



**PRIVATE  
FOSTERING  
STATEMENT OF  
PURPOSE  
2010 - 2011**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This document is a description of private fostering arrangements within Southampton City Council and is separate from the Fostering Agency Statement of Purpose. This Statement of Purpose is designed to meet the needs of the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering, Standard 1, and to provide a clear guide to the service for professionals, the public, council members and external organisations.

This document will describe private fostering arrangements, the assessment processes and the support and advice offered to private foster carers, privately fostered children and their parents within Southampton City Council. Southampton City Council's private fostering service aims to promote awareness raising, increase notification rates, increase the number of private fostering arrangements being assessed and privately fostered children's welfare being safeguarded and promoted. This will be achieved by implementing The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005, The Children Act 1989, and Guidance on Private Fostering and National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering.

Any comments or enquiries regarding this Statement of Purpose should be forwarded to the Principal Officer Simon Slater on 023 80833336 or by email [simon.slater@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:simon.slater@southampton.gov.uk)

## **REGULATION**

Southampton City Council's private fostering service is inspected by OfSTED.

Southampton City Council's private fostering service is based within the Fostering Service at Marland House, Southampton, SO14 7PQ. The service is directly managed by Leigh Clark. The service has one dedicated social worker, Angela Seymour.

Children's Services and Learning is committed to maintaining high standards in relation to its private fostering service provision and to reviewing this on a continual basis. Southampton City Council holds statutory powers and responsibilities as a local authority in relation to private fostering arrangements. The service works to ensure that equal opportunities are incorporated into all aspects of service delivery and all prospective private foster carers are assessed and supported on the basis of the needs of the individual privately fostered child/young person regardless of race, religion, class, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.

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

- 1.1 In the definition provided by the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering: "A private fostering arrangement is essentially one that is made privately (that is to say without the involvement of a 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.
- 1.2 Private foster carers may be from the extended family such as a cousin or great aunt. However, a person who is a relative under The Children Act 1989 i.e. a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of full blood or half blood or by marriage) or step-parent will not be a private foster carer. A private foster carer may 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.
- 1.3 The period for which the child is cared for and accommodated by the private foster carer should be continuous, but that continuity is not broken by the occasional short break.
- 1.4 Exemptions to this definition are set out in Schedule 8 to the Children Act 1989".

## **2 THE LOCAL AUTHORITY'S DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS UNDER THE CHILDREN ACT 1989 AND THE CHILDREN (PRIVATE ARRANGEMENTS FOR FOSTERING) REGULATIONS 2005**

- 2.1 Local authorities have a duty to be notified about private fostering arrangements in their area and to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are privately fostered in their area is safeguarded and promoted and to ensure that such advice is given to those caring for them as appears to the authority to be needed (The Children Act 1989 Section 67(1).
- 2.2 Broadly the duties fall into three types of activity:
- Giving and receiving notifications
  - Ascertaining the suitability of private foster carers and their households
  - Monitoring arrangements through visits and written records of visits

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

- 3.1 Additional measures introduced in the Children Act were the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 to strengthen and enhance the private fostering notification scheme.
- 3.2 Local Authorities are required to raise public awareness in their area of the requirements regarding notification of private fostering arrangements.
- 3.3 Notifications must now be given to Local Authorities when a child/young person is proposed to be privately fostered as well as being privately fostered. This will enable local authorities to ensure that the welfare of privately fostered children/young people is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted by ongoing assessments and monitoring of arrangements within statutory timescales.
- 3.4 These new measures, along with the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering, July 2005, focus all local authorities' attention on private fostering and require them to take a more proactive approach with partnership agencies and other professionals in identifying arrangements in their area.
- 3.5 They are expected to improve notification rates and compliance within the existing legislative framework for private fostering and, therefore, to address the key problems identified with the former scheme. It is intended that these additional measures will improve the mechanisms for safeguarding children/young people in private fostering arrangements.
- 3.6 The following outlines how Southampton City Council intends to ensure that all of the above is adhered to:

### **4. TRAINING FOR RELEVANT STAFF**

- 4.1 Training on private fostering will be provided through the Southampton Children and Young People's Trust Board training programme and staff induction programme.
- 4.2 Training will also be delivered through offering specific briefings to targeted groups.
- 4.3 Training will include information on the notification requirements, the assessment processes of the suitability of private fostering arrangements and will be based on the premise that the child/young person's best interests and welfare are paramount.
- 4.4 Training will be at different levels for different professionals and will cover different cultural child care practices and parenting styles.

