

Headteacher/Principal/Centre Manager

CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SKILLS

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Our Ref. kes

Date: 5 November 2018

Dear Headteacher/Principal/Centre Manager

Re: Privately fostered children

Children, who are cared for on a full-time basis by people who are not their parents or a close relative, and under a private arrangement between parent and carer, are in private fostering. In order to safeguard children in such arrangements, local authorities have a duty to identify, assess and monitor all private fostering.

In January 2014, Ofsted published a report called '[Private fostering: better information, better understanding](#)'. The report highlighted the fact that many private fostering arrangements are 'hidden' and are rarely brought to the attention of local authorities, even though there it is an offence not to inform them.

Given the 'hidden' nature of much private fostering, local authorities can only assess and support carers and children if they have been notified. Staff in schools and colleges, through their admission systems, are well-placed to become aware of children who are not looked after and are not living with their parents and therefore may be a private fostering arrangement. Therefore, I ask you to ensure that your staff are aware of the legal duty to inform the relevant local authority as soon as they may become aware of a current or intended private fostering arrangement. Referrals for Solihull resident children should be made to MASH (0121 788 4300).

Once we receive notification, we will arrange to visit and speak to the child, the parent, the private foster carer and everyone in the carer's household as well as undertaking a range of suitability checks including DBS checks. The child will have a social worker allocated to assess whether they require services (for instance as a child in need) and the Fostering Team will undertake the assessment of the private foster carer.

If the carer and private fostering arrangement is approved, regular visits will be undertaken by Children's Services (every six weeks) until the arrangement ceases. (It is important to remember that privately fostered children are not 'looked after children'.)

I attach a link to a guide about private fostering which gives more detail about what private fostering is and what private foster carers, parents, professionals must do once they identify a private fostering arrangement so that the local authority can safeguard a privately fostered child.

For further information about Private Fostering you may wish to visit

<https://corambaaf.org.uk/fostering-adoption/special-guardianship-kinship-care-and-private-fostering>.

Please don't hesitate to contact MASH (0121 788 4300) for any further information or to make a referral.

Thank you for this help to safeguard this group of vulnerable children.

Yours faithfully

Frank McSheffrey

Acting Assistant Director

Children, Young People and Families