

Children and Young People's Service

Private Fostering

Statement of Purpose

This Statement of Purpose sets out Suffolk County Council's duties and functions in relation to private fostering and the ways in which they will be carried out in accordance with the (then) Department for Education and Skills National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering(2005).

This Statement of purpose should be read alongside the Suffolk County Council Children and Young People Service **Private Fostering Policy**, operational from 1 May 2008, revised 1 June 2010 and updated October 2013 to reflect changes in Children and Young Peoples Services.

There are 2 leaflets designed by Suffolk County Council and the Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board and distributed, entitled *Private Fostering Information for private foster carers and for parents* and another leaflet entitled *Private Fostering Information for children and young people* in a private fostering arrangement.

The Office for the Standards in Education, Children's Services & Skills (Ofsted) has the responsibility to regularly inspect and regulate private fostering to ensure that we achieve the aims and objectives as set out in the Statement of Purpose. All inspection reports regarding private fostering can be located at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>

Ofsted can be contacted directly by telephone 08456 404045

By email at <mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk>

Or in writing to:

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Mission Statement

Suffolk County Council's aim is to focus on securing positive outcomes for privately fostered children and young people, and reducing any risks to their welfare and safety. We will work with parents and private foster carers to ensure that they receive advice and support.

Legal definition of privately fostered child

"A private fostering arrangement is essentially one that is made privately (that is to say without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more. 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-blood or half-blood or by marriage) or a step-parent will not be a private foster carer. A private foster carer may be a friend of the family, the parent of a friend of the child, or someone previously unknown to the child's family who is willing to privately foster a child. The period for which the child is cared for and accommodated by the private foster carer should be continuous, but that continuity is not broken by the occasional short break. Exemptions to this definition are set out in Schedule 8 to the Children Act 1989.

The private foster carer becomes responsible for providing the day to day care of the child in a way that will promote and safeguard his welfare. Overarching responsibility for safeguarding and

promoting the welfare of the privately fostered child remains with the parent or parents with parental responsibility.”

(National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering, Every Child Matters, DfES, 2005)

A child who has been placed by Children and Young People’s Services is not privately fostered, and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 apply.

Where a Local Authority has 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—

- visit the premises where it is proposed that the child will be cared for and accommodated
- visit and speak to the proposed private foster carer and to all members of the household
- visit and speak to the child, alone unless the officer considers it inappropriate
- speak to and, if it is practicable to do so, visit every parent of or person with parental responsibility for the child; and
- establish such matters as listed in Schedule 2 as appear to the officer to be relevant.

Having established his functions the officer must make a written report to the local authority.

(National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering, Every Child Matters, DfES, 2005)

A balance needs to be maintained between parental rights to make private arrangements for the care of children, and the Local Authority’s obligations to satisfy themselves about the welfare of the children.

Common examples are:

- Children sent to this country for education or health care by parents who live overseas
- A teenager living with a friend’s family because they do not get on with their own family
- Children living with a friend’s family because their parents’ study or work involves unsociable hours
- Children staying with another family because of divorce or separation
- A child from overseas staying with a host family while attending a language school

Aims and objectives

The Fostering Changes for Children Team (‘the Team’) within Suffolk County Council aims to provide an accessible service for the community and partner agencies. The Team aims to promote awareness raising, increase notification rates, achieve more private fostering arrangements being assessed and privately fostered children’s welfare being safeguarded and promoted. In all circumstances the needs of the child/young person are paramount.

This will be achieved by implementing The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 (the Regulations), the ‘Replacement Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering’ and the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering (Every Child Matters, DfES (2005).

