



Private Fostering Policy

Reviewed February 2021

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Introduction and Definitions

Introduction

Oxfordshire County Council aims to raise awareness of private fostering, to provide guidance on our statutory responsibilities, to check that Private Fostering arrangements are suitable and meet the needs of the child and, if necessary, to prohibit unsuitable carers.

Definition of a Private fostering Arrangement

A privately fostered child is a child under 16 years old (or 18 years old if disabled) living away from his/her birth parents for longer than 28 days with a person who is not:

- A parent of the child
- Someone who has parental responsibility for the child
- A close relative of the child

Definition of a Close Relative:

The Children Act 1989 (Section 105) defines a relative in relation to a child as: a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by affinity) or stepparent (a married step-parent, including a civil partnership). This excludes unmarried couples but in practice, unmarried or putative fathers will be included in all decision-making.

Private Fostering arrangements are made privately without the involvement of a local authority. The period for which the child is looked after by the Private Foster Carer should be continuous, but that continuity is not broken by the occasional short break. Exemptions to this definition are set out in Schedule 8 to the Children Act 1989.

The Private Foster Carer becomes responsible for providing day to day care of the child in a way which will promote and safeguard his/her welfare. Overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the Privately Fostered child remains with the parent or other person with parental responsibility.

Examples of children living in Private Fostering arrangements

- Local children living apart from their families following difficulties at home
- Children who are being cared for by another family whilst their parents are in prison or hospital
- Children attending language schools living with host families
- Children with parents or families overseas
- Children with parents working or studying elsewhere in the UK
- Children at independent boarding schools who do not return home for holidays
- Children whose parents are away in the forces
- Babies born by surrogacy in certain circumstances

A child who is looked after by a Local Authority or placed in a residential home, hospital or school is excluded from the definition.

The Legislation relating to Private Fostering

- ❖ The Children Act 1989 (part IX) as amended by the Children Act 2004
 - Part 9, and Schedule 8
 - Regulations made under Part 9 of the Act, as amended by Section 44 of the Children Act 2004
- ❖ The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 (which replaced the 1991 regulations)
- ❖ Replacement Guidance Children Act 1989 for Private fostering (issued 2006)
- ❖ National Minimum Standards for Private fostering (18 July 2005)
- ❖ The Human Rights Act 1998
- ❖ Working together to Safeguard children - Department of Health 2006
- ❖ Disqualification from Caring for Children (England) Regulations 2002
- ❖ Oxfordshire County Council - Family and Friends Care Policy

Oxfordshire County Council works within the legislative framework to ensure that the welfare of children who are, or will be, privately fostered within their area is being, or will be, satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

Private Fostering arrangements will be assessed and monitored to ensure that the Private Foster Carers, the arrangements for the child, and the accommodation is suitable. The local authority does not approve or register private foster carers but can prohibit a Private Fostering arrangement in certain circumstances.

Private Fostering Professionals

The private fostering team should be contacted through the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 0345 050 7666 or <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/information-providers/multi-agency-safeguarding-hub>.

Contact details are available on Oxfordshire County Council's website and also on Oxfordshire County Council's Private Fostering publicity material:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/fostering/information-foster-carers/private-arrangements>

The Team Manager responsible for Private Fostering is: Elisabeth Reid
Elisabeth.reid@oxfordshire.gov.uk Telephone 01865 323126

The Service Manager responsible for Private Fostering is: Jackie Giles,
Jackie.giles@oxfordshire.gov.uk Telephone 01865 816257

Service Promotion & Development

Training for Staff

Private Fostering is included in Oxfordshire's generalist safeguarding training that is provided to all universal services including health and education professionals.

All teams have the opportunity to receive Private Fostering training at team meetings. The Private Fostering team regularly attends team meetings to raise awareness of private fostering and to ensure new staff are kept informed. Leaflets are circulated.

There is a child protection module delivered to all school staff by the Social Inclusion Team. Private Fostering is included within this training.

Trainee Social Workers on placement are able to request a private fostering briefing or one to one information giving sessions with the Private Fostering Social Worker (dependent on numbers).

Discussions are underway about including training on private fostering in Oxfordshire's Social Work Academy for Newly Qualified Social Workers, as well as with Oxford Brookes University Social Worker Undergraduate and Postgraduates programmes.

Raising awareness - within Oxfordshire County Council

Oxfordshire County Council aims to ensure that all relevant internal staff are aware of Private Fostering and the procedure for Notification. Private Fostering is included in Safeguarding training which is part of the induction training for all new members of staff and the refresher training for existing staff.

Relevant staff are trained in Oxfordshire through induction training and a comprehensive plan of team visits by the designated worker for private fostering. At these meetings, details about procedures and relevant paperwork are passed on to individual workers. This is then refreshed by regular emails and updates sent to teams throughout the year.

Details about Private Fostering are available on the internal Insite Pages as well as the external internet pages.

Communication activities for internal staff are reviewed and updated annually as part of the service's annual review.

Raising Awareness - external agencies and members of the public

The National Minimum Standards, along with measures in section 44 of the Children Act 2004 and the 2005 regulations, are intended to better focus local authorities' attention on private fostering, in part by requiring them to take a more proactive approach to identifying arrangements in their area.

Oxfordshire County Council has two allocated Private Fostering Social Workers who can co-ordinate enquiries and notifications. There is a programme of communication activities, designed to raise the awareness amongst partner agencies about their responsibilities with regard to private fostering. Communication activities are reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

Members of the public are reached via publicity materials distributed to a range of external agencies including schools, health centres and libraries. Oxfordshire has produced targeted and user-friendly leaflets and posters for raising awareness about Private Fostering. Information for International Students and their parents is made available in several different languages. Other leaflets and posters can be provided in other languages and formats on request. All publicity material contains details of who to contact within Oxfordshire County Council.

Information about Private Fostering is accessible on Oxfordshire County Council's website. This information includes a definition of Private Fostering, details of who and how to notify and a printable notification form. In this way, information is available for all professionals and members of the public.

The role of other agencies in assisting the local authority

Each year Oxfordshire County Council targets different groups and organisations to ensure that they are aware of Private Fostering and their responsibilities in terms of notifying the local authority. The advice given to external agencies is that they are expected to inform parents and carers of a Privately Fostered child that they have a legal duty to inform the Local Authority of the arrangement. If these professionals have reason to believe that an arrangement has not or will not be notified to the local authority the professional will be advised to notify of the arrangement themselves. They do this by making a referral to the Private Fostering team.

There is a programme of communication activities designed to target and inform external agencies about Private Fostering and the notification requirements. These activities are assessed and amended each year to ensure that new organisations are approached, and the information is reaching organisations that may not be aware of their responsibilities.

Any agency interested in finding out more about Private Fostering is welcome to contact the Private Fostering Team to request a presentation, leaflets and/ or posters.

Details about Private Fostering, including information about how to notify the local authority and a printable notification form is available on Oxfordshire County Council's internet page.

Private Fostering Service Review

Annual Review

An annual report on Private Fostering is submitted to the Local Safeguarding Board and the Head of Children's Services. The directorate must satisfy itself that its systems are effective in the protection of privately fostered children and that steps taken are documented adequately. The annual report includes statistics and outcomes and a report on the welfare of Privately Fostered children.

