

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR PRIVATE FOSTERING

### INTRODUCTION

This is a description of private fostering arrangements within the Bradford Metropolitan Council and is separate from the Fostering Services' Statement of Purpose.

The Statement is designed to meet the needs of the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering setting out the duties and functions of the local authority and the ways these will be carried out. It is intended to provide an acceptable guide to this service for the public, professionals, Council members and external organisations. Any comments or enquiries regarding this Statement of Purpose should be passed to the lead officer private fostering Geoff Green.

Private Fostering Services are located within the Department of Services to Children and Young People. Its procedures are laid out in the Childrens Social Care Procedure manual chapter 3.2.4.

### **1. THE LEGAL DEFINITION OF A PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILD**

The Children Act 1989 states that a privately fostered child means:

A child under the age of 16 or under 18 if disabled who is cared for or is about to be cared for and given a home with someone **other** than:

- a) the parents of his or hers
- b) someone who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for him or her
- c) a close relative such as an aunt, uncle, step-parent, grandparents or sibling but not a cousin or a great aunt or uncle
- d) and she or he has been cared for and accommodated by that person for 28 days or more
- e) The period of fostering is less than 28 days but the private foster carer intends to foster him or her for a period of 28 days or more

A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for him or her has:

- a) done so for a period of less than 28 days
- b) does not intend to do so for a longer period

A Private Fostering arrangement is essentially one that is made privately for the care of a child under the age of 16 by someone other than a parent or close relative with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more. A person who is a relative under the Children Act 1989 i.e a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or step-parent will not be a private foster carer. Act includes unmarried fathers, relatives as stated above, whether by full, half-blood or by affinity or step-parent. Examples of private fostering arrangements might be children or young people with families abroad; young people whose parents are working or studying in the UK; trafficked children, young people and asylum seekers and refugees; children or young people who live with host families for reasons such as attending language schools or undergoing medical treatment etc.

## **2. THE LOCAL AUTHORITY'S DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS UNDER THE CHILDREN ACT 1989 AND THE CHILDREN'S PRIVATE ARRANGEMENTS FOR FOSTERING REGULATIONS 1991**

Local authorities have to be notified about any private fostering arrangements in their area. Once notification is received the Local Authority must satisfy themselves that children who are privately fostered are being satisfactorily cared for and that their welfare is secure. They must ensure that appropriate advice is given to those caring for them if it appears to the authority to be needed (the Children Act 1989 Section 67.1). These duties fall broadly into four types of activity:

- a) receiving notification (manual see Manual Chapter Number 3.2.3 sec 2)
- b) assessing the suitability of private foster carers and their household (manual see Manual Chapter Number 3.2.3 – 3.2.6)
- c) monitoring placements through visits and written records of visits in order to ensure the continuing suitability of the placement and the safeguarding of the child or young person (manual see Manual Chapter Number 3.2.3 sec 12)
- d) Prohibition & Disqualification (manual see Manual Chapter Number 3.2.3 sec 10)

## **3. DUTIES UNDER THE CHILDREN ACT 2004 AND THE CHILDREN (PRIVATE ARRANGEMENTS FOR FOSTERING) REGULATIONS 2005**

The Children Act 2004 and the Children Regulations 2005 strengthen and enhance the private fostering notification scheme.

Local authorities are required to raise public awareness in their area of the requirements regarding notification of private fostering arrangements. Notifications must be given to a Local Authority when a child or young person is proposed to be privately fostered or is already being privately fostered.

The measures along with the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering July 2005 focus all local authorities' attention on Private Fostering. Local authorities are required to take a pro-active approach along with partnership agencies and other professionals in identifying arrangements in their area. The expectation is that local authorities will improve notification rates and compliance with the existing legal legislative framework for private fostering. The intention is that these additional measures will improve the arrangements for safeguarding children and young people who are in Private Fostering arrangements.

4. **HOW WILL STAFF HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE DEPARTMENT'S DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS REGARDING PRIVATE FOSTERING?**

**INFORMATION TO STAFF**

Children's Services' staff have access to this Statement of Purpose and Bradford's protocol and procedures on Private Fostering arrangements via the electronic procedure manual and the fostering website. Information on materials and training will be provided by the lead practitioner on private fostering and the Workforce Development Unit These will be circulated both individually and as part of the training plan.

**PROCEDURE MANUAL**

The Social Care Procedure Manual has procedure and guidance chapters. These are subject to regular review. The manager with responsibility for these chapters is Geoff Green Principal Care Manager Fostering Services.

**TRAINING FOR RELEVANT STAFF**

The Childrens Service will ensure that its duties and functions regarding private fostering are included in the multi agency induction program for new childrens service staff. Additionally staff training requirements will be planned and reviewed annually by the responsible principal care manager, the lead practitioner and the relevant workforce development manager.

Ongoing training issues are identified as the notification requirements, the assessment process and different cultural child care practices and parenting skills.

