



**Cumberland  
Council**

# **Cumberland Council Private Fostering Statement of Purpose**

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## 1.Introduction

This Statement of Purpose is designed to meet the statutory requirement established by the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 that 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 will be carried out (at para 1.1)

It is our intention to work in partnership with children, carers and parents to ensure that:

- children are provided with high quality childcare 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 carers are provided with advice, and support 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 Cumberland where birth parents, individuals with parental responsibility and carers, 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 child's voice is at the centre of all discussions about children, and the welfare of the child will remain paramount at all times and in every circumstance.

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed, updated and modified whenever necessary on an annual basis.

Any comments or enquiries regarding this Statement of Purpose should be passed to the Designated Manager for Private Fostering, Cumberland Council.

For Children's Social Care practitioners, this Statement should be read in conjunction with the Cumberland Policies and Procedures and the Empowering Families Practice Framework.

## 2. The legal definition of a privately fostered child and a list of examples

'Private Fostering' is defined by The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 as a private arrangement made for the care of a child or young person under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) by someone other than:

- a parent of his or hers
- a person who is not a parent of his or hers but who has Parental Responsibility for him/her
- a close relative of his or hers, for example, a close relative is an aunt, uncle, stepparent, grandparent or sibling but not a cousin or great-aunt or great-uncle

- and she/he has been cared for and accommodated by that person; for 28 days or more; or the period of actual private fostering is less than 28 days, but the private foster carer intends to privately foster him/her for a period of 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

Private Fostering arrangements are diverse. However, arrangements which are private fostering include:

- children living apart from their families due to parental or family difficulties
- teenagers living with a friend, or friend's parent/carer, where relationships at home have broken down; or
- to complete a stage of education because of a family move
- 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 who stay with host families
- children attending residential schools who stay with a teacher, or a friend's parents during the school holidays (over 28 days)
- unaccompanied minors who are living with friends, relatives or a stranger
- a child or young person who is cared for or living in any residential home, hospital or school is excluded from the definition

### **3. Cumberland Council's duties and functions under the Children Act 1989 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and how they will operate in relation to privately fostered children.**

The duties of the Local Authority 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

Cumberland Council has a duty to be notified about all private fostering arrangements in its geographical area of responsibility and to satisfy itself that the welfare of children who are being privately fostered are paramount (Children Act 1989 Section 67(1)).

As soon as the Local Authority becomes aware of a proposed arrangement to privately foster a child or young person within their area, or where a child or young person is being privately fostered within their area, the Local Authority will assess the suitability of the arrangement.

Where a child or young person already has an allocated Social Worker, then the private foster carer, those with parental responsibility or any professional working with a child or young person must contact the Social Worker to notify them of the arrangement. The allocated Social Worker will be responsible for carrying out an Initial Visit and Private Fostering Assessment.

Where a child or young person does not have an allocated Social Worker, then the private foster carer, those with parental responsibility or any professional working with a child or young person must contact the **Cumberland Children Advice & Support Service (CCASS)** on 0333 240 1727 or via the Single Contact Form on [www.cumberland.gov.uk](http://www.cumberland.gov.uk)

Where the Local Authority has received notification under Regulation 3 (The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005) they must arrange for a social worker in 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 social worker considers it inappropriate
- speak to and if it is practicable to do so, visit every parent or person with Parental Responsibility for the child; and
- establish such matters listed in Schedule 2 (2005 Regulations as above) as appear to the social worker 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 Children Act 1989.
- The assessment should include:
  - the wishes and feelings of the child or young person about the private fostering arrangement.
  - the suitability of the private foster carer's household and their capacity to care for the child or young person.
  - whether arrangements are in place to meet the child's health and educational needs.

- whether adequate and clear arrangements are in place between the private foster carer and the birth parents covering such areas as contact, financial support, decision making, health care and more.

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 any additional services to be provided.

Whilst Local Authorities do not formally approve or register private foster carers, Cumberland Council does have a duty to satisfy themselves that the welfare of a privately fostered child or young person within their area is being safeguarded and promoted.

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 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.

#### **4. How relevant staff will be trained to ensure they have appropriate understanding and expertise in relation to private fostering**

The Designated Manager for Private Fostering has lead responsibility for ensuring that relevant staff have appropriate understanding and expertise in relation to private fostering. The responsibilities include the review and updating of practice guidance and assessment documentation, undertaking briefing sessions of staff and maintaining awareness of private fostering.

The Designated Manager reports on activities undertaken to the Cumberland Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP) and the Director of Children and Family Wellbeing through the preparation and presentation of the Private Fostering Annual Report.

#### **5. The name of a person within Cumberland Council with expertise in private fostering, whom social workers can contact for advice**

The Designated Manager for Private Fostering is a statutory requirement. At the issue of this Statement of Purpose, the Designated Manager for Private Fostering is: Louise Kitcher, Cumberland Council –[louise.kitcher@cumberland.gov.uk](mailto:louise.kitcher@cumberland.gov.uk)



The Designated Manager has responsibility for co-ordinating the return of required Private Fostering data and also for producing the Annual Report on Private Fostering.