Case Reviews

The Private Fostering Senior Practitioner ensures compliance with Regulation 12 by auditing files to ensure that:

- Statutory visits take place within timescales
- Decisions about suitability of arrangements are also within timescales and approved at managerial level
- Any concerns raised by privately fostered children/young people are investigated

Monitoring compliance

Confidential records must be kept on each privately fostered child and their carer, covering the following areas:

- The Private Fostering assessment.
- All police, LCS checks and responses from GPs.
- Details of any disqualifications, prohibitions or requirements imposed.
- Decisions about offences and whether to consent or refuse to consent to a disqualified person privately fostering a child.
- Any advice and support offered to parent or carer. Any information or support given to children. Details of any investigation or any pattern of concern (child protection).

Inspection - The Role of Ofsted.

Ofsted completed a Children's Service Inspection in April 2018. As part of the inspection, Private Fostering was reviewed and received no recommendations. The overall effectiveness grade of the Local Authority was Good.

Private fostering Casework

Notification

Where a child is to be placed with Private Foster Carers, the child's parents must inform the local authority in writing at least 6 weeks before the arrangement begins. If the arrangement is made at short notice the private foster carer must inform the local authority immediately after the placement is made.

Any person who is involved in arranging for the child to be Privately Fostered or a parent who knows that it is proposed that their child will be Privately Fostered, should notify the local authority as soon as possible after the arrangement is made or as soon as they become aware of the arrangement.

Notifications should be made via Oxfordshire's Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Responding to Notifications

Upon notification of a private fostering arrangement (whether proposed or in place), a decision will be made as to whether the child requires an assessment whilst establishing whether the child meets the criteria for private fostering. If the child requires a child and family assessment the MASH will progress the referral accordingly and the assessing social worker will either complete a single assessment on their own or alongside the private fostering team depending on the circumstances of the child. Please see appendix 2 private fostering flow chart for details of roles and responsibilities.

If, during the assessment it is established that the child is in a private fostering arrangement and they do not require additional social work support then they will be referred to the private fostering social worker who will complete the private fostering assessment and continue to monitor the arrangement.

If it is clear that the private fostering arrangement is not appropriate during the assessment, then the private fostering social worker will contact the parents to inform them that they will need to resume care of their child or they will need to find an alternative placement for their child. If the parents are unable to resume care of their child or find a suitable alternative carer the private fostering social worker will look at whether the local authority needs to be taking any action to ensure the child's safety.

If at any stage of the assessment, information is obtained which suggests that a child already placed with a private foster carer may be a child in need, the manager may authorise services.

Where the child is considered at risk of significant harm the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board's procedures must be followed.

Language schools and Overseas Students

Notification of overseas students under 16 years old are sent to the private fostering team and the children are then assessed in the same way as other privately fostered children. Children who stay with guardians in the holidays for more than 28 days will also be assessed under the legislation.

Dealing with situations where the local authority has not been notified

In practice, many of the arrangements that become known to the service have been in place for some time without the local authority's knowledge. As public awareness improves over time, it may be necessary to deal with un-notified arrangements. If it is decided that an offence has been committed by not notifying the authority, the case should be passed to the fostering service manager. Consideration for the welfare of the child should always be the priority.

Where a private fostering arrangement comes to the attention of the local authority which has been in place for a period of 3 months or more all professionals involved with the child will be contacted and informed about their role and responsibility to notify the local authority of private fostering arrangements.

The assessment and family solutions teams are regularly updated and reminded about private fostering. The MASH team can refer specific situations to the designated private fostering social workers for guidance.

Assessment

Assessing the Suitability of Private Fostering Arrangements

Oxfordshire County Council will determine the suitability of all aspects of a private fostering arrangement in accordance with Schedule 2 and 3 of the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.

The permission of at least one parent is required for the arrangement in order for it to be classified as private fostering. All other persons with parental responsibility will be consulted and liaised with for the duration of the arrangement. If a parent or any other person with parental responsibility does not give permission for their child to stay in a private fostering arrangement, they will be encouraged to resume care of their child. However, the legal conclusion in one case was that a child can place themselves in a private fostering arrangement without the consent of the parent or persons with parental responsibility and in such a case the local authority must carry out its private fostering duties. (*Knowsley v R Collins* EWHC2551, 2008 & *Coventry v A(R)* EWHC34, 2009). If this occurs, then the private fostering social worker will

work with the case and promote rebuilding relationships between the child and their parents.

As part of the assessment process the following checks must be completed:

- 1) The child will be seen alone (or in the presence of a teacher, or impartial professional who is trusted by the child if this makes the child feel more comfortable) within 7 working days of notification in order to ascertain their wishes and feelings.
- 2) The allocated worker will visit the private foster carers within 7 working days at their home, see the room where the child is sleeping and establish how the child's needs will be, or are being, met within the placement.
- 3) The parent(s) will be spoken to in order to ascertain their views and wishes and to ensure they are aware of their continued responsibilities towards their child and the expectation that they are to resume care if any concerns arise.
- 4) Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks to be completed for every member of the household over the age of 16. For international students who are living with a host family the expectation is that the language school or Guardianship Agency will complete the DBS checks (see DBS checks relating to host family's section below). Oxfordshire County Council will complete all DBS checks relating to privately fostered children who are not staying in host family arrangements.
- 5) When older students are sharing accommodation with a privately fostered child for 2 months or fewer, DBS forms will not be applied for because they will not be processed in time. In these circumstances the carer must provide an extra level of supervision and must sign a supervision form to this effect.
- 6) Checks will be made on LCS, Client Index, as well as with the LADO to identify any current or previous involvement with local Children's Services.
- 7) "Declaration of Suitability Forms" to be completed with all members of the household over the age of 16.
- 8) Private foster carer's declaration completed to confirm the arrangement meets private fostering criteria.
- 9) Risk assessment to be completed for any person within the household who has made a declaration or disclosure on either of the aforementioned forms.
- 10) The family's GP will be written to and asked to inform Oxfordshire County Council if they believe that the carer(s) or any member of their household may pose a risk to the child they are caring for or planning to care for.

Staff should consult the private fostering flowchart which sets out the duties of social workers and the designated worker. (Appendix 2)

All private fostering cases will be monitored by the private fostering team, however children who require additional services under the Children Act 1989 will also be allocated to a social worker within their local family safeguarding plus team as appropriate.

The private fostering assessment will be started within 7 working days and completed within 42 days from notification or as soon as the DBS checks(s) have been received and reviewed, whichever is sooner.

The child shall be seen every 6 weeks for the first year and every 12 weeks thereafter for the duration of the private fostering arrangement. These visits can be more frequent and are assessed on the needs of the child and family in the arrangement. The private fostering arrangement is deemed to begin when the local authority becomes aware of it.

Content of assessment

The private fostering assessment considers the following issues over a number of home visits.

- Proposed length and duration of the arrangement
- Finance: parental awareness of financial obligation towards the child
- Contact: arrangements with birth parents, other family members
- Health: arrangements for dental and healthcare; child's health care record, past inoculations, allergies etc
- Education: arrangements for attending school as well as attending school events, receiving school reports and dealing with any educational difficulties.
- Culture: Religious, cultural and linguistic considerations.
- Suitability: of all household members, and the capacity of the private foster carer to protect the child
- Permanence planning; plans for the child's future

A blank agreement form is given to carers and parents to complete, this is to try to open discussions about the child's needs and the care that will be given to meet these. (Appendix 3)

Oxfordshire County Council will not authorise as suitable a private foster carer whose own child is currently being looked after or accommodated by the local authority.

