

Private Fostering

**CHILDREN & YOUNG
PEOPLE'S SERVICE**

**Private Fostering Statement of
Purpose**

2019-2020



Haverling
LONDON BOROUGH

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Introduction

This Statement of Purpose is a description of private fostering arrangements within the London Borough of Havering. The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering, Standard 1, requires that there is a clear description of and guide to the service for professionals, the public, council members and external organisations.

This document defines what constitutes a private fostering arrangement; the requirement that the Local Authority is notified of all private fostering arrangements; the assessment process and the support and advice offered to parents, private foster carers and privately fostered children within Havering.

The London Borough of Havering Children's and Young Person service (CYPS) is committed to supporting the upbringing of children within and by their families of origin wherever possible, with the minimum of intrusion from the Local Authority. While CYPS takes its responsibilities in relation to private fostering very seriously, it will seek to exercise those responsibilities in ways that are seen as supportive by children, parents and carers. It is not our intention to make judgements about or interfere in the arrangements that parents make for the care of their children, except where this is necessary to ensure that the welfare of the child is being adequately safeguarded.

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 foster carers are provided with advice, support and training 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 Havering where birth parents, individuals with parental responsibility and carers, are aware and 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.

The service works to ensure that equal opportunities are integrated into all aspects of our service delivery. The welfare of the child will remain paramount at all times and in every circumstance.

This Statement of Purpose dated 2019-2020 will be updated on an annual basis.

Any comments or enquires regarding this Statement of Purpose should be passed to the Head of Service, Care Resources, Tendai Dooley on 01708 431980 or by email Tendai.dooley@haverling.gov.uk.

Overview of Services

The London Borough of Havering CYPS has established clear policies and procedures on private fostering which set out how the authority discharges its duties in relation to the private fostering legislation. These can be found on the Council's website.

The Private Fostering Service has two functions;

- To raise public and professionals awareness about private fostering and, the requirements to notify the Local Authority of any actual or planned private fostering arrangements
- To carry out the full assessment on the carer, their household and accommodation and to provide support to the child and adults involved.

It is the Council's policy that any private fostering notification will be screened by the team in the MASH who will carry out the initial checks within 24 hours of receiving the notification. If it is established or thought to be a private fostering arrangement, the case details will then be passed to the social work team for the child at a transfer meeting with 24 hours to allocate a social worker for the child. At the same time a notification is sent to the Fostering Service. Partnership working, including joint visits between the social work team and the fostering service begin immediately with both parties having responsibilities as explained below.

The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the assessment team is responsible for responding to all private fostering notifications and for carrying out the initial assessment to establish if it is a private fostering arrangement and to complete the initial checks . ***Appendix One - Private Fostering 60 Second Guide.***

- The child's social worker responsible for monitoring the welfare of the child through routine visits.
- Both parties assess the suitability of the arrangement to ensure that the child's welfare, wishes and feelings are sought, listened to and acted upon where it is reasonable to do so.
- The child will normally be seen on their own away from the placement, depending on their age and understanding.

The Service Manager is the designated person to whom requests for advice and information about private fostering should be referred to.

Accountability: Roles and Responsibilities of Staff

Havering's children social work staff and the Fostering Service have overlapping duties in relation to private fostering and a shared responsibility to assess and evaluate the suitability of private foster placements. The respective responsibilities of the allocated staff are outlined below.

Responsibilities of MASH

The MASH is located at Mercury House, Romford together with the social work and fostering service.

- Respond to all notifications regarding a proposed or actual private fostering arrangement.
- Make initial contact with the private foster carer, the child, parents and anyone else with parental responsibility to gather basic information about the proposed or actual placement and ascertain that it is a private fostering arrangement.
- If it is established that it is a private fostering arrangement refer the child and the carer to the social work team and the Fostering Service within 24 hours of receiving the notification
- Evaluate whether the provision of support or other services would diminish the need for the child to be placed with private foster carers.
- Carry out initial checks to ensure that the welfare of the child is safeguarded and protected.