## **6. The name of the manager(s) who will sign-off decisions about the overall Suitability of an arrangement**

Safeguarding Managers with responsibility for the oversight of assessment and review of private fostering arrangements have delegated responsibility to come to a professional decision about the suitability of a private fostering arrangement, considering the statutory requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering, the Private Fostering Regulations 2005 and the Children Act 1989.

## **7. How awareness of the notification requirements will be promoted with other agencies and within the wider local community**

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on Local Authorities to promote public awareness in their area of the statutory notification requirements regarding private fostering. The Designated Manager along with Cumberland Safeguarding Children Partnership is responsible for developing a strategy to raise public and professional awareness about private fostering. This will be done using a range of media, including posters, leaflets, web articles and training opportunities. The Designated Manager reports annually on activities undertaken to raise awareness of Notification requirements the Cumberland Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Director of Children's and Family Wellbeing through the preparation and presentation of the Private Fostering Annual Report.

The Cumberland Safeguarding Children's Partnership is committed to maintaining high standards in relation to Private Fostering and to reviewing these on a regular basis.

Our aims are:

- to increase the notification of private arrangements by raising awareness of private fostering
- to provide guidance on our statutory responsibilities to members of the public, parents, children, all local authority and partner agencies
- to establish and assess the suitability of private fostering arrangements
- to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people living in such arrangements and that their needs are being met
- to provide support and advice to private foster carers, children/young people and their parents as appropriate

This is achieved by:

- Cumberland Council in conjunction with the Cumberland Safeguarding Children Partnership have a publicity plan to promote awareness of private fostering with agencies and the public.
- The Cumberland Safeguarding Children Partnership website has a private fostering information section, which includes leaflets for children, parents and private fostering carers to inform them of their rights and responsibilities.

- Cumberland Council has an Annual Private Fostering Action Plan (set against National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering) which is reviewed and updated quarterly.
- Cumberland Council undertakes a six monthly private fostering thematic audit to understand practice. Good practice and areas of learning are shared at Practice and Quality Clinics to inform practice development.
- There is a regular review of private fostering data within Childrens Social Care performance meetings to understand performance against statutory requirements. This ensures that the safety and wellbeing of children in private fostering arrangements is being monitored.
- Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) reviewing individual private fostering arrangements ensuring that the arrangement continues to meet their needs, and that children, parents and carers are receiving the support that they need.

## **8. How Cumberland Council will determine the suitability of all aspects of a private fostering arrangement in accordance with the regulations**

Cumberland Council practice guidance details the response that will be required when notifications are received.

On receipt of a referral or notification to the Cumberland Children Advice & Support Service (CCASS), screening will be undertaken and a decision made within one working day, resulting in allocation to the appropriate social work team.

A visit to the child, the proposed carer and carers home will be made within seven (7) working days of the notification or within six (6) weeks (and not more than 13 weeks) if the notification is given in advance. These visits will be undertaken by a qualified social worker tasked by a manager with conducting a full assessment of the suitability of the private fostering arrangement.

This assessment will be completed in the format of a 'Private Fostering Arrangement Assessment' in line with Cumberland Council's practice model. The assessment will also gather as much information as possible required under the regulations, including duration for the arrangement and the arrangements in place to safeguard the child. Where appropriate the child will be seen alone with their wishes and feeling gathered and understood. The assessment will also explore and assessment of the child's needs and the carers capacity to meet these needs and provide care.

The 'Private Fostering Arrangement Assessment' should be completed within 42 days of the Notification. A Child and Family Assessment may also be completed if in the course of the private fostering assessment it is identified that the child has additional needs that require support. This will include a consideration of:

- issues emerging from the declarations required by Private Foster Carers
- issues resulting from DBS Certificate of Disclosure for all adult Household Members
- issues resulting from Private Fostering Home Safety Checklist
- issues resulting from two non-relative references obtained



## **9. How Cumberland Council will satisfy itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in its area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted**

Children and young people cared for by Private Foster Carers will be visited frequently to ensure that they are safe and appropriately cared for. The frequency of visits will be determined by the circumstances of the child and family's circumstances and should take place whenever reasonably requested by the child or private foster carer.

Providing the child is assessed as safe and protected within the private fostering arrangements and that this is assessed to the best place for the child to be cared for, visits to the child will be carried out at a minimum of:

1. within 7 working days of the arrangement having commenced.
2. not less than every six weeks during the first year of the arrangement; and
3. not less than every twelve weeks after the first year of the arrangement.

The child will be seen alone on each visit unless this is not appropriate given the young age of the child or if the child does not wish to see the social worker alone. The child's bedroom will be seen on some visits. The child will be provided with written information in a format which is age appropriate to understand their status and rights. This will include details of their social worker and who to contact in an emergency. The details will also include information about advocacy services where the child will be referred with their consent.

The allocated social worker will engage with the child parents by ensuring they or any other person exercising parental responsibility are fully aware of what private fostering means for them and their child. This will include agreeing the duration of the arrangement and exploring financial arrangements; consent to medical treatment; school trips and other arrangements to maintain the care of their child throughout the arrangement. Cumberland Council will continue to promote and maintain connections between the child, their parent and network ensuring parents continue to remain in touch with the child and participating in their child's care.

