



## **Private Fostering Statement of Purpose**

## Introduction

This document is a description of private fostering arrangements within the London Borough of Sutton.

The Private Fostering Statement of Purpose should be read in conjunction with the [London Safeguarding Children Partnership Private Fostering Procedures](#) and [National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering](#). The statement is designed to meet the requirements as set out in the national minimum standards for private fostering (2005). It will set out the functions and duties in relation to private fostering and the ways in which they will be carried out, and provide a guide for the service and other professionals, the public, Council Members and external organisations.

The three main teams within the London Borough of Sutton that will deal directly with private fostering arrangements and their locations are: The Children's First Contact Service (CFCS) (previously known as MASH). The Referral and Assessment Service and Looked After Children Team. All teams are part of the People Directorate, and can be found on:

1st Floor  
Civic Building  
Sutton  
SM1 1EA

All sections of the People Directorate are committed to maintaining high standards in relation to private fostering provision and to review this on a regular basis. The London Borough of Sutton holds statutory powers and responsibilities as a Local Authority in relation to private fostering arrangements.

Privately fostered children and young people are not a homogenous group and will come from a diversity of backgrounds and circumstances. All professionals should take account of the specific needs of every privately fostered child/young person including race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, class, disability and marital status. Private fostering services fall under the Head of Service Referral, Assessment and Intervention, and the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting.

The lead for private fostering is with the Head of Service Referral, Assessment and Intervention, who is responsible for:

1. Ensuring good practice and reviewing progress annually
2. Reviewing and monitoring the arrangements for private fostering, including maintaining a system for recording the number and nature of enquiries to private fostering, the responses given and any action taken.

Any comments or enquiries regarding this statement of purpose should be passed to: Averil Kathan, Head of Service, Referral, Assessment and Intervention, People Directorate Sutton Civic Offices, 1st floor St Nicholas Way, Sutton SM1 1EA Tel: 0208 770 4326 [averil.kathan@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:averil.kathan@sutton.gov.uk)

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## **Legal Definition of a Privately Fostered Child**

A child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) who is cared for, or proposed to be cared for, and provided with accommodation by someone other than:

- A parent.
- A person who is not a parent but has Parental Responsibility.
- Close relative, i.e. aunt/uncle/step-parent/grand-parent/sibling but not a cousin or great aunt/uncle.
- Cared for and accommodated by that person for 28 days or more, or the period of actual fostering is less than 28 days but the private foster carer intends to foster him/her for more than 28 days.

**\*\*A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for them has done so for a period of less than 28 days and does not intend to do so for any longer period.\*\***

The arrangement is seen as private fostering if it meets the criteria above whether for reward (monetary or otherwise) or not. Most referrals in Sutton are made for teenage children already living under private fostering arrangements. These children have the characteristics and circumstances similar to those of Children Looked After and young people. Consequently much of the knowledge and understanding of the issues relating to Children Looked After children/young people can be applied to children/young people in private arrangements. For this reason, ongoing support in Sutton is provided by the Children Looked After Service.

## **Common situations in which a child/young person may be privately fostered**

These include:

- Children and young people with parents or families overseas who have sent them to live with distant relatives or other acquaintances in the hope they will receive a better life and education. In such cases, parents who remain in their country of origin are unable to exercise Parental Responsibility.
- Children and young people with parents studying in the UK that have babies or toddlers and the parents have demanding study or careers. Such parents may arrange for children to be cared for by extended family members (but not members of the immediate family as defined by Children Act 1989) or by strangers known to them in the community.
- Asylum seekers/refugees often travelling to the UK with other adults may have been subject to torture/trauma and because they have been brought in by an adult they may not have been seen as unaccompanied at the time but later live with strangers. The same can apply to children and young people who have acquired refugee status.
- Trafficked young people generally young teenagers, who do not attend school and who are at risk of exploitation.
- Local young people may be estranged from their families and may be living apart with former neighbours or kinship carers. Some children whose parents are drug users can be left with different people for lengthy periods of time.
- Children and young people attending language schools or who are at independent boarding schools.

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- Children and young people brought into the UK with a view to adoption.