Responsibilities of the child's social work team

- Conduct an initial single assessment of the child's needs and ensure that proper arrangements are made between interested parties as to the child's care within 7 days.
- Evaluate the extent to which the child's needs are being or are likely to be met by placement with the specific private foster carers.
- Consider what other action should be taken or services provided to promote the child's welfare.
- In the event of any concerns, take action in accordance with the department's wider policies and procedures.
- Ensure that Regulation 8 (Private Fostering National Minimum Standards) visits are carried out in accordance with private fostering regulations.

Responsibilities of the Fostering Social Worker

- Conduct an assessment of the suitability of the private foster carers and other members of the household within 35 days.
- Conduct an assessment of the suitability of the accommodation and the wider environment.
- Carry out all necessary checks i.e. DBSs for private foster carers and all members of the household who are over 18 years of age.
- Provide on-going advice, support and assistance to the child, carer, parent or others with parental responsibility, where necessary.
- Supervise the placement and monitor its suitability for the specific child/ren.
- Ensure that Regulation 8 visits are carried out in accordance with private fostering regulations.
- Monitor the carer's compliance with any requirements that have been made.
- Make a recommendation as to the suitability of the private arrangement in all aspects required by Regulations.

- Consider what other action should be taken or services provided to promote the child's welfare if required and liaise with the child's social worker as appropriate.
- In the event of any concerns, take action in accordance with the department's wider policies and procedure.
- To carry out the annual review of the private foster carer and the arrangements.

Definition of a Privately Fostered Child

In the definition provided by the Children Act 1989, a privately fostered child means:

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 of his/hers.
- A person who is not a parent of his/hers but who has parental responsibility for him/her.
- A close relative of his/hers---- i.e. a close relative **is** an aunt/uncle/stepparent (if married) grandparent/sibling but **not** a cousin, great-aunt/uncle or great-grandparent.
- She/he has been cared for and accommodated by that person for 28 days or more.

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 than 28 days.

A child who is 'Looked After' by a Local Authority or placed in any residential home, hospital or school is excluded from the definition. There is a wide variety of reasons why parents seek private foster care for their children. These may include:

- Children living apart from their families due to parental or family problems.
- Teenagers living with a friend or friend's parent/carer, where relationships at home have broken down.
- Children whose parents are working abroad or in another part of the country or serving in the armed forces.
- Children whose parents come into the country to study or work and find it difficult to care for their own children.
- Children sent to the UK for educational purposes, including those attending language schools, foreign exchanges or sport academies that stay with host families.
- Children attending residential schools who stay with a teacher or friend's parents during the long school holidays.

- Unaccompanied minors who are living with friends, relatives or strangers.

The Local Authority's Duties and Functions under the Children Act 1989 and Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005

The duties of the Local Authorities in relation to private fostering are set out in the Children Act 1989, the Children (Private Arrangement for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and, amendments are contained within the Children Act 2004. The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 set out a number of standards to be met by all Local Authorities in discharging their duties which cover the following areas:

- Statement of Purpose
- Notification
- Safeguarding and promoting welfare
- Advice and support
- Monitoring and compliance

Local Authorities have a duty to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are privately fostered in their area is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted and to secure that such advice is given to those caring for them as appears to the Authority to be needed (The Children Act 1989 Section 67(1) and Section 44 the Children Act 2004). The Local Authority needs to ensure the following duties and functions are carried out:

Where the Local Authority has received notification under Regulation 3: The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005, they must arrange for an officer of the Authority within **seven** working days to:

- Visit the premises where it is proposed that the child will be cared for and accommodated.
- Visit and speak to the proposed private foster carer and to all members of the household.
- Visit and speak to the privately fostered child alone unless the officer considers it inappropriate.
- Speak to and if it is practicable to do so, visit every parent or person with parental responsibility for the child.
- Establish such matters listed in Schedule 2 (2005 Regulations as above) as appear to the officer to be relevant

Where notification is received about a child who is already being privately fostered the duties of the officer remain the same as in section 67(1) of The 1989 Act.

