

# Multi-Agency Deep Dive Audit into how agencies safeguard children subject to a Private Fostering Arrangement, March 2021

## 7 POINT BRIEFING

# 1

### SUMMARY

Wakefield Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) carried out a deep dive multi-agency audit into how agencies safeguard children subject to a Private Fostering (PF) Arrangement. The audit considered seven children who were subject to an arrangement.

# 2

### WHAT IS PRIVATE FOSTERING?

Private Fostering is when a child under the age of 16 years old (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not their birth parent or a close relative. This is a private arrangement made between a parent and a carer for 28 days or more.

Under the Private Fostering Arrangements (2005), any professional who comes into contact with children, are under a duty to inform the local authority about any private fostering arrangements they are made aware of.

# 3

### AUDIT FINDINGS - AREAS WORKING WELL

- Children subject to a PF arrangement were safe and the placement appropriate
- Birth parents were in agreement and supportive of the arrangements
- Agencies were notified by Children's Social Care when a child became subject to a PF arrangement
- Carers were very supportive of contact with the birth family
- Assessments were complete and processes in place to update annually
- Support services were in place or offered to children and carers
- Children's views demonstrated some good examples of direct work with children
- Child in Need meetings were carried out and involved multi-agencies
- During Covid-19 restrictions, face-to-face visits by support services was maintained

# 4

### AUDIT FINDINGS - AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Within some of the cases, there were late notification of the private fostering arrangement by agencies involved was noted.
- Within a small proportion of cases timeliness in the completion of the private fostering assessment could have been improved.
- In cases where a child has been subject to PF arrangements for a long period, practitioners should be reminded of the need to advise carers of the potential to seek parental responsibility through the appropriate means.
- Practitioners in some cases may need to be reminded of the importance of notifying and seeking medical consent of the birth family where parental responsibility remains.
- Within some cases, multi-agency work would have been strengthened where the GP was notified of meetings and requested to provide updates to plans.
- In the event of a child returning to birth family, practitioners are reminded to communicate effectively to consider any medium / long term arrangements for support arising from prior separation.
- Practice may be further strengthened by a learning and development approach which focuses on attention on loss, trauma, cultural and racial difference within private fostering cases.

# 5

### WHAT WILL WE DO WITH THESE FINDINGS?

- WSCP will consider the key learning points from this audit:
- All services who work with children and families to ensure workforce understands what Private Fostering is and how to respond should they suspect a child is being privately fostered
- Services to ensure GPs are notified a child is being privately fostered and included in multi-agency working such as meetings and planning
- Services to consider how Private Fostering as an area can be overseen and developments monitored more effectively across the district
- Build Our Futures Group to explore how children subject to a Private Fostering Arrangement can share their voice and views
- WSCP Learning & Development Sub-group to seek assurance resources and training available for children and families workforce is appropriate and develop as required

# 6

### NEXT STEPS

The findings of the audit have been shared with the WSCP Safeguarding Effectiveness Group and key multi-agency actions have been identified for services to implement.

# 7

### RESOURCES

There are a range of national and local resources and guidance which can support professionals in Safeguarding within Private Fostering arrangements.

- [WSCP Private Fostering Page](#)
- [Private Fostering Leaflet](#)
- [Wakefield Council Website – Different types of fostering](#)
- [Home | Youth Voice - Speak Up for Change \(youth-voice.co.uk\)](#)