



Reading
Borough Council
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**Brighter
Futures for
Children**

Private Fostering Statement of Purpose 2024 – 2025

SUMMARY

This document provides details how Brighter Futures fulfils its duties and functions in respect of Private Fostering

OWNER

Hilary Loades
Head of Service Corporate
Parenting

VERSION

V 1.1

DATE

March 2024

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Brighter Futures for Children is the
Directorate of Children's Services at
Reading Borough Council

Civic Offices, Bridge Street,
Reading RG1 2LU

Contents

1. Introduction and context	3
2. The legal framework	3
3. The legal definition of a privately fostered child	4
Examples of a privately fostered child	5
4. Brighter Futures for Children’s duties and functions in respect of private fostering and how they will operate in relation to privately fostered children.....	6
6. The organisational structure and management of the service.....	9
7. How relevant staff are trained to ensure that they have appropriate understanding of and expertise in private fostering	10
8. How awareness of the notification requirements is promoted with other agencies and within the wider Reading community	11
9. How Brighter Futures for Children determines the suitability of all aspects of a private fostering arrangement in accordance with the regulations	12
10. How Brighter Futures for Children satisfies itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in the Reading area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted	13
11. Managerial oversight	14
12. The advice and support that is available to private foster carers, and prospective private foster carers, parents, and others with parental responsibility for children who are, or are to be, privately fostered, and others concerned with privately fostered children.....	15
13. The information and support available to privately fostered children	18
14. The training available to private foster carers (including prospective private foster carers)	19
15. The role of other agencies in assisting Brighter Futures for Children to carry out its duty under section 67(1) of the Children Act 1989	19
16. Commendations and complaints	19
17. Feedback	20
Appendix 1 – The organisational structure of the agency	21
Appendix 2 – Leaflets re Private Fostering	22
Private Fostering – A guide for children	22
Private Fostering – A guide for parents, carers, and professionals	22

1. Introduction and context

Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC) is the Directorate of Children's Services within Reading Borough Council and holds responsibility for providing the full range of statutory and regulatory services required of local authorities; this includes the Council's responsibilities in respect of Private Fostering

When a child is privately fostered the local authority in whose area the child resides has legal duties in respect of that child whilst the child remains subject to a private fostering arrangement:

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 1989 Section 67 (1)]

2. The legal framework

The principles and requirements of the following legislation and regulations all underpin BFFC's delivery of Private Fostering Services:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- The Disqualifications from Caring for Children (England) Regulations 2004
- The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005
- National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering (2005)
- The Replacement Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering (2005)
- Homes for Ukraine – Guidance for councils (children and minors applying without parents or legal guardians) – Gov.UK [published 15th July 2022]
- The Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership Procedures Manual

BFFC is committed to providing a comprehensive private fostering service, operating within all current regulations, statutory guidance and best practice principles.

Key documents can be found by clicking the following links:

- The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/1533/contents/made>
- National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-minimum-standards-for-private-fostering>
- Homes for Ukraine – Guidance for councils (children and minors applying without

parents or legal guardians]]

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils-children-and-minors-applying-without-parents-or-legal-guardians>

3. The legal 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 ‘privately fostered child’ is a child who is under the age of sixteen (under the age of 18 if disabled) and who is cared for, and provided with accommodation by, someone other than:

(i) their parent(s)

(ii) a person who is not the child’s parent but who has parental responsibility for the child

(iii) a step-parent

or

(iv) an adult who is defined as a relative under the Children Act 1989 (grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt, whether of full-blood or half-blood, or by marriage)

with the intention that the arrangement will last for twenty-eight days or more.

Private fostering arrangements are usually as a result of a private agreement between the child’s parent(s) (or someone else with parental responsibility for the child) and the carer(s), without any involvement from Children’s Services.

A private foster carer may be a member of the child’s wider family network (e.g., an older cousin, a cousin of one of the child’s parents or a great-aunt or great-uncle), 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 the child. The period for which the child is cared for and accommodated by the private foster carer should be continuous, but the continuity is not broken by the occasional short break.

