

# Manchester City Council

## Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2014/5

### Introduction

This document relates to Private Fostering Arrangements within Manchester City Council. It stands alone, and should not be confused with the *Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service*.

The **Private Fostering Statement of Purpose** describes how the Authority meets its obligations as set out in the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering (2005), in particular Standard 1.

Manchester City Council will comply with its legal and other obligations under:

- [The Children \(Private Arrangements for Fostering\) Regulations 2005](#)
- [National Minimum Standards for private fostering](#)
- [Children Act 1989 - guidance on private fostering](#)

This statement sets out the City Council's duties and functions in relation to private fostering and how they will be carried out. It provides a guide for the service, its staff and other professionals; council members; external partners and organisations; and importantly members of the public, including parents, carers, and children/ young people across Manchester.

The City Council recognises that children living apart from their parents in Private Fostering arrangements are a particularly vulnerable group and it is vitally important that all agencies play their part in identifying and supporting privately fostered children.

Privately fostered children and young people in Manchester are a diverse group and come from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances. All professionals should take into account the specific needs of each privately fostered child or young person, including those of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, class, disability and marital status. The City Council is committed to ensuring services are provided in a manner which does not discriminate at an organisational, family or individual level.

Manchester City Council's Private Fostering Service is regulated by Ofsted.

Manchester City Council  
**Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2014/5**

**Key contacts**

**Enquiries / notification**

Within Manchester City Council, all enquiries and initial contact should be directed to the Contact Centre.

- **Manchester Contact Centre on 0161 234 5001 (24 hour service)**
- **email at [mcsreply@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:mcsreply@manchester.gov.uk)**

By post: Directorate Families, Health & Wellbeing,  
Manchester City Council,  
Town Hall Extension, Albert Square,  
P.O. Box 532, Manchester M60 2LA

**Ofsted**

Tele: 0300 123 1231 (helpline open from 8.00am to 6.45pm, Monday to Friday)

Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

Post: Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester, M1 2WD

Manchester City Council  
**Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2014/5**

**1. Legal definition of a Privately Fostered Child**

In the definition provided by the Children Act 1989 a privately fostered child means:

A child/young person under the age of 16 (or under 18, if disabled) who is cared for, or proposed to be cared for, and provided with accommodation by someone other than:

- a parent of his/hers;
- a person who is not a parent of his/hers but has parental responsibility for him/her;
- a close relative of his/hers, i.e. aunt/uncle/step-parent/grand-parent/sibling, but not a cousin or great aunt/uncle;

and:

- she/he has been cared for and accommodated by that person for:
  - 28 days or more;or
  - the period of actual fostering is less than 28 days but the private foster carer *intends* to foster him/her for a period of 28 days or more.

A child/young person is not privately fostered if the person caring for him/her:

- had done so for a period of less than 28 days;
- does not intend to do so for any period longer than 28 days.

The arrangement is deemed as private fostering if it meets the criteria above, whether for reward (monetary or otherwise) or not.

**2. Common situations in which a child/young person may be privately fostered**

Increasingly, referrals are made regarding teenage children living under private fostering arrangements. These children have characteristics and circumstances similar to those of looked after children and young people. Consequently much of the knowledge and understanding of the issues relating to looked after children/young people can be applied to children/young people in private fostering arrangements.

Other circumstances where someone may be caring for somebody else's child and private fostering may arise are:

- **Children and Young People with parents or families overseas**

Where parents have sent them to live with distant relatives or other acquaintances in the hope they will receive a 'better life' and education. In such cases parents may remain in their country of origin and therefore are unable to exercise their parental responsibility effectively. The reason for the child entering the country, and possibly their parentage may not be clear at the point of entry due to concerns about immigration restrictions.

- **Children or Young People with parents studying/working in the UK**

Often these children are babies or toddlers, their parents have demanding jobs, work unsocial hours or may be studying. The parents may arrange for their children to be cared for by

Manchester City Council  
**Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2014/5**

extended family members (but not members of the immediate family as defined by Children Act 1989) or by others known to them in their community.