4.5 Relevant staff will further gain understanding and expertise in relation to private fostering through briefings at fieldwork away-days, managers' forums and conferences on private fostering.

4.6 The delivery of the training to relevant staff will be through presentations at relevant team meetings and presentations at locality workshops for head teachers.

## **5. HOW AWARENESS OF THE NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS WILL BE PROMOTED**

5.1 Raising public and professional awareness of the notification requirements of private fostering arrangements within the city will be a crucial part of the role of the private fostering social worker.

5.2 Awareness of the notification requirements will be promoted via information and advertising and will be available on the website [www.youngsouthampton.org](http://www.youngsouthampton.org).

5.3 Information sessions with key professionals, partnership agencies and members of the public, faith and community organisations and schools will routinely be undertaken.

5.4 Publicity materials will contain information about the legal definition of privately fostered children/young people, the procedure for notifying the local authority, the benefits of notification and consequences of non-notification.

5.5 Awareness raising events which took place in 2010:

- presenting to relevant teams throughout Southampton City Council
- presenting at locality work shops for head teachers
- compiling advertising posters and fact sheets for all relevant parties to be distributed to key access points, e.g. schools, libraries, one-stop shops, voluntary/community sector organisations and council offices
- attending multi-agency groups within the city (IMAG)
- an 8 day road show in a local shopping centre with a professional advertising agency and advertising DVDs

5.6 All awareness-raising is continuous and ongoing with a plan for monthly awareness-raising within the city. This work will be under continuous review and will be responsive to the issues that may arise within the community. Promotion of the notification requirements will be evaluated in terms of objectives set on a regular basis.

## **6. ASSESMENT OF THE SUITABILITY OF PRIVATE FOSTER CARERS AND THEIR HOUSEHOLD**

6.1 Upon notification of a private fostering arrangement the Private Fostering Social Worker (PFSW) will visit within the first seven days to complete a 'Seven day Carer's Assessment' to determine their suitability to care for the child/young person.

6.2 The Carer's Assessment will be completed within 35 working days. The aim of this will be to determine that the arrangement will satisfactorily safeguard and promote the privately fostered child's welfare.

6.3 The report will then be signed off by the Principal Officer, Simon Slater.

6.4 All aspects of private foster carers' suitability including the suitability of their households will be assessed including CRB checks on all adult members of their household.

## **7. ADVICE/SUPPORT AND INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO PRIVATE FOSTER CARERS, PARENTS/THOSE WITH PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILDREN**

7.1 The Private Fostering Social Worker (PFSW) provides advice to those caring or proposing to care for privately fostered children and young people, parents or persons with parental responsibility for those being or proposed to be privately fostered.

7.2 All private foster carers, parents (or person with parental responsibility) children and young people in a private fostering arrangement have an allocated PFSW and are given their contact details when an arrangement commences.

7.3 Where areas of advice and support are highlighted as part of the assessment process the PFSW signposts to the relevant agencies.

7.4 The following information is provided:

- Fact sheet for parents
- Fact sheet for private foster carers
- Fact sheet for professionals
- Booklet: 'Private Fostering: what it is and what it means' by BAAF is provided for the child or young person

7.5 Information on private fostering can be found on the following website:

<http://www.youngsouthampton.org/ParentsAndCarers/being/looking-after-someone-elses-child-private-fostering.asp#1>

## **8. ENSURING THE WELFARE OF PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILDREN IS SAFEGUARDED AND PROMOTED**

- 8.1 Southampton City Council's Private Fostering Service recognises and values private fostering arrangements as private and as such ensures any intervention is as minimal as possible, balanced with the Local Authority being able to assess if the child's welfare is safeguarded and promoted.
- 8.2 This intervention also aids rapport between private foster carers, parents (or persons with parental responsibility) and the Private Fostering Service, promoting the availability of advice that can be sought and provided.
- 8.3 All privately fostered children have an identified PFSW who will complete statutory Regulation 8 visits to the child or young person.
- 8.4 Upon notification of a private fostering arrangement the Private Fostering Social Worker (PFSW) will visit within the first seven days to complete an initial assessment on the child.
- 8.5 The initial assessment will consider if the privately fostered child is a 'Child in Need'.
- 8.6 If the child is assessed as a 'Child in Need', a Core Assessment will be completed by a social worker from one of the CIN teams and the PFSW will continue to assess the carers.
- 8.7 The aim of this will be to determine that the arrangement will satisfactorily safeguard and promote the privately fostered child's welfare.
- 8.8 All adult members of the household will be CRB checked, a Health and Safety questionnaire will be completed on the accommodation and where necessary advice regarding any medical conditions will be sought.
- 8.9 The report will then be signed off by the Principal Officer, Simon Slater.

