

October 2022

# Hull City Council Children, Young People and Families Services

## PRIVATE FOSTERING SERVICES

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

#### Introduction

It is a requirement for all local authorities to publish a statement of purpose in relation to private fostering. This statement of purpose sets out to explain Hull City Council's duties and functions in relation to private fostering and the ways in which this will be conducted. It aims to meet the requirements as outlined in the 1989 Children Act; the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering; and the Children (private arrangements for fostering) Regulations 2005. Hull City Council is committed to maintaining high standards in relation to private fostering provision and to review this Statement of Purpose on a regular basis.

Hull City Council holds statutory duties 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. Hull City Council works to ensure that equal opportunities are integrated into all aspects of service delivery and will take account of the specific needs of every privately fostered child/young person including that of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, class and disability.

Hull City Council's private fostering arrangements are inspected and regulated by OFSTED.

Any comments regarding this statement of purpose should be passed to Nicola Lynn, Head of Service for Safeguarding and Designated Officer for private fostering:

[nicola.lynn@hullcc.gov.uk](mailto:nicola.lynn@hullcc.gov.uk)

#### Legal definition of a privately fostered child

The Private Fostering Regulations apply when children or young people, aged under 16 years (18 if they have a disability) live with a person who is not a close relative for 28 days or more. The term 'close relative' has a specific definition within the legislation it includes grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, and aunts (whether of the full or half blood or by marriage) and step-parents. Children living with people who are not close relatives, such as a cousin, great aunt or family friend need to be assessed and reviewed under the Private Fostering Regulations to ensure the placement is able to safeguard and promote his/her welfare.

### **Examples of situations in which a child/young person may be privately fostered**

- Child/ young person living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce or difficulties at home.
- Child/young person sent to the UK by birth parents from overseas. (this list is not exhaustive)

### **The local authority's duties and functions under the Children Act 1989 and the Children (private arrangements for fostering) Regulations 2005**

The law requires the local authority to:

- Consider the child's interests first. Local authorities must be informed about all private fostering arrangements in their area and satisfy themselves that the welfare of privately fostered children is being safeguarded and promoted and give advice to those caring for them.
- Raise and promote awareness of private fostering in their area and ensure professionals and the public are aware of their private fostering responsibilities.
- Make regular visits to ensure that children are placed in a safe home environment and that they are well cared for.
- Ensure that checks on the carer and the household are carried out and establish whether the arrangement is suitable.
- Stop a private fostering arrangement if the carer is in unsuitable accommodation or the carer is found to be unsuitable to look after children.
- The Children Act 1989 gives Local Authorities the general duty to consider whether a privately fostered child is a Child in Need, and to consider where support and services can be provided to assist the private foster carer to meet the child's needs.

Additional measures under the Children Act 2004 and the Fostering Regulations 2005 are intended to strengthen the notification scheme, and to raise public awareness. 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.

### **Training, briefings and awareness raising**

A Private fostering poster has been developed and will be updated as and when necessary. This has and will continue to be widely distributed across the city in a variety of locations i.e. schools, doctors surgeries, dentists, community and children's centres, customer service centres and libraries. Members of the private fostering steering group along with the Hull Safeguarding Children's Partnerships (HSCP) also ensure these are distributed within their own settings and amongst partner agencies. A one minute guide to private fostering has been produced for professionals, which is regularly emailed internally and to schools and partner agencies via the HSCP as well as being included periodically in the HSCP news bulletin. This is also available to download from the HSCP website.

Private fostering briefings are presented to services when required as part of the regular communication and awareness raising campaign and include for example, delivery of this to schools and GP practice managers across the city. There is also an e-learning private

fostering briefing that can be accessed via the HSCP website, this is regularly sent out along with other private fostering communications to encourage uptake of this. Updated practice guidance has been distributed to all children's social work teams and the updated Social Work Practice Standards launched in September 2022 now includes private fostering.

An annual "private fostering week" will begin in December 2022 which will be an opportunity to further promote awareness amongst professionals and the public.

