



City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership

Private Fostering Statement of Purpose

April 2021



I. 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)

It is our intention to work in partnership with children, carers and parents to ensure that:

- Children are provided with high quality child care that meets their needs;
- Safeguarding children and their best interests at all times are of paramount importance;
- We work together to safeguard and promote children's physical, emotional, health, educational, social and cultural needs;
- Private carers are provided with advice, and support which helps them to provide such care;
- Birth parents feel able to seek the help and guidance of the Local Authority.

Our aim is to ensure that we create a culture in the City of York where birth parents, individuals with parental responsibility and carers, feel comfortable in notifying the Local Authority of private fostering arrangements and that they are aware of the benefits to them and the children in their care of them doing so.

Every conversation starts with the child and the welfare of the child will remain paramount at all times and in every circumstance.

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed, updated and modified whenever necessary, but not less than annually.

Any comments or enquiries regarding this Statement of Purpose should be passed to the Designated Manager for Private Fostering, City of York Council.

At the issue of this Statement of Purpose, the Designated Manager for Private Fostering is:

 **Rose Howley, Childrens Social Care (CSC), City of York Council**

rose.howley@york.gov.uk

For Children's Social Care practitioners, this Statement should be read in conjunction with City of York Council Children's Social Care Practice Guidance available on the Procedures website: yorkchildcare.proceduresonline.com

2. The legal definition of a privately fostered child and a list of examples

'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 by marriage / 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;

or

- The period of actual private fostering is less than 28 days but the private foster carer intends to privately foster the child for a period of 28 days or more.

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;
- Children and young people from another country who are staying with someone who is not a relative which includes trafficked children.

A child or young person who is Looked After or placed in any residential home, hospital or school is excluded from the definition.

3. The City of York Council's duties and functions under the Children Act 1989 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and how they will operate in relation to privately fostered children

The City of York Council has a duty to be notified about all private fostering arrangements in its geographical area of responsibility and to satisfy itself that the welfare of children who are being privately fostered are paramount ([Children Act 1989 Section 67\(1\)](#)).

As soon as the Local Authority becomes aware of a proposed arrangement to privately foster a child or young person within their area, or where a child or young person is being privately fostered within their area, the Local Authority will assess the suitability of the arrangement.

Where a child or young person already has an allocated Social Worker, then the private foster carer, those with parental responsibility or any professional working with a child or young person must contact the Social Worker to notify them of the arrangement. The allocated Social Worker will be responsible for carrying out an Initial Visit and Private Fostering Assessment.

Where a child or young person does not have an allocated Social Worker, including those children receiving support from the Child in Need Service, then the private foster carer, those with parental responsibility or any professional working with a child or young person must contact the City of York Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to notify the Local Authority of the arrangement:

Email: MASH@york.gov.uk

Phone: 01904 551900

A Social Worker will then be allocated to carry out the Initial Visit and Private Fostering Assessment.

Whilst local authorities do not formally approve or register private foster carers, City of York Council does have a duty to satisfy themselves that the welfare of a privately fostered child or young person within their area is being safeguarded and promoted.

4. How relevant staff will be trained to ensure they have appropriate understanding and expertise in relation to private fostering

The Designated Manager for Private Fostering has lead responsibility for ensuring that relevant staff 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 of staff and maintaining awareness of Private Fostering.

The Designated Manager reports on activities undertaken to the City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership (CYSCP) and the Director of Children's Services, Education and Skills through the preparation and presentation of the Private Fostering Annual Report.

5. The name of a person within City of York Council with expertise in private fostering, whom social workers can contact for advice

The Designated Manager for Private Fostering is a statutory requirement. At the issue of this Statement of Purpose, the Designated Manager for Private Fostering is:

Rose Howley, Children's Social Care
rose.howley@york.gov.uk

The Designated Manager has responsibility for co-ordinating the return of required Private Fostering data to the Department for Education and also for producing the Annual Report on Private Fostering.

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. The Designated Manager may 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 relevant.

6. The name of the manager(s) who will sign-off decisions about the overall Suitability of an arrangement

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

7. How awareness of the notification requirements will be promoted with other agencies and within the wider local community

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to promote public awareness in their area of the statutory notification requirements regarding Private Fostering. The Designated Manager along with City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership is responsible for developing a strategy to raise public and professional awareness about private fostering. This will be done using a range of media, including posters, leaflets, web articles and training opportunities. The Designated Manager reports annually on activities undertaken to raise awareness of Notification requirements the City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Director of Children's Services, Education and Skills through the preparation and presentation of the Private Fostering Annual Report.

The City of York Safeguarding Children's Partnership is committed to maintaining high standards in relation to Private Fostering and to reviewing these on a regular basis.

Our aims are:

- To increase the notification of private arrangements by raising awareness of private fostering.
- To provide guidance on our statutory responsibilities to members of the public, parents, children, all local authority and and partner agencies.
- To establish and assess the suitability of private fostering arrangements.
- To ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people living in such arrangements and that their needs are being met.
- To provide support and advice to private foster carers, children/young people and their parents as appropriate.

This is achieved by:

- The City of York has a multi-agency Private Fostering Steering Group and has a Private Fostering Action Plan (set against National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering) which is reviewed and updated quarterly.
- The City of York undertakes a six monthly Private Fostering thematic audit which is presented to the Private Fostering Steering Group.
- Regular review of private fostering data within Childrens Social Care performance meetings and the multi-agency Private Fostering Steering Group.

