



Derby City Council

CORPORATE PARENTING SUB BOARD

2 December 2014

ITEM 9

Report of the Strategic Director of Children and Young People

Annual Report – Private Fostering 2013-14

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report provides details of the number of Private Fostering arrangements reported to the Local Authority and the statutory responses to these.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To acknowledge the content of the report and note the recommendations which are being pursued by Council staff and partners to Derby Safeguarding Children Board.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is a statutory requirement to produce this report annually.
- 3.2 Privately fostered children are potentially vulnerable and have a statutory entitlement to services to assess their needs and the suitability of their care arrangements, and take steps to protect them if necessary. The profile of private fostering was raised following the death of Victoria Climbié.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 Please see attached report (appendix 2)

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 The under-reporting of private fostering has been raised in previous years and is an issue nationally.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Kaye Howells Alison Parkin Liz Moore Hazel Lymberry Andrew Bunyan, Kay Dosanjh
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IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

1.1 None

Legal

2.1 This report is compliant with statutory requirements

Personnel

3.1 None

IT

4.1 None

Equalities Impact

5.1 None

Health and Safety

6.1 None

Environmental Sustainability

7.1 None

Property and Asset Management

8.1 None

Risk Management

9.1 The believed under-reporting of PF is a risk to the Council and the LSCB. The identified actions aim to improve reporting and demonstrate attempt to resolve this

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

10.1 Safeguarding is a Corporate priority.

**DERBY CITY COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT ON PRIVATE FOSTERING 2013-14**

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report provides details of the number of Private Fostering arrangements reported to the Local Authority and the statutory responses to these.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 DSCB and Derby CYPD acknowledge the content of the report and consider its conclusions for future development.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 There is a statutory duty for Local Authorities to report to the DfE upon their Private Fostering numbers on an annual basis. Whilst numbers are low in Derby, there have been activities that are hoped to promote awareness amongst professionals and increase the numbers identified.
- 3.2 As raised in the last annual report there is still an outstanding need to increase the reporting of private fostering arrangements to ensure that these children and young people are in receipt of effective and good quality services as identified within National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.
- 3.3 This cohort of children and young people has been included in this year's Children's Social Care Case File Quality Audit Procedure and this will continue.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 came into effect on 1st July 2005. These provide guidance as to the regulatory responsibilities of Local Authorities in responding to those children living in their area, subject to private fostering arrangements. There had been some ongoing concerns that such children were not being identified and therefore not appropriately safeguarded.

Definition of a Private Fostering Arrangement:-

A Private Fostering arrangement is essentially one that is made privately (that is to say without the involvement of the Local Authority)

Private Fostering is where a child or young person under the age of 16 is cared for by anyone other than a family member or close relative for more than a period of 28 days. This applies up to the age of 18 for a disabled child.

Private foster carers may be from extended family members such as a cousin or great aunt/uncle or parents cousins. However, a person who is a relative under the Children Act 1989 i.e. a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of full blood or half blood or by marriage) or step parent will NOT be a private foster carer.

A cohabitee of the mother or father of the child would not qualify as a relative.

4.2 Numbers of Private Fostering Arrangements in Derby.

Local Authorities are required to submit an annual Private Fostering return (PF1). This was introduced on 1st April 2004. The following table provides information required by the Department of Education.

	2005/ 06	2006/ 07	2007/ 08	2008/ 09	2009/ 10	2010/ 11	2011/ 12	2012/ 13	2013/ 14
No of new private fostering arrangements that began during the year	15	11	8	5	2	5	5	10	6
By Gender									
Male	6	3	3	0	0	1	0	4	3
Female	9	8	5	5	2	4	5	6	3
By Age									
Under 1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
1 to 5	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	0
6 to 9	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
10 to 15	13	8	6	5	2	5	3	8	3
16 and over	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	2

Historically the reported numbers of privately fostered children has been low. There has been a reduction of 40% in the number of new reported arrangements in comparison to the previous year. The numbers appear disappointing given the efforts that have been made to raise awareness amongst all professionals and staff. Despite numbers being low this is in line with the experiences of other neighbouring authorities and nationally little progress has been made in increasing the number of notified private fostering arrangements (Ofsted, 2014). Most regions nationally with the exception of 3 saw a fall in the number of notifications in 2012 compared to 2011 and this trend appears to be continuing this year within Derby, highlighting that under reporting remains a key issue.

