

Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2013/14



Private Fostering – Statement of Purpose 2013/14

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Introduction

This document is a description of private fostering arrangements within the London Borough of Bromley. It is distinct from the Statement of Purpose for the Local Authority's Fostering Service.

The statement is designed to meet the requirements as set out in the national minimum standards (NMS) for private fostering (2005) in particular National Minimum Standard 1

It will set out the functions and duties in relation to private fostering and the ways in which they will be carried out, and provide a guide for the Children's Social Care Division, other professionals, the General Public, Council Members and external organisations. This Statement of Purpose will be reviewed on a regular basis in accordance with the Private Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards.

The London Borough of Bromley holds statutory powers and responsibilities as a Local Authority in relation to private fostering arrangements. Privately fostered children and young people are not a homogenous group and will come from a diversity of backgrounds and circumstances. All professionals should take account of the specific needs of every privately fostered child/young person including that of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, class, disability and domiciliary status. The Council is committed to ensuring services are provided in a manner which does not discriminate against privately fostered children/young people, their carers and parents.

Within the London Borough of Bromley, private fostering services fall under the remit of the Looked After Children Team (LACT) and the Referral and Assessment Service (RAS). They are both based at Bromley Civic Centre, Stockwell Close, St Blaise Building, BR1 3UH. The relevant Head of Service for each of the aforementioned teams is responsible for ensuring good practice and monitors and reviews their performance via performance data and supervision.

Services provided by the London Borough of Bromley's Children's Social Care Division, including Private Fostering, are subject to regular inspections by OFSTED. Their contact details are:-

Ofsted
Piccadilly gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone 0300 123 1231

Any comments or enquiries regarding this statement of purpose should be sent in writing to either of the relevant Heads of Service, namely; Ian Leadbetter, for the Looked after Children team, or Mark Thorn for the Referral Assessment Service. They are both based at; S119, 1st floor Stockwell Building, Civic Centre, Stockwell Close, Bromley BR1 3UH.

Legal Definition of a Privately Fostered Child

A child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) who is cared for, or proposed to be cared for, and provided with accommodation by someone other than:-

- A parent
- A person who is not a parent but has Parental Responsibility
- A close relative, (i.e. aunt/uncle/step-parent/grand-parent/sibling but not a cousin or Great aunt/uncle).

They also must be;

Cared for and accommodated by that person for 28 days or more, or the period of actual fostering is less than 28 days, but the private foster carer intends to foster him/her for more than 28 days.

- A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for him/her.
- had done so for a period of less than 28 days and does not intend to do so for a longer period.

Research into private fostering, undertaken by Catherine Shaw et.al (2010), National Children's Bureau, shows that the motivations and the circumstances surrounding private fostering arrangements vary.

The living arrangement can become long term, which can impact on the children's needs and create problems for their carers and birth families. Privately fostered children can have similar needs and characteristics to those children who are Looked After, particularly around separation and attachment. Consequently much of the knowledge and understanding of the issues relating to Looked after Children/ Young People can be applied to Children/Young People in Private Fostering arrangements. For this reason, the provision of on-going support and monitoring via regular visits is undertaken by the Looked after Children team.

The local authorities duties and functions under the Children Act 1989 and the Children (private arrangements for fostering) Regulations 2005.

The London Borough of Bromley, when notified of an actual or proposed private fostering arrangement in their area, have a duty to satisfy themselves that the welfare of the child/ren in question is being safeguarded and then give advice and to support to those caring for them on an on-going basis.

The Children Act 1989 (Section 67(1)) outlines three duties:-

- Giving and receiving notifications
- Ascertaining the suitability of private foster carers in their households.
- Monitoring placements through visits and written records of visits.

The London Borough of Bromley is committed to these duties and have them enshrined in both its procedures and practice.

Additional measures under the Children Act 2004, the Private Fostering Regulations 2005, and National Minimum Standard (NMS) are intended to strengthen the notification scheme. Local Authorities are also required to raise public awareness in their area of the requirements regarding notification. Notifications must now be given to the authority when a child/young person is proposed to be privately fostered and when he/she is being privately fostered.

