

PRIVATE FOSTERING STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2023/2024

Barnsley Council Fostering Service

Updated
August 2023

This Statement of Purpose fulfils the requirements of Standard 1.1 of the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005.



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of possibilities.



BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

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1. Introduction

This Statement of Purpose is designed to meet the statutory requirement established by the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 that:

'The local authority has a written statement or plan, which sets out its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and the ways in which they will be carried out' (at para 1.1)

Any comments or enquiries regarding this Statement of Purpose should be forwarded on to the Designated Manager for Private Fostering, Barnsley Council.

The Designated Service Manager for private fostering in Barnsley is:

Anne-Marie Banks
Fostering Service Manager
Fostering Service
Westgate Plaza
S70 2DR
AnneMarieBanks@barnsley.gov.uk

The named Designated Team Manager for Private Fostering in Barnsley is:

Joanne McIntyre
Fostering Service Manager
Fostering Service
Westgate Plaza
S70 2DR
JoanneMcIntyre@barnsley.gov.uk

Children and young people's social care practitioners should read this statement in conjunction with Barnsley Council Private Fostering policies and procedures which are available online:

2. The Legal Definition of a Privately Fostered Child

Private fostering is defined by The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 as a 'private arrangement' made for the care of a child or young person under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) by someone other than:

- A parent
- A person who has parental responsibility for the child
- A close relative (i.e. an aunt/uncle/step-parent/grandparent/sibling)
- The Regulations have been interpreted to include within the definition of 'parent' unmarried or putative fathers.

For the private arrangement to be within the statutory definition of private fostering:

- The child must have been cared for and accommodated by that person for 28 days or more.
- The period of actual private fostering is less than 28 days, but the private foster carer intends to privately foster the child for more than 28 days.

Private fostering arrangements are diverse. However, arrangements which are private fostering include:

- Children and young people sent from abroad to stay with another family, usually to improve their educational opportunities.
- Teenagers who, having broken ties with their parents, are staying in short term arrangements with friends or other non-relatives.
- Children of prisoners placed with distant relatives.
- Language students living with host families.

Excluded from the definition are:

- Children and young people who are considered Looked After or placed in any residential home, hospital, or school.

3. The Duties and Functions of the Local Authority

The local authority has the following duties under the Private Fostering regulations 2005:

'Action to be taken by local authority on receipt of notification of proposal to foster a child privately

4.— (1) Where a local authority have received notification under regulation 3 they must, for the purposes of discharging their duty under section 67(1) of the Act (welfare of privately fostered children), arrange for an officer of the authority within seven working days to—

(a) visit the premises where it is proposed that the child will be cared for and accommodated.

(b) visit and speak to the proposed private foster carer and to all members of his household.

(c) visit and speak to the child, alone unless the officer considers it inappropriate.

(d) speak to and, if it is practicable to do so, visit every parent of or person with parental responsibility for the child; and

(e) establish such matters listed in Schedule 2 as appear to the officer to be relevant.

(2) Having completed his functions under paragraph (1) the officer must make a written report to the local authority.

Action to be taken by local authority on receipt of notification about a child being fostered privately.

7.— (1) Where a local authority have received a notification under regulation 5 or 6 they must for the purposes of discharging their functions under section 67(1) of the Act, arrange for an officer of the authority within seven working days to—

- (a) visit the premises where the child is being cared for and accommodated.*
- (b) visit and speak to the private foster carer and to all members of his household.*
- (c) visit and speak to the child, alone unless the officer considers it inappropriate.*
- (d) speak to and, if it is practicable to do so, visit every parent of or person with parental responsibility for the child; and*
- (e) establish such matters listed in Schedule 3 as appear to the officer to be relevant.*

(2) Having completed his functions under paragraph (1) the officer must make a written report to the local authority.

Subsequent visits to children who are being fostered privately.

8.— (1) Each local authority must arrange for an officer of the authority to visit every child who is being fostered privately in their area—

- (a) in the first year of the private fostering arrangement, at intervals of not more than six weeks; and*
- (b) in any second or subsequent year, at intervals of not more than 12 weeks.*

(2) In addition to visits carried out in accordance with paragraph (1) the local authority must arrange for every child who is fostered privately in their area to be visited by an officer when reasonably requested to do so by the child, the private foster carer, a parent of the child or any other person with parental responsibility for the child.

(3) When carrying out a visit under this regulation the officer must speak to the child alone unless he considers it inappropriate.

(4) When carrying out a visit under this regulation the officer must establish such matters listed in Schedule 3 as appear to him to be relevant.