- **Asylum seekers and refugees**

Children may arrive in the country seeking asylum, travelling with adults who may not be known to them or their family. Other children, who have acquired refugee status, may be living in similar situations. Their isolation, immigration status, lack of understanding of available services and language problems will all contribute to their vulnerability.

- **Trafficked young people**

Generally young teenagers who are brought into this country for the benefit of adults and who often have a language barrier and rarely attend school. These children are at great risk of exploitation.

- **Local children living apart from their families**

Children may have only one parent taking responsibility for them and due to this parent's illness, imprisonment, or work commitments away from home, the child may be living with friends or kinship carers. Some children whose parents are substance abusers may be left with different people for lengthy periods of time. Others may have parents with mental health problems or who are simply unable or unwilling to care for them. In some cultures it is accepted cultural practice for children to be cared for in their wider local community.

- **Adolescents and teenagers estranged from their families**

Children may become estranged from their families due to behaviour their parents find unacceptable. They may have run away because they are unhappy, have been abused or 'thrown out'. Changes in family relationships can lead to estrangement. Some parents may have tried to get their child accommodated by the local authority without success; others may allow them to live with family friends or with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend. Some of these situations will be extremely unsuitable.

- **Bereaved children**

Children who due to bereavement require alternative arrangements for their care.

- **Children and young people attending language/sport schools or independent boarding schools.**

Children/young people staying with a 'host' family or move between host families whilst attending a day language or sport schools. They may have limited knowledge of 'normal' English family life and can be very vulnerable.

- **Children and young people at independent boarding schools**

Children who attend independent boarding schools who do not return home during holidays and are cared for by other people.

- **Children and young people living with host families**

Charitable organisations and other individuals arrange for children to come and stay in this country for a variety of purposes; including holidays, education, medical treatment and sports training. They may be placed with a 'host' family during their stay.

- **Children and young people brought in to the UK with a view to adoption.**

## Manchester City Council Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2014/5

Such children would be defined as privately fostered until formal notice of intention to adopt is given.

### **3. Local authorities' duties and functions under the Children Act 1989; the Children Act 2004; and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.**

Manchester City Council has a duty to be notified about private fostering arrangements in its area and must satisfy itself that the welfare of privately fostered children is being safeguarded and promoted; and must give advice to those caring for them. The Children Act 1989 (Section 67 (1)) outlines three duties:

- 1. Giving and receiving notifications;**
- 2. Ascertaining the suitability of private foster carers in their households;**
- 3. Monitoring placements through visits and written records of visits.**

Manchester City Council is committed to fulfilling these duties and has embedded them in policy, procedure and practice.

The additional measures under the Children Act 2004 and the Fostering Regulations 2005 are intended to strengthen the private fostering notification scheme. Notifications must now be given to the local authority when a child/young person is proposed to be privately fostered; and when he/she is being privately fostered.

Local authorities are required to raise local public awareness of the requirements for notification. The purpose of these measures is to focus the local authorities' attention on private fostering; this requires a pro-active approach with partners and other professionals to identify arrangements in the area and improve notification numbers and compliance with legislation.

### **4. Assessment of the suitability of a Private Fostering Arrangement**

Manchester City Council is required to satisfy itself of the suitability of a proposed private fostering arrangement, or a private fostering arrangement which is already in place.

Notifications of proposed or current private fostering arrangements are initially received by the First Response Team (for the initial enquiry) and the relevant Locality team. The Locality Assessment Team will undertake a Private Fostering Arrangement assessment based on the Framework for the Assessment of Children In Need and their Families (2000) and in compliance with local and national procedures.

The Locality Assessment Teams will respond to notifications received within 7 days and likewise visits to privately fostered children/young people will be completed within statutory timescales. Written reports will be completed following these visits.

The Private Fostering Arrangement assessment will need to consider whether or not they should undertake their duties under the Children Act 1989; including whether or not to consider accommodating the child/young person under Section 20 of the Act; or offering support under Section 17 if the child/young person is in need of services but not accommodation. Implementing

## Manchester City Council Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2014/5

child protection procedures for a child in need who is privately fostered will be the same as for any other child and Manchester Safeguarding Procedures will be followed.