No child who is looked after by a local authority will meet the definition of a privately fostered child (regardless of the child’s situation). Similarly, a child is not deemed to be privately fostered if they live in any of the following situations:

- The child lives in the care of another adult but in the same premises as:
 - (i) one or both the child’s parents
 - (ii) a person who is not the child’s parent but who holds parental responsibility for the child
 - or
 - (iii) a person who is a relative of his (as defined within the Children Act 1989) and who has assumed responsibility for the child’s care.
- The child is for the time being living:
 - (i) in accommodation provided by or on behalf of a voluntary organisation
 - (ii) in any school in which the child is receiving full-time education
 - (iii) in any health service hospital

(iv) in any residential care home, nursing home or mental nursing home
or

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

While a child is privately fostered parental responsibility is retained by the child's parent(s) and/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 parent(s).

Examples of a privately fostered child

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 the UK for a "better life" or for health care, by parents living overseas.
- Children (whether from abroad or from within the UK) who attend residential schools or sports academies and do not return home during the long school holidays but stay with another family – perhaps referred to as a 'host' family or carer.
- Children living apart from their families due to parental or family difficulties.
- Teenagers living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend, or school friend because of family breakdown or because they are for some other reason living apart from their family.
- Children whose parents are working or studying abroad or in another part of the country or are serving in the armed forces.
- 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 are unable to look after them due to long-term illness and/or hospitalisation.
- Children who are being cared for by another family while their parent is / parents are in prison.
- Children brought in from abroad with a view to adoption.
- Children born by surrogacy (in certain circumstances).
- Unaccompanied minors (aged under 18) who are living with friends, relatives, or strangers.
- Trafficked young people.

Private fostering arrangements can be a positive response to difficulties experienced by families. However, privately fostered children are a diverse group and whilst many privately fostered children will receive a good standard of care, it must be recognised that children in private fostering arrangements can be extremely vulnerable. Privately fostered children are often placed at a considerable distance from their parents who may only be able to visit on an infrequent basis and may have only minimal oversight of their children’s living arrangements. Other privately fostered children may be estranged from their parents with very limited or no contact. Some children may be in open-ended private fostering arrangements affording the children little security or sense of identity. Some children may have been trafficked or may be being exploited. Some children may have been placed with people who are not personally known to their parent(s) and who are not suitable to look after children.

4. Brighter Futures for Children’s duties and functions in respect of private fostering and how they will operate in relation to privately fostered children

All local authorities have the following responsibilities in respect of private fostering:

Responsibility	How BfFC is meeting this responsibility
To have a written statement or plan in place which sets out the local authority’s duties and functions in relation to private fostering and the ways in which they will be carried out.	BfFC has a Statement on Private fostering; this is formally considered and signed-off by the BfFC Operational Leadership Group. The statement is reviewed annually and revised as appropriate.
To promote awareness of private fostering across the local authority area (including with local authority staff and other agencies), including awareness of the notification requirements, ensuring that those professionals who may come into contact with privately fostered children understand their role in notification.	Please see BfFC’s Private Fostering Policy and Practice Guidance – section 7 – Raising awareness with Children’s Social Care, across agencies and with members of the public, and BfFC’s Private Fostering Awareness Raising Programme for 2024 – 2025. Please also see briefer details in section 8 (below).
To take appropriate action on receipt of notification of private fostering arrangement and carry out subsequent visits in accordance with regulations.	Please see BfFC’s Private Fostering Policy and Practice Guidance – section 11 – Actions to be taken on receipt of notification.
To deal effectively with situations where a private fostering arrangement has come to their notice 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 individual child.	Please see BfFC’s Private Fostering Policy and Practice Guidance – section 10.7 – Failure to notify a private fostering arrangement.
To effectively determine the suitability of all aspects of a private fostering arrangement in accordance with the regulations.	Please see BfFC’s Private Fostering Policy and Practice Guidance, sections: 11 – Actions to be taken on receipt of a notification



