

Camden Council - Children and Learning Directorate

Children's Safeguarding and Family Help: Private Fostering Service Statement of Purpose, 2024-25



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 enquiries regarding this statement of purpose should be passed to the Children in Need Service Manager – email: esther.fajoye@camden.gov.uk - and referrals should be made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) – email: LBCMASHadmin@camden.gov.uk ; tel: 0207 974 3317.

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 within 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 with children and families in a relational, anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory manner that promotes diversity and inclusion in line with the council's equality duty.
- The service is committed to maintaining high standards in relation to private fostering service provision and to reviewing this on a continual basis to improve the quality of service delivery.
- The service will promote multi-agency partnership working 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

Private fostering services are delivered by social workers based in the Children in Need service of the Children’s Safeguarding and Family Help division of Camden Council. Overall management lies with the Head of Service and Service Manager, with administrative support from business support officers.

Social workers carrying out private fostering duties receive 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, social workers can seek support and advice from their manager or a Child in Need service manager.

Name	Designation
Rashida Baig	Director, Children’s Safeguarding and Family Help
Michelle O’Regan	Head of Service, Children in Need Services
Esther Fajoye	Service Manager, Children in Need Services
Tracey Murphy	Service Manager, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
Chris Roberts	Senior Adviser, Safeguarding and Inclusion, Camden Learning

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 them:

- 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 Council's duties and functions

As a local authority, Camden Council 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:

- 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 and healthcare
- monitoring the welfare of the child through visits within specified timescales, 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 to strengthen the notification scheme

- ensuring other professionals are aware of their duty to notify Camden Council of any private fostering arrangement of which they become aware.

6. Raising awareness of private fostering

Camden Council is responsible for raising awareness of private fostering and the Council co-ordinates awareness campaigns and publicity.

The aim is to encourage notifications by raising awareness with professionals and members of the community to help people understand when a child is privately fostered, the need to notify Camden Council, and the Child in Need service's role in assessing private fostering arrangements to safeguard the privately fostered child and promote their welfare.

To achieve this:

- The Council 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 across services in the borough.
- 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 throughout the year via the community engagement strategy.
- Camden Council has links with other inner London boroughs to share information and expertise and pool resources to raise awareness about private fostering across other boroughs.

7. Private fostering services in Camden

7.1. Responding to notifications

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 Children in Need team.

On receipt of a notification, the case is allocated to a social worker in the Child in Need teams, who will visit the family or the private foster carer, depending

on which party gives notification, within seven days of the date that the 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 for suitability of private fostering arrangements

The Children in Need 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 to the Child in Need team for a social worker to carry out a child and family assessment under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

A decision on the suitability of the private foster carer and the care arrangements will be made by the Child in Need service 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 allocated social worker will visit the child and the private foster carer every six weeks in the first year of the arrangement and then every three months, as required by the private fostering regulations.

The purpose of the visits is to monitor the care arrangements 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 carer's 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 undertake a further assessment to provide support, or if there are any unmet needs or safeguarding concerns.

A decision on whether the care arrangements are suitable will be made by the Children in Need service manager, under the Children Act 1989.

7.4. Providing advice and support

The Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership is a source of advice and support on private fostering matters in Camden for parents, private foster carers, professionals and children. Full details can be found [on the CSCP website](#).

Parents

Parents who are considering private fostering can [contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub \(MASH\)](#) 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 allocated 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 allocated 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 to meet the child's needs.

Children

Children can get support and advice on private fostering from the allocated 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.

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 MASH 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. Quality Assurance

8.1. Policy and procedure

Camden Council 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 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.

8.2. Staff training

Training for Camden's Children's Safeguarding and Family Help 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 the Fostering Network.

9. Monitoring private fostering services

In fulfilling Regulation 12, the Head of Service for Children in Need 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) of the Children Act 1989.
- How the division processes decisions regarding offences committed, bearing in mind the best interests of the child or 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.
- Integrated children's system (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 or 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.

Children's Safeguarding and Family Help also carries out internal file audits on a regular basis and will effect a policy for the use of requirements, prohibitions, disqualifications and appeals in partnership with the Council's legal services division.

10. Complaints

Camden has a designated system for dealing with complaints about services for children and complaints leaflets are provided to privately fostered children and young people by the allocated social worker. 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 on 020 7974 6673.

11. Regulation

Camden's private fostering service is regulated by Ofsted. Contact details:

- Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk
- Tel: 0300 123 1231.

Contact details for Camden private fostering service

Camden's private fostering service is based at:

Children in Need Service

Children's Safeguarding and Family Help
Camden Council
5 Pancras Square
London
N1C 4AG.

If any stakeholders have any feedback or comments about this document or the role of the Camden's private fostering service, then please contact us on 020 7974 3317.

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