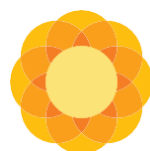


Private Fostering

Statement of Purpose 2023-24



Getting it right for privately fostered children



**BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST**

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Introduction

Birmingham Children's Trust is committed to supporting the upbringing of children within their families of origin, wherever possible.

While the Trust fully discharges its responsibilities in respect of private fostering, it seeks to do so in a way that is supportive of children, young people, parents and carers.

The Trust does not intend to make judgments about or interfere in the arrangements that parents make for the care of their children, except where this is necessary to safeguard and ensure the welfare of privately fostered children.

What we ensure

We will work together with children, young people, parents and carers to ensure that:

- Children and young people are provided with high quality care that meets their needs.
- Private foster carers are provided with support and training to help them to provide high quality care.
- Birth parents feel able to seek help and guidance from the Trust.

Recognising diversity

The Trust recognises that privately fostered children are a diverse and potentially vulnerable group.

Our aim is to get it right for privately fostered children in Birmingham and create a supportive culture where birth parents, others with parental responsibility and carers feel comfortable in notifying the Trust of private fostering arrangements.

Standards

The National Minimum Standards for private fostering apply to Local Authorities (and, in our case, to the Trust). This document ensures that the Trust meets the National Minimum Standard 1, which requires that the local authority has a written statement or plan setting out its duties and functions in relation to private fostering.

This document defines what is meant by private fostering arrangements; the requirement for all private fostering arrangements to be notified to the local authority; the assessment process; and support and advice offered to parents, private foster carers and privately fostered children by the Trust.

Private fostering functions

The Trust has three functions in relation to Private Fostering:

- To raise public and professional awareness about private fostering and the legal requirement to notify the Trust about any actual or planned private fostering arrangements.
- To respond to any private fostering notifications, assess the arrangements and provide support to the children or young people and adults involved.
- To promote the information, advice and support that are available to privately fostered children and young people; private foster carers and prospective private foster carers; parents and those with parental responsibility.

Introduction ctd.

The Trust has a clear and comprehensive written procedure for assessing private fostering arrangements, which is available online.

Find out more on our website:

birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/privatefostering

Notifying us

Notification of a Private Fostering Arrangement should be made to CASS:

cass@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

0121 303 1888.

The notification will be processed and referred for an initial visit by a social worker in ASTI (Assessment and short-term intervention) team and the private fostering team. Consideration will also be given as to whether the child is a child in need.

Private fostering assessment

If following the initial visit, it is considered to be a private fostering arrangement then a private fostering arrangement assessment will be undertaken by the private fostering team within Family and Friends Fostering Service, which will then allocate a social worker to provide advice and support to his/her parent(s) and private foster carers.

The child will receive regular visits from their social worker in the Safeguarding Team in accordance with the private fostering regulations.

Any future safeguarding concerns will be responded to by the child's allocated social worker.

Section 1

The definition of a privately fostered child

The legal definition of a privately fostered child is found in Section 66 of the Children Act 1989 and is described in the Replacement Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering.

A private fostering arrangement is essentially one that is made privately (that is to say without the involvement of the local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or a relative (as defined under the 1989 Children Act), with the intention that the arrangement should last for 28 days or more, and in an arrangement made privately (that is without the involvement of the local authority).

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 or half blood or by marriage) or a step-parent cannot be a private foster carer.