(5) The officer must make a written report to the local authority after each visit carried out in accordance with this regulation.

(6) For the purposes of this regulation, the private fostering arrangement is deemed to begin when the local authority become aware of it.

Monitoring the discharge of functions under Part 9 of the Act

12. Each local authority must monitor the way in which they discharge their functions under Part 9 of the Act and must appoint an officer of the authority for that purpose.'

4. Staff Training and Expertise in Relation to Private Fostering

The Designated Team Manager for private fostering has lead responsibility for ensuring that relevant staff members have appropriate understanding and expertise in relation to private fostering. The responsibilities include the review and updating of Practice Guidance and assessment documentation, undertaking briefing sessions for staff and maintaining awareness of private fostering.

5. The Named Person for Social Workers to Contact for Advice

The named person for advice on Private Fostering is Anne-Marie Banks, Service Manager, Fostering.

Her email contact details are Anne-Marie.Banks@Barnsley.gov.uk.

6. The Manager who will Sign Off Decisions about overall Suitability

Managers with responsibility for the oversight of assessments and reviews of private fostering arrangements have the responsibility to come to a professional decision about the suitability of private fostering arrangements, taking into account statutory requirements outlined in the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering Regulations 2005 and the Children Act 1989.

The manager responsible for decision making concerning the suitability of private fostering arrangements is:

- Joanne McIntyre (Designated Team Manager for Private Fostering)
- JoanneMcIntyre@barnsley.gov.uk

7. Raising Awareness of Notification Requirements

The Council has a duty to raise awareness of the requirements for private foster carers to notify us if they are privately fostering a child and for other agencies who know of a private fostering arrangement to notify us. In this respect Barnsley Council will:

- Take steps to raise awareness of what private fostering is and the notification requirements. This will be achieved by working alongside other key agencies identified as working in partnership with Children and Young People's Services.
- Establish a communication strategy to support awareness raising campaigns and undertake planned activities throughout the year. Details of this will be set out in the annual private fostering report completed by the Designated Manager.

The Designated Team Manager for private fostering is responsible for developing a communication strategy to help raise awareness of the notification requirements. This will be undertaken using a range of media, including posters, leaflets, web articles and training opportunities in partnership with the marketing, media and communications team.

Information leaflets and training events will be promoted through a range of service areas in the borough but include:

- Social care teams
- Education forums
- Health services
- Voluntary services
- Libraries
- Faith and Community groups

8. Determining the Suitability of Private Fostering Arrangements and Satisfying Ourselves that Privately Fostered Children's Welfare is Safeguarded and Promoted

To ensure children and young people are adequately cared for and protected as soon as the Local Authority is notified of a proposed private fostering arrangement in the borough, we will assess the suitability of prospective foster carers accordingly.

- Notifications made known to the Local Authority will be responded to within the required timescales (within 7 days).

- The allocated social worker for children living in private fostering living arrangements will carry out an initial visit within 7 days of the Local Authority being notified of the placement.
- Where a child or young person does not have an allocated social worker, the private foster carer, those with parental responsibility or professionals working with the child or young person must notify Barnsley Council's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for referral and screening of the private fostering living arrangement in order that a Single Assessment can be completed.

Contact details:

Safeguarding Hub

Email: SafeguardingUnit@barnsley.gov.uk

Telephone: 01226 772361

Private Fostering Advice:

Email: FosteringDuty@barnsley.gov.uk

Telephone: 01226 775876

- Allocated social workers for the child will complete a Single Assessment Report in the required timescale; this will be used to support the completion of the 'Private Fostering Arrangement Assessment Report' (PFAAR).
- The Private Fostering Team Manager lead will be notified, and a joint visit will be undertaken by the allocated social worker and Private Fostering Social Worker.
- Once the Single Assessment has been completed by the field social worker, the Private Fostering Social Worker will then take responsibility for arranging assessment visits to the family to complete the private fostering arrangement assessment report.
- The private fostering arrangement assessment report will be completed by the Private Fostering Social Worker within the required timescale of 45 days.
- The private fostering arrangement assessment report will determine the suitability of the placement. This will include an analysis of the strengths and vulnerabilities of the placement and of any emerging issues from the declarations required by private foster carers.
- Additional checks will be completed that include DBS certificates of disclosure for all adult household members and health and safety reports for the family home.
- Where we are not satisfied that the welfare of a privately fostered child is being or would be satisfactorily safeguarded or promoted, we will aim to

secure that the child is looked after by a parent, relative or someone with parental responsibility. In this instance they will take appropriate steps to consider the extent to which functions specified in the Children Act 1989 for the child will need to be carried out, in order to secure the child's safety and wellbeing.