4.3 Breakdown by gender, age and ethnicity.

	2007/ 08	2008/ 09	2009/ 10	2010/ 11	2011/ 12	2012/ 13	2013/ 14
No of new private fostering arrangements that began during the year	8	5	2	5	5	10	6
By Gender							
Male	3	0	0	1	0	4	3
Female	5	5	2	4	5	6	3
By Age							
Under 1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
1 to 5	0	0	0	0	1	2	0
6 to 9	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
10 to 15	6	5	2	5	3	8	3
16 and over	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
By Ethnicity							
Asian - or Asian British Pakistani	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Asian Or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black or Black British	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Dual Heritage – White/ Black Caribbean	1	0	0	0	2	1	0
White - Other European	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
White British	6	5	2	5	3	7	6

Of the 41 private fostering arrangements that started over the last 7 years:-

73% were female

78% were children aged between 10 and 15 years

82.92% were of White British ethnicity

As previously the vast majority of private fostering arrangements in 2013/14 are female children aged between 10 and 15 years old and of White British origin.

Currently Derby do not record the reason for the arrangement (e.g. teenager is asked to leave, parent in prison/homeless/hospital, avoid accommodation, family dysfunction etc) in an explicit or transparent way.

Of the 12 Local Authorities that were inspected during 2011-2013 only a third were judged as being good (Ofsted, 2014). Those Authorities judged as evidencing exemplary practice have developed their information collection and recording processes as a means of improving self evaluation. For example, North Yorkshire kept a record of where notifications were being generated from (schools, GP, parents/carers. Police, language schools, health professionals or internally) and were able to confidently state which strategies were effective in increasing notifications. According to Ofsted's 2014 report the vast majority of notifications continue to be from professionals with there being limited evidence of a rise in public or self referrals as a

result of a 'public awareness raising' campaigns. If Derby is to increase the number of reported private fostering arrangements the routes of notifications needs to be better understood to inform future strategic planning processes.

4.4 Quality assurance

Visiting Frequency and Reviews

The table below provides details of the frequency of visits undertaken following notification. The Department of Education requires the annual return (PF1) to include an audit of effectiveness and quality of the services provided. Frequency data (comparable to previous years) is detailed below.

	2007/ 08	2008/ 09	2009/ 10	2010/ 11	2011/ 12	2012/ 13	2013/ 14
2013/14 No of initial visits during year	8	5	2	4	6	10	6
No of visits within 7 days of arrangement	6	2	2	3	6	10	5
% of visits within 7 days of arrangement	75%	40%	100%	75%	100%	100%	83%
% of arrangements under 1 year that were visited at intervals of not more than 6 weeks	75%	40%	100%	100%	87.5%	70%	83%
% of arrangements over 1 year that were visited at intervals of not more than 12 weeks	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	85%

Visiting frequency

8 private fostering arrangements continued on from the previous year but closed before 31st March 2013. 1 case closed within 2 months and 7 cases remained open for longer than 12 months, with 6 out of 7 (85%) visited at frequency of no more than 12 weeks. There was a 15% fall in comparison to the previous year as 1 case had not been visited within the required timescales however upon closer inspection the case had been incorrectly identified as a private fostering arrangement (young person was placed with a step parent).

5 out of 6 children notified to be in new private fostering situations had an initial private fostering visit conducted within 7 days of being notified. 5 out of 6 children were then visited within 6 weekly timescales. Overall Derby has improved its performance in respect of 6 weekly statutory visiting timescales within the last 3 years with a rise this year in comparison to last year. Of the 6 new cases only one case was not visited within required timescales. Visits to children who remained in private fostering arrangements longer than one year appears to have fallen however the figures are distorted due to the incorrect status of one child.

Of the 6 new arrangements 3 also ended during this period, so a total of 11 private fostering arrangements ended during the year April 2013-March 2014. 4 of which ended as young people (who have no recorded disability) reached an age beyond 16.

Reviews

Of the 8 cases that carried on from the previous year but are now closed only 57% were reviewed. This is concerning as there was no independent review record in place to report on the suitability, progress, education, health needs and views of these children and young people and their carers. 66% (4 out of 6) of new notified arrangements have been reviewed demonstrating a marginal increase. However one review was scheduled for May 2014 but aborted as the child became Looked After in January 2014 therefore increasing the overall percentage to 83%. The other had not been booked in for a Review despite notification on the 24th January 2014 and this being raised as an action from a Case Audit in October 2013. This case has been chased up by the CIN Review Team and a Review is booked for 29th July 2014.

Derby has a well established independent reviewing system in place for Children in Need which includes this group of young people. Overall far more children are being reviewed than previously and as part of developments made by the QA service this year private fostered children are being given priority and will be independently reviewed at intervals of 6 months until the arrangement for the child ceases. Additionally as part of the update to CYPD procedures in April 2014 initial reviews should be booked within 28 days of the private fostering arrangement being approved. This practice will ensure that all children being reviewed have had a private fostering assessment.