As part of the Hull City Council's Social Work Academy there is a "Private fostering champion". Their role is to promote quality of practice amongst social workers and assist with awareness raising.

We have links with partner agencies in order to develop outreach work with voluntary and community groups that are in contact with children and young people, particularly in relation to ethnic minority groups.

We continue to evaluate our awareness raising campaign by means of measuring the number of notifications generated from our publicity.

Hull City Council has information published on the Council's website: [www.hullcc.gov.uk](http://www.hullcc.gov.uk) which includes information on how to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement.

### **How the local authority will determine the suitability of all aspects of a private fostering arrangement in accordance with the regulations**

Any parent proposing to have their child cared for by someone other than a close relative for more than 28 days, or a carer who is proposing to look after someone else's child who is not a close relative, should notify Children's Services at least 6 weeks before the arrangement is due to begin. This is known as a "Proposed Arrangement". In these circumstances the Notification form on the Hull City Council Website should be completed and emailed to the Early Help and Safeguarding Hub (EHASH) or the online Portal form completed: [CYP Hub \(hullcc.gov.uk\)](http://hullcc.gov.uk). However, the more usual presenting situation is one whereby social care is notified of an arrangement when the child is already with the prospective private foster carer.

Notifications of private fostering arrangements will be received by the Early Help and Safeguarding Hub (EHASH) and an Assessment Team Social Worker will be identified to undertake an initial visit within seven days to begin the private fostering assessment which includes DBS and reference checks. Ongoing statutory visits will then be undertaken by the Locality Safeguarding Team in the area in which the child resides.

We will ensure that a private fostering social work assessment will be undertaken for all privately fostered children. The assessment will include elements of the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (2000) and Hull City Council's Private

Fostering Policy and Guidance. All aspects of the private foster carer's suitability will be assessed including the suitability of their household and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks of all adult members of the household. The assessment should take no longer than 42 working days or as soon as the outcome of the DBS check(s) is known, whichever is the sooner.

The Designated Officer will oversee and advise on any issues in relation to a private fostering arrangement and has overall responsibility to agree a private fostering arrangement following completion of the assessment.

### **Advice/support and information available to private foster carers, parents/ those with parental responsibility and privately fostered children**

A social worker will be allocated to each privately fostered child. The social worker will be responsible for working with and supporting each private foster carer/parent/others concerned and privately fostered children. They will promote ongoing advice including benefit entitlement, parenting strategies and offer support deemed appropriate. They will also undertake statutory visits and see the child regularly and alone where appropriate. Interpreters will be used where it is the request of the child/ young person or where the preferred language is not English. Private foster carers are also offered bespoke support from an allocated Fostering Social Worker if appropriate and all privately fostered children will be offered an independent advocate.

### **The role of other agencies in Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of privately fostered children**

All partner agencies will be invited to attend private fostering briefings and/or access the e-learning private fostering which will inform them of their individual responsibilities in relation to notification as well as updating information and analysing feedback the local authority receives in relation to their intervention.

### **Monitoring compliance with duties and functions in relation to private fostering**

The local authority will monitor through its performance team, the:

- Number of new notifications received during the year.
- Compliance of timeliness of assessments and regulation visits that are required every 6 weeks
- Breakdown by age and ethnicity.
- Number of placements coming to an end during the year.

Private fostering case files will be audited for quality and compliance annually and the key findings aggregated to identify themes in the quality of social work practice in Hull with privately fostered children.

A record of issues raised in relation to private fostering cases will be kept and monitored by the named Designated Officer for private fostering and addressed within the private fostering steering group.

The local authority will investigate any concern or pattern of concern raised by privately fostered children.

Advice on private fostering This statement of purpose along with advice on private fostering can be obtained on the Hull City Council website [www.hullcc.gov.uk](http://www.hullcc.gov.uk) or from the EHASH Team on 01482 448879, or the Designated Officer for Private Fostering (Nicola Lynn) [Nicola.lynn@hullcc.gov.uk](mailto:Nicola.lynn@hullcc.gov.uk)