- Barnsley Council recognises the importance of ensuring children and young people in the borough are being adequately safeguarded and protected. In regard to this, we will ensure appropriate advice and support is made available to private foster carers, a privately fostered child's parents, and privately fostered children as is felt needed.
- Children and young people cared for by private foster carers will be visited in line with statutory guidance associated with children in need. Frequency of visits will take place at a minimum of **every 6 weeks**. This will be to ensure children and young people are safe and being appropriately cared for. If additional visits are needed to adequately support the placement this can be supported with management oversight by individual workers allocated to the case.

The statutory visiting requirements are set out below:

- An initial visit will take place within 7 working days of the private fostering arrangement commencing
- Visits will then take place every six weeks (or more frequently if needed) during the first year of the private fostering arrangement
- Visits will then take place at least every twelve weeks after the first year of the private fostering arrangement.

Visits should include seeing children/young people alone unless this is not appropriate taking into consideration the age of the child/young person or if the child does not wish to see social workers alone. The child's bedroom will be seen on some visits.

Private fostering arrangements will be reviewed by the fostering service annually.

The review of private fostering arrangements will cover:

- The duration of placement
- Financial arrangements
- Contact arrangements.
- How the child's health needs are being met
- How the child's educational needs are being met.
- How the child's emotional social and behavioural needs are being met.
- How the child's religious, racial, cultural and linguistic needs are being met.
- Role of parents in exercising their parental responsibility

- How the placement will be monitored by children’s social care until the next review
- As in all reviews, parents, children and carers will be actively encouraged to participate and contribute to the review and planning process.
- If an arrangement continues, the private foster carers will be required to renew their DBS checks every 3 years.

9. Advice and Support to Private Foster Carers

During the assessment process consideration will be given as to whether it is appropriate for the private foster carers to access specific training or additional information to support them in their caring responsibilities for individual privately fostered children/young people.

10. Information and Support to Privately Fostered Children

Children and young people cared for by private foster carers will be visited frequently to ensure they are safe and being appropriately cared for.

Children and young people will be seen alone on each visit unless this is not appropriate taking into account a child’s age, stage of development and / or their wishes and feelings. If a child / young person makes it clear to professionals working alongside them that they do not wish to be seen ‘alone’; this will be respected if they are considered to be ‘safe’.

11. Training for Private Foster Carers

If, during the single assessment or the continued visits to a Private Foster Carer specific training needs are identified, the Private Fostering Social Worker will talk to the Team Manager with responsibility for Private Fostering to see how these training needs can best be met. We have access to a range of training in the Fostering Service and we can signpost families either to specific courses being held by the Fostering Service or to training provided by universal services.

12. The Role of Other Agencies

There is a requirement for other statutory agencies to notify the Local Authority if they become aware of a Private Fostering arrangement. We will continue to work with partner agencies to ensure that they are aware of the responsibilities in this respect.

13. Monitoring and Evaluation of Private Fostering Arrangements

The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 requires that:

The Local Authority provides a written report each year, for consideration by the Director of Children's Services which includes an evaluation of the outcomes of its work in relation to privately fostered children in the area. (at para. 7.9)

The Local Authority reports annually to the chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board on how it satisfies itself, that the welfare of privately fostered children in the area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted, including how it co-operates with other agencies.

Accordingly, an annual report is prepared and presented to and considered by the Director of Children's Services and Barnsley's Safeguarding Children Board giving an overview of activities in relation to privately fostered children in Barnsley over the previous twelve-month period.

The annual report details how the Local Authority has complied with its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and include how the welfare of privately fostered children has been satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

The annual report will also outline the activities which have been undertaken in relation to awareness raising of the notification requirements regarding children who are living in private fostering arrangements.

Additionally, the report will include a summary of the statistics provided by the Local Authority to the Department of Education, as part of the annual private fostering return required of all local authorities concerning numbers of new notifications, arrangements and visiting patterns. Historical and national comparative data will be provided to support the context around this.

Responsibility of the Designated Manager in Barnsley Council

- The Designated Manager has responsibility for co-ordinating the return of required private fostering data needed to inform the Annual Report.
- Where it is unclear whether a care arrangement for a child or young person is or is not a private fostering arrangement, discussion will take place with the Designated Manager for private fostering and named professional.

- The Designated Manager may need to seek legal advice as to whether the arrangement does or does not fall within the statutory definition of private fostering. Learning from this process will then be shared by the Designated Manager as required with named professionals and other members of the fostering team as applicable.

Framework of Regulation by Ofsted

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