A private fostering assessment form must be completed on LCS and signed off by the team manager. If any previously undisclosed criminal offences result from the enhanced disclosure the service manager for fostering will be informed, and a decision made about whether a risk assessment can be completed, or a disqualification is required.

DBS checks relating to host families

DBS checks are to be completed by the language school or guardianship agency which have recruited the host family.

These DBS checks are to be processed and the results obtained prior to any child being placed with the family in accordance with the OSCB's policy on the care of international students under the age of 18.

DBS checks are to be completed on all members of the household over the age of 16.

The DBS checks are to be renewed every 3 years by the employing language school or guardianship agency.

Oxfordshire County Council will not consider a host family to be an appropriate private fostering arrangement unless all members of the household over the age of 16 have valid DBS checks.

DBS checks completed by both language schools and guardianship agencies can be used by Oxfordshire County Council for the purposes of assessing a private fostering arrangement only if the following conditions are met:

- a) The DBS check has been completed at the carer's current home address
- b) The DBS check specifies that the carer is part of the "child workforce"
- c) The DBS check is dated within 3 years.

In circumstances where a carer (or relevant member of their household) has not completed a DBS check; the current DBS check does not meet the criteria above; or the carer's current certificate is over 2.5 years old the school or guardianship agency will be asked to process a new DBS check as a matter of urgency.

In the absence of a DBS check or if there is any concern that the employing agency are not or will not complete a DBS check the local authority will ensure that a DBS check is processed. Guardianship agencies and language schools may subsequently be charged for these checks.

Child Trafficking

There is increasing evidence of a link between organised crime, trafficking of children (forced marriage) and private fostering. Children are brought into the country illegally and dispersed for purposes of exploitation. This could include domestic work, work of a sexual nature or involvement in the drugs trade. The nature of private fostering means that children can enter the UK and live with unrelated adults while still remaining hidden from any agencies. If there is a suspicion that a privately fostered child may be a trafficked child, then a referral will be made to the MASH team and advice will be sought from the following agencies:

UKHTC (United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre)

Tel: 0114 252 3891

Email: Margaret.moran@ukhtc.pnn.police.uk

ECPAT UK (Every Child Protected Against Trafficking)

Tel: 020 7233 9887

Email: info@ecpat.org.uk

Details of risk factors can be found on:

Association of London Government Safeguarding procedure for trafficked children, www.londoncpc.gov.uk.

Links with other Registration/Notification Procedures

a) Childminding -

A person planning to undertake childminding: day care for children under 8 for more than 2 hours a day or more than 6 days in any year and for reward; must register as a childminder - whether or not they are also private foster carers.

b) More than three privately fostered children -

If a person plans to, or is, privately fostering more than three children, he must register as a "children's home". There can, in exceptional circumstances, be an exemption, by the local authority. The fostering service manager will need a report, signed by the private fostering team manager, setting out reasons why exemption is considered appropriate. These would usually relate to:

- Arrangements made in an emergency
- Arrangements likely to be short term.
- Children are a sibling group and should not be separated.
- Geographical considerations: close to important relatives or school.
- Very exceptional other circumstances.

The fostering service manager will discuss with the legal advisor before agreeing an exemption, unless the numbers of children are to be more than three for no more than two weeks, and other considerations - such as are indicated above - are important.

c) Language School arrangements

Where arrangements have been made by education providers to house more than four students in one home the school involved should refer to the British Council's advice regarding residential accommodation.

Monitoring

Statutory visiting requirements

The arrangement must be monitored by the allocated private fostering social worker every six weeks during the first year, and every 12 weeks in subsequent years until the child turns 16 years old (18 years old if disabled), more often if there is a need. Statutory visits should be recorded on the private fostering regulation 8 forms on LCS. The child should be seen alone during every visit. In addition, visits should be arranged in a variety of settings to ensure the child has the opportunity to talk openly.

Ongoing Monitoring

During the regulation 8 visits the allocated worker must consider and report upon the following issues:

- The child's physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development. Is it appropriate and satisfactory?
- The child's needs arising from his religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background. Are they being met?
- Are there any financial arrangements made between the parents and carers? Are these arrangements working?
- The carer's on-going capacity to look after the child.
- Is the child registered with a GP? Are their health needs being met?
- Are the child's educational needs being met?
- Does the care provided meet the needs of the child?
- Are contact arrangements established and are they satisfactory for the child?
- Who is making the day to day decisions? How much consultation is taking place between parents and carers?
- How are other household members interacting with the child and are there any visitors to the home who need to be assessed?

Where the local authority has concerns that a child may not be achieving a satisfactory level of health or development without the provision of services, an assessment is undertaken under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, in accordance with the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (2000).

Changes in circumstances

Private foster carers are required to notify the local authority of certain changes in circumstances, either in advance or within 48 hours of the change. These circumstances include:

- Change of address
- Any further offence of which he or a person who is part of or employed at this household has been convicted
- Any further disqualification imposed on a person who is part of or employed at the household under section 68 of the Children Act 1989
- Any person who begins to be part of or employed at his household, and any offence of which that person has been convicted, and any disqualification or prohibition imposed on him/her under section 68 or 69 of the Children Act 1989 or under any previous enactment of either of those sections
- Any person who ceases to be part of or employed at his household

If the parent of a privately fostered child, or other person with parental responsibility for the child, plans a geographical move, they must notify the local authority of a change of address.

If the private foster carer moves with the child to another local authority, then information must be passed to the new local authority by the previous local authority.

If the local authority is notified that a new offence has been committed by someone within the private fostering household, a new risk assessment will need to be completed.

Ending a private fostering arrangement

Regulation 10 is concerned with notification of the end of the arrangement. A person who has been privately fostering a child must notify the local authority within 48 hours of the arrangement ceasing.

In the event of the child being seriously injured or worse, the local authority must be notified immediately.

All private fostering notifications must be in writing Children (private arrangements for fostering) Regulations 2005, reg. 11 using the end of arrangement notification form. (Appendix 4)

Legal Powers

Disqualification

Persons Disqualified from being Private Foster Carers

Certain individuals are automatically disqualified from being private foster carers due to past activities or offences. The circumstances that disqualify a person from private fostering include:

- Those that have been convicted at any time of certain offences.
- Parents whose children have been subject to a Care Order or Supervision Order.
- Where a carers' rights and powers over a child have been removed at any time.
- Where a carer has been refused registration as a childminder.
- Where a carer lives in a household with someone else who has been disqualified.

This list is NOT exhaustive. The list of relevant offences is long and includes a whole range of sexual offences and offences against the person including injury and threat of injury however long ago. If a potential carer or member of their household has been convicted of a sexual offence or an offence against the person of any kind or any offence involving children, the social worker **must** consult legal services as to whether this would disqualify them.

The local authority has a discretionary power to lift a disqualification, but only in "the most exceptional circumstances". Legal advice should be sought, and service manager authorisation sought before any decision to lift a disqualification is made.

The private foster carer should be informed in writing, whether the local authority has chosen to lift a disqualification or not. Reasons for the decision and details of the appeals procedure should also be given.

Where a private foster carer disagrees with a decision to refuse to lift a disqualification s/he should appeal to the family proceedings court within 14 days of the notice of refusal.

Full details regarding disqualification can be found in Children Act 1989 'Guidance and Regulations – Private Fostering'.

