



Private Fostering Annual Report

Annual Report 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017

1. Introduction and Purpose of the Annual Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to show how the Local Authority is meeting the statutory requirements established by the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 which states:

“The Local Authority provides a written report each year, for consideration by 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.

The Local Authority reports annually to the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board on how it satisfies itself, that the welfare of privately fostered children in this area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted, including how it co-operates with other agencies in this connection.”

- 1.2 This report gives an overview of activities in relation to privately fostered children who have resided in Darlington from 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017. The report details how Darlington Borough Council has complied with its duties and functions in relation to Private Fostering and includes how the welfare of privately fostered children has been satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted over the past 12 months. The report also outlines the activities which will be undertaken to promote local awareness of the notification requirements regarding children who are living in Private Fostering arrangements.
- 1.3 Since 2015 the Department of Education (DfE) has received annual information on Private Fostering via the Child In Need census and Private Fostering is no longer reported separately.

These are the factors now reported to the DfE:

8A - Privately fostered: concerns that services may be required or the child may be at risk as a Privately fostered child
8B - Privately fostered: Overseas child who intend to return
8C - Privately fostered: Overseas child who intend to stay
8D - Privately fostered: UK child in educational placements
8E - Privately fostered: UK child making alternative arrangement
8F - Privately fostered: Other

2. Reporting Period

- 2.1 As it is the intention of the National Minimum Standards that a report is produced by the Local Authority to reflect a twelve month period of activity, this annual report is based on activity between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017.

3. What is Private Fostering?

- 3.1 Arrangements for the regulation of Private Fostering originate from concern following the death of Victoria Climbié in 2000. Victoria was abused and killed when she was a Privately Fostered child living with her Great Aunt; the arrangement had been made by her parents. The Regulations for Private Fostering were codified in the Children Act 2004. Following this, the Replacement Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering 2005 set out the duties of local authorities in their arrangements for Private Fostering. The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering were published in 2005.
- 3.2 Private Fostering is defined by The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 as *“an arrangement made for the care of a child or young person under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) with someone other than a parent or close relative for 28 days or more in the carer’s home. Close relatives are step-parents, siblings, siblings of a parent, grandparents and aunts or uncles whether by full or half blood or by marriage.”* This could be an arrangement by mutual agreement between parents and the carers or a situation where a child or young person has left home against their parent's wishes and is living with a friend and the friend's family. In all Private Fostering arrangements, the parent retains parental responsibility for the child or young person.

3.3 Private Fostering arrangements are diverse. Examples of arrangements which are Private Fostering include:

- Children and young people sent from abroad to stay with another family, usually either for education or on account of health issues
- Teenagers who, having broken ties with their parents, are staying in short term arrangements with friends or other non-relatives
- Staying with another family member because their parents have divorced or separated or there has been an argument at home
- Children of prisoners
- Language students living with host families

3.4 Where it is unclear whether a care arrangement for a child or young person is or is not a Private Fostering arrangement, discussion takes 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.

4. The Designated Manager for Private Fostering

4.1 The Designated Manager for Private Fostering is a requirement of the National Minimum Standards. The role of the Designated Manager is defined as the manager who can approve assessments of private foster carers, impose requirements on private foster carers or decide to prohibit someone from acting as a private foster carer. The Designated Manager for Darlington is the Assistant Director for Children.

5. National Minimum Standards

5.1 The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 establishes the seven outcomes for Private Fostering, linked to a number of 'Standards'.

NMS Standard One - Outcome:

Relevant staff are aware of local authority duties and functions in relation to Private Fostering.

NMS Standard Two - Outcome:

The local authority is notified about privately fostered children living in its area.

NMS Standard Three - Outcome:

The welfare of privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted.

NMS Standards Four – Six - Outcome:

Private foster carers and parents of privately fostered children receive advice and support to assist them to meet the needs of privately fostered children. Privately fostered children are able to access information and support when required so that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

NMS Standard 7 - Outcome:

The local authority monitors the way in which it discharges its duties and functions in relation to Private Fostering.

6. Monitoring Compliance with Duties and Functions

- 6.1 There were five notifications of private fostering received by Darlington in this reporting year.
- 6.2 Within the reporting period, no requirements, disqualifications or prohibitions were issued by the local authority to Private Foster Carers.
- 6.3 Within this reporting period, there has been one notification to Darlington Borough Council. This is still considered to be likely to be an under-representation of the number of privately fostered children and young people within Darlington.
- 6.4 All currently active private fostering cases have been audited and quality assured with the resulting action plan being forwarded to the Head of Service.

7. Action Plan November 2017 – March 2018

- 7.1 Over the coming year, the following action plan by Darlington Borough Council will be implemented by the Designated Manager for Private Fostering:

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Statement of Purpose

Appendix 2 – Private Fostering Audit tool

PRIVATE FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT ACTION PLAN

NOVEMBER 2017 – MARCH 2018

OUTCOME: TO RAISE THE PROFILE OF PRIVATE FOSTERING AND INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PRIVATE FOSTERING NOTIFICATIONS

NO	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	TIMESCALE
1	Revised bite-sized training to be provided on Private Fostering to both internal and external professionals.	Head of Assessment, Care Planning & LATC/Workforce Development/LSCB	March 2018
2	Revised bite-sized training to be provided to all social workers and managers in CAP, FRT and Assessment and Safeguarding to ensure the Private Fostering pathway is followed in LiquidLogic.	Head of Assessment, Care Planning & LATC/Professional Systems and Standards Officer	March 2018
3	To undertake annual audits of those Privately Fostered children currently open to Children's Social Care using the recently developed audit tool.	Head of Assessment, Care Planning & LATC	November 2018
4	Explore, and if assessed as appropriate, develop a multi-agency steering group to raise the profile of Private Fostering. The group to include internal and external agencies to the Council e.g. the voluntary sector, faith groups, Citizens Advice Bureau, Hospitals, DWP and so on.	Assistant Director - Children	March 2018
5	Publish and distribute the newly designed Private Fostering leaflets across the Borough with the support of partner agencies.	Head of Assessment, Care Planning & LATC	March 2018
6	Elected Members to promote Private Fostering in their Wards and Clinics via the circulation of leaflets.	Assistant Director - Children	March 2018

NO	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	TIMESCALE
7	Private fee paying schools in the Borough to be contacted via letter to request they determine whether there are any Privately Fostered children on role.	Head of Education and Inclusion	March 2018
8	Revised awareness of Private Fostering in Darlington schools by checking that admission letters have a notification regarding the relationship between the child at the school and the person requesting the school place and who has Parental Responsibility.	Head of Education and Inclusion	March 2018
9	Consideration to be given to producing a canvas promotional banner for use in. public spaces.	Assistant Director - Children	March 2018
10	To explore innovative ways of promoting awareness – banner on the intranet, on payslips, rates bills, back of receipts at leisure centres, car park tickets and so on.	Assistant Director - Children	March 2018
11	Consideration to be given to providing an anonymised case study on Private Fostering to the local newspapers to raise awareness in Darlington.	Assistant Director - Children	March 2018
12	Revise the webpage for Private Fostering on the internet and intranet with a link across to the LSCB.	Head of Assessment, Care Planning & LATC	November 2017
13	Information raising awareness on Private Fostering to be in “One Darlington.”	Assistant Director – Children	March 2018
14	Consideration to be given to forming a Tees Valley wide Private Fostering forum to share good practice examples.	Assistant Director – Children	March 2018
15	Darlington will use the Private Fostering Week in 2018 to raise awareness across the Borough.	Assistant Director – Children	July 2018