



# Private Fostering: Statement of Purpose

## Getting it Right for Privately Fostered Children

### Statement Summary

This statement of purpose sets out the definition of a Privately Fostered Child and the Trust's responsibilities.

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**Version:** 1.2

**Date:** June, 2017  
December, 2018  
(contact details updated)

**Review Date:** February, 2019

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Registered Company: England and Wales:  
9487106



A hands-on approach to help children in Slough be  
..... Safe, Secure and Successful

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## Introduction

Slough Children's Services Trust is committed to supporting the upbringing of children within and by their families of origin, wherever possible.

While the Trust fully discharges its responsibilities in respect of private fostering, it seeks to do so in a way that is supportive of children, young people, parents and carers. The Trust does not intend to make judgements about, or interfere in the arrangements that parents make for the care of their children, except where this is necessary to safeguard and ensure the welfare of privately fostered children.

### **We will work together with children, young people, parents and carers to ensure that:**

- Children and young people are provided with high quality care that meets their needs
- Private foster carers are provided with support and training to help them to provide high quality care and are able to seek help and guidance from the Trust
- Birth parents feel able to seek help and guidance from the Trust.

The Trust recognises that privately fostered children are a diverse and potentially vulnerable group. Our aim is to get it right for privately fostered children in Slough and create a supportive culture where birth parents, others with parental responsibility and carers feel comfortable in notifying the Trust of private fostering arrangements.

The National Minimum Standards for private fostering apply to Local Authorities (and, in our case, to the Trust). This document ensures that the Trust meets National Minimum Standard 1, which requires that the local authority has a written statement or plan setting out its duties and functions in relation to private fostering. This document defines what is meant by a private fostering arrangement; the requirement for all private fostering arrangements to be notified to the local authority; the assessment process; and the support and advice offered to parents, private foster carers and privately fostered children within the Trust.

### **The Trust has three functions in relation to Private Fostering:**

1. To raise public and professional awareness about private fostering and the legal requirement to notify the Trust about any actual or planned private fostering arrangements.
2. To promote the information advice and support that are available to: privately fostered children and young people; private foster carers and prospective private foster carers; parents and those with parental responsibility.
3. To respond to any private fostering notifications, assess the arrangements and to provide support to the children or young people and adults involved.

### **The Trust has a clear and comprehensive written procedure for assessing private fostering arrangements, which is available online:**

[http://sloughchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p\\_private\\_fost.html?zoom\\_highlight=Private+Fostering](http://sloughchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_private_fost.html?zoom_highlight=Private+Fostering)

Notification of a Private Fostering Arrangement should be made to First Contact where it will be processed and referred for assessment by a Social Worker. Private fostering arrangements that are assessed as being suitable will be managed by the Family Placement Service, which will allocate a social worker to the child and also provide advice and support to his/her parent(s) and private foster carers. Any future safeguarding concerns in respect of the child will be referred back to the relevant Social Work Hub.

