



## **LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL**

### **POLICY STATEMENT RELATING TO PRIVATE FOSTERING**

Liverpool City Council believes that parents and others with parental responsibility have the right to make private fostering arrangements. The City Council believes that those involved in private fostering have the right to a private foster care service that protects children from harm and promotes their development. The Authority will work with private foster carers as partners in child care to ensure that private fostering arrangements are suitable. The Authority will not accept private fostering arrangements where either the carers or accommodation is unsuitable. If the private fostering arrangement is not accepted, alternative arrangements will need to be made for the care of the child by the parents.

**This statement sets out the duties and functions in relation to Private Fostering and the ways in which they will be carried out.**

#### **Legal Definition of Private Fostering**

A child or young person under 16 (or if disabled, under 18) is defined as privately fostered when he or she is cared for and living in accommodation provided by someone who is not a parent, close relative, person with parental responsibility for him or her, or an approved local authority foster carer, for 28 days or more, whether or not there is any payment.

A close relative is defined as:

- Brother / Sister
- Aunt / Uncle
- Grandparent
- Step-parent

The above can be related by full blood, half blood, marriage, or civil partnership.

Below are some examples of private fostering arrangements:

If a child is being cared for by a great aunt or a parent's cousin this is private fostering. A private foster carer may also be a friend of the family, the parent of a friend of the child, or someone previously unknown to the child's family who is willing to privately foster a child.

### **Raising Public Awareness**

Parents and those proposing to privately foster a child are subject to statutory notification requirements to ensure local authorities are made aware in advance of the proposal. This can also include language colleges or residential schools who have a duty to ensure the arrangements they are making are safe and appropriate, this includes completing health and safety checks of the home/residential setting and undertaking the necessary checks i.e. DBS checks, in respect of the private foster carers. Such colleges and schools are supported by the Local Authority in meeting these duties by way of providing advice and information sharing. As part of their duty, they have an obligation to notify the Local Authority in advance of any planned private fostering arrangements.

Professionals, such as teachers and health professionals, who come into contact with privately fostered children, have a responsibility to inform Children's Services about such arrangements. Such professionals need to assist the local authority to carry out its duty under section 67 (1) of the Children Act 1989, in particular through notifying the authority of an arrangement where they are not satisfied that the local authority have been, or will be, notified of that arrangement.

The City Council is under a duty to promote public awareness in the local area of the notification requirements. Accessible information about private fostering must therefore be available to the public in order for them to understand the statutory requirements in relation to private fostering and Local Authority procedures.

The public needs to know of the requirements for private foster carers to notify Children's Services within the Local Authority of the proposed arrangement at least 6 weeks before the arrangement is due to begin. Birth parents / carers with parental responsibility need to know of their responsibility to also notify the Local Authority of the arrangement in advance or as soon as possible after the arrangement has been made.

The designated Private Fostering Social Worker will facilitate the increasing of awareness of the notification requirements with other agencies and within the wider local community via distribution of information leaflets (in various languages) and by providing further information, if requested. Information is provided to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board on an annual basis, which is then distributed to various agencies, professionals, and community groups. The Private Fostering Social Worker attends meetings with other organisations and within Children's Services to promote awareness of private fostering.

### **Placement Arrangements**

- Notifications about private fostering arrangements are processed via the Council's Children's Careline and are allocated to an Assessment social worker to undertake initial checks and complete a single assessment. If the arrangement is deemed to meet the remit for private fostering and there are no safeguarding concerns, the

notification is then forwarded to a social worker in the Safeguarding Teams along with the completed single assessment.

- Upon receipt of the notification, the allocated social worker will visit the premises where the child is being cared for and accommodated, within 7 working days of receiving notification and will carry out an appropriate assessment of the individual arrangements in accordance with the statutory guidance on private fostering. This will include statutory checks, welfare visits, and a concluding report. This will be completed within 42 working days (including the 7 working days for the initial home visit) or as soon as the outcome of the DBS checks are known.
- The assessment report will be presented to the Team Manager, who will make a decision as to the suitability of the arrangement. If the recommendation is positive, the case will be accepted as a suitable private fostering arrangement. If the decision is negative, further identified work will be undertaken, if it is feasible, to make the arrangement suitable or the Local Authority will advise the child's parents/person with parental responsibility that the arrangement will need to cease. This is in line with the Local Authority's powers to prohibit an arrangement which is deemed to be inappropriate. In some situations, a referral may be generated back to Careline if safeguarding concerns are highlighted.
- If the arrangement is agreed, a social worker will be allocated to the case to monitor arrangements for the child and the carers. In each arrangement the welfare of the child is paramount.
- In each arrangement a written agreement is signed by both the private foster carer and the child's parents or person with parental responsibility. The parents or person with parental responsibility are asked to provide consent for such matters relating to seeking medical advice, school trips, etc.
- The duration of the placement will be agreed at the outset, if possible, by the parents and the private foster carers and will be monitored regularly by the Local Authority via statutory visits.

**The Local Authority will satisfy itself that the welfare of privately fostered children is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted:**

- The Local Authority social worker for the child will visit the child:
  - a) At intervals of not more than 6 weeks in the first year of the arrangement.
  - b) In the second and following years at intervals of not more than 12 weeks.
- The child must be seen alone (unless considered inappropriate) at every visit and a written account completed for the child's file.
- Each child will have an individual electronic file to include all information relevant to the arrangement. The records will facilitate the monitoring and reviewing of the case, decision making, and all the usual features of record keeping.

- There will be a separate case file relating to the private foster carers with all relevant information relating to their suitability.
- Once an arrangement is agreed the relevant Team Manager will then have oversight of the arrangement.

### **Fair Access**

The welfare of privately fostered children will be ensured by the promotion of services and practices which meet their racial, cultural, linguistic, and religious needs and any needs arising from disability. Privately fostered children will have access to information and all services, as other children, via the child's Social Worker. Such services include universal and specialist services which can be accessed via an assessment of need. Private foster carers (including prospective private foster carers), parents, and others with parental responsibility, and others concerned with the privately fostered child, may receive advice via the allocated Social Worker.

There will be a corporate approach to the needs of privately fostered children by Children's Services in terms of ensuring their needs are holistically met on a consistent basis within the private fostering arrangement.

The publicity material relating to private fostering will address equal opportunity issues.

The designated Private Fostering Social Worker will have the opportunity to attend private fostering forums which are facilitated by Coram BAAF. These forums provide legal advice regarding the private fostering regulations and also provides an opportunity to correspond with other Local Authorities.

### **Organisation and Management**

The policy for Private Fostering is part of the Children's Services child care policy.

Notifications about private fostering arrangements should contain all the requirements as specified in The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.

Management responsibility rests with the relevant Team Managers and Service Managers.

All relevant staff must have an appropriate understanding of the local authority's duties and functions in relation to private fostering.

**Reviewed 2023**