



# Private Fostering

## Statement of Purpose

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**Author:** Jo Smith

**Owner:** Head of Service – Homes for Children

**Team:** Fostering and Kinship Service – Homes for Children

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# 1. Introduction

This statement is prepared in accordance with Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering.

This document sets out Warwickshire County Council's duties and functions in relation to Private Fostering and the ways in they will be carried out.

This Statement of Purpose is a requirement of the national Minimum Standards (NMS) for Private Fostering, Standard 1 issued in 2005 which states that there is a clear description and guide to the service for the public, professionals, council members and external organisations.

## 2. Definition

Warwickshire will use the definition as provided by [the Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering](#) as amended by the [2005 Regulations](#) and [Section 44 of the Children Act 2004](#) which came into effect on 1 July 2005.

*“A private fostering arrangement is essentially 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.”*

The Children Act 1989 [Section 105](#) defines: “close relative” as a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of full or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership); or step-parent (if married to the parent or in a civil partnership).

The period for which the child is cared for and accommodated by the private foster carer should be continuous. This continuity is not broken by the occasional short break. Exemptions to this definition are set out in [Schedule 8 to the Children Act 1989](#).

An arrangement is deemed as private fostering if it meets the criteria above, whether for reward (monetary or otherwise) or not.

### 2.1 Examples of Private Fostering may be:

- Children who attend language schools.
- Adolescents temporarily estranged from their parents.
- Children at boarding schools who do not return to their parents during vacations.
- Children on holiday exchanges.
- Children brought from abroad with a view to adoption.

- Children whose parents work unsocial hours and whose parents have chosen to make private fostering arrangements as a consequence.
- Children of asylum seekers whose parents are not in this country but were brought in by someone and so were not unaccompanied at the time of arrival.
- Minority ethnic children with parents working or studying in the UK who have chosen to make Private Fostering arrangements for their children.
- Children with parents overseas.
- Children living with host families for a variety of reasons.

### **3. Duties and Functions**

- 3.1 Local authorities do not approve private foster placements. The duties placed on local authorities are supervisory and regulatory. Staff of the Family Help Teams along with others from Children and Families will carry out Warwickshire County Council's duties in respect of private fostering arrangements. The assessment of carers as to the suitability of the household are undertaken by a social worker in the Fostering and Kinship Service. The assessment of the child's needs and proposed arrangements are undertaken by the Family Help social worker.
- 3.2 The local authority has a duty to satisfy itself that the welfare of children who are privately fostered is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted and provide the necessary advice to those caring for them. This includes the duty to ensure that parents and carers fulfil their responsibilities to the child.
- 3.3 These duties will be provided in accordance with required legal obligations and available resources.
- 3.4 It is Warwickshire County Council's intention to carry out these duties in a way that maintains a balance between the rights of the parent to make a private arrangement for the care of their children, and the local authority's obligation to satisfy themselves about the welfare of the children.
- 3.5 In fulfilling this duty Warwickshire County Council will seek to establish good partnership arrangements. These relationships should be established not only with the private foster carers, the children and young people and their parents but also with other organisations and agencies.
- 3.6 The Executive Director and the Director for Children and Families Services plus the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Partnership will receive a copy of the Private Fostering Annual Report. This details how the authority has complied with its duties and functions in relation to Private Fostering in the preceding year.

## 4. Determining and Assessing Suitability of Arrangements

4.1 The local authority's role is to check that private fostering arrangements are satisfactory, and that foster carers and premises are suitable:

### 4.1.1 *The suitability of the carers and the household members.*

In order to assess the suitability of the person who intends to privately foster, Warwickshire County Council implements the powers, duties and criteria contained within [Schedule 3 of The Children \(Private Arrangements for Fostering\) Regulations 2005](#), the [Replacement Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering](#) and the [National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005](#). As well as the requirements for a social work assessment as identified in [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#) with regard to all private fostering arrangements regardless of the age of the child.

These checks include but are not limited to the following matters:

- Satisfactory outcome of Disclosure, Barring Service enquiries and other references.
- The capacity of the proposed or actual private foster carer/s to look after a child and the suitability of household members.
- The suitability of the premises.
- Whether it would be prejudicial for the welfare of the child to, or continue to reside with the private foster carer/s in those premises.
- That the arrangements or proposed arrangements are likely to provide a safe and stable environment for the child.
- The intended duration of the arrangement.
- The capacity of the private foster carer/s to respond to the child's development needs.
- The wishes and feelings of the child about the private fostering arrangement.
- The quality and consistency of care for the child in relation to their physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development.
- Health care provision including registration with a GP; the child's personal health record and medical history and consent to medical examination or treatment.
- Education provision and the private foster carer/s ability to understand, recognise and provide support to the child.
- Private foster carer/s understanding and ability to meet the needs of the child arising from their religious persuasion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background.
- How decisions about the child's day to day care are being taken.

