

Children, Sports and Leisure Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	Monday 30th March 2015
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Private Fostering
Report of:	Tri-Borough Executive Director of Children Services
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	Better City Better Lives / ActiveWestminster Strategy
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1. What is private Fostering?

- 1.2 A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 years (under 18, if disabled) with someone other than a parent or close relative, in their own home, with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more.
- 1.3 It is not private fostering if the arrangement was made by social services. Examples of private fostering situations include:
- children and teenagers living apart from their families for a variety of reasons e.g. if a parent is ill, has had to temporarily move for work or there has been an argument within the family
 - children with parents working or studying elsewhere in the UK
 - children with parents overseas
 - children on holiday exchanges.

2. Local Authority Requirements

- 2.1 Current arrangements for the regulation of private fostering originate from concern following the death of Victoria Climbié in 2000. Victoria was privately fostered by her great aunt. Arrangements were codified in the Children Act 2004. Following this, the Children (Private Arrangement for Fostering) Regulations 2005 set out the duties of local authorities in their arrangements for private fostering, and national minimum standards for local authorities were published in 2005.
- 2.2 Given concerns about the level of 'hidden' private fostering arrangements, local authorities are required to concentrate on 'awareness-raising' among professionals and the general public. From 2005 the Commission for Social Care Inspection was given the duty of inspecting LA arrangements with the intention of facilitating improvement
- 2.3 Local authorities are required to complete an annual review of their private fostering arrangements and to submit this to the local safeguarding children board (LSCB). Data on private fostering are gathered annually by each authority and published nationally by the Department for Education.

3. Private Fostering Social Worker Roles & Responsibilities.

- 3.1 The Tri Borough Private Fostering Social work role sits within the Tri Borough MASH. The role is responsible for
- Manage a caseload of private fostering cases and assess any new cases.
 - Raise awareness of private fostering within key teams across children's services and key partner agencies.
 - Increase the numbers of notifications of privately fostered children.
 - Provide advice and consultation to partner agencies including dealing with private fostering enquiries.
 - Tracking all cases across the tri borough ensuring that accurate records and data is held on all private fostering cases.
 - Attendance at the Private Fostering Special Interest Group facilitated by BAAF which meets on a quarterly basis. The group provides an important forum for PF practitioners to discuss practice issues, raise awareness, best practice and inform and influence policy wherever possible.
- 3.2 The Tri borough Private Fostering role ensures that all children who are privately fostered receive a consistent response with good quality assessments ensuring that the needs of those children who are privately fostered are met. Having the role based in the MASH ensures that awareness is raised and all opportunities to identify cases are taken place.

4. Private Fostering Panel

4.1 The Tri Borough private Fostering panel is a multi-disciplinary panel chaired by the Mash Head of service. The purpose of the panel is

- Establishing a multi-disciplinary approach to good quality and robust assessment of privately fostered children.
- Ensuring compliance with statutory guidance on privately fostered children.
- Every privately fostered child has a Child In Need Plan which is reviewed quarterly and meets the individual needs of that child.
- Provide good quality oversight to ensure cases are stepped up to statutory social work should the Private Fostering placement no longer be viable or breaks down.
- Ensure all young people over the age of 16 receive relevant support and intervention from services from agencies ensuring good outcomes beyond the Privately Fostered arrangement.
- Ensuring children and young people are visited according the statutory requirement

5. WCC Prevalence

5.1 10 children/young people are currently in Private fostering arrangements in Westminster. Of the 10 children, 6 are males and 4 females. Reasons why children are privately fostered and source of the referral are also included below.

Ethnicity/Age	Under 1	1-4 yrs.	5-9 yrs.	10-15 yrs.
UK				2
European				1
African				1
Asian				3
Middle East				3
Canadian/USA				
Caribbean, Central & South American				

Reason for arrangements:

- Children attending language/independent schools In the UK [Older children aged 14]
- Family crisis and inability of parents to parent
- Children in UK to access secondary education
- Children fleeing political unrest in Palestine
- Parental Mental health
- Hospital admission

Source of referral:

- Self-referral
- UKBA
- Interagency /in-house
- Admissions
- Transfer from another LA

6. Service Provision & Development

- 6.1 WCC has had a 0.5 Private Fostering Role for several years but in August 2014 the role became a full time Tri Borough role and was embedded in the Tri Borough MASH Team. The Private Fostering role reports to the MASH Team Manager and the MASH Head of service.
- 6.2 All new Private Fostering cases are subject to MASH checks ensuring good quality information gathering at the earliest opportunity. As a result referrals receive a prompt and timely response and identify quickly those young people who are in private fostering arrangements and require a home visit with 72 hours of the notification.
- 6.3 Work has been undertaken to develop the Private Fostering Panel to a tri borough panel where multi-disciplinary decisions are made in relation to the assessment & planning for privately fostered children. Ensuring good quality oversight and effective escalation of cases where statutory input is required. The panel has extended its remit to include a review of all PF cases ending prior to the child's 16th birthday to ensure that appropriate support is offered to the young person beyond the role of Private Fostering. This ensures that any young person with ongoing identified needs will receive support and intervention either via the LA locality teams or through voluntary agencies.
- 6.4 The Private Fostering Social Worker has begun to roll out awareness raising processes including linking in with relevant International/private schools, local faith organizations, and partner agencies to ensure that identification and referrals are being made. Further awareness is needed across these agencies as the number of Privately Fostered children remains low in WCC. It is thought that there are many more children being privately fostered but have not been identified and referred appropriately.
- 6.5 Ongoing develop is taking place to look at the data being captured on our privately fostered children including why children are being privately fostered and who is referring cases in to the LA. This will ensure that the LA can identify any gaps in agencies recognizing Private Fostering and address this through training and briefing sessions. It will also support the LA in understanding why children are privately fostered and any trends or patterns specific to Westminster and build a reliable profile of Private Fostering which will support strategic planning for this cohort.