CityGateway	November 2016	Professionals	Partnership Event
City Induction, with City of London Staff and Partners	March 2017	Professionals	Case Scenarios were used in workshop.

Private fostering data is reviewed through the Quality Assurance Sub Group of the CHSCB; 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 2016 to 2017; 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 and Families Team social workers 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 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, 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 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.

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 that have not been reported. Although there have been attempts to engage the community through residents meetings and through publications it has proved difficult to raise the profile of private fostering in the community. Therefore the communication strategy for 2017 to 2018 will focus on areas where residents are likely to visit, such as Schools and Library's.

Parents and carers initial response when informed about private fostering arrangements is to align it to becoming a foster carer for the Local Authority. This perception often prevents them from reading any further about these arrangements as they consider it would not apply to them. Therefore it is important that they receive the information as a whole rather than just a headline, as this often leads to disengagement from the message being given.

In the coming year there will be more emphasis placed on raising awareness with residents in the City; this will be achieved through linking in with community resources, such as libraries and community groups where there will be direct face to face engagement. These priorities will be included into the Private Fostering Plan for April 2017 to March 2018.

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