The assessment should include:

- The wishes and feelings of the child or young person about the arrangement.
- The suitability of the private foster carer's household and their capacity to care for the child or young person.
- Arrangements being in place to meet the child's health and educational needs.

- Adequate and clear arrangements being in place between the private foster carer and the birth parents covering such areas as contact, financial support, decision making, health care etc.

All privately fostered children will have an assessment completed following notification of the private fostering arrangement in order to assess their needs and to ascertain whether they require the provision of any additional services. The children social work team will carry out the assessment seven days of receiving the notification

The fostering social worker will assess the suitability of the private foster carer and their household within 42 days of notification (35 + the initial 7 day single assessment). They will also be responsible, as well as the child's social worker for seeing and meeting with the child, monitoring the arrangement and for providing the necessary support.

Assessments as to the suitability of the arrangement are considered at the monthly Self Regulating Monitoring Meeting, chaired by the Fostering Manager Carol Balfe with Annual reviews considered by the Head of Service, Care Resources, Tendai Dooley..

If a person is deemed unsuitable then it may be necessary to take legal advice and possibly remove the child. The 2004 Act amended the 1989 Act to ensure that responsibilities of the Local Authority extend not only to those children who are privately fostered but also for those who are proposed to be privately fostered.

Local Authorities have the power to impose requirements on private fostering arrangements or to prohibit them altogether. The parents and carers will be advised of this in writing and advised of the appeals' process.

The duties related to notification and assessment processes are outlined in the Havering private fostering procedures which are accessible to staff and members of the public via the Havering website and through public awareness raising materials distributed at a minimum of once a year.

Social workers will visit the placement in line with Regulation 8 of the 2005 Regulations. The fostering social worker will also continue to make routine visits at intervals of not more than every 6 weeks in the first year of their placement and at least 12 weekly thereafter, (subject to agreement by the monitoring meeting) The child's social worker and/or fostering social worker will make additional visits to a privately fostered child when reasonably requested by the child, the private foster carer, the child's parents or any other person with parental responsibility for the child. The social workers will ensure that privately fostered children are seen alone at each visit; the exception being if an interpreter who is independent of the child's parents and of the private foster carer is used where the child's preferred language is not English.

Information, advice and services may be provided by the Local Authority or other agencies as necessary. Any services provided will be reviewed in line with appropriate procedures. Privately fostered children's health and development will be monitored through regular visits undertaken to the child. Where there are any concerns that they may not be achieving a satisfactory level of health or development, this assessment will be reviewed. Where it is necessary a further assessment will be undertaken.

The Local Authority has a duty to monitor compliance with the duties regarding services and support to private fostering arrangements. The monitoring meeting will take the lead on this. The Director of Children's Services and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board will also receive regular reports on private fostering in their area.

Ensuring the welfare of privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted

*It shall be the duty of every local authority to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are privately fostered within their area is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted and to secure that such advice is given to those caring for them as appears to the authority to be needed. **Section 67 (1) Children Act 1989***

In considering the welfare of the children privately fostered within Havering, regard has been given to Section 1 (3) a-f Children Act 1989 and the following values and principles have been devised to inform good practice:

- the welfare of the child is considered as paramount.
- parents and guardians' primary responsibility for their child is recognised and respected.
- children have a right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- children should be valued as individuals with regard to race, culture, language, religion, gender and disability.
- children have a right for their physical and emotional needs to be met.
- children have a right to a safe, child-centred environment.
- children need opportunities for independence and exploration within safe boundaries.
- children have a right to continuous and consistent care.
- due consideration should be given to the wishes and feelings of children and parents/guardians.
- partnerships between parents/guardians, care givers and Local Authority are valued.

The private foster carer is responsible for providing the day-to-day care of the child in a way which will promote and safeguard their welfare. Responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the privately fostered child remains with the parent or other person with parental responsibility.