The care of a child or young person in private foster care will be reviewed regularly. The review of private fostering arrangements is dependent upon whether the child or young person is receiving services additional to the ongoing support and monitoring provided to comply with The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 or not.

For all children living with private foster carers, the arrangement will be reviewed by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) at 3 months (with a 6-month mid-point review), with a second review within 12 months of the first review. Subsequent reviews are held at 12-month intervals for the duration of the arrangement.

The Review of the arrangement will cover:

- duration of placement
- financial arrangements
- contact arrangements

- how the child's health needs are being met
- how the child's educational needs are being met
- how the child's emotional social and behavioural needs are being met
- how the child's religious, racial, cultural and linguistic needs are being met
- role of parents in exercising their parental responsibility
- how the placement will be monitored by Children's Social Care until the next Review

As in all reviews, parents, children and carers will be actively encouraged to participate and contribute to the review and planning process. If an arrangement continues, the private foster carer's will be required to renew their DBS forms every 3 years.

Where the child or young person is also receiving additional services under a Child in Need Plan, the plan will be reviewed every month at the Child in Need Review Meeting in accordance with the locally determined Cumberland Council Practice Guidance.

## **10. The advice and support that will be available to private foster carers (including prospective private foster carers), parents and others with parental responsibility, and others concerned with the privately fostered child**

The allocated Social Worker assessing the suitability of the arrangement and ensuring the privately fostered child is safe and well cared for has responsibility to identify the advice and support required by the child, private foster carers, parents and others. During the assessment consideration will be given as to whether it is appropriate for the private foster carers to access specific training or information materials to support them in caring for the individual privately fostered child. Where appropriate the assessing Social Worker will offer advice on benefit entitlement, parenting strategies and techniques.

Cumberland Council will engage with the child's parents by ensuring they or any other person exercising parental responsibility are fully aware of what private fostering means for them and their child. This will include agreeing the duration of the arrangement and exploring financial arrangements; consent to medical treatment; school trips and other arrangements to maintain the care of their child throughout the arrangement. Cumberland Council will continue to promote and maintain connections between the child their parent and network ensuring parents continue to remain in touch with the child and participating in their child's care.

## **11. The information and support that will be available to privately fostered children**

Children and young people cared for by private foster carers will be visited frequently to ensure that they are safe and appropriately cared for. The child will be seen alone on each visit unless this is not appropriate having regard to the young age of the child or if the child does not wish to see the social worker alone. A privately fostered child or young person will be referred to the Cumberland offer for advocacy advice and support, with their consent.

## **12. Any training that may be available to private foster carers (including prospective private foster carers)**

During the assessment consideration will be given as to whether it is appropriate for the private foster carers to access specific training or information materials to support them in caring for the individual privately fostered child. This will be kept under review.

## **13. The role of other agencies in assisting Cumberland Council to carry out its duty under section 67(1) of the Children Act 1989, in particular through notifying the Council of an arrangement where they are not satisfied that the Council have been, or will be, notified of that arrangement**

Other agencies have a clear role in assisting the local authority to carry out its duty under section 67 (1) of the Children's Act 1989 through notification to the Local Authority, where they are not satisfied that the Local authority has or will be notified of that arrangement. The Designated Manager for Private Fostering along with the Cumberland Safeguarding Children Partnership is responsible for developing a strategy to raise multi-agency professional awareness about private fostering.

The action plan for communication strategy sits within Cumberland Partners Improving Practice Steering Group. The raising of awareness will be done using a range of media, including posters, leaflets, web articles and training opportunities. The Designated Manager reports annually on activities undertaken to raise awareness of Notification requirements to the Cumberland Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Director of Children and Family Wellbeing through the preparation and presentation of the Private Fostering Annual Report.

This written statement will be made available to all staff in Children's Social Care and will be reviewed annually by the Cumberland Partners Improving Practice Steering Group. Practice Guidance is available to all staff via the online procedure's portal.

## **14. Monitoring and Evaluation of Private Fostering within Cumberland**

The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 requires that:

The Local Authority provides a written report each year, for consideration by Local Safeguarding Children's Board and the Director of Children's Services, which includes an evaluation of the outcomes of its work in relation to privately fostered children within its area (at paragraph 7.9).

Accordingly, the Designated Manager for Private Fostering will prepare and present an 'Private Fostering Annual Report' to the Cumberland Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Director of Children and Family Wellbeing giving an overview of activities in relation to Privately Fostered children in Cumberland over a twelve-month period. The report will detail how the Cumberland Council has complied with its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and include how the welfare of privately fostered children has been satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted over the past 12 months. The report will also outline the activities which have been undertaken to promote local awareness of the notification requirements regarding children who are living in private fostering arrangements.

Additionally, the report will include a summary of the statistics provided by Cumberland Council to the Department of Education, as part of the annual Private Fostering Return (PF1) required of all local authorities concerning numbers of new notifications, arrangements and visiting patterns.

Following consideration by the Cumberland Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Director of Children and Family Wellbeing this report will be placed on the Cumberland Council website as a publicly accessible document.