Dealing with Disqualifications

The carers and all members of their household over the age of 16 are required to complete a "Declaration of Suitability" in which they have the opportunity to disclose any reason why they may be disqualified from caring for a child. (Appendix 5)

If a disclosure is made or the social worker becomes aware of any reason why the carer or any member of their household may be a "disqualified person" the fostering service manager will be notified. The local authority has the right to waive the restriction under certain circumstances having regard to the date of the offence or order, the type of offence, the degree of culpability and the person's activity and involvement with children since the offence.

Where a proposed private foster carer is a disqualified person a decision will be made, at service manager level, to either

- a) refuse to allow a person who is disqualified from privately fostering a child, or
- b) arrange for the allocated worker to complete a risk assessment to establish the carer's current circumstances and views about past offences and events.

If, following the risk assessment, the carer is then deemed suitable, the risk assessment will be placed on the child's records on LCS. The parents will be informed that a risk assessment has been completed and, where appropriate the private foster carers will be asked to share the risk assessment with the child's parents.

Where the carer is a disqualified person who is not suitable to care for a child, immediate discussion should take place with the child's parents as to the making of alternative arrangements for the child. Unless it would not be in the best interests of the child concerned, all reasonable steps must be taken to secure the child's return to his or her parents, any other person with parental responsibility or a relative, with support where appropriate. In order to determine the best outcome for the child an assessment under the Assessment Framework should be undertaken.

A disqualification letter will be sent to the parents and to the carer and s/he will be advised that an appeal may be made to the family proceedings court within 14 days of notification of that decision.

Requirements

Where a person is privately fostering or proposes to privately foster, the appropriate local authority may impose requirements as to:

- The number, age and sex of children who may be privately fostered.

- The standard of accommodation and equipment to be provided by them.
- The arrangements to be made with respect to their health and safety
- Particular arrangements to be made with respect to the provision of care for them.

The local authority may specify a period of time by which these requirements must be met (Schedule 8. Para 6(1))

Requirements must be specific and are imposed on the private foster carer.

Examples of requirements may include:

- Maintaining a record/ details of the child and his/her family
- Discipline
- Safety
- Sleeping arrangements
- This list is not exhaustive

If a requirement concerns a child's safety, the parents should be fully informed of the situation. They may be advised to or decide to remove the child from the placement while an appeal is pending.

Before imposing a requirement, good practice would be to work towards an action plan between the private foster carer and the social worker to address the concerns.

Requirements shall be imposed by notice in writing (by recorded delivery or by hand) addressed to the person on whom it is imposed and informing him of:

- The reasons for imposing the requirement
- His right to appeal against it
- The time in which he may do so

A local authority may at any time vary any requirement, impose any additional requirement or remove any requirement. Consultation should take place with the legal department in respect of requirements.

The private foster carer has a duty to comply with any such requirements. Failure to do so is an offence under Section 70 of the Children Act 1989. If a private foster carer does not comply with a requirement, the local authority should consider whether it would be appropriate to impose a prohibition on the persons concerned. A person aggrieved by a requirement under Paragraph 6, Schedule 8 may appeal to the court. The appeal must be made within 14 days of notification.

While the appeal is pending the requirement shall not have effect (Schedule 8, paragraph 8, Children Act 1989).

Prohibitions

A local authority has the power to prohibit a person from privately fostering children where they are of the opinion that:

- The person is not suitable

- The premises are not suitable
 - It would be prejudicial to the welfare of the child for him to be, or continue to be, accommodated by that person in those premises.
- Children Act 1989, Part IX, Section 69 (2)*

A prohibition may be imposed on a person who intends to privately foster or on a person who is already privately fostering. A prohibition may apply generally to a person, or specifically to a named child or named premises.

If a requirement is not met the local authority may impose a prohibition on the private foster carer. Consultation needs to take place with the legal department before a prohibition can be served.

Any prohibition would not have effect unless:

- The time specified for compliance had expired
- And the requirement has not been complied with

A prohibition shall be imposed in writing (by recorded delivery) addressed to the person on whom it is imposed and informing him:

- The reason(s) for the prohibition
- His right under Paragraph 8 of Schedule 8 to appeal against the prohibition.
- The time in which he may do so

The private foster carer will be able to appeal in writing against a prohibition by writing to the head of service within two weeks of receiving the notice of prohibition.

When a prohibition has been issued the child's parents should be fully informed and advised to find alternative suitable care for their child. The local authority should also consider whether child protection procedures are required.

Cancelling a prohibition

The local authority has the power to cancel a prohibition, and thus to respond appropriately to action taken by the private foster carer, or new information. Consultation with the legal department is requirement before a prohibition can be cancelled.

The private foster carer should be informed in writing (by recorded delivery) where a prohibition has been lifted.

Where a prohibition has been lifted the child's parents should be notified.

Private Fostering arrangements which are not satisfactorily safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare

Unless it would not be in the best interests of the child concerned, the local authority must take reasonable steps to secure that the child is looked after by a parent, any other person with parental responsibility, or a relative. They must also consider whether they should exercise any of their functions under the Children Act 1989,

including whether or not to consider accommodating the child under Section 20 of the Act, or offering support under section 17 of the Act. Decisions under Section 67(5) of the Children Act 1989 should not be taken by the social worker working alone. Concerns should be discussed with senior managers together with legal services.

Services for Privately Fostered Children, their parents and their carers

Advice and Support

When Oxfordshire County Council is made aware of a private fostering arrangement parents and carers are given the appropriate "Guide to Private Fostering" leaflet which explains their respective responsibilities and Oxfordshire County Council's role in assessing and monitoring private fostering arrangements. (Appendix 6)

Carers are seen and where practical, parents are seen to discuss the private fostering arrangement. Parents and carers are, where possible, invited to attend meetings together and are given guidance on issues to be clarified for the best interests of the child (such as finances, dietary requirements, discipline).

Parents and carers are given the contact details for the private fostering social worker who they, or any other person involved with the child, can contact directly for further information and advice.

Support for Private foster carers

Advice will be given to carers and parents in relation to the need for any child benefit and child tax credit claims to be transferred to the private foster carer.

Information, advice and guidance can be given to private foster carers, in the same way as they are to our in-house foster carers on amongst other things:

- Behaviour management,
- bullying,
- computer safety,
- physical intervention,
- sanctions,
- spiritual development,
- hair and skincare.

Private foster carers will be visited by the social worker and supported to ensure the arrangement remains safe and suitable and in the best interests of the child.

Private foster carers will be given culturally appropriate information about other relevant services (such as CAMHS, Early Help, REoC and youth support services) and referrals will be made where appropriate.

Carers will be given the name and contact details of the named social worker and the number for the out of hours emergency services.

Support for Parents

Parents also have the right to advice about local authority and other agencies' services (in culturally appropriate materials) as above.

Parents should be supported to maintain contact with the child and they will be encouraged to make arrangements directly with the carer where it is appropriate to do so.

Where the private fostering arrangement is the result of disagreements within the parental home between the child and parents, the private fostering social worker will offer more support to resolve these issues. Consideration will also be given to referring to other services for further support. The goal is to improve relationships with a view to the child returning home. All efforts at mediation and avoiding the need for the parent to have the child privately fostered or for the child to continue to live away from home should be explored and documented on the case file.

Where an arrangement is prohibited, parents should be provided with advice and support to make alternative arrangements. Parents will be given the contact details of the allocated worker. The private fostering social worker will support the child and parents and can undertake restorative work to rebuild relationships where necessary.