However, it is the duty of Local Authorities to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are or will be privately fostered within their area is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

Havering CYPS will ensure that privately fostered children and young people's welfare is safeguarded and promoted by staff adhering to the Regulations on private fostering as outlined below:

Where the Local Authority receives notice that a child is being privately fostered, it will make such enquiries and visits to ensure that the child's welfare is being appropriately safeguarded and promoted and will be done within the statutory timescales.

This will involve completing an assessment of the private fostering arrangements (as set out in the Private Fostering procedures), together with an assessment of the child's needs. All private foster carers and their household will have an Enhanced DBS checks undertaken on them and relevant checks to ensure suitability to care for a privately fostered child. To further promote the safeguarding of privately fostered children/young people, Havering has adopted a system to agree arrangements through the Monthly Monitoring Meeting.

Havering will ensure that all privately fostered children in its area are visited within the first seven days of notification as part of the initial assessment and spoken to alone. Privately fostered children will be visited at intervals of not more than once every six weeks in the first year of the private fostering arrangement and at least every twelve weeks in the second and subsequent years. The frequency of visits, however, will be determined by the needs and circumstances of each case. The Private Fostering Social Worker will make additional visits to a privately fostered child when reasonably requested by the child, the private foster carer, the child's parents or any other person with parental responsibility for the child.

The child will be seen alone at each visit, unless the social worker considers it inappropriate, because an interpreter, who is independent of the child's parents and the private foster carer, is needed to support the child.

The Self Regulating Monitoring Meeting

The Self Regulating Monitoring meeting meets on a monthly basis and is chaired by the Fostering Manager. As well as providing managerial oversight and decision making on assessments, requirements, disqualifications and prohibitions, the members of this meeting have an important compliance and quality assurance role. The membership of this meeting include the Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker and fostering administrative support, and where necessary, a private fostering manager representative from children's social work services, a manager from the MASH/ assessment team.

The meeting will decide on the suitability of a private foster carer following assessment.

Where the arrangement is not deemed as suitable, the meeting will recommend appropriate action to the appropriate social work manager.

Other functions of the monthly monitoring meeting include:

- Tracking the progress and outcome for every privately fostered child the Local Authority has been notified of.
- Checking what other action, if any, is taken to ensure that the welfare of a privately fostered child is being satisfactorily safeguarded or promoted (e.g. child protection measures)
- Reviewing the performance data from Liquidlogic Children's System (LCS).

- Reviewing the data from the Private Fostering Management Spread Sheet.
- Evaluating action taken to raise staff, partner agencies and public awareness and the effectiveness of those campaigns and activities.
- Reviewing how the service responds to notifications received.
- Reviewing Arrangements for determining the suitability of all aspects of a private fostering arrangement - including the accommodation and the wider environment in which privately fostered children are placed.
- Reviewing arrangements for providing advice to all concerned and interested parties
- Disseminating findings and themes from audits and performance data monitoring.
- Quality assurance of assessment and support

Actions and recommendations resulting from the reviews and scrutiny by the Monitoring meeting are incorporated into the plan of work for the fostering service and other services as appropriate. This is to ensure that the service continues to develop, that there is robust monitoring of the impact of awareness raising activity, early identification of gaps within the service and so that examples of improved performance are captured and built upon.

Additional Duties under the Children Act 2004 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005

Under the Children Act 2004 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 Local Authorities are required to raise public awareness in their area of the requirements regarding notification of private fostering arrangements.

Notifications must be given to the Local Authority when there is a proposal to privately foster a child or when a child is already being privately fostered. This will enable the Local Authority to make such enquiries, to determine whether the welfare of privately fostered children is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted. This is achieved through assessment and monitoring of arrangements within statutory timescales.

These measures, along with the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005, focus Local Authorities' attention on private fostering and require them to take a more proactive approach with partnership agencies and other professionals in identifying arrangements in their area. Local Authorities are expected to improve notification rates and compliance with the existing legislative framework for private fostering. It is intended that these additional measures will improve the arrangements for safeguarding children and young people in private fostering arrangements.

Training of Staff

Training in private fostering will be provided within the Havering Safeguarding Children's Board training programme and staff induction programme.

