



Department of Children, Education
and Early Help Services



Private Fostering Statement of Purpose

2017/18



Updated February 2017

1. Private fostering

The aim of this statement is to ensure that all relevant staff are aware of Reading Borough Council's (RBC) duties and functions in relation to private fostering and the ways in which they will be carried out.

The requirements in relation to private fostering are contained in Section 44 of the Children Act 2004 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005, in conjunction with Part IX Children Act 1989. These measures, along with the National Minimum Standards, are intended to strengthen and enhance the Children Act 1989 private fostering notification scheme.

The private foster carer becomes responsible for providing the 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. Local authorities do not formally approve or register private foster carers. However, it is the duty of local authorities to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are/who will be, privately fostered within their area is being/will be, satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

Private fostering arrangements can be a positive response from within the community to difficulties experienced by families. Nonetheless, privately fostered children remain a diverse and potentially vulnerable group. Therefore it is important that all staff working with children are aware of Reading Borough Council's duties in relation to these children and young people.

This statement should be read in conjunction with Reading Borough Council's policy and procedures for private fostering.

2. Definition of a privately fostered child

The legislation regarding private fostering arrangements is contained within Part IX of the Children Act 1989 (sections 66 - 70), as amended by Section 44 of the Children Act 2004, and in Schedules 8 and 9 of the Children Act 1989.

(a) "a privately fostered child" means a child who is under the age of sixteen and who is cared for, and provided with accommodation by, someone other than—

(i) a parent of his;

(ii) a person who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him; or

(iii) a relative of his; and

(b) "to foster a child privately" means to look after the child in circumstances in which he is a privately fostered child as defined by this section.

Children Act 1989 Section 66 (1)

A private fostering arrangement is where a child under the age of 16 years (or under 18 years if they are disabled) lives with, and is cared for by, someone who is not their parent or close relative for 28 days or more. This is usually as a result of a private agreement between the child's parents (or someone else with Parental Responsibility for the child) and the carers, and without any initial involvement from Children's Services. In this case a "close relative" means a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt. It also includes half-relatives, step parents and people who are related to the child by marriage (this could include people who are or have been in a long term relationship equivalent to marriage).

A private foster carer may be a friend of the family, the parent of a friend of the child, or someone previously unknown to the child's family who is willing to privately foster a child. The period for which the child is cared for and accommodated 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, that is:

1. A child is not a privately fostered child while he is being looked after by a local authority.

2(1). A child is not a privately fostered child while he is in the care of any person -

(a) in premises in which any -

(i) parent of his;

(ii) person who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him; or

(iii) person who is a relative of his and who has assumed responsibility for his care,

is for the time being living;

(b) in any children's home;

(c) in accommodation provided by or on behalf of any voluntary organisation;

(d) in any school in which he is receiving full-time education;

(e) in any health service hospital;

(f) in any residential care home, nursing home or mental nursing home; or

(g) in any home or institution not specified in this paragraph but provided, equipped and maintained by the Secretary of State.

Children Act 1989 Schedule 8

Parental responsibility is retained by the child's parents or any other person with parental responsibility for the child. The private foster carer does not have parental responsibility for the child, although may have delegated authority from the child's parents.

The private foster carer becomes responsible for providing the day-to-day care of the child in a way which will promote and safeguard their welfare. Responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the privately fostered child remains with the parent or other persons with parental responsibility. However, it is the duty of local authorities to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are, or will be, privately fostered within their area is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted. It is the local authority in whose area the privately fostered

child resides which has legal duties in respect of that child.

It shall be the duty of every local authority to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are privately fostered within their area is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted and to secure that such advice is given to those caring for them as appears to the authority to be needed.

Children Act 1998 Section 67 (1)

3. Examples of private fostering arrangements

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

- Children sent to this country for education and/or health care by birth parents living overseas.
- Children living with a friend's family as a result of separation, divorce or arguments at home.
- Teenagers living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend, or school friend because of family breakdown.
- Children whose parents' work or study involves unsociable hours which make it difficult for them to use ordinary day care or after school care.
- Children whose parents may have a long term illness and are unable to look after them.

