

---

**ANNUAL PRIVATE FOSTERING REPORT DATE: 30.05.2017**

**REPORT FROM:** ROSANNE TURNER, Team Manager, Family Placement Team  
PETER HODGES, Head of Service, Looked After Children

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the LSCB of the Private Fostering activity undertaken by Children's Social Care's (CSC) between 01/04/16 - 31/03/17 and includes the raising awareness actions with the public and professionals who have contact with children in the community. It should be read in conjunction with the Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2017/18.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 For LSCB to note the actions and progress of Children's Social Care in implementing the existing legislation relevant to private fostering set out in Part 9 of, and Schedule 8 to, the Children Act 1989, and regulations made under Part 9 of that Act: The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.
- 2.2 The regulations require local authorities to satisfy themselves of the suitability of a proposed arrangement or otherwise exercise their powers to prohibit, or to impose requirements on, the arrangement before the child is privately fostered, where advance notice of the arrangement is given, thereby providing additional safeguards for privately fostered children.
- 2.3 Together these define the requirements placed on the LA in respect of private fostering, including any arrangements where a pupil remains cared for within a boarding school for longer than two weeks during the holidays (to be treated as a Private Fostering arrangement).
- 2.4 For the LSCB to assist Children's Social Care in the task of raising awareness, ensuring that Partner agencies are aware of their responsibilities towards privately fostered children in the community, particularly during Private Fostering week.

**3. DEFINITION OF A PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILD**

- 3.1 A privately fostered child is defined as one under the age of 16 (18 if disabled) who is cared for by someone other than a parent or close relative as defined in section 105 of the Children Act 1989. Close relatives are defined as step-parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles or aunts (whether of full blood, half blood or marriage/affinity). Private foster carers may be from an extended family, for example, a cousin or great uncle. They may be a friend of the family, another non-relative, or someone unknown who has advertised to offer to privately foster a child. Privately fostered children include children sent from abroad to stay with another family. A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for him or her has done so for fewer

than 28 days and does not intend to do so for longer than that, or the child returns home regularly whilst being cared for by other people. (DfE)

#### **4. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AGAINST IDENTIFIED TARGETS / PRIORITIES**

**The duties of the LA have two components:**

##### **4.1 To assess the suitability of any private fostering arrangements and to provide ongoing monitoring and support to children who are privately fostered.**

4.1.2 There is a clear process within Children's Social Care in respect of the assessment and management of private fostering arrangements. The process which follows the legal requirements (for assessment and meeting with the child and carers within defined timescales) is well embedded within the Children's and Family Placement Teams. As a result, notifications of new or potential private fostering arrangements are responded to in a timely manner and children, parents and carers are given clear information.

4.1.3 Where children are not previously known to Children's Social Care, an assessment is undertaken by the Duty Team social worker for the child and a social worker from Family Placement Team to assess the suitability of the carers. Where the child is known to Children's Social Care, the allocated social worker will continue to work with the child and the process of assessment is completed as already described. Completed assessments are presented to the Foster Panel for scrutiny before a senior manager gives final agreement to the 'suitability' of the arrangement.

Children are visited within the first seven days of notification of the arrangement whether this is a proposed or current arrangement where the child is already living with the carer. Following this, visits are at a minimum of six weekly intervals in the first year, and intervals of not more than 12 weeks in subsequent years. Carers can have ongoing support from the Family Placement Team if this is required.

4.1.4 There are currently two ongoing private fostering arrangements within Bracknell Forest. The children in these arrangements are subject to a Child in Need (CIN) plan and during 2016/17 continued to receive visits in line with the Regulations. The assessment of the carers of one of these children is almost complete, and in the interim has been presented to Foster Panel for quality assurance and oversight. A third privately fostered child turned 16 during this period, so the arrangement has ended.

4.1.5 During the last 12 months, there has been 1 new notification of a private fostering arrangement. This notification came from the parent, whose child was already known to Children's Social Care. A further five potential notifications were subsequently found to not be private fostering arrangements. When notified, the situations are always . This is deemed good practice always to ensure all arrangements are thoroughly vetted to ensure they meet the criteria and arrangements for children are safe.

4.1.6 During 2016/17 the number of notifications showed a decrease on the previous year (3 in 2015/16). It is useful to note that over the last three years a number of notifications have been made by Education teams, including the School Admissions team, Education Welfare and individual schools. This seems to evidence that the ongoing publicity and information sharing has had the impact of disseminating knowledge about private fostering and the requirements to inform the Local Authority.

4.1.7 There are five independent boarding schools within Bracknell Forest. The Family Placement Team contacts the Head Teachers within each school each term. This ensures that schools are routinely informed about the requirement to notify the Local Authority about any private fostering requirements where a pupil remains cared for within a boarding school for longer than two weeks during the holidays. Each school is sent a form to provide information about such pupils and is asked to return the form to Children's Social Care even if there are no arrangements in place. This approach has been successful and ensures that no children are overlooked. The team request a nil return and there have been no notifications from the boarding schools of private fostering arrangements in 2016/17.