This training will include information on the notification requirements, the assessment processes of the suitability of private fostering arrangements and support available to private fostering arrangements. The aim of these courses is to raise awareness and increase knowledge and understanding of private fostering.

Information about private fostering will continue to be circulated to relevant professional's staff, within CYPS and partnership agencies such as health and education. The Fostering Service will provide additional, specific training to staff across CYPS and its partners if there is a request to provide this or as a result of issues or gaps identified by the monitoring meeting.

Staff who are directly involved with the assessment of private fostering arrangements and in providing support and information to carers and children will have access to relevant training and development opportunities as required.

How awareness of private fostering and the notification requirements will be promoted

The Children Act 2004, Schedule 8 of the Children Act 1989, places a duty on Local Authorities to promote public awareness in their area of the notification requirements.

The Local Authority is taking action at regular intervals to raise and maintain public awareness of the need for private fostering arrangements to be formally notified to the Authority. These efforts are aimed at raising the awareness of parents, prospective and actual private foster carers, professionals within Havering, all relevant partner agencies and members of the public. The Local Authority has sought and will continue to seek to raise awareness as follows:

- Publicity materials will contain information about the legal definition of privately fostered children/young people, the procedure for notifying the Local Authority, the benefits of notification and consequences of non-notification.
- Information published on a dedicated webpage for private fostering on the Havering website (www.Havering.gov.uk) which includes information on private fostering, notification process, Havering's Statement of Purpose and other useful links.
- Publicity posters will be displayed and publicity materials will be distributed at key access points, e.g. schools, libraries, GP Surgeries, Health centres, Children Centres, voluntary/community sector organisations and council offices. The information leaflets will contain the contact number for private fostering enquires.
- Publicity material will be made accessible and available in different languages, when requested or if a particular need is identified by the monitoring meeting.
- Private fostering presentations /training are continually provided to all staff within the Partner agencies as part of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board training programme and wider training agenda.

- Private fostering presentations / training with partner agencies, community faith groups, private and voluntary agencies are also undertaken to ensure that private fostering remains on the agenda.
- Targeted private fostering campaigns including seminar presentations and attending community events etc.
- Taking any other action which may be required to promote professional awareness of private fostering requirements across CYPS and within partner agencies.

The Fostering Service will work with and provide information on promoting understanding and awareness of private fostering to Elected Members, the Lead Member for children and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board to help raise the profile of private fostering.

Assessment of the suitability of private foster carers and their household

The London Borough of Havering CYPS has a duty to assess the suitability of all potential or actual private fostering arrangements that come to the Local Authority's attention or that they have been notified of.

The Local Authority will undertake such checks and enquiries to ensure that the carers identified by the parents as private foster carers are able to discharge the responsibilities of private foster carers to a satisfactory standard.

Where the Local Authority is notified of a private fostering arrangement, an assessment will be undertaken, which will include:

- Visiting the premises where it is proposed that the child will be cared for and accommodated.
- Visiting and speaking to the proposed private foster carer/s and to all members of their household.
- Visiting and speaking to the child.
- Speaking to and if practicable, visiting every parent of or person with parental responsibility for the child.

The assessment will ascertain whether the private foster carer/s and their household and premises provide an environment in which the child's welfare will be safeguarded and promoted and to determine:

- The carer's capacity to look after the child/ren and the suitability of the household.
- The suitability of the premises in which the child will be or is being privately fostered.
- Whether it would be prejudicial to the welfare of the child to be or continue to be accommodated by the carer in those premises.

- That the arrangements or proposed arrangements are likely to provide a safe and stable environment for the child.

Private fostering social work assessments will ensure that the child or young person's physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development needs are been met and any needs arising from relationship with their family including contact, his/her religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic background are met by the private foster carer.

Private foster carers will be given advice on the child or young person's individual needs in order to enhance their ability to care for the child. In completing the private fostering assessment, consideration will be given to ensuring that each child is healthy, safe, able to enjoy & achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.

