

Private Fostering Annual Report for Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board

July 8th 2008

Summary

This is the annual private fostering report to Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board.

The report will provide information on the activity that has taken place since June 2007, give information on the number of arrangements recorded (with qualifying data) and indicate what ongoing activity is taking place or needs to take place for continued improvement. The report will also give feedback on the first Key Announced Inspection undertaken by Ofsted Inspection of Private Fostering Services in Telford and Wrekin in June 2007.

Recommendations

That Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board acknowledges the annual report and accepts its contents.

Enquires

Alison Sorrell - Private fostering social worker (01952) 385889.

1 Context

Arising from the Victoria Climbié Enquiry, enhanced regulations and the introduction of national minimum standards were introduced in July 2005 in relation to Private Fostering. The duties of Safeguarding Children Boards were also extended to ensure the interests of children who are privately fostered are protected.

Definition

- A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (that is to say without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more.
- Private foster carers may be from the extended family, such as a cousin or great aunt. However, a person who is a relative under the Children Act 1989 i.e. a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full or half blood or by marriage) or step-parent will not be a private foster carer.

- A private foster carer may be a friend of the family, the parent of a friend of the child, or someone previously unknown to the child's family who is willing to privately foster a child. The period for which the child is cared for and accommodated by the private foster carer should be continuous, but that continuity is not broken by the occasional short break.

Who are Private Foster Carers?

Private Foster carers are not recruited, approved or supported by a Local Authority, neither are they those foster carers who are recruited, approved or supported by Independent Fostering Agencies, they are people who by private arrangement are looking after someone else's child.

Examples of children and young people who may be privately fostered

- Children who attend language schools
- Adolescents who may be temporarily estranged from their parents
- Children at boarding schools who do not return to their parents during holidays
- Children on holiday exchanges
- Children whose parents are abroad e.g. working or have been deployed as members of the armed forces
- Children of asylum seekers whose parents are not in this country but who were brought in by someone and so were not unaccompanied at the time of arrival.
- Minority ethnic children with parents who may be working or studying in the UK.
- Children from abroad, who have come to England for better education and life chances.

The new requirements in particular emphasise the need to raise public awareness about private fostering and for Local Authorities to respond and complete assessments of the child or young person's needs and the ability of the private foster carers to meet those needs within specified timescales following receipt of notifications.

2 Private Fostering Inspection.

An Ofsted inspection of Telford & Wrekin's private fostering arrangements took place on 6 June 2007. The inspection rated the service as unsatisfactory based upon the following criteria.

1. Helping children to be healthy - not judged
2. Protecting children from harm or neglect - inadequate judgement - reasons
Lack of leaflets to raise awareness

- Not enough training of professionals
Procedures not followed
Agreements not in place for all children
3. Helping children to make a positive contribution - not judged
 4. Achieving economic wellbeing - not judged
 5. Organisation - satisfactory.

Recommendations and current ratings are included in the Private Fostering Action Plan devised and written by Angela Yapp, Business Manager, Placements.

Activity undertaken June 2007 - July 2008.

In order to ensure that as a Local Authority Telford & Wrekin Children and Young People's services took action in response to the Ofsted inspection recommendations attention was focussed on the following areas:

1. From 1st April 2008 there has been in post a full time worker
2. There has been a series of workshops to promote an awareness of private fostering
3. Leaflets have been devised on private fostering for professionals as well as the general public. Authority responded to notifications appropriately
4. Posters have been distributed at libraries, G.P surgeries and schools
5. On 24th October 2007, there was a Private fostering action plan presented to Divisional Management Team Meeting which was endorsed
6. There has been a private fostering strategy and Action plan produced in March 2008 (See attached at the end of the document)

Training and awareness for staff.

- Multidisciplinary briefings have been provided for staff in June 2008. Further multidisciplinary training has been arranged for September, October, November, December 2008 and January 2009 and it is planned that there will be continual annual ongoing training for all staff throughout Telford and Wrekin
- There is a component of private fostering in the basic child protection awareness course which is delivered to all staff working with children in Telford and Wrekin

Responding to notifications.

- There has been a significant improvement over the last 12 months as the profile of Private Fostering has been raised and social care staff understand better their role and responsibilities, in the identification of

arrangements the way in which they are responded to and in monitoring arrangements.

