## **Bolton Safeguarding Children**

Do you know if a child you are working with is privately fostered?



Identifying and responding to private fostering arrangements for people working with children



This leaflet helps practitioners identify and respond to private fostering arrangements.

## What Is Private Fostering?

Private fostering occurs when a child is:

- Under 16 (or under 18 if disabled).
- Cared for by someone, not their parent or close relative.
- Cared for 28 days or more.

The period a child is cared for by the private foster carer should be continuous but can include the occasional short break.

Close relatives include:

- Step-parents.
- Grandparents.
- Brothers and sisters.
- Uncles and aunts.

There is an estimated 10,000 privately fostered children in England and Wales.

## How can a Private Fostering Arrangement be identified?

Be alert to signs which may include:

- A child is regularly seen with a new or unknown carer.
- Mentions of not staying at their usual home.
- Carer is vague about child's health, routines, or history.

### When meeting a child:

- Ask about their relationship with the carer.
- · Request key documents (e.g. birth certificate).
- Inquire about the home situation.

## Why Must Bolton Children's Services be notified?

Privately fostered children are not in state care. While many arrangements are suitable, some children can experience loneliness, confusion, anxiety and an increased risk of harm.

#### Who Should Refer the Private Fostering Arrangement?

The duty to refer a Private Fostering Arrangement to Childrens Services lies with:

The person proposing to privately foster the child; they should notify the local authority at least six weeks before the arrangement is to begin or as soon as possible after the arrangement has been made.

The parent or person making the arrangement; they should notify the local authority at least six weeks before the arrangement is to begin or as soon as possible after the arrangement has been made

A parent, or person who has parental responsibility for the child, who has not been involved in making the arrangement but know about it. They should notify the local authority as soon as they become aware of the arrangement.

Any other person who becomes aware of a Private Fostering Arrangement should, as part of their responsibility to safeguard the welfare of children, make a referral to Bolton Childrens Services. This will include teachers and other school staff, health visitors, GPs, school nurses, and a range of other people whose work brings them into contact with children.

#### What will Bolton Children's Services Do?

On receiving a referral about a potential Private Fostering Arrangement Childrens Services must:

- Visit the private foster carer in their home, meet with other members of the household, the child and, where possible, the child's parent(s). This visit must take place within seven working days of the notification.
- Carry out an assessment of the suitability of the arrangement and prepare a report.
- Make a decision about the suitability of the arrangement within 42 working days of the notification (or once DBS checks have been received if later).

# Safeguarding Privately Fostered Children is Everyone's Responsibility

If you suspect a Private Fostering Arrangement is in place you must act.

Private Fostering referrals should be made to the Integrated Front Door via the online portal:

https://www.bolton.gov.uk/safeguarding-protecting-children/reporting-child-abuse



If the matter is urgent, you should ring 01204 331500.

You can find out more about Private Fostering at:

https://www.boltonsafeguardingchildren.org.uk/private-fostering