- The private foster carer/s expectations and attitudes towards contact arrangements between the child and his/her family or persons significant to them.
- Private foster carer/s and parent/s awareness of the importance of continuity of health care, education, religious practice and indeed all aspects of a child's life, and they share relevant information.
- Specific areas of the private foster carer/s capacity to respond to the child's needs giving consideration to discipline, lifestyle, household relationships.
- The financial arrangements for the care and maintenance of the child are agreed between the parent/s and private foster carer/s.

The regulations also state that the same issues are addressed at all visits made to the private foster arrangement.

4.2 The practical responsibilities of the local authority in a private fostering arrangement include the following:

- Receive notification from parent/s.
- Assess the suitability of the arrangement.
- Visit the child in line with statutory requirements.
- Ensure that carer/s are aware of the child's racial, cultural linguistic and religious needs and are helped to meet them.
- Offer advice and support to parent/s, carer/s and child/ren involved in private fostering arrangements.
- Consider the need for specific requirements and prohibitions.
- The child's social workers will ensure that a review is completed at least every six months. All the relevant partner agencies, parent/s, private foster carer/s and the child/young person will be invited to this formal review.
- An Annual Review of the private foster carer's household and the suitability of the premises will be completed. A report will be presented to the Fostering Service Manager, who will make the appropriate decision.
- As a part of every 3rd Annual Review of the private foster carer/s, full checks, references and interviews of all members of household will be undertaken as identified in the first assessment.

## 5. Signing off arrangements

5.1 Completed assessment reports will be presented in accordance with the authority's procedures to the Fostering Team Manager for a decision on the suitability of the application and arrangement. The report will need to comply with the requirements for a social work assessment identified in [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#). It should include clear recommendations, any additional requirements, which should be imposed,

and/or any prohibitions for the Fostering and Kinship Service Manager to consider. A full report must be written and the following points should be addressed:

- Date child placed/to be placed.
- The purpose and intended duration of the private fostering arrangements.
- The child's physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development.
- Whether the child's needs arising from his religious persuasion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background are being met.
- The financial arrangements for the care and maintenance of the child.
- The standard of care which the child is being given.
- Whether the private foster parent is being given any necessary advice.
- Whether the contact between the child and his parents, or any other person with whom contact has been arranged is satisfactory.
- Whether the child's parent/s or any other person, are exercising parental responsibility for the child.
- The ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child regarding the private fostering arrangements.
- Any environmental factors and its influence on the child.

## **6. Welfare of privately fostered children are safeguarded**

6.1 In considering the welfare of the child/ren privately fostered within Warwickshire, regard has been given to [Section 1 \(3\) a-f Children Act 1989](#). The following values and principles have been devised to inform good practice:

- The welfare of the child is considered as paramount.
- Parent/s and guardian/s 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.

- Partnership between parents/guardians, care givers and the local authority is valued.

6.2 The enquiries made by Warwickshire Family Help and Fostering teams (i.e. DBS, checks with education, health, referees, assessments) are linked to the duty of the local authority to satisfy itself that the welfare of a privately fostered child is being safeguarded; that the arrangements (or proposed arrangements) are likely to provide a stable and safe environment in which the child's physical, social, intellectual and emotional needs are met. This includes those arising from the child's religious, racial, cultural and linguistic background.

## **7. Named Person within local authority to contact for advice**

7.1 The named person to contact about Private Fostering is the Team Manager within the Fostering and Kinship Support and Supervision Teams. The Fostering and Kinship team will offer the necessary expertise and advice to social workers and professionals from other organisations as appropriate.

## **8. Training and Awareness for Staff**

8.1 Joint training and workshops focusing on Private Fostering will be provided for children and fostering social workers. This will also be available for other professionals from schools, health, voluntary and community organisations as appropriate, in partnership with the Learning and Development service.

8.2 Procedures are in place, which clearly outline the roles and responsibilities for all staff and are easily accessible for all staff.