Further quality assurance findings

It was previously noted that within social care these arrangements are not always distinguished as private fostering arrangements when practitioners are recording on CCM, there is some evidence that this continues despite workers being reminded about correcting case status. An internal SAV conducted in June 2014 also uncovered at least 2 that cases held in MAT teams which despite being correctly identified as private fostering arrangements had not been escalated to social care and therefore are not being treated in accordance with statutory guidance.

A private fostering case file audit was completed in October 2013 and there was evidence of purposeful social work intervention and effective involvement of the child/young person, their family and private foster carers. Managerial oversight was also a positive theme. Of the 4 cases audited there were 2 cases where there was a Child in Need Plan found on the file, one case had proceeded to the granting of an Adoption Order and in one case the Plan was missing. Reviews had been completed on 3 out of 4 cases audited.

4.5 **Actions undertaken and planned**

The following actions have already been undertaken by the Quality Assurance Service;

- New practice guidance for privately fostered children- a working tool kit for practitioners adapted to include the use of the single assessment
- Private Fostering arrangements have been updated in the CYP procedures and referred to in the revised safeguarding procedures and threshold document
- Leaflets have been created for children/young people, their parents and private foster carers explaining their rights and responsibilities
- Team Managers and social care practitioners reminded about need to change case status and the correct way to record private fostering visits on CCM. This will be reinforced through locality Workshops.
- Flow chart developed to easily identify privately fostered children which also highlights key responsibilities of other agencies in notifying Derby Social Care of such an arrangement, cascaded to the GP Lead Professional and Educational Hub.
- This cohort of children and young people were included in the Children's Social Care Case File Quality Audit Procedure and a further audit for this year is planned
- Child in Need Reviewing Team are keeping a database of all private fostering arrangements to ensure that these children are being regularly reviewed and have a Child in Need Plan.
- Service Managers from the locality teams and LAC teams have been asked to identify privately fostered cases held in their teams though the response was poor.

In a bid to further improve Derby's responses to privately fostered children the following actions are planned imminently with a target completion date between 3-6 months;

- Targeting of MAT Teams to ensure privately fostered children are being worked and reviewed as Children in Need. Practice Lead has contacted MAT Team Managers and offered to deliver workshops across all locality teams to ensure workers are aware of what constitutes as a private fostering arrangement and action required to escalate to social care for assessment. Team Managers have also been asked to identify cases held within their localities.
- The offer of workshops has been extended to include the Lighthouse to ensure that the most vulnerable children are identified

- Child in Need Reports for privately fostered children to be adapted to include collecting information about the reason for the arrangement, the source of the notification, and the frequency of visits to the child/young person so this can be checked from a QA perspective at each Review.
- Following discussion at the Safeguarding Board, letters will be sent again to Schools, including Language Schools and General Practitioners within Derby requesting they identify children/young people living within private fostering arrangements. Schools will be asked to identify children in private fostering arrangements as part of their admission process and annual returns. Guidance clarifying responsibilities of professionals within private fostering will be enclosed.

4.6 **Conclusion**

Overall the numbers of privately fostered children have been low since 2005/06 until 2012 when notifications increased by 50% which may have been attributable to the publicity campaigns and integration of private fostering within multi- agency training courses. However, despite significant focus on this from the QA service and through the Safeguarding Board (see below) there has been a 40% reduction in the reporting of new arrangements when compared to last year. This suggests that despite efforts to raise awareness of professionals' responsibilities it has not had the desired impact, and it is likely there are unknown private fostering arrangements within the city of Derby.

Once identified, however, there is evidence of good work in the majority of cases. Work is compliant with regulations in the majority, though not all, cases, and those children are being well supported.

4.7 Further Recommendations

- Improve means of effective self evaluation by collecting the correct types of information. Whilst this information can be collected manually by Eastmead (through recording information within CiN Reports) and integrating data into the existing database, support from IT systems to self generate this information is required.
- There is an expanding population of Eastern European communities within certain parts of Derby and it is possible that children are arriving in the area due to economic reasons but remain hidden; further work is needed to improve engagement.
- There is existing information contained on Derby.gov.uk for the general public about private fostering. The Derby Safeguarding Board also has some information on their website and both sites would benefit from being updated
- An e learning training resource has been developed by the County and whilst professionals are directed to this resource within multi agency training events a far greater audience will be reached if a link is added to the DSCB website and the resource is circulated to CYPD Staff and key partner agencies.

Kay Dosanjh, 10th July 2014