Support for privately fostered children

Privately fostered children are given an age appropriate leaflet during the initial visit which is designed for privately fostered children.

Children will be able to talk to the designated social worker alone at least once every 6 weeks during the Regulation 8 visit. Every privately fostered child is given details of who to contact if they feel at risk and they are given contact details, including the email address and phone number for their allocated worker. The private fostering social worker can carry out 1-to-1 sessions with the child to support, including but not exclusively, challenges with relationships, school difficulties, contact with parents, boundaries at home, access to clubs etc.

Privately fostered children are advised that they can arrange to see their worker in between Regulation 8 visits. In addition, visits are made to the child in a range of settings to maximise the opportunity for children to be able to voice any concerns they may have. The private fostering team have created resources to use with children and young people to effectively gain their wishes and feelings.

Referrals will be made by the allocated social worker to other agencies for any additional support that the child requires including CAMHS and Early Help. If the child requires additional services under the Children Act 1989 a referral will be made to their local assessment team.

Where appropriate and if deemed necessary, the allocated private fostering social worker will co-ordinate team around the family meetings to bring together services and people for the child. The private fostering social worker can be lead professional for such meetings or appoint another professional, such as school leads.

Children who do not speak English or whose English is limited will, wherever possible, be given information about private fostering in their first language.

After Care

Disabled Children

The local authority will provide details of its procedure for transition planning (disabilities team) to all disabled privately fostered children who qualify for on-going support.

Post 16 support

Children without a disability do not qualify for leaving care services, but they and their carers will be given information about opportunities for independent living, further education and other support agencies at the final statutory visit before they turn 16 years old. Children who require additional support at the age of 16 will be referred to their local assessment team or the Locality Community Support Services (LCSS).

“The local authority can advise, assist and befriend such a young person if he asks for help and his previous private foster carers do not have the necessary facilities to advise or befriend him. Assistance may be in kind or, in exceptional circumstances, in cash which may also be conditional on repayment, except where a person is in receipt of certain benefits.” (Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering, 3.7)

This does not preclude the local authority considering that the child ceasing to be privately fostered continues to be a ‘child in need’. In this case, the local authority has the power to support the young person under s17 CA 1989. Many young people continue to be vulnerable and need continuing support and assistance to enable them to make the transition to adulthood and independence.

Appendix 1



Notification of a Private Fostering Arrangement:

Please make sure that you complete all sections of this notification form with as much information as you can

Name of child:

Gender:

Date of Birth:

Place of Birth:

Nationality:

Ethnic Origin:

Religion:

1st Language:

Level of fluency in English:

Name, address and contact details of person(s) with parental responsibility:

Parent 1

Name(s):

Phone number:

Address:

Email:

Parent 2

Name(s):

Phone number:

Address:

Email:

Name, address and contact details of person(s) whom the child will be staying with and their relationship or how they know the young person:

Name(s):

Relationship with child:

Phone number:

Address:

Email:

Carer's previous addresses in the last 5 years:

Name and Date of Birth of every person in the carer's household:

Please include all current members of the household including lodgers, students and children. Please also include all of the carer's birth children or adopted children including adult children who now live elsewhere. If there are any frequent visitors to their home, including staff such as cleaners or childminders please include them as members of their household.

Has the private foster carer been informed that a social worker from private fostering will be in touch with them?

Yes or No

Has the person(s) with parental responsibility been informed that a social worker from private fostering will be in touch with them?

Yes or No

Name of Child's School/ Education Provider:

Name(s):

Address:

Email:

Phone number:

Course title/ year group:

Name of GP the child is registered:

Name:

Address:

Will this change in the PF arrangement? If so to which practice?

Name address and contact details of any guardian (language school only) or other significant people involved with the child:

Name(s):

Address:

Phone Number:

Email:

Name, date of birth and address of any siblings who are living in the UK:

Names of people involved in arranging the placement:

Date the child is due/has moved into the arrangement:

Date the child is due to leave the arrangement:

Reason for the Private Fostering Arrangement:

Please give any other relevant details such as any existing health conditions or disabilities and state if there are any other professionals involved with the young person (such as CAMHS, Early Help etc):

Name of the person completing this notification:

Your relationship/ role with the young person:

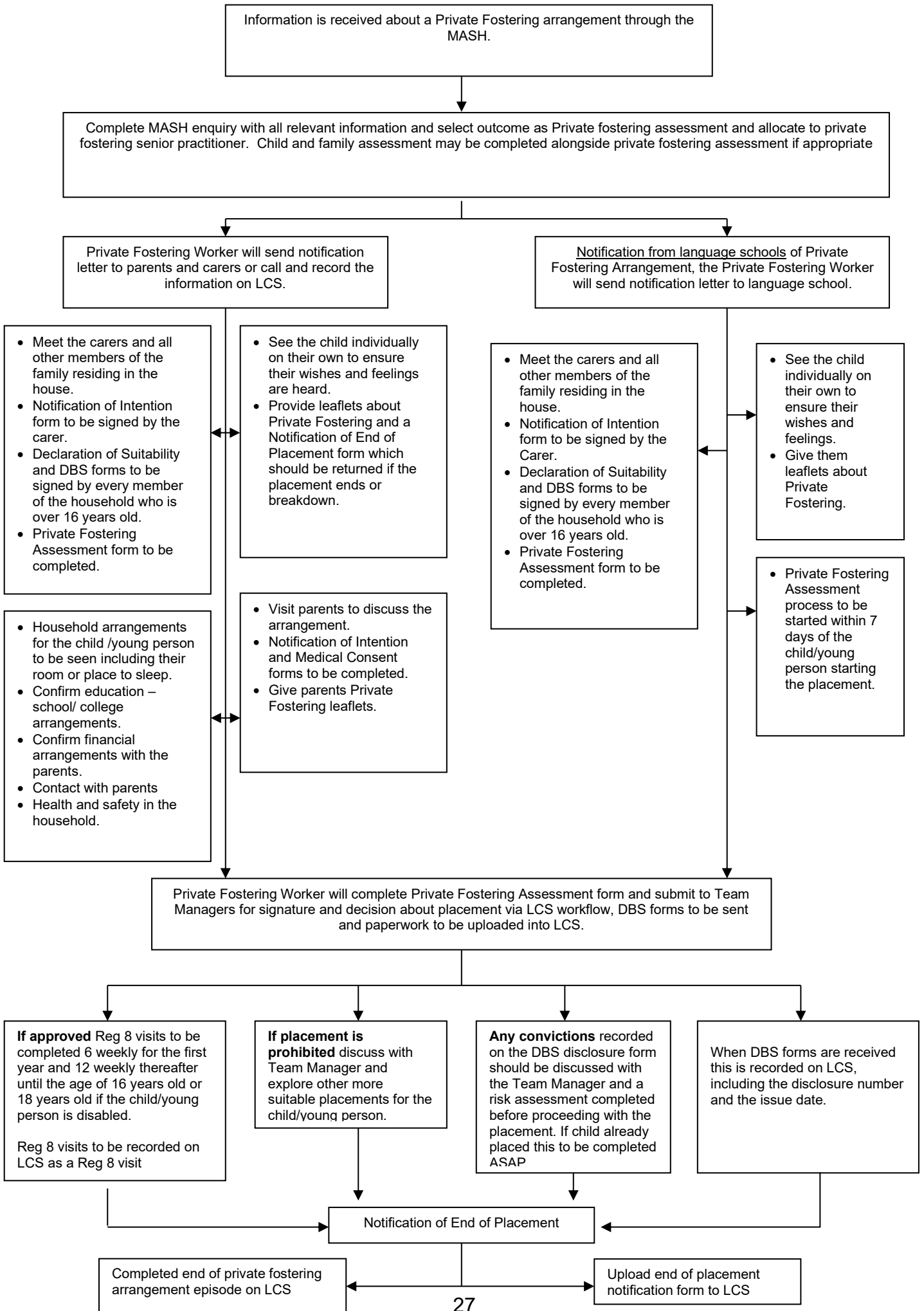
Your contact information:

Date of Notification:

Appendix 2

Private fostering flow chart

Private Fostering Flow Chart



Appendix 3

Agreement between parents and private foster carers

Agreement between Parents and Private Foster Carers for

While your child is living away from home you will want to make sure that the person looking after them knows everything they need to know about your child. As well as practical information such as what foods they like and dislike it is also helpful to make sure that your child's carer(s) know about their routines, interests and the people and activities that are important to them.