8. How the City of York Council will determine the suitability of all aspects of a private fostering arrangement in accordance with the regulations

Private Fostering Regulations require that an 'Initial Visit' commencing the assessment must be made to the proposed or actual private foster carers within seven working days of Notification. This will be by a qualified Social Worker tasked by a Manager with conducting a full assessment of the suitability of the Private Fostering arrangement.

It is locally determined that an assessment of the suitability of the Private Fostering arrangement should take no more than 45 days from the Notification. The primary record for the assessment of the Private Fostering arrangement is the City of York Council Single Assessment document. However, additionally, a locally devised 'Private Fostering Assessment Part B' document will be used to record additional information obtained in the course of assessment. This will include a consideration of:

- Consideration of any issues emerging from the declarations required by Private Foster Carers;
- Consideration of any Issues resulting from DBS Certificate of Disclosure for all adult Household Members;
- Consideration of any issues resulting from Private Fostering Home Safety Checklist;
- Consideration of any issues resulting from two non-relative references obtained.

9. How City of York Council will satisfy itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in its area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted

Children and young people cared for by Private Foster Carers will be visited frequently to ensure that they are safe and appropriately cared for. The frequency of visits will be determined by the circumstances of the case and should take place whenever reasonably requested by the child or private foster carer. However, at a minimum a child or young person should be visited:

- a. Within 7 working days of the arrangement having commenced;
- b. Not less than every six weeks during the first year of the arrangement; and
- c. Not less than every twelve weeks after the first year of the arrangement.

The child will be seen alone on each visit unless this is not appropriate having regard to the young age of the child or if the child does not wish to see the Social Worker alone. The child's bedroom will be seen on some visits.

The care of a child or young person in Private Foster Care will be reviewed regularly. The review of private fostering arrangements is dependent upon whether the child or young person is receiving services additional to the ongoing support and monitoring provided to comply with The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 or not. Where the child or young person is also receiving additional services under a Child in Need Plan, the Plan will be reviewed every three months in accordance with the locally determined City of York Council Practice Guidance for the review of Children In Need cases.

Where however, there are no additional services provided to that of support and monitoring of the arrangement under the Regulations, the arrangement will be reviewed on a six monthly basis.

The Review of the arrangement will cover:

- 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 carer's will be required to renew their DBS forms every 3 years.

10. The advice and support that will be available to private foster carers (including prospective private foster carers), parents and others with parental responsibility, and others concerned with the privately fostered child

The allocated Social Worker assessing the suitability of the arrangement and ensuring the privately fostered child is safe and well cared for has responsibility to identify the advice and support required by the child, private foster carers, parents and others. During the assessment consideration will be given as to whether it is appropriate for the private foster carers to access specific training or information materials to support them in caring for the individual privately fostered child. Where appropriate the assessing Social Worker will offer advice on benefit entitlement, parenting strategies and techniques. Wherever possible the Social Worker will meet with the child's parents and offer advice about local service provision which may remove the need for the child to be privately fostered.

11. The information and support that will be available to privately fostered children

Children and young people cared for by Private Foster Carers will be visited frequently to ensure that they are safe and appropriately cared for. The child will be seen alone on each visit unless this is not appropriate having regard to the young age of the child or if the child does not wish to see the Social Worker alone. Where appropriate, a privately fostered child or young person may be referred to the City of York Children's Rights Officer for advocacy advice and support.

12. Any training that may be available to private foster carers (including prospective private foster carers)

During the assessment consideration will be given as to whether it is appropriate for the private foster carers to access specific training or information materials to support them in caring for the individual privately fostered child. This will be kept under review.

13. The role of other agencies in assisting City of York Council to carry out its duty under section 67(1) of the Children Act 1989, in particular through notifying the Council of an arrangement where they are not satisfied that the Council have been, or will be, notified of that arrangement

The Designated Manager for Private Fostering along with City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership is responsible for developing a strategy to raise multi-agency professional awareness about private fostering. This will be done using a range of media, including posters, leaflets, web articles and training opportunities. The Designated Manager reports annually on activities undertaken to raise awareness of Notification requirements to the City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Director of Children's Services, Education and Skills through the preparation and presentation of the Private Fostering Annual Report.

Copies of the most up-to-date awareness raising publicity are available on the Children's Social Care Procedures Forms Library or from the Designated Manager for Private Fostering.

14. Monitoring and Evaluation of Private Fostering within York

The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 requires that:

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

Accordingly, the Designated Manager for Private Fostering will prepare and present an 'Annual Report' for consideration by the Director of Children's Services, Education and Skills and the City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership giving an overview of activities in relation to Privately Fostered children in the City of York over a twelve month period. The report will detail how the City of York Council 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 over the past 12 months. The report will also outline the activities which have been undertaken to promote local awareness 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 City of York Council to the Department of Education, as part of the annual Private Fostering Return (PFI) required of all local authorities concerning numbers of new notifications, arrangements and visiting patterns. Historical and national comparative data is provided for context.

Following consideration by the Director of Children's Services, Education and Skills and the City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership, this report will be placed on the City of York Council website as a publically accessible document.