

Private Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2020-2021



1. Introduction

This document provides a description of private fostering arrangements within Camden and is designed to meet the requirements of standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering by providing a clear guide to the service for professionals, the public, council members and external organisations.

The document describes private fostering arrangements, including the assessment processes and the support and advice offered to private foster carers, privately fostered children and their parents, within Camden.

Any comments or enquiries regarding this statement of purpose should be passed to the Fostering team manager.

2. Principles of the service

- The welfare of the child is paramount, and the private fostering service will work to ensure that the welfare of all privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted so that they are able to achieve good outcomes.
- The service will ensure that Camden's duties towards privately fostered children as set out in the Children Act 1989, the amendments contained within the Children's Act 2004 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 are fully discharged.
- Where necessary, Camden will exercise its powers this legislation to ensure the safety and welfare of privately fostered children, including use of child protection procedures and finding alternative accommodation for the child.
- Wherever possible, the service will respect the wishes of parents in relation to the private fostering agreement and work in partnership with parents and private foster carers to maintain this agreement in a way that promotes the child's welfare.
- The service will work to ensure that equal opportunities are incorporated into all aspects of service delivery and that all prospective private foster carers are assessed and supported on the basis of the needs of the individual private foster child regardless of race, religion, class, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.

- The service is committed to maintaining high standards in relation to private fostering service provision and to reviewing this on a continual basis in order to improve the quality of service delivery.
- The service will promote multi-agency partnership working in order to improve service delivery and outcomes for privately fostered children by keeping all agencies and private and voluntary groups fully informed and involved regarding service provision and development and making appropriate referrals to services on behalf of the privately fostered child.

3. Structure of Camden's private fostering service

The Private Fostering service is part of Camden's Fostering service, which is based in the Children's Safeguarding and Social Work division of the Supporting People Directorate.

The Private Fostering service is delivered by a dedicated team consisting of a senior practitioner and a supervising social worker, and is managed by the Fostering manager. Overall management lies with the Principal Officer of Children's Care Provision, and the team receives administrative support from the Fostering service administrators.

The Private fostering social worker receives regular supervision and there are clear arrangements in place for their continued supervision in the absence of a team manager. On day-to-day issues, the senior practitioner will deputise for the team manager whilst in their absence, the supervising social worker can seek support and advice from the Head of Service or another service manager within the division.

Name	Designation
Anne Tuner	Director, Children's Safeguarding and Social Work
Sally Jospeh	Head of Service, Safeguarding and Social Work
Pal Jandu	Service Manager, Children's Care Provision
James Kargbo	Team Manager, Fostering Team
Zinah Parekh	Senior Practitioner, Private Fostering
Melissa Gunduz	Supervising Social Worker

4. Legal definition of a privately fostered child

The Children Act 1989 defines a privately fostered child as:

a child, under the age of 16 (or under 18 if disabled) who is looked after full time for more than 27 days by an adult who is not their:

- Parent, step-parent or legal guardian
- Grandparent
- Brother or sister
- Aunt or uncle.

A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for him/her:

- Had done so for a period of less than 28 days;
- Does not intend to do so for any longer period.

For the purposes of the Act parent includes unmarried or putative father. A relative includes full-blood or half-blood relation, a relation by marriage, or step-parent.

Care arrangements that meet the above criteria are considered as private fostering arrangements whether or not there is any kind of payment, either monetary or in kind.

5. Camden's duties and functions

As a local authority, Camden has a duty to ensure that the welfare of children who are privately fostered living in the area is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted and that parents, private foster carers and privately fostered children receive any advice that they need about private fostering arrangements.