- Social Care staff and associated professionals are seeking appropriate advice.
- The Private Fostering social worker has promoted awareness of the issues by attending Children's social care Team meetings, Integrated Children's Team meetings, Youth offending operations management team meetings, Education Social Workers and Attendance officers team meetings and team meetings with health professionals.
- As schools are best placed to identify private fostering arrangements the Private Fostering social worker is liaising with Claire Hughes, Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Board trainer to ensure that the dedicated teacher for child protection in each school in Telford is aware of private fostering.

Advice and Support and training for carers.

- Private Foster Carers are encouraged to attend training events (e.g. "Child Protection" and support group")
- An information pack for Private Foster Carers has been devised.

3. Promoting Awareness of notification requirements.

- a. The Private Fostering Development officer is a member of the BAAF (British Agency for Adoption and Fostering) (Southern) Private Fostering Special Interest Group which meets 4 times a year to share common issues and ideas for good practice. This group is able to call upon the experience and expertise of other Social Care Professionals across the country for advice and support.

Children who are privately fostered can generate some of the most complex legal issues.

Numbers of children and young people subjected to privately fostering arrangements .

As at 31st March 2008, Telford and Wrekin had eight children and young people subject to private fostering arrangements.

- 1 was under five years old.
- 2 were between 5 and 9 years old.
- 5 were 10 years or older.

7 were White British, 1 Black British. 4 were boys and 4 were girls.

Throughout the year there were 24 private fostering arrangements in total, 9 were already known at the start of April 2007 and a further 15 became subject to private fostering arrangements during the course of the year.

Of the total 24 arrangements during the year

- 4 were under 5 years old.
- 4 were under 10 years old.
- 16 were over 10 years old.

Of the total 24.

- 21 were White British.
- 1 was Black British.
- 2 were Black African.

Of the total 24 - 14 were female and 10 were male.

Conclusion.

This has been a year of immense activity in order to enhance our performance and meet the requirements of the Private Fostering Inspection Action Plan. In particular there has been a steady rise in the number of arrangements and improvement in how those arrangements are responded to and dealt with. This has required good partnership working across Children's and Adult Services (Workforce Development) as well as other agencies. Hopefully a firm platform has been laid from which both services to children who are privately fostered in Telford and Wrekin and their carers can continue to be improved upon.

Alison Sorrell
Social worker

Endorsed by T&WSCB 8 7 08

TELFORD & WREKIN PRIVATE FOSTERING STRATEGY

2008-2011

(A 3 year Plan)

DATE: MARCH 2008

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1 Introduction.

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more.

A private foster arrangement can be any one of the following circumstances;

- Children from abroad living with someone other than their parent for educational or health reasons.
- Children living with a family friend after separation, divorce or a family dispute.
- Teenagers living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Families who come to this country to study or work but find it difficult to care for their child/children because of unsocial hours of study or work.
- A child living with an unmarried partner of a parent when the parent leaves the home.
- Child/ren placed by a parent with friends whilst the parent is in hospital / working away or in prison.
- A family friend who is willing to look after the child.

A private foster carer becomes responsible for providing the day to day care of the child/ren ensuring that they promote and safeguard their welfare.

In recent years there has been increasing emphasis on improving the safety and security of children and young people cared for in private fostering arrangements as a direct consequence of the recommendations arising from Lord Laming Investigation into the death of Victoria Climbié. Victoria Climbié was placed into a privately fostered arrangement. A number of public safeguards were not in place or adhered to leading to the tragic death of this child. Legislation has been strengthened to enable improved notification, assessment and monitoring of children and young people who are living in private fostering arrangements.

This document is Telford & Wrekin's first separate Strategy document on Private Fostering. The Strategy establishes our aims and objectives over the next 3 years.

2 The Legislation

The legislation relevant to private fostering is set out in Part 9 of, Schedule 8 to, the Children Act 1989, as amended by section 44 of the Children Act 2004 which came into effect on 1 July 2005, and regulations made under part 9 of 1989 Children Act (the Children Private Arrangements for Fostering Regulations 2005), which also came into effect on 1st July 2005. Local authorities are required to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are, or will be, privately fostered within their area is being, or will be, satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

3 Standards & Regulations for Private Fostering

There are 7 National minimum standards:

- Standard 1 - 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 are to be carried out.
- Standard 2 - The local authority is notified about privately fostered children living in its area.
- Standard 3 - The welfare of privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted.
- Standard 4 - The local authority provides such advice and support to private foster carers and prospective private foster carers as appears to the authority to be needed.
- Standard 5 - The local authority provides advice and support to the parents of children who are privately fostered within their area as appears to the authority to be needed.
- Standard 6 - Children who are privately fostered are able to access information and support when required so that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted. Privately fostered children are enabled to participate in decisions about their lives.
- Standard 7 - The local authority has in place and implements effectively a system for monitoring the way in which it discharges its duties and functions in relation to private fostering. It improves practice where this is indicated as necessary by the monitoring system.