This includes:

- Raising public and professional awareness of the notification requirements for private fostering arrangements. This involves seminars, attending meetings and distribution of leaflets specifically designed for parents and carers as well as articles published within the community. Separate leaflets have been designed and distributed to professionals. All awareness raising is continuous and ongoing.
- Relevant staff are trained to ensure they have appropriate understanding and expertise in relation to private fostering arrangements on the Integrated Induction Programme (Children’s Workforce Development Council) and is included as part of the Safeguarding component for all practitioners in Children and Young People’s Services.
- Social workers undertaking assessments to ascertain if the private fostering arrangement

will satisfactorily safeguard and promote the privately fostered child's welfare. Identified training needs of the private foster carer, will be addressed within the assessment process. The child's social worker completing an assessment to consider if the privately fostered child is a 'child in need'. If so they will be passed to the relevant team to undertake an assessment to determine whether they meet the criteria of a 'child in need'. If the child is assessed as a 'child in need', a core assessment will be completed by the relevant team.

- Providing advice to those caring or proposing to care for privately fostered children and young people and parents or persons with parental responsibility for those being or proposed to be privately fostered. All privately fostered children and young people will have an identified social worker. All private foster carers and parents (or person with parental responsibility) will have contact details of the Team.
- The Private Fostering Panel is chaired by the nominated Corporate Parenting Manager for Private Fostering. The members making recommendations about the suitability of private foster carers, any support indicated and whether additional resources are needed. Any recommendations to impose requirements, prohibitions and/or permit disqualified carers to be private foster carers will be authorised by the Head of Corporate Parenting.
- The Private Fostering Panel reviewing all current private fostering arrangements on an annual basis. Any notification of a change of circumstances and the end of a private fostering arrangement is also reported to the Private Fostering Panel.
- As part of the monitoring of compliance, the Safeguarding Quality Assurance Team along with the Service Manager will arrange to review a sample of individual child and private foster carer's records annually and provide a written audit report. The Private Fostering Service will investigate any patterns of concern raised by privately fostered children and can take action to improve practice where indicated.
- An Inter Agency Steering Group meeting twice a year to assist the Local Authority in carrying out its duties.
- The nominated Safeguarding Manager and Service Manager providing an annual report to the Director of Children and Young People's Services, Vulnerable Children's Operational Management Group, Children Trust partnership and Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board with an action plan.

Private fostering aims and objectives are:

BE HEALTHY

- privately fostered children/young people are registered with a GP and immunisations are up to date
- privately fostered children/young people are encouraged to attend regular dental and optical check-ups
- privately fostered children/young people are registered with NHS dental services
- meeting of cultural and religious needs is promoted within each care arrangement
- increased awareness of private fostering arrangements among health professionals
- signposting to information regarding sexual health, mental health, drugs and alcohol, smoking, counselling service
- young person's health reviewed at every visit
- carers encouraged to promote healthy diet and lifestyle choices
- positive contact encouraged to promote emotional wellbeing
- health and safety check undertaken

STAY SAFE

- partner agencies and voluntary organisations have an understanding of private fostering
- raised awareness of private fostering in Suffolk
- privately fostered children and young people identified, visited and seen alone
- private foster carers and members of household assessed
- undertake enhanced CRB checks for all members of the household over 16 years old
- Undertake Local Authority checks, covering all addresses where the carer has lived in the past 5 years
- obtain 1 personal reference, from outside the prospective private foster carer's family
- health and safety check undertaken
- privately fostered children/young people have named worker
- young people receive regular statutory visits, as per legal requirements
- private foster carers have access to support, information and access to relevant modules offered to foster carers
- contact with birth parents by social worker so they can remain involved in the decision making about their children
- robust system to review the quality of care and ensure ongoing suitability of the private fostering arrangements which are presented to Private Fostering Panel for approval, yearly review and any changes in the arrangements including notification to end an arrangement
- effective process for handling disqualifications, prohibitions and imposing requirements via Private Fostering Panel

ENJOY AND ACHIEVE

- social worker has contact with schools
- children and young people encouraged to attend out of school activities
- private foster carers encouraged to support children and young people's education

MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION

- social workers consult with children and young people regularly and obtain their views
- children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making
- children and young people encouraged to engage in positive activities
- children and young people encouraged to develop positive relationships
- support given to children and young people to enable them to deal with problems
- private foster carers encouraged to promote positive behaviour

ACHIEVE ECONOMIC WELLBEING

- children and young people encouraged to consider further education
- children and young people encouraged to seek part-time employment
- continuing support post-16 where indicated

Principles and Standards of Care

Suffolk County Council's Private Fostering Service seeks to deliver an excellent service for the children, young people and private foster carers that complies with the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering and the Regulations.