After consulting with parents and carers we devised this agreement to allow you, as parents, to write down your views and wishes about the care of your child. We have included everything that Parents have told us are important.

This is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. We advise parents to complete the form and give it directly to your child's carers. If you feel uncomfortable doing this or if you would like any help to complete the form then please contact the private fostering social worker who will be happy to assist.

Let's get started.....

Money

Include date of benefit transfer

How much money will be available for the following?

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|----------------|
| • School uniform | £ | per week/month |
| • School trips | £ | per week/month |
| • General clothing | £ | per week/month |
| • Clothes for special occasions | £ | per week/month |
| • Glasses | £ | per week/month |
| • Pocket money | £ | per week/month |
| • Travel expenses | £ | per week/month |
| • Haircuts | £ | per week/month |
| • Other expenses... | £ | per week/month |

How will this be paid to the carers? How often?

Any other money received by parents to be transferred over to carers:
(e.g. maintenance payments from other parents or trustee payments from a Will)

Identification

The Child has the following forms of ID

Passport Birth certificate Other

These will be kept by:

Visits to family/ contact

Names of family members the child needs to see regularly. How will this be arranged?

Are there any family friends who the child has regular contact with and how will this be arranged?

Is there anyone who the child must not see - please give reasons why

Food

Are there any foods which the child must not eat - please give reasons.

Does the child have any allergies?

What should the carer do if the child eats something they are allergic to?

What is the child's favourite food?

What food does the child dislike

How do you/ would you like mealtimes to be managed where a child is not eating?

Religious & cultural practices and celebrations

The following celebrations are important to the child:

(e.g. Birthdays, Christmas, Eid, Passover, etc)

The following arrangements will be made for the child on the celebration dates below:

(e.g. child will be visiting grandparents on Christmas day. Mother will collect child on Christmas eve and return him/her back to placement at 4pm on Boxing day).

The child attends the following places of worship on the following days/ times:

Medical issues

The child is registered with....

In an emergency the carer should.....

On-going health issues

Any on-going health appointments?

(When are these and what are the arrangements for taking the child to these appointments?)

Parents views on medical treatment & blood transfusions

Language Issues

Child's first language

Can the child read and write (in what language?)

Education

Name of child's school

Year group

Any specialist timetable?

Main contact within school

Normal arrangements for half terms and holidays:

Behaviour management

At home when the child misbehaves the parents do the following:

Parents are in agreement with the following forms of discipline being used:

- Time Out Yes/No

- Removal of items Yes/No
(please specify period of time)

- Grounding Yes/No

- Other, please give details

Parents are NOT in agreement with any of the following forms of discipline being used:

Expected duration of the Private fostering arrangement

Is there anything the carers can do to support the child to return home...

Holidays

Pre-booked holidays for parents that the child will be going on:

Pre-booked holidays for the carers:

Where will the child be staying during the carer's holiday period?

If the child will be going on holiday with the carers please give details of how much money will be paid by the parents and when, who will be arranging and paying for holiday insurance for the child?

NB: Parents need to sign a consent form if they are in agreement with the child going on holiday with the carers.

Out of school activities/clubs

The child attends the following groups on the following days each week:

Arrangements for out of school activities whilst the child is staying in a Private fostering arrangement:

Will the child continue to attend?

Who will provide transport?

How will this activity be paid for?

Clubs/groups the carer's children attend:

Do parents give permission for their child to attend any/ all of these groups? How will this be paid for?

If problems arise within the placement what will happen?

Who will be contacted?

Who will collect the child?

Where will the child stay?

Permission is needed by parents before.....

Other issues not mentioned above:

Signed.....
Name of Parent

Appendix 4



CHILDREN ACT 2004: PRIVATE FOSTERING REGULATIONS

NOTIFICATION OF END OF PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENT

Full Name of Child: _____

Date private fostering placement ended:

Reason for private fostering placement ending:

Name and address and relationship of person into whose care the child was received (*where has the child moved to and who are they living with?*)

Date: _____

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO:

Private Fostering Team
Family Placement (City)
Knights Court
21 Between Towns Road
Oxford
OX4 3LX
Tel: 01865 323126
private.fostering@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Version updated February 2021

Appendix 5



Declaration of Suitability Form

The Local Authority needs to enquire as to the carers' suitability to take on the role of looking after someone else's child. In certain circumstances, people could be disqualified from becoming Private Foster Carers, according to current legislation, unless the Local Authority makes full enquiries and determines otherwise in writing.

It is therefore necessary for each member of the household over 16 years of age to answer the following:

Name: _____ Date of Birth: ___/___/___

Address: _____

Please answer Yes or No against each question.

<u>Have you ever:</u>	YES	NO
Been involved with mental health services or been detained (sectioned) under the Mental Health Act?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Been diagnosed with a serious or terminal illness?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Been convicted of any offence against a child?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Had a child removed from your care by the order of any court?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Had an application by you for your registration as a child minder refused by any Local Authority? (Part X, Children Act 1989)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Been involved in Court proceedings in which the Local Authority were a party (e.g. a Care Order application)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Been prohibited by the Local Authority from acting as a private foster carer because you were considered unsuitable		

(Children Act 1989 Section 69)

Have you ever:

Been disqualified from acting as a foster parent

(Disqualification for Caring for Children Regulations)?

Answering yes to any of these questions does not necessarily mean that you will be unable to care for a child as proposed but will mean that the Local Authority will need to know the details in order to consider the matter further and complete a risk assessment.

Please give details of your Doctor:

Name of Doctor/ Practice: _____

Address: _____

We will not ask to see your medical records or ask for any other health information which is not relevant to Private Fostering. We send a standard letter to your GP asking them to contact us if they believe you to be a risk to children.

If you would like to discuss any medical conditions or offences in private, please contact the visiting Social Worker as soon as possible.

Declaration:

I have answered the questions on this form honestly and fully and I consider myself to (please delete as appropriate):

a) Be a suitable person to undertake the role of 'Private Foster Carer' or b) Be suitable to share the household with a Privately Fostered child.

I agree to my Doctor sharing any information which is relevant to my application as a Private Foster Carer/ member of the household of a Privately Fostered child.

I understand that Oxfordshire County Council is obliged by Law to enquire whether any member of my household is believed to have been convicted of any offence which would render it undesirable that a child be placed in the home. I consent to approaches being made to statutory bodies for appropriate checks.

Signed.....

Date.....