This duty involves the following activities:

- Acting upon notifications
- Providing information and advice to parents, private foster carers and children around private fostering
- Assessing the suitability of the private foster carer's household and accommodation, and their capacity to care for the child

- Assessing the child's needs and ensuring that arrangements are in place to ensure that they receive universal services such as health and education
- Ensuring that adequate and clear arrangements are in place between the private foster carer and the child's parents covering such areas as contact, financial support, decision making, health care etc.
- Monitoring the welfare of the child through visits within specified time scales, ensuring that the child is seen alone, and producing written records of visits
- Providing such assessment and support as may be required under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 where the child is in need
- Providing private foster carers with advice and support on caring for the child
- Monitoring the discharge of its functions in respect of privately fostered children
- Raising public awareness of private fostering within the local area in order to strengthen the notification scheme
- Ensuring other professionals are aware of their duty to notify Camden of any private fostering arrangement of which they become aware.

6. Raising awareness of private fostering

Camden uses a number of methods to raise awareness of Private Fostering issues with professionals and members of the community in order to help people understand when a child is privately fostered, the need to notify Camden, and the Private Fostering service's role in assessing private fostering arrangements in order to safeguard the privately fostered child and promote their welfare.

To achieve this, Camden has produced a series of information leaflets aimed at parents, private foster carers and professionals, which are available in different languages and are widely distributed to:.

- schools, nurseries and play centres
- libraries
- voluntary/community sector organisations
- council offices
- health clinics and GP surgeries.

Awareness of the notification requirements is also promoted through advertising in newspapers and posters in public places, as well as by publishing information on Camden Council's website, (www.Camden.gov.uk) and Camden's fostering and adoption page.

In addition, information about private fostering is disseminated across the borough in the following ways:

- Camden's Fostering and Adoption Recruitment and Marketing Officer includes information on private fostering on all publicity materials sent out to members of the public, faith and community organisations, schools and leisure and play services.
- Private fostering awareness is included as part of the safeguarding training carried out within Camden by the Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership, with professionals from partnership agencies and community and voluntary groups.
- Information on private fostering is made widely available at co-ordinated events and functions planned through out the year via the community engagement strategy.

Camden has links with other inner London boroughs to share information and expertise and pool resources in order to raise awareness around private fostering issues throughout a number of boroughs.

7. Functions of the private fostering service

7.1 Responding to notifications

The Private Fostering service together with the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is the main point of contact for any enquiries regarding private fostering. MASH responds to notifications from parents, private foster carers and other professionals who inform Camden of any private fostering arrangements that come to their attention by alerting the Private Fostering Team

On receipt of a notification, the supervising social worker will visit the family or the private foster carer, depending on which party gives notification, within 7 days of the date notification was received.

The purpose of the initial visit is to provide advice and support, explain the procedures regarding assessment and visits, and to begin gathering information for the private fostering arrangement assessment.

7.2 Assessment of suitability of private fostering arrangements

The private fostering service takes the lead in assessing:

- the child's developmental needs
- the suitability of the private foster carer and their household to care for the child
- the suitability of the private foster carer's accommodation
- the suitability of the care arrangements to safeguard and promote the child's welfare as agreed between the parents and the private foster carer.

Assessment may take place on proposed or current arrangements depending on when notification was received. A record of all information gathered during the assessment process is taken including information about the agreement between the parents and private foster carer for the care of the child, an assessment of the child's developmental needs and the private foster carer's capacity to meet these needs.

As part of the assessment process, the child will be seen alone if appropriate and their wishes and feelings about the arrangement ascertained and recorded on the assessment.

To safeguard the child further, the suitability of the private foster carer and their household is also assessed by taking up various checks and searches against the carer and any member of their household who is aged over 16, including checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service.

The assessment considers the appropriateness of the private fostering arrangements and concludes with a recommendation as to whether or not Camden should support the arrangement, whether any requirements should be imposed on the private foster carer, and any advice that needs to be provided in order to enhance the care arrangements.

If the assessment indicates that the child has unmet developmental needs, that there are child protection concerns regarding the care arrangements or that there are concerns about the suitability of the carer, a referral will be made back to MASH to allocate for further assessment.

A decision on the suitability of the private foster carer and the care arrangements will be made by the Fostering manager within 42 days of the date of notification.