On completion of the private fostering assessment the case must be presented to the monitoring meeting. The aim of this meeting is to ensure the provision of a high quality service that safeguards and promotes the welfare of privately fostered children. The meeting ensures compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering that private fostering arrangements are safe and suitable for children and that children in such arrangements are protected from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The monitoring meeting scrutinises the assessment and makes one of the following recommendations:

1. Agreement that the arrangement is suitable (subject to DBS checks)
2. Defer
3. Impose Requirements or conditions
4. Prohibit the arrangement
5. Disqualification

The arrangements for determining the suitability of private fostering arrangements are provided in the private fostering carer assessment template.

A continuous part of monitoring will be to check that the private fostering arrangement continues to meet the child/ren's needs and that they are safeguarded and protected.

Having, in carrying out all its duties and responsibilities in relation to privately fostered children, will seek and have regard to the wishes and feelings of the child. Written reports will be completed following these visits and placed on the electronic care record system. In accordance with the Regulations, written records will include conclusions drawn on the arrangement, whether the arrangement continues to be suitable, whether the child/young person was seen alone (if not, why not), his/her wishes and feelings about the arrangement, any concerns raised and any relevant advice given.

All privately fostered children will have a named social worker whom they can contact for support, information or advice or should they have any concerns, worries or questions. Children will also be provided with details of advocacy services, the complaints procedures and organisations that they can contact should they wish to talk to someone independently.

Carers and parents will also have the contact details of the named social worker for the child who they can contact should they require support, information, advice or have any concerns, worries or questions.

Carers will be provided with the support, information and advice necessary to enable them to be able to take appropriate care of the child they are fostering.

Parents will be provided with support, information and advice to enable them to be able to take care of their own children. Where this is not an option for a period of time, parents will be provided with guidance and support on how to make sure that the private fostering arrangement meets the needs of their child and keeps them safe and protected. Support and services will also be made available for parents with regards to contact as the Local Authority has a duty to promote contact where children are living away from their parents or family of origin. The Local Authority will provide support around reunification if required.

Where the care of a privately fostered child is unsatisfactory and this cannot be addressed satisfactorily, Havering will, unless they consider that it would not be in the best interests of the child, take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that the care and accommodation of the child is undertaken by:

- a parent
- a person who has parental responsibility
- a relative

If any concerns raised about the child suggest that s/he may be at risk, Child Protection Procedures will be followed. Havering Legal Services will be consulted in determining action when necessary.

The Monitoring meeting will also track the progress of each privately fostered child and recommend any action that might need to be taken to ensure the child's welfare is safeguarded and protected. The Fostering Team Managers will carry out internal file audits on a regular basis and report back the findings to the Monitoring Meeting.

Havering will also ensure that information regarding private fostering is available for members of the public and for professionals working with children, so that there is a clear awareness of these arrangements and associated procedures. Annual reports will be provided to the Head of Service for CYPS who will report in turn to the Director of Children and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board

The role of other agencies in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of privately fostered children, including encouraging notification

It is important that all those who might come into contact with a privately fostered child are aware of the need for such arrangements to be notified to the Local Authority. In particular professionals working in the universal services of health and education have a pivotal role as they will often be the first to become aware of such arrangements.

Such agencies share the Local Authority's responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of privately fostered children. Other agencies need to be aware

that failure by a private foster carer or parent to notify a Local Authority of a private fostering arrangement is an offence and if Local Authorities are not aware of such arrangements they cannot carry out their duty to satisfy themselves that the welfare of the children concerned is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

The Local Authority has produced a guide for staff working in these and other relevant agencies that explain how to recognise a potential private fostering arrangement and how staff working in other agencies should respond.

Education, health and other professionals should notify the Local Authority of a private fostering arrangement that comes to their attention, where they are not satisfied that the Local Authority have been or will be notified of the arrangement, so that the Local Authority can then discharge its duty to satisfy itself that the welfare of the privately fostered child concerned is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

Awareness raising/briefing workshops will be provided for professionals and voluntary agencies that have regular contact with children, young people and carers to ensure that they are clear about their role and responsibilities in relation to private fostering arrangements. Additional training will be provided to key professionals as required to provide an appropriate understanding of the policy and procedures which can be disseminated to their agencies.