The Private Fostering Arrangement social work assessment will be signed off within 35 working days. Decisions will be made in consultation with the Team Manager and Locality Manager (or equivalent) and signed off by the Team Manager and Locality Manager (or equivalent). The Team Manager will quality assure the assessment and agree approval for the arrangement. Where approval is not given carers will be informed of the outcome and will have an opportunity to appeal against this.

The social work assessment of the private fostering arrangement will be comprehensive and include a thorough examination of caring capacity and consultation with the child or young person who will be seen alone. All relevant statutory checks will be made, including an enhanced disclosure from the [Disclosure and Barring Service](#), agency enquiries and personal references for all adults in the household.

Private Fostering Arrangement assessments include ensuring that the child/young person's physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development is satisfactory and that identified needs arising from his/her religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background are being met. In addition, the assessment will include the suitability of the accommodation and an evaluation of the parenting capacity of the prospective/current private foster carer.

All privately fostered children/young people will have a named social worker and their contact details; children will be given written, age appropriate information by their social worker. Children assessed as 'Children In Need' or 'disabled' whilst being privately fostered will have access to specialist services, and a community care assessment as relevant.

### **5. Ensuring the welfare of privately fostered children in Manchester is safeguarded and promoted**

In Manchester all private fostering cases are managed through Locality Teams to ensure adequate safeguarding of children subject to these arrangements.

All cases will be case planned through the Locality Team. Ongoing monitoring and quality assurance of private fostering arrangements will be via regular multi-agency case plan review meetings. The frequency of reviews will be determined on an individual basis subject to need.

Ongoing support and monitoring including visits will be recorded on the Private Fostering Arrangement Record and recorded within Manchester's electronic recording system.

The Strategic Lead (Children's) monitors the operational performance of services for privately fostered children, and reports annually to the Manchester Local Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) regarding their welfare.

**Manchester City Council**  
**Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2014/5**

**6. Advice and support available to private foster carers (including prospective private foster carers), and parents/ guardians of privately fostered children**

Private foster carers and prospective carers will have a named social worker to support the arrangement for the child and their family.

The named social worker will offer advice and support in line with the minimum standards and other support, including a Carers Information Pack. They will also undertake statutory visits and see the children/young people regularly, giving advice to carers on all matters pertaining to the children's welfare.

Written information, through leaflets, will be provided for the carers and parents of any privately fostered child at the earliest opportunity.

Private foster carers will be given advice to enhance their ability to care for a child/young person and support services may be made available to them, including any identified or requested training.

Where safe to do so, private foster carers will be encouraged to promote contact between the child/young person and his/her parents, siblings, extended family and significant others.

**7. Monitoring compliance with duties and functions in relation to private fostering**

Manchester monitors, through its Performance, Research and Intelligence Unit and other performance management groups, the performance measures required for the year and statutory returns. These are:

- the number of notifications of new private fostering arrangements received during the year;
- the number of cases where action was taken in accordance with the requirements of regulation 4 (1) of the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 for carrying out visits;
- of these, the number of cases where action was taken within 7 working days on receipt of the notification;
- the number of new arrangements that began during the year;
- the percentage of private fostering arrangements that began on or after the 31<sup>st</sup> March of that year, where visits were made at intervals of not more than six weeks;
- the percentage where visits were made at intervals of not more than twelve weeks;
- the number of notifications of private fostering arrangements that came to an end during the year;
- the number of children under private fostering arrangements;
- the breakdown by age and place of birth (ethnicity).

An annual report to MSCB on private fostering is provided in line with statutory requirements.