The Fostering Changes for Children Team is committed to the best outcomes for children and young people in private fostering arrangements. The service works with all services within the County Council who have responsibility for meeting the Every Child Matters outcomes for children and young people. The team is part of the County Services and has a designated Service Manager who has overall operational responsibility for the service.

Support to Private Foster Carers

Private foster carers are able to access training for Suffolk County Council foster carers and the allocated worker also provides ongoing support.

Role of the Private Fostering Panel

The Private Fostering Panel will act on behalf of the whole county for approving and reviewing all private fostering arrangements. The Fostering Changes for Children Team (FCFCT) is based in Ipswich and therefore the Private Fostering Panel will meet every 6 weeks in the Ipswich area.

As above, the Panel is chaired by the nominated Corporate Parenting Manager for Private Fostering. Panel membership is made up of representatives from Health, Education, Social Care and other professionals from CYPS. The key task of the Private Fostering Panel is to ensure that their recommendations contribute to good quality decisions being made about private fostering arrangements in the County. Any recommendations will be authorised by the Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance.

Inter-agency Steering Group

The membership includes:

- chair (who will be the nominated Safeguarding Manager for Private Fostering)
- Service Manager County Services
- Social Care Manager and Senior Practitioner Private Fostering
- Professional adviser
- health representatives
- education representatives
- LACESS professional
- Faith group members
- Safeguarding Children Board Manager
- Immigration officer
- Housing Officer
- Community representatives

Purpose of this group is:

- To raise professional awareness and understanding of private fostering with specific reference (but not exclusively) to the refugee and migrant community within Suffolk
- To raise awareness of practitioners and agencies working with families, children and young people of their role and responsibility in notifying Children and Young People's Services of private fostering arrangements
- To provide a forum for networking and discussion about shared issues and to identify solutions and proposals for improved inter-agency service delivery for privately fostered children, their carers and their parents.
- To provide a forum for managers, practitioners and policy officers to discuss legislation, research, policy and practice in relation to private fostering, in order to inform and develop evidence based social work and improve standards of child care practice.
- To facilitate mutual support and the interchange of information and good practice amongst practitioners concerned with private fostering.

- To contribute to conferences, seminars and training events in relation to private fostering
- To discuss research developments, identify gaps and work with researchers interested in the relevant areas of private fostering work.

Contact information

The Fostering Changes for Children Team provides advice and guidance to social care and partner agencies in relation to private fostering, notification requirements and prospective arrangements.

Contact:

Fostering Changes for Children Team
 Corporate Parenting
 4th Floor Lime
 Endeavour House
 Ipswich
 IP1 2BX
 Telephone: 01473 265025
 Email: FCFCT@suffolk.gcsx.gov.uk

A nominated Safeguarding Manager has the quality assurance lead for private fostering. Responsibilities include Chair of Private Fostering Panel and Inter-Agency Steering Group. The Service Manager has operational lead for Private Fostering Services. Together they make recommendations about the overall suitability of private fostering arrangements and report to the Safeguarding Children Board.

Contact:

Safeguarding Quality and Assurance
 Endeavour House
 8 Russell Road
 Ipswich
 Suffolk
 IP1 2BX
 Telephone 01473 265302/260142

Service Manager County Services
 Endeavour House
 8 Russell Road
 Ipswich
 Suffolk
 IP1 2BX
 Telephone 01473 265718

To make a referral please contact Customer First on 0808 800 4005.

Information is available in other formats, including audio tape or large print or in other languages. Please call 08456 066 067.

For more information about Children and Young People's Services in Suffolk please visit www.suffolk.gov.uk or www.suffolkscb.org.uk