**LEAD PRACTITIONER**

An experienced social worker with experience will is available to provide advice and guidance. This person is Jessica Sterrie, Social Worker based at Romanby Shaw and the Fostering Unit. The lead practitioner will be part of the assessment process to give information to a parent, the potential carer, the child and the assessing social worker.

5. **HOW WILL THE DEPARTMENT ENSURE THAT ITS DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS REGARDING PRIVATE FOSTERING ARE INCLUDED IN INDUCTION AND TRAINING PROGRAMME?**

The Group Service Manager will include Private Fostering in their introduction to the Staff Induction program. This is reinforced in the presentation on fostering services. A workforce development officer will meet the lead officer as part of their preparation for the training plan. The lead practitioner, as part of the BAAF special interest group on private fostering, will be responsible for ensuring relevant external courses and new developments are highlighted.

## **6. HOW WILL AWARENESS OF THE NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENT BE PROMOTED?**

There needs to be an ongoing process to promote the awareness of the notification requirements with other agencies and the local community. This should highlight the procedure for notification, the benefits of notification and the consequences of non-notification. Schools and health services should be particular targets. Newspapers, radio and transport advertising should be used. Leaflets and posters should be placed in one stop shops, libraries, hospitals and childrens services offices. There should be annual targets for this publicity included in the childrens plan ( CSIF) .

## **7. THE ASSESSMENT OF THE SUITABILITY OF PRIVATE FOSTER CARERS**

People who wish to become private foster carers will be required to take part in a fostering assessment which follows the guidelines laid out in the Integrated Childrens System. This will be led by a Social Worker from the assessment section of the area team where the applicant lives. The Social Worker will be assisted by the lead practitioner private fostering.

Notifications received will be dealt with within the **statutory timescale of 7 days** this will include the child being seen. The assessment of the private foster carers will be completed within **statutory timescales of 42 days**.

The assessment will examine all the needs of the child and the capacity and abilities of the applicant to meet these needs. It will also look at how the carer will be able to meet the cultural, religious and linguistic needs of the child. The suitability of the accommodation will be assessed and the appropriate checks made on all adult members of the household. This assessment must be agreed and signed by the principal care manager of the area team then countersigned by the lead officer private fostering. The aim being to achieve a consistent standard of assessment

## **8. ADVICE, SUPPORT FOR PRIVATE FOSTER CARERS CHILDREN AND PARENTS**

Parents should be contacted by the Social Worker and given advice on any alternatives to private fostering and written information on Private fostering, if this is not possible this should be noted and reasons given.

Children should be given information both verbally and in appropriate written form this should include contact points for their social worker or other potentially helpful organisations

Prospective carers will be seen by both the area social worker and the lead practitioner and will be given advice on their responsibilities and available support.

Training will be available to carers via the courses run by the Fostering Unit or Workforce development.

## **9. TO ENSURE THE WELFARE OF PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILDREN IS SAFEGUARDED AND PROMOTED**

It is the duty of the Local Authority to ensure that the welfare of the privately fostered child is safeguarded and promoted. To ensure this takes place there is need of a satisfactory assessment followed by regular visits to the placement where the child is seen and interviewed. Schools also need to be clear about the arrangements. Contacts need to be recorded and an annual review undertaken

Where necessary private foster carers will be encouraged to promote contact between the child/young person and their parents, siblings extended family and any significant others

If Child Protection concerns are identified a Section 47 investigation will be carried out following Bradford's Safeguarding Procedures.

An annual report will be presented to the Bradford Safeguarding Board on how the welfare of privately fostered children is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted

## **10. MONITORING THE DISCHARGE OF FUNCTIONS AND COMPLIANCE WITH PART 9 OF THE CHILDREN ACT 1989**

Under Regulation 12 the Group Service Manager (Social Care)- Roger Morris will monitor the way the Department (Performance Management arrangements) complies with and discharges its statutory duties and functions in relation to Private Fostering. Aspects of these functions will be delegated to Geoff Green, Principal Care Manager, Fostering Services. Compliance with the following duties and functions will be monitored.

- a) the promotion of awareness regarding notification requirements
- b) how the Department responds to notifications and if these are within appropriate timescales
- c) how the Department deals with disqualification, prohibitions and requirements and appeals against these
- d) how the Department processes decisions regarding offences committed, bearing in mind the best interests of the child/young person
- e) how the Department assesses the parenting capacity of prospective or actual private foster carers, members of their household and the suitability of their accommodation
- f) statutory visits are within timescales and decisions about the suitability of arrangements are also within timescales and approved at managerial level
- g) that reports are made in accordance with the regulations

- h) that advice and support is provided to foster carers and parents and privately fostered children and young people
- i) that any concerns raised by privately fostered children and young people are investigated
- j) that a system recording the number and nature of enquiries received in relation to private fostering, the responses given and the action taken is effective.

## **12. ADVICE ON PRIVATE FOSTERING**

The Statement of Purpose and advice on private fostering will be available on the Council website within fostering information. Guidance , the Statement of purpose and the policies and procedures on Private Fostering Arrangements will be available on the Children Services' Web based Policies and Procedures .

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