Regulations:

The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 set out the specific arrangements in relation to:

- Notification of proposal to foster a child privately
- Action to be taken by local authority on receipt of notifications of proposal to foster a child privately
- Notification by person already fostering a child privately
- Notification of a child going to live with private foster carer
- Action to be taken by local authority on receipt of notification about a child being fostered privately
- Subsequent visits to children who are being fostered privately
- Notification of change of circumstances
- Notification of the end of a private fostering arrangement
- Forms
- Monitoring

These are accompanied by 3 Schedules detailing information to be provided in notification; Welfare of children to be fostered privately; welfare of children who are fostered privately.

4 National Context.

Information from the Office of National Statistics published a report on 8th November 2007, suggests that formal notifications made to local authorities about children in England in privately fostered arrangements were **1,250, as at 31st March 2007**. Trend figures suggest that the number of notifications has been increasing each year from **730** in March 2005 to **980** in March 2006.

Some key characteristics identified were:

- 68% of privately fostered children were aged 10-15
- 68% of privately fostered children were born in the UK, and 23% were born in Africa or Asia.

Within the same report a number of tables were presented on regional trends across England.

Of the 9 regional areas the West Midlands - which Telford and Wrekin are part of were ranked

- 7th in terms of the number of children under private fostering arrangements as at 31st March 2007.
- 5th in terms of the number of notifications received during the year
- 4th in terms of the number of notifications about arrangements coming to an end.
- 6th in terms of statutory visits being made within 7 days
- 5th in terms of number of cases where action was taken in

accordance with requirements for carrying out visits.

Clearly, the West Midlands area is not faring very well within the 9 regional areas. Part of this may well be related to volume of activity as London and the South areas experience far more activity due to the higher grouping of BME groups and cosmopolitan nature of these areas. The data provided does not enable an assessment to be provided against population density of each regional area to surmise whether numbers reported are disproportionately low or high for each region.

5 The local situation and local service provision.

Telford & Wrekin Private Fostering Year 2007 - 2008

As at 31st March 2008, Telford & Wrekin had 8 children and young people subject to private fostering arrangements.

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Local service provision.

Staffing

From the 1st April 2008 the current part-time 18.5hrs post will increase to full-time 37hrs post. The post holder is based within the Fostering team. This post is complemented by access to training and

support for private foster carers through a dedicated training officer and support officer for the Fostering Service.

Social workers based within the safeguarding team, case management team, disabled children's team and community integrated service teams undertake assessment and joint work with the private fostering officer.

A schedule of training events have been planned to occur during 2008/9 to increase awareness amongst professionals working with children and young people in Telford & Wrekin about Private Fostering.

Links with key services:

The Private Fostering officer has developed links with health visitors, educational welfare officers and with the community liaison team. Plans are in place to develop increased links with Schools, Early Years and a range of youth provision - Youth offending, Youth Service, special needs housing.

Resources

There are a number of resources which following assessment may be deemed appropriate depending upon the specific private fostering arrangement which can be accessed. The area where there is a need for further development to occur is in relation to parental financial contributions for arrangements that are formally made and those informally made.

The normal checks required during information gathering and assessments are robust.

A range of leaflets and posters have been developed to promote awareness of private fostering - these have been distributed to schools, GP surgeries and a number of public venues.

Support to carers and children placed with private foster carers

A support group is in place for private foster carers. Work has begun to develop a support group for children and young people. The private fostering social worker will be able to consult and receive feedback from these groups on emerging needs and the quality of service provision.

Systems and Performance monitoring.

An electronic recording system has been developed very recently to capture all activity concerning notifications, numbers, statutory visits, notification of arrangements ceasing. Training will be delivered to a range of staff so that accurate statistical information can be gathered on an ongoing basis to produce reports on performance.

Telford & Wrekin's Private Fostering service was inspected by Ofsted in June 2007 a number of recommendations were made in relation to developing improvements. Those recommendations have been incorporated into our Objectives and action plan see **section 6 & 7** of this strategy outline.