Such children would be equally defined as privately fostered until formal notice of intention to adopt is given. The Local Authority Duties and Functions under the Children Act 1989 and the Children (Private Fostering Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005. The London Borough of Sutton have a duty to be notified about private fostering arrangements in their area and satisfy themselves that the welfare of privately fostered children is being safeguarded and promoted, and give advice to those caring for them. The Children Act 1989 (Section 67(1)) outlines three duties:

- Giving and receiving notifications.
- Ascertaining the suitability of private foster carers in their households.
- Monitoring placements through visits and written records of visits. The London Borough of Sutton is committed to these duties and have these enshrined in London child protection procedures and practice. Additional measures under the Children Act 2004 and the Fostering Regulations 2005, are intended to strengthen the notification scheme. Local Authorities are also required to raise public awareness in their area of the requirements regarding notification.

Notifications must be given to the authority when a child/young person is proposed to be privately fostered and when he/she is being privately fostered. The purpose of these measures is to focus the Local Authorities' attention on private fostering and requires a proactive approach with partners and other professionals in identifying arrangements in the area and improving on notification rates and compliance with legislation. Training for the People Directorate has a clear and comprehensive written process for private fostering arrangements which is operational through written procedures and practice guidance. These are actively promoted with staff and with partner agencies and other professionals within the borough. Sutton will ensure that training on private fostering is available for all social workers and that it is specifically prioritised for all newly appointed staff as part of their induction.

Training on private fostering is available both as part of the children's social care training programme and the multi agency training programme that is led by the Sutton Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Board. The training will include information on the context and legislative requirements, on notification requirements and the assessment processes regarding the suitability of private fostering arrangements. Staff training in private fostering will also be promoted high on the agenda of the Local Partnership Board and is part of the monitoring of the Board.

### **Overall Suitability of Arrangements**

The Local Authority is required to satisfy themselves of the suitability of a proposed arrangement or an arrangement already in place. The CFCS will most likely be the first to receive notification of proposed or current private fostering arrangements. This will be passed to the Referral and Assessment Service who will undertake a core private fostering social work assessment within 7 days or 35 days as appropriate. This assessment will need to consider whether or not they should undertake their duties under the Children Act 1989, including whether or not to consider accommodating the child/young person under Section 20 of the Act or offering support under Section 17 if the child/young person is in need of

services but not accommodation. Decisions will be made in consultation with the Team Manager of the relevant service as necessary.

Implementing child protection procedures for a child in need who is privately fostered is done in the same way as for any other child and care management procedures followed. If child protection issues arise, the matter will be addressed in line with procedures. Once the private fostering arrangement has been deemed satisfactory, the relevant Team Manager will sign off the decision about suitability and will arrange for a transfer of the case to the Children Looked After Team with a full report and recommendations. The Children Looked After Team will then allocate a social worker to undertake subsequent statutory visits.

### **Awareness of the Notification Requirement with Other Agencies and the Wider Community**

Sutton has the following objectives in relation to raising awareness:

- To raise awareness and understanding of private fostering among the general public.
- To raise awareness of the need to notify among private foster carers and children being privately fostered.
- To enable local agencies, faith and community organisations, schools, health centres and other professionals to gain awareness of private fostering notification requirements.
- To increase private fostering notification levels.

Sutton has developed leaflets for carers, children and professionals which have been widely distributed. This includes the Council's website. All information contains the contact numbers for the CFCS.

### **How the Local Authority Determines the Suitability of all Aspects of a Private Fostering Arrangement**

The London Borough of Sutton will ensure that all privately fostered children/young people in Sutton undergo a private fostering social work assessment, which will also include elements of the Framework for the Assessment of Children In Need and their Families (2000) in line with the London Child Protection Private Fostering procedures. These private fostering social work assessments will be completed and signed off by a Team Manager within 35 working days. All aspects of the private foster carers suitability will be assessed including the suitability of their household. Ongoing statutory visits will be undertaken by the Children Looked After Team.