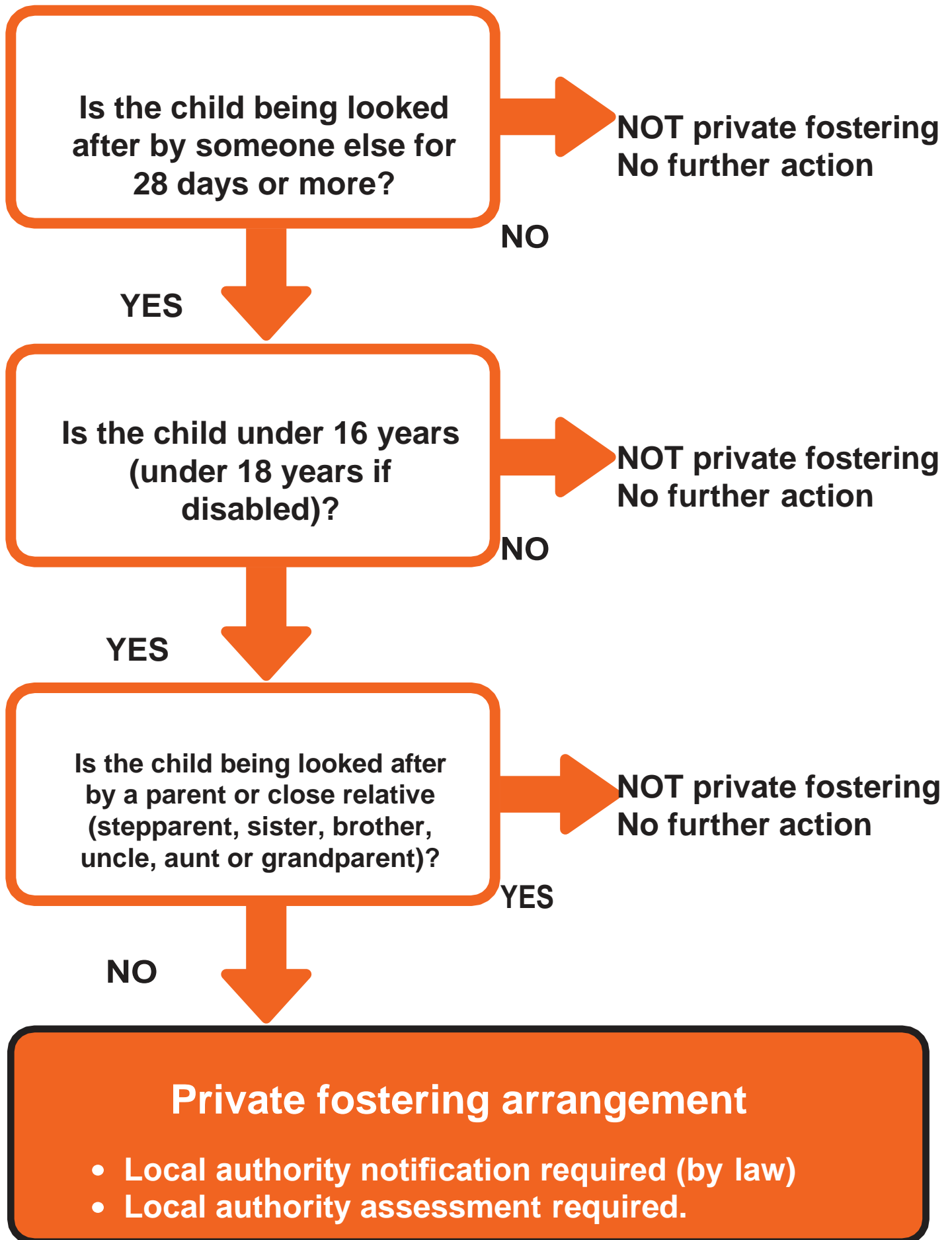
A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for him/her has done so for a period of less than 28 days and does not intend to do so for a period longer than 28 days.

The 28-day period is intended to ensure that families can decide for a child to stay with their extended family or friends without interference from the local authority.

See chart on page 6 to determine if a care arrangement is private fostering.



Determining if a care arrangement is private fostering?



Section 1 ctd.

Examples of private fostering

Each private fostering arrangement will be different, depending on the child's circumstances and need.

Examples of the private fostering arrangements include those below.

Local children living apart from their families

- Adolescents temporarily estranged from their parents.
- Children whose parents are not able to care for them (due to illness, substance abuse, divorce or imprisonment) and have made alternative arrangements.
- Children living with a friend's family because their parent's study or work involves unsociable hours, which make it difficult to use ordinary day care or after-school care.
- Single parents who are in hospital for four weeks or more, planned or unplanned, and who arrange for the care of their child/children with adults who are not close relatives.
- Children attending a sport's academy at a distance from their family home, where they need to stay with host families for more than four weeks.

Children staying with friends because of family difficulties

- A teenager living with family of a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- A teenager 'sofa-surfing' at a friend's house because they do not get on with their own family.
- Children staying with another family because their parents have separated or

Children with parents overseas

- Children attending a language school, whilst staying with a host family.
- Children from overseas sent to this country by their parents for education or health care.
- Overseas students at boarding school, who cannot return home during the holidays and stay with a host family in the UK.

Children brought into the UK for adoption

- Children brought into the UK to be adopted will be privately fostered until formal notice of intention to apply to adopt is granted.