Accountability

The annual report on the operation of the private fostering service is presented to Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board in July of each year. That report will also be presented in future to the local Change for Children Board meetings held in each Integrated Service team locality and the Children's Trust Board Annually.

6 Service Development Objectives.

The number of notifications of privately fostered children and young people who have come to the attention of the local authority over the past year is low. There are situations which come to the attention of the private fostering officer as a result of initial response assessments through the Safeguarding team, early intervention teams and 16+ teams. Whilst these are formal routes into services, word of mouth and awareness raising is the most powerful tool for members of Telford & Wrekin Community and agencies to recognise what are private fostering arrangements to bring them to the attention of key services so that children and young people made be safeguarding and their wellbeing promoted.

The following are key service development objectives over the next 3 years.

Objectives 1 Increase awareness of Private Fostering.

- Raise awareness and understanding of private fostering amongst the general public and the need to notify.
- Schedule a rolling programme of visits to local faith organisations, community organisations, schools, health centres and other professionals to raise awareness.
- Run a bi annual media campaign to reach the widest audience(s) including radio and newspaper features in local BME media.
- Develop & distribute information - posters and leaflets for carers/children and professionals.
- Target specific services for training - Homeless person; 16+, counseling services.

Objective 2 Effective assessment of the child or young person's needs and their carer/s

- Develop, agree and implement procedures with safeguarding and case management teams / integrated services teams / disabled children team / 16+ team and youth offending team.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the procedures developed and change where appropriate.

Objective 3 Provide advice and support to private foster carers (including prospective private foster carers), parents and others with parental responsibility.

- Develop a frequently asked questions leaflet for prospective & current private foster carers.
- Provide clear information leaflet on what is available as resources. Such as parenting support / statutory visits / health / education / reviews of the placement.

Objectives 4 Improve training to key services:

- Develop an annual training programme to target key staff: The Police / youth workers / special needs housing / youth counseling / nursery / childminders / teachers / accident & emergency staff / Hospitals.

Objective 5 Development and implementation of robust recording systems to monitor and evaluate trends in relation to notifications / new arrangements / end of arrangements / compliance with timescales.

- Work with T&W ICT and Performance team to develop appropriate electronic recording system to record a range of information to meet national requirements and local data need.

Objective 6 Provision of annual report to the Safeguarding Board and Children's Trust Board.

- An annual report to be provided to the Safeguarding and Children Trust Board to review and evaluate the performance of the service. This report should be presented no later than July of each year.

7 Action Plan for the development of the private fostering service.

A number of recommendations were made in June 2007 arising from an Ofsted inspection.

Standard	Action	Progress to date
1	Include in the Statement of Purpose details of the named person who is responsible for signing off the suitability of arrangements	Private fostering arrangements are signed off by the Business Manager Placements, at the weekly Resource Allocation Meeting.
1	Ensure that information regarding private fostering is readily available to members of the public, including on the authority's website.	<p>The private fostering posters have been distributed to all schools, leisure facilities and G.P.</p> <p>Draft information for website sent to Council's Public Relations Unit – May 2008.</p> <p>Wider distribution of leaflets amongst partner agencies, for example, PCT, Connexions 4 Youth and Probation by 30th June 2008.</p>
1	Ensure that all staff receive training in respect of private fostering arrangements and that information is included in all induction programmes.	<p>Private fostering social worker has devised multi agency training within the Safeguarding Children Board.</p> <p>There will be three, one and a half hour sessions arranged for 28 May, 16 June, 27 June, to provide a basic awareness.</p> <p>There will be five sessions which are more in depth 5/9/08, 17/10/08, 28/11/08, 9/1/09 and 6/3/09.</p> <p>The private fostering social worker has visited all social work teams in The Mount and discussed Private Fostering with them in their team meeting.</p>

2	<p>Ensure that the criteria for private fostering arrangements are met, where a young person is clearly placed under other provisions of the Children Act 1989, the appropriate procedures must be followed. Children Act 1989.</p>	<p>Since 1 April 2008 there is now a full time private fostering social worker. The worker will train other professionals in basic awareness of private fostering arrangements. When all staff are trained on Protocol it will be easier to ascertain if all timescales are met.</p>
2	<p>Ensure that appropriate procedures are followed and timescales met. Reg 4 & 7.</p>	<p>Private fostering social worker to: Develop register with admin support.</p> <p>In private fostering social workers absence there will be admin support.</p> <p>Hold discussions with ICT & Performance Team to develop software programme on Protocol capture notifications.</p> <p>Pitfall checklist for case managers. Circulated to all staff including Team Managers and Business Managers, 17th April 2008.</p>
2	<p>Clarify what legal action will be taken if there is a failure to notify a private fostering arrangement.</p>	<p>Legal advice will be obtained from the senior solicitor, legal services and discussion with Business Manager Placements regarding imposing a prohibition order.</p>