## The Definition of a Privately Fostered Child

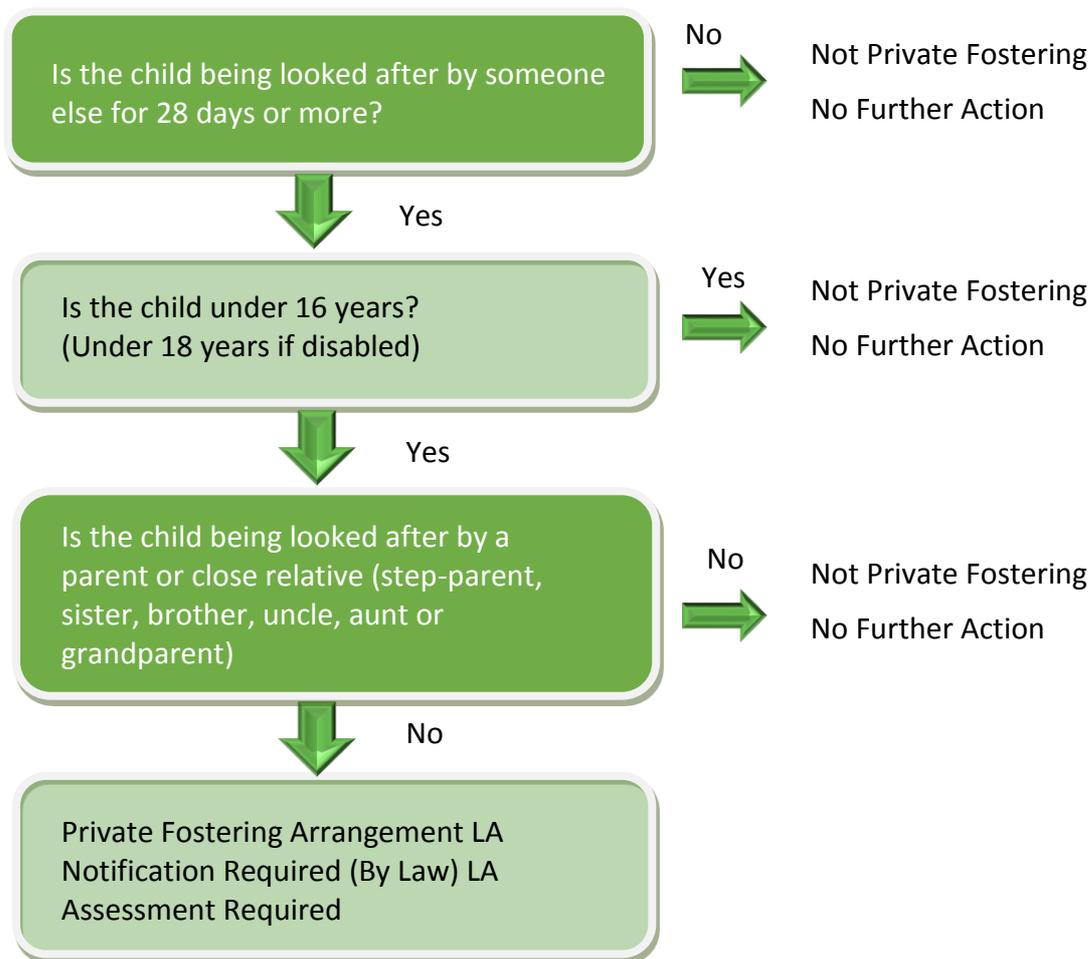
The legal definition of a privately fostered child is found in Section 66 of The Children Act 1989 and is described in Replacement Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering.

A private fostering arrangement is essentially one that is made privately (that is to say without the involvement of the 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 full or half blood or by marriage) or a step-parent cannot be a private foster carer.

A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for him/her has done so for a period of less than 28 days and does not intend to do so for a period longer than 28 days. The 28 day period is intended to ensure that families are able to make arrangements for a child to stay with their extended family or friends without interference from the local authority.

## Determining if a care arrangement is Private Fostering



## Examples of Private Fostering

Each private fostering arrangement will be different, depending on the child's circumstances and needs. Examples of private fostering arrangements include those below.

### Local children living apart from their families

- 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
- Children whose parents are not able to care for them (due to, illness, substance abuse, divorce or imprisonment) and have made alternative arrangements
- Single parents who are in hospital for four weeks or more, planned or unplanned, and who arrange for the care of their child/children with adults who are not close relatives.

### Children staying with friends because of family difficulties

- Children staying with another family because their parents have separated or divorced
- A teenager “sofa surfing” at a friend’s house because they don’t get on with their own family
- A teenager living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend.

### Children with parents overseas

- Children from overseas staying with a host family while attending a language school
- Children from overseas sent to this country, for education or health care, by parents who live overseas
- Overseas students at boarding school who do not return home during the holidays and stay with a host family in the UK.

### Asylum seekers and refugees

- Unaccompanied children who arrive in the UK seeking asylum
- Children who arrive in the UK seeking asylum travelling with adults who are not close relatives and might not be known to them
- Children who are trafficked into the UK.