4. Duties and Functions

Reading Borough Council (RBC) will:

Promote awareness of the requirements regarding notification within the borough, including with other agencies and with local authority staff:

- Reading Borough Council will encourage and promote the notification by members of the public and other agencies of situations where they know children in Reading Borough Council's area are being privately fostered. The Family and Friends section of the Fostering Service will have the lead responsibility for this.
- Reading Borough Council will publish information and make it available to members of the public to clarify those circumstances in which children are deemed to be privately fostered and the responsibilities and obligations of all parties involved as a result of such an arrangement.
- Information will also be available through Reading Borough Council's website.
- Training will be provided for all relevant staff in Education and Children's Services regarding private fostering, regarding the local authority's duties and responsibilities, together with Reading Borough Council's own policy and procedures.
- Awareness raising training will be arranged with other key partners and agencies, to ensure that those professionals working with children and young people are aware of their role and responsibilities in relation to private fostering.

Respond appropriately to notifications received and within required timescales:

- Notifications regarding private fostering arrangements will be made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), whose contact details are given below.
- Within 7 working days of the notification a joint visit will be made by a Children's Social Worker and a Social Worker from the Family & Friends section of the Fostering Service. They will complete an

assessment on this initial visit in line with the regulatory requirements (please see section 7. below for further details)

- All relevant staff will receive training in responding to notifications of proposed or actual private fostering arrangements.
- Timescales for responding to notifications and completing assessments will be monitored by the Family & Friends section of the Fostering Service.

Handle private fostering disqualifications effectively:

- Reading Borough Council's procedures on private fostering deal with handling disqualifications effectively.
- Reading Borough Council will, where it has been informed or has been directly responsible, record details of those people who have been disqualified from private fostering.

Implement its policy and process effectively for prohibiting private fostering arrangements and imposing requirements where appropriate:

- Reading Borough Council's procedures on private fostering deal with prohibiting private fostering arrangements and imposing requirements.

Take steps where there are concerns that the welfare of a privately fostered child is not being, or would not be, satisfactorily safeguarded or promoted. The Local Authority will ensure that the child is looked after by a parent or relative of his, or someone else with parental responsibility, and consider the extent to which (if at all) they should exercise any of their functions under the Children Act 1989 with respect to the child:

- All staff undertaking visits to children who are privately fostered will be appropriately trained and supervised.
- Every privately fostered child will be visited at intervals of not more than six weeks in the first year of the private fostering arrangement, and at intervals of not more than 12 weeks in any second or subsequent year. This will be the **minimum** level of visiting.

The following issues will be considered at each visit:

- The wishes and feelings of the child about the arrangement (considered in the light of his age and understanding).
- The child's physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development.
- The child's needs arising from his religious persuasion, racial origin, and cultural and linguistic background.
- Financial arrangements for the care and maintenance of the child are working.
- The capacity of the private foster carer to look after the child and the suitability of the accommodation.
- Appropriate arrangements for care of the child's health.
- The arrangements for the child's education.
- The standard of the care which the child is being given.
- The suitability of members of the private foster carer's household.
- Whether contact between the child and his parents, or any other person with whom contact has been arranged, is satisfactory for the child.
- How decisions about the child's care are being taken
- That any advice needed is being given to the private foster carer, the parents of the child, any other person with parental responsibility for the child, or any other person concerned with the child.
- All visits will be recorded by the worker.
- Children in private foster placements have the same rights to protection and access to services as children living within their family home. Any concerns about the welfare or safety of a child who is privately fostered are properly and thoroughly investigated.
- When an assessment indicates that the care provided by a private foster carer is considered to be unsatisfactory, discussions must take place with managers, and where necessary with the Joint Children's Services Legal Team, regarding the private foster placement.
- The child's parents will be informed of the concerns and any course of action will be discussed and agreed with them.

- Where this does not prejudice the child's welfare or safety, the issues of concern should be addressed with the private foster carer in the first instance. If concerns remain, appropriate procedures will then be followed to ensure the child safety.

Handle appeals effectively against relevant decisions, including refusing to consent to a disqualified person privately fostering a child, and to impose requirements and prohibitions:

- Reading Borough Council's procedures on private fostering deal with appeals against relevant decisions.

Deal effectively with situations where a private fostering arrangement has come to their attention but has not been notified in accordance with the regulations, and ensure that an appropriate decision is taken where it appears that an offence has been committed, bearing in mind the best interests of the child:

- Whenever notification is received regarding a private fostering arrangement, a brief Single Assessment will be undertaken within 7 working days, to ascertain whether the proposed or actual arrangements fall within The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.
- Consideration will be given to whether there is a reasonable explanation for failing to notify the local authority, the circumstances of the placement and whether it is necessary to apply to the court.