Further reviews are undertaken to monitor compliance in the following areas:

- how the Directorate deals with disqualifications and prohibitions;
- ensuring accurate and comprehensive confidential records are kept for each privately fostered child and private foster carer;

**Manchester City Council**  
**Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2014/5**

- decisions about offences, and whether to consent or refuse a disqualified person fostering a child;
- how the Directorate assesses the parenting capacity of carers and suitability of accommodation;
- that statutory visits are achieved within timescale;
- that additional visits are made when required;
- that the system for recording information and enquiries is robust;
- that advice and support is provided and matters of concern are highlighted;
- that a sample of young peoples files and private foster carer records are regularly reviewed to ensure compliance;
- that decisions about the suitability of arrangements are signed off correctly and at appropriate managerial level;
- the local authority investigates any pattern of concern raised by privately fostered children;
- that the local authority reports annually to the MSCB on how it satisfies itself that the welfare of the private fostered children in its area is safeguarded and promoted, including how it co-operates with other agencies.

**8. The role of other agencies in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of privately fostered children including encouraging notification**

All partner agencies are given regular and updated information; are made aware of the Private Fostering Statement of Purpose; and advised of their responsibilities in informing and notifying the local authority of any arrangement. Agencies are made aware of how to notify the authority and who to contact.

All partner agencies have access to multi-agency training and workshops and awareness raising materials.



## Manchester City Council Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2014/5

### 9. All relevant staff has an appropriate understanding of the local authority's duties and functions in relation to private fostering

All **Children's Services** staff and partner agencies have access to the Statement of Purpose in a variety of formats, primarily the Manchester City Council web site.

**Manchester's Children's Services** has a clear and comprehensive written policy governing the procedure and practice for private fostering arrangements. This policy is held electronically within the **Children's Social Care** electronic manual.

To embed awareness and understanding of procedure and practice, training and briefings are in place for social care staff. Training on private fostering is mandatory for all social workers and is specifically prioritised for all newly appointed social workers as part of their induction. Staff also gain further expertise and understanding in relation to private fostering through team meetings and regular supervision.

Training on private fostering is provided within the MSCB Multi-Agency Training Programme. Training includes information on the context and legislative requirements, notification requirements and the assessment processes regarding the suitability of private fostering arrangements. Further information on Private Fostering training can found at [Multi-Agency Training](#) or by contacting the MSCB Multi-agency Learning and Development Officer at [miscb@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:miscb@manchester.gov.uk) or tele: 0161 234 3330.

### 10. Raising awareness

Manchester has adopted the following objectives:

- to raise awareness of the need to notify among private foster carers and children being privately fostered;
- to enable local partner agencies, faith and community organisations, education, health and other professionals to gain awareness of private fostering notification requirements;
- to raise awareness and understanding of private fostering.

Achievement of these objectives may contribute to increasing private fostering notification levels.

To fulfil these objectives **Manchester Children's Services**, in partnership with MSCB, is committed to:

- distribution of electronic information and information leaflets to raise awareness across the City Council and its partners; with emphasis on the health, social care and education sectors;
- maintaining up-to-date and accessible web based information;
- promoting training events.

## Manchester City Council Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2014/5

### 11. Information on Private Fostering

This Statement of Purpose, along with further advice on private fostering, can be found on Manchester's website at [Private fostering](#)

Further information and advice can be found on the MSCB website [MSCB - Private Fostering](#)

The website [Somebody else's child](#) is the national site providing a wealth of information, particularly for professionals. The [British Association for Adoption and Fostering](#) is also a good information source.

### 12. Information for children

[Manchester Children's Rights Service](#) is a service for any child or young person who is looked after by Manchester City Council, and this includes children and young people who are privately fostered.

Support is available to young people to ensure they:

- are listened to;
- understand their rights;
- are able to make a complaint;
- know about other services that might be able to help them; and
- can become involved in participation events, so they can have their say about issues which are of importance to them.

When a referral is made where a young person cannot express their wishes and feelings due to being of a very young age or severely disabled, the Service will advocate on their behalf and ensure their rights are not violated but implemented.

Children and Young person's freephone number: **0800 032 5647**

Email: [childrens\\_rights@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:childrens_rights@manchester.gov.uk)

Manchester Children's Rights Service  
Ground Floor, R&D Block,  
Wenlock Way Offices  
Wenlock Way  
West Gorton, M12 5DH

Further information for children is available at [MSCB children & young people](#)