### **How the Local Authority will Satisfy itself that the Welfare of Privately Fostered Children is Satisfactorily Safeguarded and Promoted**

This will be achieved by first undertaking a private fostering social work assessment. Approval of arrangements as satisfactory or not will be concluded and signed off within 35 days by the Team Manager in the Referral and Assessment Service. Private fostering social work assessments will take account of all aspects of the child's care as outlined in the London child protection procedures. This includes a thorough examination of parenting capacity and speaking to the child or young person alone. Private foster carers will be given

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advice in order to enhance their ability to care for a child/young person and support services made available to them, including family support. Private foster carers will be encouraged to promote contact, where it is safe, between the child/young person and his/her parents, siblings, extended family and significant others. The Referral and Assessment Team will respond to notifications received within 7 days and likewise visits to privately fostered children/young people will be completed within statutory timescales. Written reports will be completed following these visits.

All private foster carers will have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and all privately fostered children/young people will have a named social worker with their contact details (Children Looked After if deemed satisfactory after assessment) and will be informed about what private fostering means.

Links will be made with specialist services where necessary.

### **Advice and Support to Private Foster Carers, Parents and Others with Parental Responsibility and Others Concerned with Privately Fostered Children**

Private foster carers and prospective carers will have a named social worker to support the arrangement for the child. Ongoing advice on the carers' suitability will be undertaken by a social worker and private foster carers will have access to information and training. The allocated social worker will also offer advice on benefit entitlement, parenting strategies and other support. They will also undertake statutory visits and see the children/young people regularly giving advice on all matters pertaining to the child's welfare. The Role of Other Agencies in Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Privately Fostered Children Including Encouraging Notification

All partner agencies will be given regular and updated information and leaflets and be made aware of the Private Fostering Statement of Purpose and their responsibilities in informing and notifying the Local Authority of any arrangement. They will be part of joint training. Publicity materials will be sent to schools, faith groups, GPs, housing, leisure centres etc. Other agencies will be made aware of who to contact and how.

All Relevant Staff have an Appropriate Understanding of the Local Authority's Duties and Functions in Relation to Private Fostering

All children's social care staff and partner agencies will have access to the Private Fostering Statement of Purpose. The ongoing awareness programme will further develop their understanding.

### **How the Local Authority will Ensure its Duties and Functioning in Relation to Private Fostering**

These are included in induction and other training programmes. The training programme in children's social care and the multi-agency training programme organised via the Local Partnership Children Board are reviewed annually and both include training about private fostering. In addition, all social care staff will undergo an induction which includes information about private fostering.

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## **Monitoring and Compliance with Duties and Functions in Relation to Private Fostering**

The Local Authority will monitor the performance measures as required based on the following criteria:

- Number of notifications of new private fostering arrangements received during the year.
- Number of cases where action was taken in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 4(1) of the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 for carrying out visits.
- Of these, record the number of cases where this action was taken within 7 working days on receipt of the notification.
- Number of new arrangements that began during that year.
- The percentage of private fostering arrangements that began on or after 31 March of that year, where visits were made at intervals of not more than six weeks.
- The percentage where visits were made of not more than twelve weeks.
- Number of notifications of private fostering arrangements that came to an end during the year.
- Number of children under private fostering arrangements.
- Breakdown by age and place of birth (ethnicity).

The Head of Service Referral, Assessment and Intervention will monitor the promotion of awareness regarding notification requirements and make recommendations annually to the Assistant Director of Children's services, on how the Department is responding to notifications and if these are within timescales. Case file audits will continue to be undertaken to assess the quality of practice and outcomes for children and young people who are subject to private fostering arrangements. The Local Authority reports annually to the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership on how it satisfies itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in its area is safeguarded and promoted, including how it co-operates with other agencies in this connection.

### **Advice on Private Fostering**

This Statement of Purpose is available to download from the Sutton [TriX procedure manual](#). A copy can also be obtained from: CFCS 1st Floor Sutton Civic Centre, Sutton SM1 1EA

Advice about private fostering can be obtained from the Children's First Contact Service on 020 8770 6001 or by email on [childrensfirstcontactservice@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:childrensfirstcontactservice@sutton.gov.uk)

The London Safeguarding Children Partnership Private Fostering procedures are available on [this link](#)