Determine the suitability of all aspects of a private fostering arrangement effectively in accordance with the regulations:

- Reading Borough Council has its own policy and procedures in relation to private fostering in order to ensure that all aspects of private fostering arrangements are suitable and effectively managed in accordance with the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.

Assess the capacity of the proposed or actual private foster carer to look after the child and the suitability of household members, and determine whether the child who is, or is proposed to be, privately fostered poses any risk of harm to children already living in the private foster carer's household, and whether those children pose a risk of harm:

- Reading Borough Council has private fostering procedures in place

detailing the arrangements for assessing the capacity of private foster carers to look after the child in accordance with the legislation and regulations.

- Following the assessment of the private foster carer's capacity the completed assessment will be presented to RBC Fostering Panel for their view of the suitability of the arrangement to meet the child's needs.
- The suitability of private fostering arrangements will be reviewed by the RBC Fostering Panel 6 months after the initial presentation to panel and then annually, in order to ensure that privately foster children's welfare is being properly safeguarded.
- Cases will be audited at least annually by the Assistant Team Manager or Team Manager in the Family and Friends section of the Fostering Service. As well as considering the child's general welfare and appropriateness of the private fostering placement, the review should consider whether additional services should be provided (services to children in need).

When there are concerns that a privately fostered child may not be achieving a satisfactory level of health or development without the provision of services, the Local Authority will undertake an assessment under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989:

- All privately fostered children will have a brief Single Assessment completed at the point of notification of the private fostering arrangement, in order to assess their needs and to ascertain whether they require any additional services to be provided.
- Services may be provided by RBC Children's Services or other agencies as necessary. Any services provided will be reviewed in line with appropriate procedures.
- Privately fostered children's health and development will be monitored through the regular visits undertaken to the child.
- Where there are any concerns that they may not be achieving a satisfactory level of health or development, this assessment will be reviewed in order to form the basis for future action/service delivery.
- Where it is necessary an in-depth Single Assessment will be completed in order to form the basis for future action/service delivery..

Make decisions about the overall suitability of arrangements within

required timescales and decisions will be signed-off at managerial level:

- All visits to privately fostered children will review the private fostering arrangement, together with ensuring that the privately fostered child's welfare is being properly safeguarded.
- All assessments will be signed off by the Assistant Team Manager or Team Manager.
- Cases will be reviewed at least annually by the Assistant Team Manager or Team Manager of the Family and Friends section in the Fostering Service and the suitability of private fostering arrangements will be reviewed by the Foster Panel.

Comply with the required timescales for subsequent visits:

- Every privately fostered child will be visited at least 6 weekly in the first year of their placement and at least 12 weekly thereafter.
- The Assistant Team Manager or Team Manager for the Family and Friends section in the Fostering Service will be responsible in the first instance for ensuring that visits undertaken comply with the required timescales.

Make additional visits to a privately fostered child when reasonably requested by the child, the private foster carer, the child's parents or any other person with parental responsibility for him:

- Additional visits will be arranged when reasonably requested.
- The Assistant Team Manager or Team Manager of the Family and Friends section in the Fostering Service will be responsible in the first instance for ensuring that any additional visits, when requested, are undertaken.

Ensure that privately fostered children are seen alone at each visit, unless it is considered inappropriate, and an interpreter who is independent of the child's parents and of the private foster carer is used where the child's preferred language is not English:

- The child will be seen alone at each visit, unless the social worker considers it inappropriate, and with an interpreter, who is independent of the child's parents and of the private foster carer, present in every case where the child's preferred language is not English.
- If requested by the child or if it seems likely to the social worker

that the child would prefer to discuss their welfare elsewhere, the child will be seen away from the private foster home.

Provide written reports in accordance with the regulations:

- Reading Borough Council's procedures provide a format to ensure all reports, following a visit to a private foster placement, are made in accordance with regulations.