### Children brought into the UK for adoption

- Children brought into the UK to be adopted will be privately fostered until formal notice of intention to apply to adopt is given.

## The Trust’s Duties and Functions

The Children Act 1989 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 place a duty upon the Trust to ensure that the welfare of privately fostered children notified to the Trust is being safeguarded and promoted, and give advice to those caring for them.

The duties of the Trust, where it is not satisfied that the welfare of a privately fostered child is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted, will apply in the case of children who are proposed to be privately fostered.

### **The Trust is also required to undertake the following actions in respect of private fostering:**

- Raise public awareness in Slough about the notification requirements
- Develop a programme of communication activities, including for Trust staff

- Develop a range of up to date publicity materials
- Make available information on the notification requirements
- Involve other agencies in awareness-raising activities
- Provide advice to those parents, persons with parental responsibility, private foster carers and those proposing to privately foster a child.
- Consider the overall developmental needs, in co-operation with other relevant agencies, of a disabled child who is privately fostered.

The Trust must also consider whether a privately fostered child is also a Child in Need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and consider where support and services can be provided to increase the capacity of the private foster carer to meet the child's needs.

The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering (2005) set out a number of standards to be met by all local authorities (and Trusts) in discharging their duties.

**These standards cover the following areas:**

- Producing a written statement, which set out the local authority/trust's duties and functions in relation to private fostering (this document)
- Promoting awareness of notification requirements, responding to notifications and dealing with un-notified arrangements that come to their attention
- Ensuring the welfare of privately fostered children is safeguarding and promoted
- Providing advice and support to privately fostered children and their parents and foster carers, including prospective private foster carers
- Monitoring the way in which the local authority complies with its duties and function in relation to private fostering.

## Training for Relevant Staff

Private Fostering awareness is included within the Trust's safeguarding children training at both Level 1 (Basic) and Level 2 (Targeted).

Level 1 Safeguarding Children training is undertaken by a wide variety of Trust staff and others in statutory and voluntary organisations that come into contact with children and families. Level 2 Safeguarding Children training is undertaken by staff with a designated role or responsibility for safeguarding or child protection.

The Trust and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board have also commissioned online training to enable multi-agency practitioners and managers to understand private fostering and their responsibilities for notifying the local authority of private fostering arrangements. This training requires no previous knowledge of private fostering and can be freely accessed by all staff and volunteers via the Internet.

## Named Person with Private Fostering Expertise

Local Authorities/Trusts are required to provide the name of a person with expertise in private fostering, whom social workers can contact for advice.

### **Slough Children's Services Trust's Named Person with expertise in private fostering is:**

Amita Sharma

Social Worker

Hub 13

Child Protection and Court Service

[amita.sharma@scstrust.co.uk](mailto:amita.sharma@scstrust.co.uk)

## Named Manager for Private Fostering

Local Authorities/Trusts are required to provide the name of the manager(s) who will sign-off decisions about the overall suitability of private fostering arrangements.

### **The Trust's Named Manager for private fostering is:**

Vrushali Pendharkar

Service Manager, Child Protection and Court Service

[Vrushali.Pendharkar@scstrust.co.uk](mailto:Vrushali.Pendharkar@scstrust.co.uk)

### **In the absence of the Named Manager, private fostering decisions will be signed-off by:**

Eric De Mello

Head of Operations

[eric.deMello@scstrust.co.uk](mailto:eric.deMello@scstrust.co.uk)

## Promoting Awareness of Notification Requirements

The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering require local authorities to have a programme of communication activities, including for the public, local authority staff and other agencies.

### **Promoting awareness with other agencies**

The Trust is required to provide targeted and current information to those who may come into contact with privately fostered children (including teachers, health visitors, nurses, doctors, housing officers and community workers) about their role in assisting the local authority to carry out its duties in respect of private fostering.

The Trust promotes private fostering awareness to partner agencies through the LSCB, direct communications with schools and partners and through publicity and fostering events. The Trust website also carries relevant information.