The purpose of these measures are to focus the Local Authorities' attention on private fostering arrangements and requires a pro-active approach with partners and other professionals in identifying arrangements in the area and improving upon notification rates and compliance with legislation. Detail of Bromley's promotion and awareness strategy is in Section 5 and outlined in the Communication Plan for 2014/2015.

Training for relevant staff

Bromley Children's Social Care has a clear and comprehensive policies and procedures in relation to private fostering arrangements. It has a set of procedures and actively promotes this within the Department and with partner agencies and other professionals within the borough. Bromley will ensure that training on private fostering will be mandatory for all Social Workers and that it is specifically prioritised for all newly appointed social workers as part of their induction. Partner agencies such as language school, private foster carers and host family receive appropriate training alongside social worker.

Training on private fostering will be given priority by the Training Board in its formulation of the annual training programme as part of on-going training related Child Protection, Children In Need and Looked after Children Services. Training will include information on the context and legislative requirements, on notification requirements and the assessment processes regarding the suitability of private fostering arrangements. Staff training in private fostering will also be promoted and monitored by the Bromley safeguarding children Board. Bromley will commit to on-going workshops to enhance a multi-disciplinary approach and will review the statement of purpose and private fostering procedures annually at integrated forums across children's workforce.

The name of the person within the local authority with expertise in private fostering whom social workers can contact for advice

Teshome Gameda (Lead Officer for Private Fostering) E-mail:
Teshome.gameda@Bromley.gov.uk

Details of the manager(s) who will sign off decisions about the Overall suitability of arrangements

The Local Authority are required to satisfy themselves of the suitability of any proposed or already in place Private fostering arrangement. The Referral and Assessment Service Team receives and processes all notifications of proposed or current private fostering arrangements and undertake an assessment, of the Private fostering arrangement. The assessment will need to consider whether or not they should undertake their duties under the Children Act 1989, including whether or not to consider accommodating the child/young person under Section 20 of the Act or offer support under Section 17 if the child/young person is in need of services, but not accommodation.

If the child, subject to a Private Fostering arrangement is deemed to be in need of protection, child protection procedures are implemented in the same way as for any other child. If on-going child protection concerns continue the case is transferred to one of the Safeguarding Care Planning teams for further assessment and monitoring.

When a Private fostering arrangement is deemed safe and meets the child's / young person's needs, it will be signed off by the relevant Deputy Manager in the Referral and Assessment Service, and transferred to the Looked after Children team. The Looked After Children Team will allocate all Private Fostering cases to its Lead Officer for Private

Fostering, the aforementioned Lead Officer will undertake all on-going monitoring home visits, provide support and advice to privately fostered children their carers and parents as well as developmental work which enable the Local Authority to discharge its duties and function in relation to Private Fostering Services in Bromley.

How awareness of the notification requirements will be promoted with other agencies and within the wider local community

Bromley has the following objectives in relation to raising awareness:-

- To raise awareness and understanding of private fostering among the general public.
- To raise awareness of the need to notify among private foster carers and children being privately fostered.
- To enable local agencies, faith and community organisations, schools, health centres and other professionals to gain awareness of private fostering notification requirements.
- To increase private fostering notification levels.

To achieve these objectives the Local Authority has develop a comprehensive Communication Plan for 2014/2015 as part of Private Fostering National Awareness day which will take place in July 2015. Bromley Safeguarding Children Board will commit to review and make changes were deemed necessary to provide publicity Borough wide regarding the need to refer all Private Fostering arrangements to its Referral and Assessment service.

How the local authority will determine the suitability of all Aspects of a private fostering arrangement in accordance with the regulations.

We will ensure that all privately fostered children/young people within the London Borough of Bromley undergoes a Private Fostering Social Work assessment, which will also include elements of the framework for the assessment of Children In Need and their Families (2000) and the London Borough of Bromley Private Fostering Policy and Guidance. All Private Fostering Social Work assessments will be signed off by a Deputy Manager based in the Referral and Assessment Service. Once a private Fostering arrangement is identified and deemed safe, all on going statutory visits will be undertaken by the Lead Officer for Private Fostering located within the Looked After Children Team.

How the local authority will satisfy itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in their area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted

This will be achieved by first undertaking a Private Fostering Social Work assessment by the Referral and Assessment Service.