7.3 Monitoring private fostering arrangements

To ensure that the child's welfare is safeguarded and promoted on a continual basis throughout the duration of the arrangement, the Private Fostering social worker will visit the child and the private foster carer every 6 weeks in the first year of the arrangement and then every 3 months, as required by the private fostering regulations.

The purpose of the visits is to monitor the care arrangements in order to ensure that the child's needs are being met and to look at any further support required by the child or the private foster carer in relation to caring for the child.

All visits are recorded to include information on the private foster carers household, records when the child, the carer and members of the household were seen by the social worker, and how the care arrangements are meeting the child's needs and safeguarding and promoting their welfare.

The record also contains information on how arrangements for contact and financial support are working, checks that the child is in receipt of universal services such as health and education, and explores how the child's cultural, ethnic, religious and language needs are being met by the private foster carer.

The social worker will record any advice given or action to be taken, and any recommendations on whether the care arrangements remain suitable or if any requirements need to be imposed on the carer. The social worker may also recommend that a referral is made to MASH where the child has unmet needs or where there are child protection issues.

All records of visits are passed to the Fostering manager or Senior Practitioner to make a decision on whether the care arrangements remain suitable and what action to take, including whether or not to take action or intervention under the Children Act 1989.

7.4 Providing advice and support

The Private Fostering service is the principle source of advice and support on private fostering matters in Camden for parents, private foster carers, professionals and children, and the contact details of the service are available on all information leaflets and publicity materials.

Parents

Parents who are considering private fostering can contact the service to discuss whether private fostering is in the best interests of their child, or to obtain advice on other services or help available as an alternative to private fostering.

Parents can also get advice on what issues need to be addressed in the private fostering agreement, for example contact and financial support, and information on how private fostering may impact on their child.

The purpose of the advice is to help parents make an informed decision on private fostering, and to help them make sure that any private fostering agreement they enter into is right for their child.

Parents whose children are already privately fostered may also contact the service for advice on private fostering matters generally, or to discuss how the service is carrying out their role in safeguarding the child and what they can do to improve the care arrangements.

Private foster carers

Private foster carers can access support through the Private Fostering social worker, who will visit them regularly and can discuss any extra support or training needs that will enhance the carer's capacity to care for the child.

Private foster carers can also access training programmes and support groups available to Camden foster carers, and can receive information and advice on parenting techniques, benefit entitlement, managing behaviour and how to access other resources available within the borough.

The Private Fostering social worker can also help private foster carers access information, advice and support in relation to the child's ethnicity, culture, religion and language if this is required in order to meet the child's needs.

Children

Children can get support and advice on private fostering from the Private Fostering social worker, who will visit them regularly to monitor their progress and ascertain their wishes and views. Privately fostered children can also join children's consultation forums facilitated by Camden's Participation Officer.

Children who receive a social work service from CSSW will also have an allocated social worker to provide support and advice.

Professionals

Professionals, agencies and private and voluntary organisations are provided with information leaflets and training to raise awareness of their role regarding notification of private fostering arrangements. The Private Fostering service can also provide professionals with general advice on private fostering issues, such as recognising private fostering arrangements, making notifications, and accessing suitable services and resources for privately fostered children.

8 Functions of Children's Safeguarding and Social Work

The Private Fostering worker will refer privately fostered children to the MASH for a social work service where an assessment of the suitability of the private fostering arrangements or a visit under Regulation 8 indicates concerns regarding the child's needs and the private foster carer's ability to meet these needs. Referrals will also be made whenever any child protection issues arise. ,

Where the child meets the threshold for a social work service, the case will be allocated for a child and family assessment. Following the assessment, the social worker, in consultation with the manager or senior, will decide what action needs to be taken to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

This may involve providing extra resources to the child as a child in need and/or providing support to the private fostering arrangement, or it may intervention under child protection procedures or accommodating the child.

