

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD: 17 SEPTEMBER 2015

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

PRIVATE FOSTERING

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to set out the current arrangements across Leicestershire regarding private fostering. The British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) says that private fostering is when a child under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a 'close relative'. This is a private arrangement made between a parent and a carer, for 28 days or more. Close relatives are defined as step-parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles or aunts (whether of full blood, half blood or marriage/affinity).
2. **Link to Better Care Together**

Workstream	Relevance	Workstream	Relevance
Maternity, neonates, children and young people	*	Mental health	
Long term conditions		Frail and older people	
Urgent care		Planned care	
Learning disabilities		End of life	

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

3. Responsibilities are set out in national guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015, regulation 5, and the Children Act 2004 section 14. This is the first occasion that this matter has been considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Background

4. In any local area, including Leicestershire, it is likely that a relatively small number of children will be living in private fostering arrangements. However, such arrangements are not always recognised by public services, nor do families who have been privately involved in making such arrangements understand what they are or that they are obliged to inform the local authority.

5. Essentially after 28 days or more of a private fostering arrangement the local authority should be advised of its existence and then should take steps to ensure the arrangement is suitable by undertaking an assessment of the carer and providing support to the child.
6. In 2014 the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) were concerned that the number of children living in private fostering arrangements is not always being identified, due to the fact that numbers identified in Leicestershire at that time were low.
7. In 2014, in order to promote the identification of private fostering arrangements and in keeping with regulatory requirement the Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board produced a new communications campaign aimed specifically at professionals that may come into contact with Children or young people that are privately fostered. The publicity material and campaign targeted; all Leicestershire and Rutland schools, General Practitioners across both counties, all health visitors and school nurses, social workers, targeted Early Help practitioners and children's centres. This part of the campaign was run in tandem with a strand aimed at parents and individuals who may themselves be offering private fostering arrangements.
8. As a result of the ongoing awareness raising campaign at the present time there are 12 children in Leicestershire who have been identified as living in private fostering arrangements. Of that cohort; in the year 2013/14 five children were identified as living in private fostering arrangements, and in 2014/15 four children were identified as living in private fostering arrangements. Although these numbers are small the concern is that children in private fostering arrangements are potentially in very vulnerable circumstances therefore every effort should be made to ensure all such arrangements are identified and assessed.

Proposals/Options

9. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:
 - Support the ongoing campaign to identify private fostering situations.
 - Continue to raise awareness of private fostering in their organisation
 - Consider any additional steps required to support the identification of private fostering situations.

Consultation/Patient and Public Involvement

10. The communications campaign hosted by the LSCB in 2014 endeavoured to engage with key professional and family stakeholders.

Conclusions/Recommendations

11. It is recommended that the Health and Wellbeing Board consider what additional steps are necessary to promote the identification of private fostering arrangements and thus provoke the appropriate responses from the County Council and health partners.

Background papers

None

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

12. This matter is relevant to all parts of Leicestershire.

Officer to Contact

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List of Appendices

None

Relevant Impact Assessments

Equality and Human Rights Implications

13. The nature of the children and young people who live in private fostering arrangements suggest that they are likely to be vulnerable therefore the necessity to identify them is great.