

Statement on Private Fostering

Purpose:

The purpose of this statement is to provide clear and accurate information about private fostering, outline the legal responsibilities associated with private fostering arrangements, and explain the duties of educational institutions, healthcare providers, and social services in safeguarding children and young people in such arrangements.

What is Private Fostering?

Private fostering is defined as an arrangement where a child under the age of 16 (or under 18 if they have a disability) lives with an adult who is not their parent or a "close relative" for a period of 28 days or more. Close relatives are defined as grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles (whether full blood, half blood, or by marriage or civil partnership), and stepparents. A private foster carer can be anyone who is not a close relative, such as a family friend, a great-aunt or great-uncle, or a host family providing accommodation for an international student.

Legal Responsibilities and Notifications:

Duty to Notify:

Parents, private foster carers, and all professionals who work with children, including teachers, healthcare workers, and social workers, are legally required to notify the local authority of any private fostering arrangements. This notification must be made at least six weeks before the arrangement begins or immediately if the arrangement is made in an emergency.

Role of the Local Authority:

Once notified, the local authority has a duty to:

1. Assess the suitability of the private fostering arrangement, including the private foster carer and the home environment.
2. Ensure the child's welfare, safety, and emotional needs are being met.

3. Conduct regular visits to monitor the arrangement and provide support to both the child and the private foster carer.
 4. Offer guidance to parents and private foster carers on best practices for the child's care and well-being.
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Responsibilities of Educational Institutions:

Schools and other educational institutions play a crucial role in safeguarding children in private fostering arrangements. The responsibilities include:

Raising Awareness:

Staff should be trained to understand what private fostering is, recognize the signs, and be aware of their duty to notify the appropriate authorities if they become aware of or suspect a private fostering arrangement.

Identifying Concerns:

Teachers and school staff should look for signs that a child may be in a private fostering arrangement, such as:

1. A change in living arrangements, with a child suddenly living with a new adult guardian.
2. Parents who are absent for an extended period, especially if the child mentions staying with someone who is not a close relative.

Reporting and Referring:

If staff become aware of a private fostering situation, they must refer the case to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who will ensure that the local authority is informed. Early notification helps the local authority assess the arrangement and put in place any necessary safeguarding measures.

Support for Children and Private Foster Carers:

Safeguarding Measures:

Private foster carers are expected to provide a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment for the child. The local authority will offer advice and support to help the carer meet the child's needs, including access to healthcare, education, and emotional support.

Educational and Emotional Support:

Schools and educators should be proactive in providing extra support to children in private fostering arrangements. This includes monitoring academic progress, social integration, and emotional well-being, and offering appropriate resources as needed.

Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness:

Children in private fostering arrangements, particularly those from different cultural or international backgrounds, may require additional understanding and sensitivity. Schools should be prepared to address cultural and language barriers to ensure that the child feels safe and included.

Monitoring and Review:

Educational institutions must regularly review their policies and procedures concerning private fostering to ensure compliance with safeguarding laws and best practices. Staff training should be updated as necessary to keep awareness high and ensure that all professionals understand their roles and responsibilities.

Contact Information:

For more information on private fostering or to report a private fostering arrangement, please contact [Insert Local Authority Contact Details] or speak to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for further guidance.

Date of Last Review: 12/09/2024

Signed:Junyi Xiao/DSL