



GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Private Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

Fostering
Gloucestershire
County Council

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1. Introduction

This Statement of Purpose outlines the responsibilities and functions of Gloucestershire County Council Children's Services in relation to private fostering. It sets out how these duties will be delivered in line with the legislative framework, including the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, and The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.

In accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering (2005), this document provides a clear overview of the local authority's approach to fulfilling its statutory responsibilities and promoting safe, effective private fostering arrangements.

2. Legal definition of a privately fostered child

A privately fostered child is a child under the age of 16 (or under 18 if they have a disability) who is cared for and provided with accommodation by someone who is not their parent, a person with parental responsibility, or a close relative—as defined by the Children Act 1989 (i.e., grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, or step-parent). The arrangement must be made privately, without the involvement of the local authority, and intended to last for 28 days or more.

3. Duties and Functions of the Local Authority

Gloucestershire County Council has a statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people living in private fostering arrangements. In fulfilling this duty, the Council will:

- Promote awareness of the legal requirement to notify the local authority of private fostering arrangements.
- Ensure that professionals who may encounter privately fostered children understand their role in identifying and reporting such arrangements.
- Respond promptly and appropriately to all notifications of private fostering.
- Investigate and assess any private fostering arrangement that comes to the Council's attention, including those not formally notified.
- Evaluate the suitability of all aspects of the arrangement in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations.
- Provide support and guidance to private foster carers and those considering becoming private foster carers.

- Offer advice and assistance to birth parents to help prevent unnecessary private fostering arrangements where appropriate.
- Ensure that privately fostered children have access to information, support, and opportunities to participate in decisions affecting their lives.
- Maintain a robust system for monitoring the effectiveness of private fostering duties and functions.
- Use monitoring and quality assurance processes to identify and implement improvements in practice.

4. Training of Relevant Staff

The nominated person has completed relevant training in both private fostering and child protection. Social workers who specialise in private fostering are based within the Kinship Support Team and act as champions for best practice in this area. They bring extensive experience and training in supporting children living in arrangements outside of their birth families, and in safeguarding and child protection. Their expertise ensures that private fostering arrangements are assessed, monitored, and supported in line with statutory requirements and best practice standards. Social Workers who specialise in private fostering attend quarterly Private Fostering Forums through Coram Baaf, with a plan to also attend a full day Private Fostering Course later in the year.

Social Workers specialising in Private Fostering also provide mentoring and guidance to colleagues in wider children services, supporting them in recognising and responding appropriately to private fostering situations.

5. Nominated Person & Designated Managers

Tammy Wheatley, Head of Service – Permanence, is the nominated person responsible for overseeing the local authority's compliance with its duties under Regulation 12 in relation to private fostering.

Tammy Wheatley, or the Managers of the Kinship Support Team, will authorise the report assessing the suitability of private foster carers. The managers in the Kinship Support Team will be responsible for recording specific decisions regarding the arrangement and the suitability of the proposed private foster carer in relation to each individual child.

6. Raising Awareness in the Community

The communications strategy adopts a ‘digital first’ approach, with a strong emphasis on maintaining a visible and accessible online presence. Awareness-raising efforts are focused on increasing visibility through Google search and social media platforms, particularly Facebook.

In addition, ongoing engagement takes place with key partner organisations—including schools, further and higher education institutions, emergency services, and health partners—to promote awareness of private fostering and the associated responsibilities. The Kinship Support Team regularly raises awareness of Private Fostering by hosting information stalls at induction events for new Gloucestershire County Council staff.

7. Suitability Criteria

Upon receiving notification of an intended or existing private fostering arrangement, an initial visit will be carried out by a social worker from the Kinship Support Team within seven days. The allocated social worker will then undertake a Private Fostering Assessment to evaluate the safety and welfare of the child or young person and prepare a detailed report on the arrangement.

This assessment will:

- Consider the child’s wishes and feelings, alongside their physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and behavioural development.
- Assess the suitability of the private foster carer, all members of the household, and the accommodation.
- Include checks with other agencies, enhanced DBS checks for all household members and frequent visitors aged 16 and over, including checks with Children’s Services records and previous local authorities where applicable.
- Seek at least two written references and arrange visits to personal referees.
- Clarify with both the prospective private foster carers and birth parents the objectives of the placement, including contact and financial arrangements.
- Conduct immediate checks for any relevant offences for all household members aged 16 and over.

The completed assessment is presented to the Designated Manager for authorisation within 42 days of the notification being received.

If, at any stage of the assessment of the private foster carers, information is obtained which suggests that a child already placed with the private foster carer may be a child in need or safeguarding concerns arise, a referral may be made into the Children's Helpdesk and reviewed in accordance with normal referral processes and assessed by locality teams accordingly. This may include the completion of a Single Assessment, or the initiation of Child in Need or Child Protection processes, which would run alongside the statutory involvement in the private fostering arrangement. In such cases, the child would be open to both the Kinship Support Team and the relevant Children and Families Team.

In the event of a refusal of any person to cooperate with the making of the necessary checks, the social worker will advise the private foster carers that they cannot be recommended as suitable and advise the parents of the reason why alternative arrangements will have to be made for the child. Any action required by the local authority to secure the child's safety will then be considered and legal advice sought as necessary.

8. Safeguarding Privately Fostered Children

All private fostering arrangements will be subject to regular visits by a social worker in the Kinship Support Team, in line with statutory requirements. An initial visit will be undertaken within seven days of the local authority receiving notification of the arrangement. Following this, visits will take place:

- Every six weeks during the first year of the arrangement
- At least every three months in subsequent years

The frequency of visits may be increased based on the child's needs or circumstances, as determined by the social worker and their manager. Consideration may also be given to making unannounced visits and arranging visits at times when all household members are likely to be present.