Section 70(a) of the Children Act 1989 provides that a person who makes any statement in this notice or information which he knows to be false or misleading, shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5.

Appendix 6

Declaration by Private Foster Carer(s)

Names and address Private Foster

Carer(s):.....

.....

I am intending to look after

From..... until

Please tick to indicate that you agree with the following:

- He/she is under the age of 16, or under the age of 18 if disabled
- I am not closely related to him/her
- He/she will be staying in my household for more than 28 days
- I understand that this is a Private Fostering arrangement
- I have read the "Private Fostering" leaflet and I am aware of my responsibilities.
- I have informed Oxfordshire County Council about any offences that have been committed by people who are part of my household.
- There are no concerns regarding the health of any person within my household that would prevent us from being able to care for a Privately Fostered child.
- I have given the names and dates of birth of all persons currently living in the household on the reverse of this form and I will advise of any changes within the household structure

Signatures of
carers.....

Date:.....

Household Structure:

Please include all current members of the household including lodgers, students and children. Please also include all birth children or adopted children including adult children who now live elsewhere. If there are any frequent visitors to your home, including staff such as cleaners or child-minders please include them as members of your household.

Name

Date of Birth

Appendix 7

Private Fostering

A Guide for Parents

Your child is in a Private Fostering arrangement if:

- They are under the age of 16 (or 18 if disabled)
- They are being looked after for more than 28 days
- By someone who is not a parent or someone with parental responsibility, or a close relative.

Close relatives are defined as follows:

- Grandparents,
- Adult brother or sister of full or half blood
- Aunt, Uncle or step-parent whether of full blood, half blood or by marriage or civil partnership

If your child is living in a Private Fostering arrangement or if you are planning for them to live in a private fostering arrangement then, by law the local Council need to be informed. We need to check that your child is being well cared for and that they are not living with people who pose a risk to them.

We will do the following things:

- We will check that parents are in agreement with their child living with the named person for the specified period.
- We will visit your child within 7 days of being told that they are living elsewhere.
- We will complete criminal record checks on everyone over the age of 16 who is living in the household.
- We will visit your child every 6 weeks for the first year and every 12 weeks after that to make sure that they are safe and being well cared for.
- We will speak to your child alone during visits to ensure that they have a chance to tell us about any concerns they may have.
- If the arrangement becomes long term (usually over 1 year) we will talk to you and the carers about legal options to provide your child with security and stability.
- We will update you about any issues or concerns that we may have whilst your child is living elsewhere
- We will liaise with other settings that your child attends (such as school) to gain their views on your child's welfare.

Your responsibilities:

- You need to let us know if your child moves out or if you are aware of anyone else moving into the household
- You need to let us know if you have any concerns about the level of care that your child is receiving.

- You still have parental responsibility for your child and we would encourage you to have as much contact with your child as possible.
- We would ask that you work in partnership with your child's carer and bear in mind that they may also want to make plans at weekends and holiday periods which include your child.
- You still have financial responsibility for your child. The person caring for your child does not get paid for doing this. You will need to transfer any benefits (Child Benefit, Tax credits) over to your child's new carer.
- You are responsible for informing your landlord that your child is living elsewhere.
- You are also expected to provide money to the carer for any additional expenses such as school uniform, school trips, etc.
- You will need to ask the Carers to show you their police disclosure certificate and let the Social Worker know your views on the arrangement based on any details given by the Police
- If we feel that your child is at risk or is not being cared for will expect you to resume care of your child or to find an alternative suitable placement for them.
- We would ask you to discuss issues directly with the person who is caring for your child and for you to work in partnership with each other for the benefit of your child.
- You will need to provide the carer with full details of your child's medical history and sign a form to say what medical treatment you do and do not agree to your child receiving.
- You will need to inform your child's school of their new address and explain to the school how information about your child's progress and general issues should be dealt with. For example, are you in agreement with your child's carer signing permission forms or do you want these sent directly to you? Who should receive school reports?
- You need to keep us informed if you move address or change your phone number.

Some children already living in Private Fostering Placements have had a few difficulties with contact so they have asked me to include the following Guidelines:

Please remember that contact with your child is very important to them, especially when they are living elsewhere so when you make arrangements to see or contact your child please follow the following guidelines:

- If you are coming to the house, please ring the carer first to make sure that your child is at home (it is really disappointing for your child to hear that you have been to the house and they have missed you)
- When planning a time to meet please talk to the carer first to ensure that other plans have not been made.
- Discuss with the carer how your child is before you see them so that you are aware of anything which is happening for them at the time (for example find out if they have done really well at school or if they are struggling, if they have made any new friends, etc)

- Arrange to see your child on their own sometimes as well as seeing them at the same time as their brothers and sisters
- Turn up on time to see your child
- Do not turn up under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Do not address any issues of conflict with the carers in front of your child
- Please, please do not cancel visits at the last minute.

**If you have any questions about Private Fostering Please contact:
The Private Fostering Team on 01865 323126
or by email at: private.fostering@oxfordshire.gov.uk**

Version updated February 2021

Appendix 8

Private Fostering:

A Guide for Carers

This information has been produced for people who are privately fostering or planning to privately foster a child within Oxfordshire. Please take the time to read this document fully as it gives details of your responsibilities and our involvement with Privately Fostered children.

What is Private Fostering?

If you are looking after a child who is:

- under the age of 16, or 18 if disabled
- for more than 28 days

AND that child is:

- Not your own child or a child for whom you have a legal order (Adoption, Residence Order, Special Guardianship Order)
- Not closely related to you

This is legally defined as "Private Fostering" and the child is classed as "Privately Fostered".

Close relatives are:

- Parents
- Step-Parents by Marriage or Civil Partnership
- Grandparents,
- Adult brother or sister of full or half blood
- Aunt, Uncle or step-parent whether of full blood, half blood or by marriage or civil partnership.

What happens if I am Privately Fostering a Child?

Oxfordshire County Council has a legal duty to do the following:

- To visit the child and assess the placement within 7 days
- To see the child alone
- To complete Criminal Record checks on all members of the household over the age of 16.
- To visit the child every 6 weeks to check on their safety and welfare.

We realise it can be both challenging and rewarding to look after someone else's child. We are also available to offer advice and support to yourselves and we can refer you to other agencies for further support if required.

Your responsibilities:

As the carer of somebody else's child you will need to make sure that their basic needs are being met (food, warmth, affection) and you will also need to ensure that they are registered with a doctor and attending school.

Whilst a child is living with you in a private fostering arrangement their parents retain parental responsibility and need to be consulted about the child's care. The child also needs to be encouraged to maintain contact with their parents. If you have any concerns about this, please discuss with the Private Fostering Social Worker.

Money:

As a Private Foster Carer, you do not receive any payment for this but you are entitled to claim Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits (if eligible) for the child. The child's parents retain financial responsibility so if the child needs any additional money then we would ask you to contact their parents. You are responsible for informing your landlord that you have another child living in your household.

Police Checks:

Our role is to check that all privately fostered children within Oxfordshire are being well cared for and are living in appropriate placements. It is therefore necessary for us to have full details about any person in your household who may have been involved in any criminal activities.

When we complete the initial assessment, we will ask all members of your household over 16 years of age to complete DBS checks. We pay for these checks and when they are processed you will receive a copy of the Certificate of Disclosure which is valid for 3 years. Please show this document to the parents of the child you are caring for to enable them to make a full assessment of the arrangement.