In addition, other agencies may also be responsible for the provision of services for privately fostered children where there is an assessed need.

Advice/support and information available to private foster carers (including prospective carers) to parents or those with parental responsibility

Havering's on-going contact with children and young people in private fostering arrangements will also include a responsibility to provide appropriate advice and guidance and to identify any individual support requirements with the private foster carer.

Havering has produced literature which is available to parents and carers including information leaflets and briefings on

- Notification process
- Private fostering arrangements; legal information, assessment process, support and services including arrangements for children in need
- Support and advice on benefits for private foster carers
- Support, Information and advice to parents on private fostering arrangements
- Complaints procedure

Information and support that will be available to privately fostered children.

Children will have access to their own social worker for advice, information, help and support. A guide to private fostering for children is also available.

Privately fostered children will also be provided with information, using methods or formats appropriate to their age and level of understanding, including

- About their private foster care and the carer's responsibilities.
- The meaning of their privately fostered arrangement, and their right to be safeguarded.
- Their right to speak openly about their experience and to inform the social worker where they are unhappy about any aspect of the care they receive and how that information will be treated.
- What support is available to them and how to access that support when needed.
- Advocacy services.
- Complaints procedure.

In addition, privately fostered children will be given the contact details of the Social Worker who will be visiting them while they are privately fostered.

If a child is assessed as being a 'child in need' by the Local Authority, then additional services and support will be put in place.

Monitoring the discharge of functions and compliance with part 9 of The Children Act 1989

The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 requires Local Authorities to monitor the way in which they discharge their functions under Part 9 of the Children Act.

The Local Authority monitors compliance and evaluates effectiveness in improving practice in relation to private fostering via a number of means including

- Performance data from Liquidlogic Childrens system
- Data collated on the Private Fostering Management Spread sheet tracking the progress and outcome for all private fostering situations
- Audit findings

Line Management and Auditing

As well as managerial oversight through supervision and signing off reports, the Fostering Team Managers will be expected to monitor compliance through carrying out audits of a sample of cases.

The purpose of these audits is to ensure that all required areas of work have been completed to a high standard, within the required timescales and that this has been achieved through

- multi agency working

- partnership with children and families
- child focused practice

A summary of audit practice and findings should be reported back to the Monitoring meeting and will be incorporated into the annual report on Private Fostering.

Matters to be covered in the Annual Report on Private Fostering

This annual report will provide an overview of private fostering activity in the local area, the actions taken by the Local Authority and set out the extent to which local agencies are cooperating in respect of private fostering matters by having particular regard to the extent to which the Local Authority and other agencies have taken action to:

- Promote staff awareness of the requirements of the Private Fostering Regulations
- Promote public awareness of the requirements of the Private Fostering Regulations
- Identify whether service users may be acting as private foster carers
- Identify whether children using their services are placed with private foster carers
- Provide Private foster carers or prospective private foster carers with advice, guidance and support.
- Promote access to relevant training by private foster carers
- Notify the Local Authority of the placement or proposed placement of any children with private foster carers
- Notify other Local Authorities of the placement or proposed placement of any Havering children with private foster carers in another area.
- Extent to which the requirements of the Regulations are being met in Havering. What additional action is required by the Local Authority and agencies?

Consultation/ feedback from Children, Parents, Carers and Professionals

The private fostering auditing process is designed to check that the views of children, parents and carers are being sought, listened to and evident within the assessment and decision making process.

The Monitoring meeting will also check that the views of children, parents and their carers are evident within the assessment process. Complaints and feedback about any aspect of the private fostering service and process will be reported on by the Self Regulating Monitoring Meeting.

Complaints

Havering CYPS recognize the importance of feedback and welcomes complaints, compliments and comments as a valuable form of feedback about its services and performance. Complaints leaflets are provided to private foster carers, to privately fostered children and young people and to their parents. Adults and children are encouraged to discuss any concerns about the service with their social worker and/or the team manager.