Ensure advice and support is provided to private foster carers, proposed private foster carers, the parents of the child, any other person with parental responsibility for the child, or any other person concerned with the child as appears to the local authority to be needed:

- Reading Borough Council foster carers and professionals, in order to provide them with information regarding private fostering arrangements.
- The leaflets for professionals are now distributed annually to ensure all professionals working with children are kept up to date with knowledge and information on private fostering.
- Reading Borough Council offers workshops for any professionals who work with children to gain a better understanding of private fostering and what their role may require.
- Information is also available through Reading Borough Council's website.
- Information and advice will also be provided by the Family and Friends section of the Fostering Service, through their contact with parents, private foster carers and professionals as requested or required.

Provide information and support to privately fostered children:

- Reading Borough Council has previously produced an information leaflet for children and young people providing information regarding private fostering. This is now being updated. The leaflet provides details of alternative sources of information that can be accessed.
- Information and advice will also be provided by the Family and Friends section of the Fostering Service, through their contact with privately fostered children and young people as required.
- Reading Borough Council has commissioned an independent service

- the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) - to provide advocacy for privately fostered children and young people.

5. Training for staff

Training is provided for all relevant staff within Reading Borough Council in relation to private fostering in order that there is an appropriate understanding of the policy and procedures.

Additional training will be provided for those teams with a responsibility for responding to notifications of private fostering arrangements and visiting privately fostered children to provide an appropriate understanding and expertise in the legislation and regulations.

Awareness raising training will be provided for key professionals on a quarterly basis to provide an appropriate understanding of the policy and procedures and disseminate such information to their agencies.

6. Who to contact for advice regarding private fostering

Notifications from the public or partner professionals regarding private fostering arrangements should be sent to:

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Directorate of Children, Education and Early Help Services
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 7LU
Tel: 0118 937 3641

The Family and Friends section of the Fostering Service can be contacted by any member of staff needing advice regarding private fostering:

Family and Friends Section

Fostering & Adoption Service
Reading Borough Council
PO Box 2624
Reading
RG1 7WB
Tel: 01189373740

Information regarding private fostering can be found on Reading Borough Council's website www.reading.gov.uk/privatefostering

7. Responsibility for the overall suitability of private fostering arrangements

The respective roles are outlined as follows:

- Notifications regarding private fostering arrangements will be made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), whose contact details are given below. Basic enquiries will be made to ascertain whether the proposed or actual arrangements fall within The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.
- A joint visit to see the private foster carer and child will be made within 7 working days of the notification by a Children's Social Worker (from the Access & Assessment Team for all new cases or the appropriate long term Children's Social Work Team for known cases) and a Social Worker from the Family & Friends section of the Fostering Service.
- If, subsequent to the visit, there are no child care or safeguarding concerns, the Children's Social Worker will write a brief Single Assessment within 35 days. The Family & Friends Social Worker will record any information provided which contributes to the carer's assessment.
- If the initial visit highlights child care or safeguarding issues for the child the normal procedures are followed to support or safeguard the child.
- For all ongoing private fostering arrangements, once the Single Assessment has been completed, the case will be transferred to the appropriate long term Children's Social Work Team for a Social Worker to make regular visits to the privately fostered child to monitor their welfare. The minimum visiting requirements identified in section 4, page 9 of this report.
- A Family & Friends Social Worker will complete the private fostering assessment within 12 weeks of the initial visit (obtaining required references for the carer, making statutory checks etc) and will continue to monitor the placement, arranging carer reviews as required.

- Following the assessment of the private foster carer's capacity, the completed assessment will be presented to the Reading Borough Council Fostering Panel for their view of the suitability of the arrangement to meet the child's needs.
- The suitability of private fostering arrangements will be reviewed by the RBC Fostering Panel 6 months after the initial presentation to panel and then annually, in order to ensure that privately foster children's welfare is being properly safeguarded.

8. Promoting awareness with other agencies and within the wider community

Reading Borough Council will encourage and promote the notification by members of the public and other agencies of situations where the latter know of children in the Reading Borough Council area who are being privately fostered.

General information workshops will be provided for professionals and voluntary agencies who have regular contact with children, young people and carers (e.g. schools, health visitors, school nurses, GPs, education welfare officers, faith groups, voluntary and activity groups) at least three times a year. Additional targeted workshops will be offered for specific groups e.g. the police, Reading Borough Council Community Action Teams (providing early help to families) to ensure that they are clear about their role and responsibilities in relation to private fostering arrangements.

