

7 MINUTE BRIEFING

Private Fostering

Once a referral is made the department will visit the child and check the arrangement is suitable. A child can be removed from a carer if there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. The arrangement will be assessed jointly by a fostering social worker and child is social worker and both the carers and child will be allocated their own social workers.

We currently have 10 private fostering cases open to children's social care; this is a significant increase and highlights that there is an increased awareness of private fostering.

It is estimated that about 10,000 children and young people are privately fostered. In over 50% of cases councils are not being notified and when they are informed, it is nearly always after the arrangement has started.

This is a huge cause for concern, as privately fostered children without the protection provided by the council, are a particularly vulnerable group.

Notification of an arrangement should come from the parent, or carer, but professionals can help in identifying these arrangements and advising parents and carers of their responsibilities. If you know a child is being privately fostered, and you think the council is unaware, please notify us via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub on 0151 443 2600 or encourage the carer or parent to do so. You will not be breaching confidentiality.

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A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (that is 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.

Some Examples...

Children sent to this country, for education or health care, by parents who live overseas, a teenager living with a friend's family because they don't get on with their own family and children living with a friend's family because their parents' study or work involves unsociable hours, which make it difficult to use ordinary day care or after-school care.

The Private Fostering Arrangement is only legitimate if the parent gives informed consent; the Local Authority knows about and agrees with the Private Fostering arrangement. It is a legal requirement that Councils are notified of all private fostering arrangements. We will check that the children and young people are kept safe, well care for in appropriate accommodation and happy.

A child who is privately fostered is a child or young person looked after by someone other than a parent, step-parent, sibling, aunt, uncle or grandparent for a period of more than 28 days. Support and advice will be offered to all parties involved with a private fostering arrangement.

For more information regarding 7 minute briefings, please email sarah.herron@knowsley.gov.uk Knowsley Safeguarding Children Board, 2nd Floor, Nutgrove Villa, Westmorland Road, Huyton L36 6GA Tel: 0151 443 3859 www.knowsleyscb.org.uk