

PRIVATE FOSTERING

A presentation for School Administrators
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Penny MacDonagh

CHILDREN'S & ADULTS' SERVICES



What is Private Fostering?

- When a child or young person under the age of 16 years (or 18 if the child is disabled) is looked after for 28 days or more by someone who is not a close relative, parent or legal guardian.
- The term 'close relative' includes parents, aunts, uncles, adult siblings, grandparents or step-parents by marriage.
- It is a private childcare arrangement made by the parent/s (or person with Parental Responsibility)

When must Childrens Social Care be involved?

- NOT REQUIRED IF the adult is genuinely a close relative, and they have the consent of the parent (or someone with Parental Responsibility for the child)
- REQUIRED IN OTHER CASES. There is a legal requirement to register with the council



Examples of Private Fostering

The parent/s may be

- In hospital or custody for more than 28 days
- Living or working elsewhere in UK or abroad
- Unable to care for the child because the relationship between them has broken down



More Examples

- . They may be migrant children sent by their families to live with another family here
- Some may be trafficked for domestic servitude, sexual exploitation or economic gain (benefit fraud, cheap labour).



Consider Vulnerability

- Arrangements may be made in haste eg illness, or death, or war, without due care being possible.
- The bond between adult and child when it is not a biological relationship can be less strong, especially if the child has additional needs

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Difference from LA Children

- Private fostering **does not** refer to children who are placed by their local authority with independent fostering agencies. The confusion arises because these are sometimes referred to as "Private Fostering Agencies".
- Looked after children may live with approved foster carers or may have been placed with friends and/or relatives as part of a multi-agency child in need or child protection plan.



Duties relating to Private Fostering.1

For parents

- must register with the LA, where possible 6 weeks in advance or if an emergency then within 48 hours of placement
- Advise of any change in circumstances
- They continue to have parental responsibility



Duties relating to Private Fostering.2

For Carers

- Tell the LA in advance
- Update the LA of changes in circumstances eg moving, another adult in household etc
- Not a duty but a written agreement is best practice as is having good information and ideally good contact with the parents.



Duties relating to Private Fostering.3

For the Council

- They must visit and assess, visit regularly and review (as for Children in Need)
- To ensure the welfare needs of the child are safeguarded and promoted
- Check the carers and other adults in the accommodation are safe and suitable (DBSs etc)
- Visit 6 weekly in the first year, then 3 monthly
- Must see child alone to ascertain their views and wishes, and advise of their right to request visits



Is private fostering very common?

- It is believed there may be at least 10,000 – 20,000 privately fostered children in the UK but only around 2,500 are registered.
- In Ealing there are currently only 10 -11 children registered.



The role of schools

- School administrators see the whole range of children passing through your offices.
- When a new child is admitted, you view the proof of date of birth (provided in a variety of forms). Where the details appear discrepant or where a child appears not to be related (eg dob too close to another child in the family or different race), this should be looked into.



What should you look out for and do?

- Be aware of the possibility of Private Fostering
- Scrutinise proofs of dob and identification to match names to pick up discrepancies
- Refer to your designated CP Lead in school who will investigate and refer on as needed
- If any PF child leaves or is absent without reasonable explanation, again refer to CP Lead
- If any parent indicates such an arrangement is being made, again refer to CP Lead.



Guardianship

- You may receive a copy of an affidavit (a legal document witnessed usually by a solicitor).
- This may purport to transfer parental responsibility to a third party but this is not valid. Only a court can do so.
- If the situation appears to be one of private fostering, then the case must still be referred to Childrens Social Care.

Referral

- To ECIRS Ealing Childrens Integrated Response Service 8825 8000
- Cases of private fostering then pass to the Children's Housing Support & Unaccompanied Minors Team
- Your CP Lead should in most cases discuss the need to refer with the carer first



Thank you

- Leaflets are available

- Penny MacDonagh

Team Manager In-Year Admissions and
Children Missing Education

8825 9447

pmacdonagh@Ealing.gov.uk