Asylum Seekers and refugees

- Children who are trafficked into the UK.
- Unaccompanied children who arrive in the UK seeking asylum.
- Children who arrive in the UK seeking asylum travelling with adults who are not close relatives and might not be known to them.

Section 2

The Trust's duties and functions

The Children Act 1989 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 place a duty upon the Trust to ensure that the welfare of privately fostered children notified to the Trust is being safeguarded and promoted and give advice to those caring for them.

Duties

The duties of the Trust, where it is not satisfied that the welfare of a privately fostered child is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted, will apply in the case of children who are proposed to be privately fostered.

The Trust is also required to undertake the following actions in respect of private fostering:

- Raise public awareness in Birmingham about the notification requirements.
- Develop a programme of communication activities, including for Trust staff and partners.
- Develop up-to-date publicity materials.
- Make available information on the notification requirements.
- Involve other agencies in awareness raising activities.
- Provide advice to parents, persons with parental responsibility, private foster carers and those proposing to privately foster a child.
- Consider the overall developmental needs, in co-operation with other relevant agencies, of a disabled child who is privately fostered.

The Trust must also consider whether a privately fostered child is also a Child in Need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and consider where support and services can be provided to increase the capacity of the private foster carer to meet the child's needs and promote positive outcomes.

Standards

The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering (2005) set out a number of standards to be met by all authorities (and Trusts) in discharging their duties.

These standards cover the following areas:

- Producing a written statement, which set out the local authority/Trust's duties and functions in relation to private fostering (this document).
- Promoting awareness of notification requirements, responding to notifications and addressing un-notified arrangements that come to their attention.
- Ensuring the welfare of privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted.
- Enabling all children who are privately fostered to access information and support when required so that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted.
- Ensuring that privately fostered children participate in decisions about their lives.
- Providing advice and support to privately fostered children and their parents and foster carers, including prospective private foster carers.
- Monitoring the way in which the Trust complies with its duties and functions in relation to private fostering.
- Improve practice wherever this is required by monitoring and quality assurance processes.

Section 3

What the Trust Fostering Service can expect from foster carers

BSCP

The Birmingham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (BSCP) website contains key information about private fostering.

<http://lscpbirmingham.org.uk/private-fostering>

Private fostering in practice

Private fostering awareness is included within the Trust's practice training offer.

All social workers who are either undertaking the private foster carer(s) assessment or supporting the private fostering placement, working with both the private foster carer(s), the child and their parents will have the specialist knowledge and understanding of the private fostering regulatory requirements.

They are experienced and trained in working with care arrangements for children not living with their own parent/s, and in child protection.

Team managers and private fostering leads have a mentoring role with other staff and will support colleagues in identifying and responding appropriately to private fostering arrangements.

Section 4

Named persons for private fostering

Local authorities and Trusts are required to provide the name of a person with expertise in private fostering, whom social workers and partners can contact for advice (Regulation 12).

Named manager

Private fostering lead

Carol Lees

Head of Service, Family and Friends
Carol.X.Lees@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

The Trust's named team manager practice leads for private fostering are:

Abigail Malpass

Private Fostering Safeguarding Practice Lead
Abigail.Malpass@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

Lauren Love

Private Fostering ASTI Practice Lead
Lauren.Love@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

The relevant team manager for ASTI (assessment and short-term intervention) and Safeguarding teams will champion private fostering best practice across the Trust.

Local authorities and Trusts are required to provide the name of the manager(s) who will sign off decisions about the overall suitability of the private fostering arrangements.

Named agency decision maker

For private foster carers

Kim Smith

Assistant Head of Service
Kim.X.Smith@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

Kim will authorise the report of the suitability of a private foster carer.

In her absence this will be the head of service for connected care.

Section 5

Promoting awareness within the local community

The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering require local authorities to have a programme of communication activities including for the public, Trust and local authority staff and other agencies.

The communication strategy includes information on the Trust's website, publicity in various publications, and dissemination of information to community groups and other agencies.

Leaflets about private fostering arrangements and notification requirements have been distributed to libraries, GP surgeries, faith groups and language schools, and this will be renewed periodically.

Efforts are to be further concentrated on awareness raising with other professional groups, for example in schools and health services, police, youth services, housing officer, community workers and with social care professionals.

The Trust promotes private fostering awareness to partner agencies through the Safeguarding Children's Partnership (BSCP), direct communications with schools and partners and through publicity and fostering events.