All agencies also need to be aware that failure by a private foster carer or parent to notify a local authority of a private fostering arrangement is an offence, and if local authorities are not aware of such arrangements they cannot carry out their duty to satisfy themselves that the welfare of the children concerned is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

Information leaflets and posters are made available to members of the public, both through the Reading Borough Council website and via agencies based in the community such as:

- Schools and nurseries
- Local churches, faith groups and places of worship
- Housing officers
- Education welfare officers
- GPs surgeries, health visitors and hospitals

- One-stop shops and drop-in centres
- Youth activity schemes
- Leisure and activity centres
- Local voluntary organisations
- Community organisations
- Citizen Advice Bureau
- Thames Valley Police
- The Probation Service
- Youth Offending Team
- Refugee groups and organisations working with unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- Drug & alcohol projects

Leaflets are sent to the above organisations during the year by the Family and Friends section of the Fostering service. These were sent to all schools, pre-school settings, Health Visitors and General Practitioners in February 2017.

9. Determining the suitability of private fostering arrangements

Reading Borough Council will undertake such checks and enquiries to ensure that the carers identified by the parents as private foster carers are able to discharge the responsibilities of private foster carers to a satisfactory standard.

Where Reading Borough Council are notified of a private fostering arrangement, an assessment will be undertaken, which will include visiting the home where it is proposed that the child will be cared for and accommodated, visiting and speaking to the proposed private foster carer and to all members of their household, visiting and speaking to the child (alone unless it is considered inappropriate), speaking to and, if it is practicable to do so, visiting every parent of, or person with parental responsibility for, the child.

The assessment will ascertain that the private foster carers, and their household and premises, provide an environment in which the child's welfare will be safeguarded and promoted and to determine the carer's capacity to look after the child and the suitability of his household, the suitability of the premises in which the child will be, or is being, privately fostered. The assessment will consider whether it would be prejudicial to the welfare of the child to be, or continue to be, accommodated by the carer in those premises, and whether the arrangements or proposed arrangements are likely to provide a safe and stable environment for the child.

This assessment will be completed alongside a brief Single Assessment of the child to be privately fostered, in order to ascertain their needs, views, wishes and feelings. Where necessary an in-depth Single Assessment will be undertaken or services provided in order to meet the assessed needs. The arrangements for determining the suitability of private fostering arrangements are detailed in Reading Borough Council's private fostering procedures.

10. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of privately fostered children

It shall be the duty of every local authority to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are privately fostered within their area is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted and to secure that such advice is given to those caring for them as appears to the authority to be needed.

Section 67 (1) Children Act 1989

The private foster carer is responsible for providing the day-to-day care of the child in a way which will promote and safeguard his/her welfare. Responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child remains with the parent or other person with parental responsibility.

However, it is the duty of Local Authorities to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are, or will be, privately fostered within their area is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted. **It is the Local Authority in whose area the privately fostered child resides which has these duties in respect of that child.**

Where Reading Borough Council receives notice that a child is being privately fostered, it will make such enquiries and visits to ensure that the child's welfare is being appropriately safeguarded and promoted.

This will involve completing an assessment of the private fostering arrangements (as set out in Reading Borough Council's Private Fostering procedures), together with an assessment of the child's needs.

Reading Borough Council will ensure that all privately fostered children in its area are visited in order to oversee their development in the private foster home, ensure that their needs continue to be met appropriately, and to identify the need for further action where this is not the case.

The frequency of visits will be determined by the needs and circumstances of the particular case (see pages 7-10 above for visiting

requirements).

The extent to which the private fostering arrangement meets the child's needs will in part depend upon the extent to which the private foster carers can meet the religious, cultural, language and racial needs of the child who is placed with them.

Reading Borough Council, in carrying out all its duties and responsibilities in relation to privately fostered children, will seek out the wishes and feelings of the child about the arrangements.

Where the care of a privately fostered child is unsatisfactory and this cannot be addressed satisfactorily, Reading Borough Council will, unless they consider it would not be in the best interests of the child, take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that the care and accommodation of the child is undertaken by:

- a parent
- a person who has parental responsibility
- a relative

If any concerns about the child suggest that he/she may be at risk, Child Protection Procedures will be followed, and a risk assessment undertaken. Where necessary the Joint Legal Team for Children's Services will be consulted in determining action.

11. Advice and support for private foster carers

Reading Borough Council's ongoing contact with children and young people in private fostering arrangements will also include a responsibility to provide appropriate advice and guidance and to identify any individual support requirements with the private foster carer.