## **9. THE ROLE OF PARTNER AGENCIES IN SAFEGUARDING AND PROMOTING THE WELFARE OF PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILDREN, INCLUDING ENCOURAGING NOTIFICATION**

- 9.1 All partner agencies are provided with information on their responsibilities regarding notifications under the new Regulations 2005.
- 9.2 Information materials have been sent to all schools within the Southampton City Council boundaries in Feb 2010 and presentations at workshops with primary and secondary heads were completed in

March/April 2010.

- 9.3 Awareness raising posters have been sent to all school, faith groups, housing, health organisations, as part of the Private Fostering Awareness campaign.
- 9.4 Both locality groups and inner city multi agency groups are attended to raise awareness of private fostering in the city.
- 9.5 Ongoing monthly workshops are planned throughout the year to raise awareness with both partnership agencies and social work teams.

**10. HOW RELEVANT STAFF WILL HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE DEPARTMENTS DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS IN RELATION TO PRIVATE FOSTERING**

- 10.1 Children's Services and Learning staff will have access to this Statement of Purpose and Southampton City Council's information materials and training on private fostering.
- 10.2 Other information leaflets and relevant training as part of the Trust Board's training programme.
- 10.3 The private fostering social worker will continue to visit other departments within Southampton City Council and partner agencies as appropriate, to inform them of the new guidance, safeguards and standards.

**11. HOW THE DEPARTMENT WILL ENSURE THAT ITS DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS REGARDING PRIVATE FOSTERING ARE INCLUDED IN AN INDUCTION AND OTHER TRAINING PROGRAMMES AND THESE ARE REVIEWED AND EVALUATE ANNUALLY IN LINE WITH CHANGES IN LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE**

- 11.1 Children's Services and Learning will ensure that its duties and functions in relation to private fostering are prioritised and included in the annual training plan.
- 11.2 The Children and Young People's Trust (CYPT) will ensure that its duties and functions in relation to private fostering are included in the Children and Young People's Trust Board training programme and will be reviewed annually by the Service Manager, and the CYPT Stay Safe Steering Group in light of any changes in legislation, guidance and best practice developments.
- 11.3 In addition to this, the designated social worker's training needs in relation to private fostering are assessed as part of the Children's Service Appraisal and Personal Development Plan.



11.4 All social workers undergo Induction/Return to Social Work training in relation to the Children's Services duties and functions concerning private fostering.

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

12.1 Under Regulation 12, the Principal Officer, Simon Slater in conjunction with the relevant Service Manager, will monitor the way the Directorate complies with and discharges its statutory duties and functions in relation to private fostering.

12.2 This officer will monitor compliance with the following duties and functions:

12.3 The promotion of awareness regarding notification requirements.

- How the Directorate responds to notifications received and if these are within timescales
- How the Directorate manages disqualifications (refusal to consent to disqualified persons being private foster carers), prohibitions, requirements and appeals against these
- How the Directorate exercises its functions under section 67(5), Children Act 1989
- How the Directorate processes decisions regarding offences committed bearing in mind the best interests of the child/young person
- How the Department assesses the parenting capacity of prospective or actual private foster carers, members of their households and the suitability of their accommodation
- That statutory visits are within timescales and decisions about the suitability of arrangements are also within timescale and approved at managerial level
- That additional visits are made when requested by the child/young person, private foster carers, parents or those with parental responsibility
- That written reports are made in accordance with the regulations, i.e. recommendations on the arrangement, the child/young person seen alone, wishes and feelings of child/young person, contact and financial arrangements and any concerns raised
- That advice and support is provided to private foster carers, parents/those with parental responsibility or any person concerned with the child/young person and recorded
- That information and support is provided to privately fostered children/young people
- That independent interpreters are used as appropriate
- That a sample of child/young person's records are regularly audited to check that compliance with the Regulations is being fulfilled
- That any concerns raised by privately fostered children/young

people are investigated

- That a system is in place recording the number and nature of enquiries received in relation to private fostering, the responses given and action taken
- That privately fostered children/young people, carers, parents and others concerned are given a copy Southampton City Council's Complaints Procedure and given information on how to access their records.

### 13. **ADVICE ON PRIVATE FOSTERING**

- 13.1 This Statement of Purpose along with advice and information on private fostering can be obtained from the private fostering social worker Angela Seymour on 023 80833956, Bev Ashmead, Senior Practitioner on 023 80833839 and Leigh Clark, Manager on 023 80832063.