The Trust website also carries relevant information for partners/stakeholders and the public about private fostering which includes:

- An explanation of private fostering with examples of why children may be in private fostering arrangements.
- The duty to refer to the Trust.
- Contact details/how to notify.
- How children in private foster care are monitored.

Find out more on our website:

birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/privatefostering



Section 6

Determining the suitability of private fostering arrangements

The Trust will respond promptly to all notifications of an intended or an existing private fostering arrangement.

The allocated social worker within Family and Friends will assess the safety and welfare of the young person by completing a private fostering assessment and preparing a report about the arrangement.

The social worker will visit all privately fostered children and young people during which they will speak to them alone.

The social worker will undertake an assessment of the suitability of the private foster carers, or proposed private foster carer, including their parenting capacity, suitability of the accommodation along with the contact and financial arrangements.

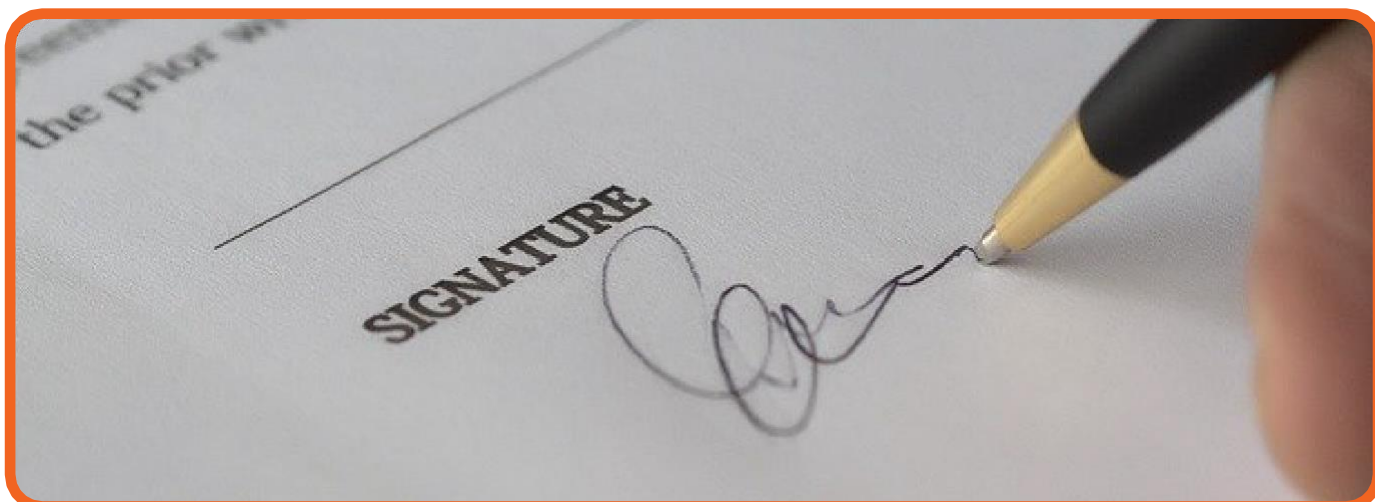
This includes seeking the views of the parents and or adults with parental responsibility.

As part of the assessment of suitability, all private foster carers and other members of the household over 16 years must consent to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

Assessment will be signed off by the Named Manager or in their absence the Head of Service within 45 days or as soon as the outcome of the DBS check is known, whichever is sooner. If a private foster carer, proposed private foster carer or member of the household over 16 refuses to co-operate with any of the checks they will not be recommended as suitable to privately foster the child.

If during the assessment, including DBS check, concerns are identified there may need to be discussions about alternative arrangements for the child, and whether child protection procedures or emergency legal action needs to be considered where a risk of harm is identified.

Consideration may also be given as to whether there is a need for a Children in Need plan to run alongside the private fostering arrangement, which will identify any needs and how and by whom the needs will be addressed.



Section 7

Safeguarding privately fostered children

All privately fostered children and young people will have an allocated social worker who will undertake statutory visits in order to safeguard them and ensure their welfare.

These visits will be made at least every six weeks during the first year and at least every three months thereafter; more frequent visits may be made if deemed necessary.

The child or private foster carer may also request additional visits.

During the visits the social worker will ensure that the child is making progress and that their needs are being met and speak to the child in order to ascertain his /her wishes and feelings.