9. Quality Assurance

9.1 Policy and procedure

Camden ensures that privately fostered children's welfare is satisfactorily safeguarded and the council's statutory duties fully discharged by ensuring that all staff involved in delivering the Private Fostering service have an understanding of their role and responsibilities.

To achieve this, staff are provided with comprehensive policies and procedures that enable them to carry out their duties to a high standard and within statutory timescales.

The divisional policy for private fostering also includes a rigorous procedure for the assessment and approval of private fostering arrangements, which sets out clearly the role of the Private Fostering service and the CSSW service. All decisions are approved and signed off by the Fostering Service manager, and there are clear procedures in place for referral to CSSW in the event that there are concerns about any aspect of a private fostering arrangement.

9.1 Staff training

Training for Children Safeguarding and Social Work staff on private fostering is delivered through staff induction training, workshops and information sessions. Private fostering is also included in ongoing childcare, child protection, child assessment and children in need training.

Training on private fostering is delivered in-house through internal training courses and workshops and training provided via organisations such as BAAF and the Fostering Network.

The training needs of individual staff, including Private Fostering social workers and other front-line social work staff, is discussed and identified during regular supervision with line managers and tailored to the individual needs of the worker, depending on their role in delivering Private Fostering services.

10. Monitoring private fostering services

In fulfilling Regulation 12 the Head of Service for Children's Care Provision will monitor the way the division complies with and discharges its statutory duties and functions in relation to private fostering. This officer will monitor compliance with the following duties and functions:

- The promotion of awareness regarding notification requirements.
- How the division responds to notifications received and if these are within timescales.
- How the division manages disqualifications, prohibitions, requirements and appeals against these, and refusals to consent to disqualified persons being private foster carers.
- How the division exercises its functions under section 67(5), Children Act 1989.
- How the division processes decisions regarding offences committed bearing in mind the best interests of the child/young person.
- How the division assesses the parenting capacity of prospective or actual private foster carers, members of their households, as well as the suitability of their accommodation.
- Those statutory visits are within timescales and decisions about the suitability of arrangements are also within timescales and approved at managerial level.
- Additional visits that are made when requested by the child, private foster carer, parents or those with parental responsibility.
- ICS records of assessment and visits are made in accordance with the regulations, i.e. conclusions drawn on the arrangement, the child seen alone, wishes and feelings of child, any concerns raised or action taken on concerns.
- Advice and support provided to private foster carers, parents or those with parental responsibility or any person concerned with the child.
- Information and support provided to privately fostered children.
- Independent interpreters are used as appropriate.
- That a sample of individual child/young person and private foster carer records are regularly reviewed to check that compliance is being fulfilled.
- That any concerns raised by privately fostered children/young people are investigated.
- That a system for recording the number and nature of enquiries received in relation to private fostering, the responses given and action taken is effective.

The Head of Service is responsible for monitoring how effectively the authority discharges its functions, and reports annually to the Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership

CSSW also carries out internal file audits on a regular basis, and will affect a policy for the use of requirements, prohibitions, disqualifications and appeals in partnership with the council's legal services division.

11. Complaints

Complaints leaflets are provided to private foster carers once their approval is completed.

Complaints leaflets are provided to privately fostered children and young people by the Private Fostering social worker and the fostering service provides further copies when requested or when circumstances indicate that this is relevant. Adults and children are encouraged to discuss any concerns about the service with their social worker and/or the team manager.

Advice on making a complaint can be sought from the complaints and representations team in the Supporting People Directorate. This team can be contacted on 020 7974 6666.

12. Regulation

Camden's private fostering service is regulated by Ofsted at:

Ofsted National Business Unit
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

Telephone; 08456 404040
Email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Website www.ofsted.gov.uk

CONTACT DETAILS

Camden's Private Fostering service is based at:

Fostering Team
Crowndale Centre
218 Eversholt Street
London
NW1 1BD

If any stakeholders have any feedback or comments about this document or the role of the Camden Private Fostering Service, then please contact us:
020 7974 6783

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