During each visit:

- The child will be seen alone, unless this is not appropriate due to their age or if the child declines.
- The child's wishes and feelings will be sought and recorded.

The social worker will assess the ongoing suitability of the private foster carer, the household, and the accommodation. This includes ensuring that all required checks (e.g., DBS, Children's Services history, and references) remain valid and up to date.

An annual review of the private fostering arrangement will be completed and submitted to the Designated Manager for a decision. Written notification of the outcome, including any conditions, exemptions, or prohibitions, will then be provided to both the private foster carer and the child's parents.

Where private fostering arrangements involve host families for children on educational placements, the social worker will assess the suitability of the arrangement and visit the child once they are placed with the host family.

Regular management supervision includes oversight of visit frequency and the identification of any issues arising within private fostering arrangements. In addition, routine file audits are conducted to ensure compliance and quality. Any learning or insights gained through supervision or audit processes are used to inform and improve future private fostering practice.

Information about all the private fostering arrangements will be collated centrally and an annual report prepared for the Director of Children's Services. This report will include an evaluation of the compliance of the National Minimum Standards and the outcomes afforded to privately fostered children in Gloucestershire.

The Nominated person, Tammy Wheatley, will report annually to the Gloucestershire Children's Safeguarding executive focusing on the welfare of privately fostered children in its area and that all children living under these arrangements are satisfactorily safeguarded and their welfare promoted, including how the service co-operates with other agencies.

9. Support for Private Fostering Carers, Parents & Others

Prospective and approved private foster carers will be visited by a Kinship Support Team social worker in accordance with statutory timescales. The social worker's role includes providing ongoing advice and support, identifying any training needs, and ensuring carers are equipped to meet the child's needs.

In cases where the arrangement is for educational purposes and the identity of the child is not yet confirmed; the social worker will offer appropriate guidance based on the available information.

Social workers also have a continuing responsibility to offer relevant support and advice to the parents of privately fostered children. Information for both carers and parents is available in accessible formats and languages, where required, to ensure understanding and engagement.

Each privately fostered child will have an allocated social worker who is available to provide information, support, and guidance. The practitioner will ensure the child receives age-appropriate information outlining:

- The responsibilities of their private foster carer
- The ongoing role of those with parental responsibility
- Contact details for their allocated worker
- How to access advocacy services
- How to share feedback about the services they receive

Where needed, information will be provided in accessible formats and languages to ensure the child, and their family can fully understand and engage with the support available.

Specialist advice and support may also be accessed through other agencies or community organisations, including translation and interpretation services.

10. Training for Private Foster Carers

Private foster carers will be invited to attend training opportunities that are available to Gloucestershire foster carers. These include First Aid, supporting children in education, diversity, and child protection. The allocated social worker can provide information about training in specialist issues which may be identified as particularly relevant in individual cases.

The Social Workers will ensure all foster carers have a copy of the most updated training programme and will be able to support them in attending and reflect on what difference the training will make to them and the child they are caring for.

11. Role of Agencies in Supporting Duties under section 67(1) of the Children Act 1989

The local authority has a statutory duty to raise awareness within its area about the requirement to notify private fostering arrangements. Increasing notification rates is essential to safeguarding the welfare of children who are privately fostered. Identifying such arrangements is a shared responsibility, and other agencies and community groups play a vital role in recognising and reporting them.

Kinship Social Workers actively provide targeted and up-to-date information to professionals and services that may come into contact with privately fostered children. This includes partnerships with education providers, health services, locality teams, youth services, housing officers, police, libraries, and leisure services. Engagement with faith communities is also a key element in promoting wider community and inter-agency understanding of private fostering responsibilities.

12. Ofsted Inspection

Ofsted are responsible for the regulation and inspection of children's services including local authority fostering services. The National Minimum Standards and fostering regulations are designed to set a minimum acceptable standard for the safe running of fostering services. Further details are available on the website www.ofsted.gov.uk

13. Fairness and Diversity

The Fostering Service works within Gloucestershire County Council's Equality Objectives.

The Service aims to ensure: -

- Employees and service users alike are treated equally with fairness and respect and that their diversity is both valued and celebrated.
- That our working practices are characterized by flexibility, efficiency, and excellence, reflected in a supportive management style that enables the diverse workforce to realise their full potential in serving our customers.
- That our employee profile reflects diversity at every level of the organisation, and that posts will be filled through a fair system of recruitment and promotion.

14. Complaints Process

Private foster carers have the right to access the department's complaints procedure. Wherever possible, concerns will be addressed informally by the Private Fostering social worker or their manager. All carers will be provided with information about the council's corporate complaints policy, including guidance on how to access it and submit a complaint regarding any aspect of the service.

Gloucestershire County Council values feedback from those who use its services and use this information to help improve and develop the support it provides.

Full details of the corporate complaint's procedure are available by contacting: CustomerServices@gloucestershire.gov.uk

15. How to Make a Notification

Anyone who becomes aware of a private fostering arrangement should complete the Private Fostering Notification Form ([PF Notification.doc](#)) and send it via email to: pfostering@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Once a notification is received, it will be reviewed and, where appropriate, allocated to a social worker within the Kinship Support Team. An initial visit to the private foster carer and child will be arranged within 7 working days. If the arrangement meets the criteria under private fostering regulations, a full assessment will be initiated.

If you require further advice, support, or would like to request private fostering materials, please contact the Kinship Support Team via the email address above or by Telephone: **01452 425320**.