The social worker will speak to the child alone unless the child does not wish to, or it is not appropriate because the child is too young.

An annual review of the suitability of the private foster carer will be undertaken. Private foster carers will be given advice in order to enhance their ability to care for the child and support services will be made available to them.

Private foster carers will be encouraged to promote contact, where safe, between the child or young person and their parents, siblings, extended family and significant other people important to them.

The suitability of the private foster carer will be reviewed annually by the social worker and the named manager.

Regular management supervision of the case includes the monitoring of visiting frequencies and any issues arising in private fostering arrangements.

A file audit of carer and child records will be undertaken.

Good practice will be reported, and practice improvement identified and implemented.

Information about all the private fostering arrangements will be collated centrally and the annual report will be presented to the Trust's Executive, Trust Board and the Birmingham Children's Safeguarding Partnership.



Section 8

Advice and support for private foster carers and parents

Prospective private foster carers and private foster carers will be visited by a family and friends social worker.

The role of the Social Worker includes providing advice, support and identifying any training needs.

In circumstances where it is identified that the placement is for education reasons, and the identity of the specific child to be placed in the household may not yet be known, the private fostering social worker will give appropriate advice.

Practitioners have an ongoing responsibility to consider relevant support and advice to the parents of the privately fostered child.

Information to carers and parents is available in different formats and languages where needed.

Training for private foster carers and parents

Training for private foster carers, including prospective foster carers, will be provided on a case-by-case basis and will depend on the needs of the private foster carer or prospective private foster care.

For those already caring this will include the needs that arise from the assessment and social worker visits.

All private foster carers, prospective private foster carers, parents and other persons with parental responsibility will be provided with the opportunity to attend parenting programmes.

In certain cases private foster carers may be supported to access specific adult learning or training, to address identified needs.



Section 9

Information and support for privately fostered children

Children and young people who are privately fostered will receive a range of information and support from the Trust.

Every privately fostered child and young person will be provided with the following information in their first language and in a format appropriate to their age and level of understanding:

- The reasons they are in private fostercare and what this means for them
- The meaning of their privately fostered status.
- Details of their private foster carer.
- Their private foster carer's responsibilities.
- Their right to be safeguarded.
- The name and contact details for their social worker and their manager.
- Details of the advocacy service for children and young people.

Unless the young person has a disability, private fostering arrangements will end when she/he is aged 16 years.

Where the young person remains with the private foster carers after this age and requires continuing advice and support, she/he will be assisted as a Child in Need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

Children with a disability who are privately fostered and over the age of 16 years (and under 21 years) will be offered support, advice and assistance with their transition to independence and adulthood.



Section 10

The role of other agencies

Those who have day-to-day contact with children and families - especially those in universal health and education services - are most likely to identify a private fostering arrangement.

The Trust's partners have a duty to notify the Trust about private fostering arrangements to enable it to fulfil its statutory functions (as outlined above).

The responsibility of the other agencies to notify the Trust of private fostering arrangements is underpinned by the **Replacement of Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering (1)** and the duty to cooperate in **Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 (2)**.

(1) Replacement Children 1989 Act – Guidance on Private fostering

Education, health and other professionals should notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement that comes to their attention, where they are not satisfied that the local authority have been, or will be, notified of the arrangement, so that the local authority can then discharge its duty to satisfy itself that the welfare of the privately fostered child concerned is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted. This, of course, is a matter of good practice.

(2) Children Act 2004

Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 requires each local authority to make arrangements to promote cooperation between partners and such other persons or bodies working with children in the local authority's area as the authority considers appropriate. The arrangements are to be made with a view to improving the wellbeing of children in the authority's area, which includes protection from harm and neglect.

It is essential that all workers who come into contact with children and families:

- Can recognise private fostering arrangements.
- Understand the private fostering notification requirements.
- Can make a notification to the Trust.

Partners should ensure that groups of staff have access to information about private fostering - including this document - and access relevant training.

Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership (previously Birmingham Local Safeguarding Children Board) also has an important role in raising professional awareness of private fostering and the requirements for professionals in partner agencies to notify the Trust of private fostering arrangements.

Within Standard 7 of the National Minimum Standards for private fostering, the local authority is required to report annually to the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership on how it satisfies itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in its area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted, including how it cooperates with other agencies.

Contact us

For advice or discussion about private fostering please email or call:

cass@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

0121 303 1888.



www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/privatefostering