### Promoting awareness with the local community

The Trust promotes awareness of private fostering and the notification requirements with families and the local community in a number of ways.

**The Trust website has a page on private fostering which provides information to partners / stakeholders and the public about private fostering which includes:**

- An explanation of private fostering with examples of why children may be in private fostering arrangements.
- The duty to refer to local authority (Trust)
- Contact details / how to notify
- How children in private foster care are monitored.

<https://www.scstrust.co.uk/privatefostering>

**A media campaign will include advertisements and editorial in online and print publications using the following:**

- The Citizen (Slough Borough Council's free residents' magazine)
- Local newspapers
- Local radio stations
- Digital advertising
- SCST social media (Twitter and Facebook) and SCST website.

The Trust will also engage with the community, faith and women's groups in Slough in order to raise awareness about private fostering and the notifications requirement.

The Trust's Statement of Purpose for privately fostered children provides more detailed information and is reviewed and updated annually.

### Determining the suitability of private fostering arrangements

The Trust will respond promptly to all notifications of private fostering arrangements it receives. A social worker will visit all privately fostered children and young people during which the social worker must speak to them alone. The social worker will also make an assessment of the suitability of the private foster carer, or proposed private foster carer, including their parenting capacity and the suitability of the accommodation. The visit and assessment must be completed within 7 days of receipt of the private fostering notification.

As part of the assessment of suitability, all private foster carers and other members of the household over 16 must consent to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check on them being obtained. Assessments will be signed off by the Named Manager or in his/her

absence the Head of Operations within 45 working days or as soon as the outcome of the DBS check is known, whichever is sooner.

If a private foster carer, proposed private foster carer or member of the household over 16 refuses to cooperate with any of the checks they will not be recommended as suitable to privately foster the child. If during the assessment, including the DBS check, the social worker finds any information that may preclude the person from fostering a child then a report should be prepared for the Named Manager.

Where information that may preclude a person from fostering a child is discovered during an assessment of a private fostering arrangement that is already in place then the Named Manager must be informed and child protection procedures followed.

## Safeguarding Privately Fostered Children

All privately fostered children and young people will have an allocated social worker who will undertake statutory visits in order to safeguard them and ensure their welfare. These visits will be made at least every six weeks during the first year and at least every three months thereafter; more frequent visits may be made if deemed necessary by the social worker and his/her manager. The child or private foster carers may also request additional visits.

During the visits the social worker will ensure that the child is developing satisfactorily and that his/her needs are being met, and speak to the child in order to ascertain his/her wishes. The social worker will speak to the child alone unless the child does not wish to or it is not appropriate because the child is too young.

Private foster carers will be given advice in order to enhance their ability to care for a child or young person and support services will be made available to them by the Family Placement Service. Private foster carers will be encouraged to promote contact, where safe, between the child or young person and his/her parents, siblings, extended family and significant others.

The suitability of the private foster carer should be reviewed annually by the social worker and reported to the Named Manager.

## Advice and Support for Private Foster Carers and Parents

Private foster carers, prospective private foster carers, parents and others with parental responsibility will be provided with ongoing advice and information by the child's allocated social worker. The Family Placement Service will also provide information about health services, voluntary and community sectors groups that can offer support and access to support groups and training opportunities. Information and materials for private foster carers and parents will be reviewed and updated regularly.

**The Trust's FIRST (Family Information and Resources Support Team) will provide information about universal services for children and families in Slough to private foster carers, including:**

- Childcare;
- Children's centres;

- Early years learning;
- Schools and colleges;
- Adult learning;
- Healthcare; and
- Leisure activities.

### Slough **FIRST (Family Information and Resources Support Team)**

Telephone: 01753 476589

<https://www.sloughfamilyservices.org.uk/kb5/sloughcst/directory/home.page>

## Information and Support for Privately Fostered Children

Children and young people who are privately fostered will receive a range of information and support from the Trust. Every privately fostered child and young person will be provided with the following information in their first language and in a format appropriate to their age and level of understanding:

- The reasons they are in private foster care;
- Details of their private foster carer;
- Their private foster carer's responsibilities;
- The meaning of their privately fostered status;
- Their right to be safeguarded;
- The name and contact details for their social worker; and
- Details of the advocacy service for children and young people.