Reading Borough Council has produced an information leaflet for private foster carers, in order to provide them with information regarding private fostering arrangements.

Information is also available through Reading Borough Council's website.

Information and support will also be provided by the Family and Friends section in the Fostering Service, through their contact with parents, private foster carers and professionals as requested or required.

Training will be available to private foster carers by Reading Borough Council if required.

12. Information and support for privately fostered children

Privately fostered children have made their views clear regarding private fostering arrangements. They have said:

- Social workers should visit to check every privately fostered child is safe.
- Make sure privately fostered children can speak freely to the social worker - away from their carer's house.
- Private foster children should have the social worker's phone number to call if they feel unsafe.
- A complete risk assessment should be completed for the child in their new family.
- Private foster children should be able to decide whether they want to keep in touch with their birth parents and if they do, social workers should help.
- Social workers should visit at least once a month in the first year - and always as often as they need to. They should visit often if there are problems.

Private foster children should be able to ask a social worker to visit any time and the social worker should visit if a child asks them to:

- Private foster children need more information about their new families and private foster carers need more information about their new foster children.
- Being privately fostered can make you sad, embarrassed, and picked on.
- Carers shouldn't treat their privately fostered children differently from their own children.

All staff working with privately fostered children should be aware of the views, wishes and feelings of these children. Reading Borough Council is updating an information leaflet for children and young people providing information regarding private fostering. The leaflet will provide details of alternative sources of information that can be accessed.

Information and advice will also be provided by the Family and Friends section in the Fostering Service, through their contact with privately fostered children and young people, as requested or required.

13. Training For Private Foster Carers

The Family and Friends section in the Fostering Service will consider the private foster carers' individual needs in order to identify appropriate training.

Training can include: behaviour management, attachment, dealing with loss, health and safety, first aid, fire safety, child protection and caring for teenagers.

The Family and Friends section will organise or facilitate support groups for private foster carers if requested.

The Family and Friends section will organise or facilitate parenting groups and parenting support if requested.

In addition, private foster carers can also access training available to Reading Borough Council Foster Carers and Family and Friends Carers.

14. The role of other agencies

Other agencies need to be aware that failure by a private foster carer or parent to notify a local authority of a private fostering arrangement is an offence, and if local authorities are not aware of such arrangements they cannot carry out their duty to satisfy themselves that the welfare of the children concerned is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

Education, health and other professionals should notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement that comes to their attention, where they are not satisfied that the local authority has been, or will be, notified of the arrangement, so that the local authority can then discharge its duty to satisfy itself that the welfare of the privately fostered child concerned is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

Information leaflets, workshops and training are provided for professionals and voluntary agencies as detailed above.

In addition other agencies will be responsible for the provision of their respective services for privately fostered children where there is an assessed need.

15. Monitoring and evaluating

Reading Borough Council will ensure that its duties and functions in relation to private fostering arrangements are included in induction programmes and training for relevant staff. These programmes will be reviewed in line with any changes in legislation or guidance.

In order to evaluate the services being provided for privately fostered children, individual child and private foster carer records will be audited at least annually by a line manager for the Family and Friends section. These audits will check such matters as compliance with required timescales for action on receipt of a notification; decisions about the overall suitability of arrangements and subsequent visits; that additional visits are made when reasonably requested; that children are seen alone, unless it is considered inappropriate (and with an independent interpreter where the child's preferred language is not English); that written reports are completed in accordance with the regulations; that decisions about the suitability of arrangements are signed-off at managerial level; that any concerns raised by privately fostered children are addressed; the satisfactory implementation of all the Private Fostering procedures, and the effectiveness of actions, in relation to private fostering.

The suitability of private fostering arrangements will be reviewed by the Fostering Panel following the assessment of the private foster carer, 6 months after the initial presentation to panel and then annually in order to ensure that privately foster children's welfare is being properly safeguarded.

The Family and Friends section will be responsible for producing an Annual Report for oversight by senior managers and relevant elected members. This report details how the authority has complied with its duties and functions in relation to Private Fostering. In addition the Family and Friends section will report annually to the Local Safeguarding Children Board on how the workers satisfy themselves that the welfare of privately fostered children in their area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted, including how they co-operate with other agencies in this connection.