

Private Fostering Policy

Review frequency: Annual

Approval: Trust Board

1. Introduction and Context

Most children and young people spend some time away from their home and stay with relatives and friends. Some of these children and young people may stay for longer and therefore special measures may apply.

If a child or young person is under 16 - or under 18 and is disabled - and living with a family member or friend for longer than 28 days, this is seen as Private Fostering. This does not have to be continuous and periods staying with family members or friends that add up to 28 days or longer in any period this may then be seen as Private Fostering. Private Fostering is an arrangement made by the parent with the carer who has agreed to look after the child or young person on their behalf. In some circumstances they may not have agreed to this or circumstances of their living arrangements raises concerns.

1.1 Our Responsibilities

Each LEAD Academy recognises its responsibilities for knowing about Private Fostering, to know how to identify a child or young person who may be in a Private Fostering arrangement and to have a duty to report this to the Local Authority if it is believed the child or young person is possibly living in such an arrangement.

This policy should be read in conjunction with “How to Identify a Privately Fostered Child” Appendix A, found at the end of this policy.

1.2 Our Policy

Under the Children Act, 1989, the Local Authority has a duty to make sure the arrangement that the child or young person is in will provide for the child’s or young person’s needs and safeguard his or her welfare.

Each L.E.A.D. Academy will ensure all staff, governors and volunteers in the school are aware of this duty.

If a member of staff, governor or volunteer becomes aware that a child or young person may be living in a Private Fostering arrangement it is the responsibility of that person to report this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and this person may need to make further enquiries to try and establish this.

The DSL should seek advice from Children’s Social Care as to whether the child or young person is a privately fostered child under the regulations. If so, a referral must be made to Children’s Social Care.

Essential information for making a referral includes:

- Full names and dates of birth for the child
- Address and daytime phone numbers for the current carer including mobiles
- The child's address and phone number
- Whereabouts of the child (and siblings)
- Child and family's ethnic origin
- Child and family's main language
- Actions taken and people contacted
- Special needs of the child, including need for an accredited interpreter, accredited sign language interpreter or other language support
- A clear indication of the family's knowledge of the referral and whether they have consented to the sharing of confidential information
- The details of the person making the referral

Other information that may be required in a referral about a possible Privately Fostered child or young person:

- Address and daytime phone number of the parent/parental responsibility holder
- Address and phone numbers of any other family members
- Any other helpful information about the parent/parental responsibility to assist an understanding of why this child or young person is not living with them

The school will work together with the Local Authority to help safeguard and promote the child's or young person's safety and welfare.

2. Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities

All staff, volunteers and governors have responsibilities for the following:

- To ask parents/carers questions around their relationship with the child or young person if this is unclear, confusing or concerning
- To follow up any discussion with a child or young person about their living arrangement which is unclear, confusing or concerning
- To have robust consent/trips/outings letters which clearly define the child's relationship to the adult giving consent

If a child or young person is living in a Private Fostering arrangement:

- To work with the Local Authority to ensure the child's or young person's needs are being met, to monitor and report to ensure the safety and welfare of that child or young person whilst being privately fostered

- To assist with advising and supporting the carer to undertake their duties whilst the child or young person is living in such an arrangement.

3. Management of the Policy

The DSL will become familiar with this policy and ensure all staff, governors and volunteers are aware and familiar with the legal requirements and duties.

The DSL will endeavour to read and provide information on Private Fostering to school staff on a regular basis.

The DSL will undertake the L.E.A.D. Training module made available on Private Fostering and record the date that the training was completed.

The Headteacher will ensure that Private Fostering forms part of staff safeguarding induction and is used in safeguarding training in the school.

The Headteacher will report on issues relating to Private Fostering and any impact for the school to the Governing Body.

The Governing Body will oversee the policy, ensure its implementation and review its content on an annual basis.

Appendix A

PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENTS

How to identify a private fostering arrangement and what to do next
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A privately fostered child is one who is:

- Under the age of 16 (18 if disabled)
- Living with someone other than a parent or person with parental responsibility or close relative or step parent
- With the intention that it last for 28 days or longer – either as a single episode or cumulatively

This means:

- The local authority is **not** involved in making the arrangement The child is **not** in care

There is a duty under the Children Act to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement, this duty applies to:

- Any parent or other person with parental responsibility proposing to place a child in a private fostering arrangement
- Any person proposing to privately foster a child
- Any other person involved in the proposed arrangement
- Education, health and other professionals who become aware of a possible private fostering arrangement where they are not satisfied that the local authority has been, or will be, notified of the arrangement

Universal children’s services such as primary care, health visiting, school nursing, schools and early years, voluntary sector are especially well placed to identify children who are not living with a parent who may be privately fostered. Below is a simple question and answer format for checking whether or not this may be the case.

How to identify a possible private fostering arrangement

Is the child aged under 16 years (18 if disabled)?	Yes/No	If no, the child cannot be privately fostered
Is he/she living with a parent/person with parental responsibility or a close relative – aunt, uncle, step-parent, grandparent, sibling (but not a cousin or greataunt/uncle)?	Yes/No	If yes, the child cannot be privately fostered
Is he/she adopted or in care, subject to special guardianship or a residence order?	Yes/No	If yes, the child cannot be privately fostered
Has the child been living with a person providing accommodation for 28 days or longer, or is the child planning to, or is likely to, be living with the person providing accommodation for 28 days or longer – either as a single stay or cumulatively?	Yes/No	If yes, the child can or may be privately fostered