**4.2 To raise public and professional awareness of private fostering and the requirement for parents and carers to notify the LA of any such arrangements or intended arrangements.**

4.2.1 The responsibility for arranging publicity and raising awareness about private fostering sits within the Family Placement Team. Currently an Assistant Team Manager (ATM) leads in this area, with assistance from a Family Worker and the Recruitment and Publicity Officer. A rolling programme is followed to meet with professionals and community groups and to distribute information in the form of leaflets, posters, the website and posts on social media including Facebook and Twitter. The ATM attends a social work team meeting within Children's Social Care at least once per year where a quiz or discussion is used to improve knowledge. She is also available to attend team meetings with Education Welfare, Adult Mental Health, School Admissions Team, Family Intervention Project, Life Chances Team, and the Foster Panel.

4.2.2 New workers in Children's Social Care are provided with prompt cards and leaflets as a part of their induction in their new role. The private fostering policy and procedure was updated in August 2014 and will be reviewed again this year. The manager meets with the policy officer to ensure procedures and policies are updated.

4.2.3 Publicity also takes the form of ensuring that posters and leaflets are updated and placed in GP surgeries, schools and Children's Centres, mail drops to various community groups 1 x per year and is included in the Fostering Fortnight activities as well as general fostering recruitment activity. The Bracknell Forest website is in the process of being updated, and the Private Fostering page will include new, attractive and informative material.

4.2.4 In addition to the above, prompt cards are in place for professionals which sets out the requirements of the legislation along with contact details for Children's Social Care. They have also been sent to all GPs in the area by their LSCB representative. A second prompt card for social workers details what is required when they visit a child in a private fostering arrangement. The private fostering cue cards for social workers have been reprinted and reflect current practice guidelines. The cards are laminated and in A5 size for ease of use and durability. There are also four A5 leaflets for professionals, parents, carers and children/young people, which are used to support their understanding of roles and responsibilities.

4.2.5 There are information packs for parents, carers and young people (where deemed appropriate), with the relevant notification forms and information booklets. A specific document for private foster carers to detail the information required and consent to seek relevant checks has been developed. A revised medical reference form is also

in place. This supports the prompt delivery of information to families from the Duty Team to ensure all relevant information is provided and collected.

- 4.2.6 The publicity strategy is embedded within the service. It covers a further range of professionals such as School Nurses, Health Visitors, Nursery Managers, Designated Teachers forum, Education Welfare Officers and Children's centres. A letter outlining the purpose of Private Fostering is sent to the police. This year we have developed the strategy further with visits to teams or leaflet mail-drops to Housing, Drug and Alcohol service, Child-minding services, Educational Psychology Service and Libraries.
- 4.2.7 We have also liaised with a worker from Early Years who works with families whose first language is not English. As a result we have developing information sheets about private fostering to promote understanding in the three key languages identified, Lithuanian, Polish and Nepalese for families. Other families identified will also be provided with this service if required.

## **5. QUALITY ASSURANCE WITHIN CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**

- 5.1 In order to quality assure the decision making, practice and record keeping within the Children's Social Care (CSC) teams, a review of the two private fostering arrangements was completed in March 2017. The overall aim of such a review is to improve the outcomes for children and young people, through monitoring and evaluating the quality of service delivery in relation to private fostering arrangements.
- 5.2 In all cases, visits were carried out within seven days of Children's Social Care being notified of the private fostering arrangement and ongoing social work visits to the child had taken place within timescales. There was evidence of management oversight in 100% of cases.
- 5.3 It has been agreed that an overview of any new private fostering arrangements will be read by the Head of Service for LAC within 42 days and prior to these being presented to the Foster Panel. Therefore management overview can be clearly recorded at each stage.

## **6. ACTIONS DURING 2016/17**

- 6.1 Children's Social Care seeks to ensure as many agencies as possible are aware of their responsibilities around reporting private fostering arrangements. This will enable the local authority to assess and support such arrangements and ensure children are safeguarded.

In addition to the above activity the family placement team have worked in partnership with the Public Health Team to create an animation which it is anticipated will be circulate to agencies via the LSCB and available on the public website.

## **7. CHALLENGES OR RISKS**

7.1 There is a need to ensure that private fostering is 'kept in mind' by public and professionals alike. In a busy and fast paced world, this very small but potentially very vulnerable group of children need to remain the focus of our work. There is a need for all agencies to be aware of the definition of private fostering and that the LSCB support the raising of awareness of the responsibilities for privately fostered children and young people. This will enable social workers to assess the needs of the children and the suitability of the arrangements and therefore safeguard these children.

**8. CONSULTATIONS**

None for this report.

Background Papers (if any)

None

Appendices (if any)

Statement of Purpose for Private Fostering 2017/18

Contact for further information

Name:	Designation:
<b>Rosanne Turner</b>	<b>Team Manager Family Placement Team</b>
<b>Peter Hodges</b>	<b>Head of Service Looked After Children</b>
<b>Email Address:</b>	<b>Telephone Number:</b>
<a href="mailto:Rosanne.turner@bracknell-forest.gov.uk">Rosanne.turner@bracknell-forest.gov.uk</a>	01344 352653
<a href="mailto:peter.hodges@bracknell-forest.gov.uk">peter.hodges@bracknell-forest.gov.uk</a>	01344 351532