Private Fostering Social Work assessments will take account of parenting capacity and any child or young person will be seen and interviewed alone. Private foster carers will be given advice where needed in order to enhance their ability to care for a child/young person and will be directed to any relevant support services, including training provided to mainstream and connected person foster carers.

Private foster carers will be encouraged to promote contact, where safe, between the child/ young person and his/her parents, siblings, extended family members and significant others. The Referral and Assessment Team will respond to notifications received within 7 days and likewise visits to privately fostered children/young people will be completed within statutory timescales (6 weeks). Written reports will be completed following these visits and held on the child's / young person's electronic file. All private foster carers will have an enhanced CRB check and all privately fostered children/young people will have a named Social Worker, within the Looked After Children Team this will be the Lead officer for Private Fostering.

Advice and support that will be available to private foster carers (including prospective private foster carers), parents and others with parental responsibility and others concerned with privately fostered children

Private foster carers will have a named social worker to support the arrangement for the child, within the Looked after children Team this will be the Private Fostering Lead Officer.

The named social worker will also offer advice on benefit entitlement, parenting strategies and other support. They will also undertake statutory visits and see and speak to the child / young person alone.

The role of other agencies in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of privately fostered children including encouraging notification

All partnership agencies will be given regular and updated information and leaflets and be made aware of the Policy and Statement of Purpose and of their responsibilities in informing and notifying the Local Authority of any arrangement. Materials will be sent to schools, faith groups, GPs, housing, leisure centres and any other agencies that it is felt may come into contact with children / young people subject to Private Fostering arrangement and / or their carers. It is considered good practice for agencies to designate a lead officer on private fostering in their area.

The Bromley Safeguarding Children Board will monitor and advise agencies of their responsibilities in relation to private fostering arrangements and where necessary will formally investigate compliance issues.

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

As Stated in Section 3, all Children's Social Care staff and partner agencies will have access to the Policy and Statement of Purpose. The on- going awareness programme will further develop these understandings and working protocols which will further enhanced by relevant training. Bromley is a member of Private Fostering Specialist Interest Group (PFSIG) which runs by BAAF three times a year. The Lead Officer for Private Fostering attends the group (PFSIG) meetings where private fostering information based on research, law and practice is shared and disseminated. Officers within the council and professionals from other agencies receive private fostering briefings which inform them of their specific duties in relation to privately fostered children.

The Bromley Safeguarding Children Board will lead and ensure that multi-agency training is available to all partner agencies in relation to the statutory framework for private fostering. The Lead Officer and The Business Manager for BCSB will continue jointly organising appropriate training for internal and external partner agencies including for those social workers who directly work with privately fostered children and their carers.

Monitoring compliance with duties and functions in relation to private fostering

The Local Authority will monitor its performance, providing monthly data and this will form the basis for its end of year reporting on private fostering within the London Borough of Bromley. These are:-

Number of notifications of new private fostering arrangements received during the year.

- Number of cases where action was taken in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 4(1) of the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 for undertaking visits.
- Of these, record the number of cases where this action was taken within 7 working days on receipt of the notification.
- Number of new arrangements that began during that year and the percentage that had visits made at intervals of not more than six week intervals.
- Number of notifications of private fostering arrangements that came to an end during the year.
- Number of children under private fostering arrangements.
- Breakdown by age and place of birth (ethnicity).
- Ensure accurate and comprehensive confidential records are kept for each privately fostered child.
- That statutory visits are within timescale.
- That additional visits are made when required.
- That the system for recording information and enquiries is safe and robust.
- That advice and support is provided and matters of concern are highlighted.
- That decisions about the suitability of arrangements are signed off correctly and at the appropriate managerial level.
- The Local Authority will report annually to the Chair of the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board on how it satisfies itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in its area are safeguarded , including how it co-operates with other agencies.

The Bromley Safeguarding Children Board will satisfy itself on an annual basis that it is fulfilling its responsibility to promote the awareness of Private fostering and people's obligations related to it within the Bromley borough.

Further information on private fostering

The Statement of Purpose will be updated annually and published, along with practical advice on the Bromley Council and Bromley Safeguarding Children websites.

In addition;

This Statement of Purpose and further information can be obtained from:

Bromley Children's Social Care Services

Bromley Civic Centre

Stockwell Close

Bromley

Br1 3UH

Tel. 208 313 4016