Unless the young person has a disability, private fostering arrangements will end when s/he is aged 16 years. Where the young person remains with the private foster carers after this age and requires continuing support s/he will be assisted as a Child in Need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

Children with a disability who are privately fostered and over the age of 16 years (and under 21 years) will be offered support, advice and assistance with their transition to independence and adulthood.

## Training for Private Foster Carers and Parents

Training for private foster carers, including prospective private foster carers, will be provided on a case-by-case basis and will depend on the needs of the foster carers or prospective foster carers. For those already caring this will include the needs that arise from the assessment and social worker visits.

All private foster carers, prospective private foster carers, parents and other with parental responsibility will be provided with the opportunity to attend parenting programmes.

In certain cases private foster carers may be referred to specific adult learning or training opportunities, where this is necessary to address identified needs.

## The Role of Other Agencies

Those who have day-to-day contact with children and families – particularly workers in universal education and health services – are most likely to identify private fostering. The Trust’s partners have a duty to notify the Trust about private fostering arrangements to enable it to carry out its statutory functions.

The responsibility of other agencies to notify the Trust of private fostering arrangements is underpinned by the Replacement Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering and the duty cooperate in Section 10 of the Children Act 2004.

**It is essential that all workers who come into contact with children and families:**

- Are able to recognise private fostering arrangements;
- Understand the private fostering notification requirements; and
- Can make a notification to the local authority.

All partners have access to the private fostering online training and are provided with information about private fostering and the notification requirements

Partners should ensure that the groups of staff outlined below complete the online training and have access to the information – including this document.

<b>Staff Group</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Teachers and Lecturers Support Staff (e.g. Teaching Assistants) Pastoral Staff (e.g. Family Workers) Administrative Staff (e.g. receptionists) Senior Managers (e.g. Heads and Deputies) Governors	Primary, Secondary and Special Schools, Pupil Referral Units, Alternative Provision centres and Further Education establishments.
Health Visitors School Nurses	Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
General Practitioners Practice Nurses Receptionists Practice Managers	NHS England
Emergency Doctors (A&E/MIU) Emergency Nurses (A&E/MIU) Midwives Paediatric Nurses Paediatricians Relevant support and para-medical staff Administrative Staff (e.g. receptionists)	Heatherwood and Wexham Park NHS Foundation Trust
Community Police Officers Police Community Support Officers Relevant Police Staff	Thames Valley Police
Probation Officers	Thames Valley Probation Trust

Managers Staff Volunteers	Voluntary and community organisations in Slough that work with children and families.
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Slough Local Safeguarding Children Board (SLSCB) also has an important role in raising professional awareness of private fostering and the requirement for professionals in partner agencies to notify the Trust of private fostering arrangements.

Within Standard 7 of the National Minimum Standards for private fostering, the local authority is required to report annually to the LSCB on how it satisfies itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in its area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted, including how it cooperates with other agencies in this connection.

The Trust’s annual report to SLSCB will also include details of staff training in private fostering completed by staff in the local authority and all partners; the numbers of private fostering notifications received from each agency; and selected private fostering case studies. Partners will be asked to disseminate the annual report through their organisations and consider it at management and staff meetings in order to raise awareness of private fostering.

**Replacement Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering**

Education, health and other professionals should notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement that comes to their attention, where they are not satisfied that the local authority have been, or will be, notified of the arrangement, so that 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. This, of course, is a matter of good practice.

**Children Act 2004**

Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 requires each local authority to make arrangements to promote cooperation between partners and such other persons or bodies working with children in the local authority’s area as the authority considers appropriate. The arrangements are to be made with a view to improving the wellbeing of children in the authority’s area, which includes protection from harm and neglect.