3	<p>Ensure that there are sufficient staff available to promote awareness of private fostering, assess the suitability of foster carers and provide ongoing support and advice.</p>	<p>Since 1 April 2008 there is now a full time private fostering social worker. The worker will train other professionals in basic awareness of private fostering arrangements. When all staff are trained on Protocol it will be easier to ascertain if all timescales are met.</p>
6	<p>Consider providing written information to young people, in formats appropriate to their age and level of understanding, regarding local arrangements for private fostering and what they should expect from their carers and their allocated social worker.</p>	<p>A booklet is in the process of being devised by private fostering social worker and privately fostered children. There has been a discussion with Sarah Stembridge on planning and implementing the process of young people creating a child friendly leaflet. It will be completed by July 2008.</p> <p>It is envisaged that the group devising the leaflet for young people will help to identify ways that the young people would like to be involved in making decisions.</p> <p>The majority of privately fostered arrangements are within the TAC process and the young person is encouraged to be part of the process.</p>
7	<p>Undertake a regular analysis of the statistics gathered in respect of private fostering to ensure that improvements are made to the service.</p>	<p>From the 1 April Intergrated Children's system phase 1B will be on Protocol. After this there will be opportunity to develop a register of private foster carers electronically. There will be training on 30 April 2008.</p>

7	Present a report to the local Safeguarding Children Board and the Director of Children Services.	Private fostering social worker / Performance Manager / Team Manager / Business Manager Placements / DMT report.
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2008-11 Objectives	Activity	Who & When
<p>Objectives 1 Increase awareness of private fostering.</p>	<p>Raise awareness and understanding of private fostering amongst the general public and the need to notify.</p> <p>Schedule a rolling programme of visit's to local faith organisations, community organisations, schools, health centres and other professionals to raise awareness</p> <p>Run a bi annual media campaign to reach the widest audience(s) including radio and newspaper, features in local BME media.</p>	<p>Private fostering social worker to develop a campaign Strategy - June 2008.</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>October 2008</p>

	<p>Develop & distribute information - posters and leaflets for carers/children and professionals. Target specific services for training Homeless person; 16+, counseling services .</p>	October 2008
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<p>Objective 2 Effective assessment of the child or young persons needs and their carer/s</p>	<p>Develop, agree and implement procedures with safeguarding / case management teams / integrated services teams / disabled children team / 16+ team and youth offending team.</p> <p>Evaluate the effectiveness of the procedures developed and change where appropriate.</p>	<p>Team Manager FPT / Team Managers Safeguarding - 16+ Disabled children – ISM.</p> <p>October 2008</p> <p>Team Manager FPT Annual Review March of each year and comment upon in annual report July of each year.</p>
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<p>Objective 3 Provide advice and support to Private foster carers (including prospective private foster carers), Parents and others with Parental responsibility.</p>	<p>Develop a frequently asked questions leaflet for prospective & current private foster carers.</p> <p>Provide clear information leaflet on what is available as resources. Such as parenting support/statutory visits/health/education/ reviews of the placement.</p>	<p>Private fostering social worker / S&CP DMT. August 2008</p> <p>Private fostering social worker, carers and children - S&CP DMT. December 2008</p>
<p>Objectives 4 Improve training to key services:</p>	<p>Work with T&W ICT and Performance team to develop appropriate electronic recording system to record a range of information to meet national requirements and local data need.</p>	<p>Business Manager / Team Manager / Private fostering social worker / Performance Manager / ICT officer. March 2009</p>

<p>Objective 5 Development and implementation of robust recording systems to monitor and evaluate trends in relation to notifications/new arrangements/end of arrangements/compliance with timescales.</p>	<p>An annual report to be provided to the Safeguarding and Children Trust Board to review and evaluate the performance of the service. This report should be presented no later than July of each year.</p>	<p>Business Manager / Team Manager / Private fostering social worker. July of every year.</p>
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