We will ask anyone who has a criminal record to let us know details of the offence(s) they have been convicted of. We will ask the person concerned to give us details of the offence(s) so that we can complete a risk assessment. **Having a criminal record does not automatically prevent you from privately fostering but we need to complete an assessment based upon what the offence was, when it happened etc.**

Whilst we are waiting for the CRB checks to be processed we will ask all members of your household over the age of 16 to sign a "Declaration of Suitability form" which asks you a series of questions about whether you have ever had a child removed from your care or whether you have been prevented from fostering a child previously. This procedure applies to all families who are privately fostering. We hope you will understand why such rigorous checks are necessary.

Ongoing Support:

If we think that the private fostering arrangement is unsuitable, we will ask the child's parents to find a suitable alternative placement for their child. If we think that some changes are needed to make it suitable for the child to stay with you, we will let you know.

If we feel that the arrangement is suitable and is meeting the child's needs, we will visit the child at least once every 6 weeks for the first year and once every 12 weeks after that. During this visit the Social Worker will need to see the child alone but after this time we are also available to offer advice and assistance to you in relation to the child, their legal status, behavioural issues, family dynamics etc. If you require any additional support you can contact the Social Worker to arrange additional visits and we can also offer you free training and access to support groups, if you are interested in this please speak to the Social Worker.

You will provide a lot of information at our first visit but whilst the child is living with you, we need you to inform us if anything changes within your household, including:

- If you move home (you will need to let us know your new address).
- If anyone moves into or moves out of your home.

- If any other person starts spending time a lot of time within the home (i.e. a new partner, a relative, close friend).
- The name and contact details for anyone who is employed or starts employment within your home whilst you are privately fostering a child (i.e. nanny, cleaner, etc).
- Any further criminal offences or police cautions received by anyone in your household.
- If a child is removed from your care or you are involved in any child protection procedures (for children who live outside of the family home as well as those within the home).
- If you become aware of any person(s) that may present a risk to your child or the child, you are privately fostering.

This can all sound a bit daunting but rest assured we appreciate the role of private foster carers and are keen to support people who are providing care to somebody else's child. If you have any questions or if you would like to discuss Private Fostering further before making a commitment, please contact:

The Private Fostering Team on 01865 323126
or by email at: private.fostering@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Version Updated February 2021

Appendix 9

Private Fostering:

A Guide for Young People

If you've been given this leaflet it is likely that you are being "Privately Fostered." So, what does it all mean?

If you are a child (under the age of 16 or under 18 if you have a disability) who is living with a family friend or a distant relative for more than 28 days the law says that this is "Private Fostering."

There are loads of different reasons why children are being privately fostered, see if any of them look familiar to you...

"I couldn't live at home anymore, me and my Mum kept arguing so I went to stay with my best mate and his parents instead"

"My Dad went into hospital suddenly, so my cousin said I could stay with her until he gets better".

"I've lived with my Dad and his girlfriend since I was small, but they have recently split up and my Dad's moved out. While my Dad is finding somewhere to live, they've agreed that I can stay where I am".

"I was offered a place at a school in the UK, because my parents live overseas, the school arranged for me to stay with a family in Oxford"

"My mum is in the army and she has been posted overseas for 6 months. I am due to sit my exams this year, so my mum has agreed that I can stay with a neighbour until the end of my exams".

Is Private fostering the same as Foster Care?

No. Social Workers arrange for children to go into foster care whereas private foster care is arranged by parents and carers and sometimes by older teenagers themselves. Your carers will not be paid for looking after you and you should be able to return home at any time.

Do I get any money?

You should receive some form of pocket money or alternatively have your everyday essentials bought for you by your carers. If money is causing difficulties for you or your carers, please let us know.

What involvement will my family have?

Even though you are not living at home, your parents are still legally responsible for you and your carers will need to ask permission from them before making any major decisions about you or your life, such as.

- Taking you on holiday,
- Allowing you to go on school trips,
- Having any medical treatment

- Moving home.

You should be able to keep in contact with your family while you are living away from home. If this is causing you any difficulties, please tell us and we will try to assist.

How is Private Foster care different from being at home?

Your life in private foster care should be very similar to being at home. The people who are looking after you should be caring for you in the same way as they do/ would do for their own child, this includes:

- Giving you regular meals at the same time as the rest of the family
- Making sure you have a bed of your own and clean clothes
- Making sure that you have somewhere to shower or bath without being interrupted every day.
- Involving you in family life and activities
- Making sure you go to school
- Helping to support you to celebrate your religion and culture
- Making sure that you see a Doctor or go to the hospital if you are unwell
- Setting rules for you when you are out of the house as well as when you are at home
- Making sure that you go to a dentist and optician for regular check-ups.
- Helping you to enjoy sports and hobbies
- Making sure that you are safe and healthy
- Helping you to stay in touch with your family

Who needs to know that I am Privately Fostered?

The law says that Oxfordshire County Council needs to be told about all children who are being privately fostered in Oxfordshire. Schools, doctors, health visitors, and other organisations will let us know if they know of a privately fostered child. If you are a privately fostered child and you haven't been contacted by a Social Worker, we are happy for you to contact us directly.

What does a Social Worker do when they come to visit?

Our job is to make sure that you are safe and that you are being looked after properly while you are away from home. We can help you, your parents and the people who are looking after you by doing the following:

- Help you and your parents to get along better if arguments have led to you being away from home
- Look at long term plans for you if you are unable to return home
- Work with your parents and carers to make sure that you are able to see the people who are important to you
- Looking at any other support you might need

- Make sure that your voice is heard and that the adults know how you are feeling
- Help your carers to look after you safely
- Make sure that your carers know about the activities and groups outside of school that are important to you
- Help your parents and carers to work together to look after you

We will help you if you feel unsafe or unhappy

How often will a Social Worker visit me?

We will come to see you at least once every 6 weeks when you first stay in a private fostering arrangement. If you are there for more than a year, then we can reduce this to once every 12 weeks if this is what you want. Our involvement will end when you are 16 years old unless you are disabled in which case, we can work with you until you are 18.

What if I don't feel able to talk to my Social Worker

If you feel unhappy about any aspect of the care you are receiving, and you don't feel able to talk to your Social Worker please speak to your parents, your teachers or another trusted adult.

If you are not happy with the service, you are receiving from the Team please contact the Team Manager Elisabeth Reid on 01865 323126.

If you feel unsafe, please contact the police immediately on 999. If you urgently need Social Work help outside of normal working hours and it cannot wait until the following day, you can ring the out of hours emergency social work team on 0800 833408.

If you are worried about anything else and don't know where to turn, take a look at the ChildLine website www.childline.org.uk or give them a call on 0800 1111.

We will try to see you both at home and at school. If you would like us to meet you anywhere else or if you are unhappy about us seeing you in school, please tell us and we can make other arrangements.

We will always want to spend some time with you on your own to give you a chance to tell us how the arrangement is working for you and let us know if there is anything you are not happy with. If you feel uncomfortable meeting in the home, let us know and we can go elsewhere.

Young people sometimes find that arrangements work really well to start with, but they start to experience difficulties after a few months. We are available for you to talk to through both the good and the more difficult times. No matter what happens we will always try to make sure that you are safe and being well cared for.

How do I contact you?

Your Social Worker's name is:

You can contact your Social Worker by...

Telephone:

Text:

Email:

If your social Worker is not available, you can contact:

Out of working hours you can ring the Emergency Duty Team on 0800 833 408.