Privately fostered children and young people will also have access to an advocate if required and will be given the contact details of advocacy services.

Making a Complaint

Complaints, or indeed general comments or compliments, about the service can be lodged in a variety of different ways with the complaints manager or with the Service Manager for Adoption, Fostering and Placements

On line: www.havering.gov.uk/complaints

Regulation and Inspection

The Office for the Standards in Education, Children's Services & Skills (Ofsted) has the responsibility to regularly inspect and regulate private fostering services to ensure that we achieve the aims and objectives as set out in the Statement of Purpose. All inspection reports regarding private fostering can be located at

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>

Ofsted can be contacted directly by telephone 08456 404045
By email at <mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk>

or in writing to:
Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

Further information and advice on Private Fostering

Advice and information about private fostering can be obtained from The Fostering Service on 01708 434406 or the MASH on 01708 434343

Havering's Private Fostering Service is located within the Fostering Service at Mercury House, Romford, a division of the CYPS.

Having Private Fostering – 60 Second Guide

What is it?

- Private fostering is where a private arrangement has been made by the child's parent (or someone with parental responsibility) to live with a carer who is not a close relative of a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if the child is disabled).
- Close relative is defined as: grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or stepparent (by marriage) of the child.
- The arrangement is expected to last for more than 28 days and on a full time basis

Examples of private fostering include:

- Children / young people whose parents work or study long and / or anti-social hours
- Children / young people sent to the UK for education or health care by birth parents from overseas
- Children / young people living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce or difficulties at home
- Teenagers living with their partner's family

Privately fostered children are not looked after children.

Parents and private foster carers should notify the local authority

- The Parent/s (or those with Parental Responsibility) and the private foster carer have a duty to notify the local authority of the name and address of the private foster carer, six weeks before the start of the private fostering arrangement.
- If the arrangement is already in place, they must notify the local authority at once. If the arrangement is made in an emergency and is intended to last more than 28 days, this information should be provided within 48 hours of the child being placed.
- Child care professionals from other agencies (such as teachers or health care practitioners) should notify the local authority if they become aware of or believe that a child is living in a private fostering arrangement.

Partner agencies should notify the local authority

- When completing forms with and meeting children, young people and their families, we should all ask questions about who lives in the household and who has parental responsibility — this can help in identifying a private fostering arrangement.
- Child care professionals from other agencies (such as teachers or health care practitioners) should notify the local authority if they become aware of or believe that a child is living in a private fostering arrangement.

The role of the local authority and arrangements in Havering

- The Children Act 1989 places a legal duty on local authorities to protect and promote the welfare of privately fostered children, to check that the arrangements for the child/ren are safe and that the child/ren are well cared for.
- Section 44 of the Children Act 2004 extended these duties to include children who are proposed to be, but not yet, privately fostered. The duties are set out in the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.

Where the local authority is informed of a proposed or existing private fostering arrangement:

- MASH to confirm private fostering arrangement.
- Open as private fostering in LCS- transfer to ISS for Social Worker and Fostering Team for a Supervising Social Worker.
- The child's Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker (Private Fostering) will undertake an initial Regulation 8 visit within seven working days of the date of notification
- A Social Worker (Private Fostering) from the MASH Team will carry out an assessment of the suitability of the arrangements for the child (Single Assessment)
- An assessing Social will carry out a private fostering assessment within 35 days of initial referral.
- The child's Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker (Private Fostering) will visit the child every six weeks during the first year of the private fostering arrangement and then every 12 weeks thereafter.
- The child should be seen at the placement and spoken to alone where this is appropriate.

For more information and to notify Havering of a private fostering arrangement please contact:

Havering Council Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Phone Monday to Friday (9am to 5pm) 01708 433 222

Out of hours/Weekends 01708 433 999

Email: tmash@haverling.gov.uk

Refer online: www.haverling.gov.uk/privatefostering