8.3 Staff will also be encouraged to attend additional training provided by specialist and national organisations as appropriate.

8.4 Mandatory Private Fostering training is a requirement of workers within the Fostering and Kinship Service team and Family Help teams.

## **9. Promoting Awareness of Notification Requirements**

9.1 Other agencies and the wider community will be informed of notification requirements through a series of activities, which will include:

- Promotional literature e.g., leaflets and posters placed throughout the county and local offices.

- Direct contact e.g. face-to-face, email or written letter.
- Invitation to joint training.
- Specific professional meetings e.g. multi-agency meetings, stakeholder events or conferences.
- Newsletters e.g. School Governor Newsletter.
- Attendance at relevant meetings e.g. staff meetings, management group meetings.
- Local and national networking.

## 10. Advice, Support and Training for Carers

- 10.1 As a part of initial contact and assessment of the carer/s, the Fostering Social Worker will ensure that the prospective private foster carer/s has received a copy of Warwickshire's Private Fostering Policy; and that they are aware of their duties and responsibilities as a private foster carer/s.
- 10.2 The Private Foster Carer/s will be advised of the annual foster care training plan by the Fostering and Kinship Services and invited and encouraged to attend (e.g. "Child Protection" and "Promoting Equality"). This offer of training is generally not mandatory but is available should private foster carers wish to access it.
- 10.3 Whilst undertaking the private foster carer's assessment, the social worker may consider it appropriate to stipulate attendance at a specific training programme for the suitability of a specific placement.
- 10.4 If this is the case, the social worker will discuss the matter with the private foster carer/s and will make a clear recommendation in their assessment report to the Fostering Service Manager. It will be clear in the report if the identified training is voluntary or 'a requirement' for the private foster carer to be deemed suitable. The Service Manager will make an appropriate decision and the private foster carer/s will be advised accordingly.
- 10.5 Part of the statutory function of the allocated social worker or assigned family support worker for the child will be to undertake statutory visits. These are required to take place within 7 days of the beginning of the placement and then at least every 6 weeks during the first year of placement. During the second and subsequent years, visits are required to take place at least every 12 weeks or as frequently as necessary. Both children and fostering social workers will also visit to offer support and guidance when reasonably requested by the child or foster carer/s.
- 10.6 The social workers visiting the child and foster carer/s will assist them through advice and guidance to access services from other agencies/teams to help the child if they are deemed to be necessary.

## **11. Advice and Support for Parents**

- 11.1 There is no statutory obligation to visit the parent/s or those with parental responsibility to discuss the progress of their child. During the assessment stage contact will be made with parents. However, social workers will consider any necessary advice and support when undertaking their assessment and should visit at the reasonable request of the parents/those with parental responsibility.

## **12. Information and Support for Privately Fostered Children**

- 12.1 All children and young people privately fostered will be given a copy of the 'Private Fostering Children Young People Leaflet' according to their age and understanding. If required, the allocated social worker for the child will assist the child in reading it with them or obtain a copy in other languages if deemed necessary. The child's allocated social worker will also visit when reasonably requested at times other than statutory visits.
- 12.2 Children who are privately fostered will be given the opportunity to have independent advocacy support from Coram Voice.

## **13. Role of Other Agencies**

- 13.1 Good links, partnership and joint working arrangements, and a robust promotional campaign with other agency and organisation professionals will take place. This is to ensure that professionals are aware of their duty of care and to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement that comes to their attention. This also applies if they are not satisfied that the local authority have been, or will be, notified of the arrangement. 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.

## **14. Comments, Complaints and Representation**

- 14.1 It is the policy of Warwickshire County Council to actively encourage comments and representations concerning the delivery and nature of its service.
- 14.2 Any child receiving or refused a service from Children and Family Teams or Fostering teams, his/her parents, anyone who has parental responsibility for him/her or, any other such person as the County Council considers has

sufficient interest in the child's welfare, has a right to make a complaint when an issue cannot be resolved satisfactorily.

- 14.3 If more information is required regarding the Complaints and Representations procedure, please contact:-

**Customer Relations Team PO Box 9  
Shire Hall  
Warwick CV34 4RR Telephone: 01926  
414102**

Or visit

<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/childrensocialcarecomplaints>

## 15. Further Information

- Further information for carers and parents in a range of languages can be found on the [Warwickshire County Council Private Fostering webpage](#).
- Notification forms for parents or carers may also be found on the [Warwickshire County Council Private Fostering webpage](#).