Responsibility	How BfFC is meeting this responsibility
	<p>12 – Case transfer between teams 13 – The S.17 single assessment 14 – The role of the Adoption & Permanence social worker 15 – Signing off the assessment of private fostering arrangements and recommendations.</p> <p>Please also see briefer details in section 9 (below).</p>
<p>To when required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - impose requirements on private foster carers, - limit the number of children placed, - prohibit private fostering arrangements, - impose disqualifications, <p>as required in order to safeguard the wellbeing of a privately fostered child(ren). To effectively handle appeals against any relevant decisions.</p>	<p>Please see BfFC’s Private Fostering Policy and Practice Guidance, sections:</p> <p>16 – Imposing requirements on private foster carers 17 – Non-compliance with requirements 18 – Limits on the number of children placed 19 – Disqualification 20 – Prohibition.</p>
<p>To ensure that the welfare of a privately fostered child(ren) is being, or would be, satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.</p>	<p>Please see BfFC’s Private Fostering Policy and Practice Guidance, sections:</p> <p>23 – Assessment of the child 27 – The monitoring of private fostering arrangements 28 – Reviews of private fostering arrangements 29 – Unsatisfactory care.</p> <p>Please also see briefer details in section 10 (below).</p>
<p>To provide such advice and support to private foster carers and prospective private foster carers as appears to the authority to be needed.</p>	<p>Please see BfFC’s Private Fostering Policy and Practice Guidance – section 26 – Support and information for private foster carers.</p> <p>Please also see BfFC’s leaflet: ‘Private Fostering – A guide for parents, carers and professionals’. This can be accessed at: https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/for-parents-carers/fostering-and-adoption/family-and-friends-carers/</p> <p>Please also see briefer details in section 12 (below).</p>
<p>To provide such advice and support to the parents of children who are privately fostered within the Reading area as appears to BfFC to be needed.</p>	<p>Please see BfFC’s Private Fostering Policy and Practice Guidance, sections:</p> <p>25 – Support and information for birth parents or those with parental responsibility</p>

Responsibility	How BfFC is meeting this responsibility
	<p>32 – Reunification of privately fostered children with their parents.</p> <p>Please also see BfFC’s leaflet: ‘Private Fostering – A guide for parents, carers and professionals’. This can be accessed at: https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/for-parents-carers/fostering-and-adoption/family-and-friends-carers/</p> <p>Please also see briefer details in section 12 (below).</p>
<p>To ensure that children who are privately fostered are able to access information and support when required, so that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted. Privately fostered children are enabled to participate in decisions about their lives.</p>	<p>Please see BfFC’s Private Fostering Policy and Practice Guidance – section 24 – Support and information for privately fostered children.</p> <p>Please also see BfFC’s leaflet: ‘Private fostering – A guide for children’. This can be accessed at: https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/for-parents-carers/fostering-and-adoption/family-and-friends-carers/</p> <p>Please also see briefer details in section 13 (below).</p>
<p>To ensure that BfFC has in place and effectively implements a system for monitoring the way in which it discharges its duties and functions in relation to private fostering, and that the local authority improves practice where this is indicated as necessary by the monitoring system.</p>	<p>Please see BfFC’s Private Fostering Policy and Practice Guidance – section 42 – Managerial monitoring, compliance, and independent scrutiny.</p> <p>Please also see briefer details in section 11 (below).</p>
<p>To complete an annual report of its work in relation to privately fostered children within its area, for consideration by the Director of Children’s Services, which includes an evaluation of the outcomes.</p> <p>To provide a report to the Local Safeguarding Children Board detailing how the local authority satisfies itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in its area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted, including how it cooperates with other agencies in this connexion.</p>	<p>Please see BfFC’s Private Fostering Policy and Practice Guidance – section 43 – The Annual Report on Private Fostering.</p> <p>Please also see briefer details in section 11 (below).</p> <p>BfFC’s Private Fostering Annual Report for 2023/24 can be provided on request¹.</p>

¹ **Note:** BfFC’s Private Fostering Annual Report for 2023/24 will be available from 30th April 2024]

BFFC's Private Fostering Policy and Practice Guidance can be accessed at:

<https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Private-Fostering-Policy-Practice-Guidance.pdf>

6. The organisational structure and management of the service

The following BFFC staff members hold responsibility for BFFC's Private Fostering Services:

- **Brighter Futures for Children Director of Family Help & Safeguarding Children's Services:**

Name: Maria Young

Contact details: Maria.young@brighterfuturesforchildren.org
- **Head of Service – Family Help & Partnerships:**

Name: Jonny Bradish

Contact details: Jonny.bradish@brighterfuturesforchildren.org
- **Head of Service – Family Help & Safeguarding:**

Name: Dudley Foster

Contact details: Dudley.foster@brighterfuturesforchildren.org
- **Head of Service – Corporate Parenting, Fostering, Special Guardianship & Adoption:**

Name: Hilary Loades-Bannon

Contact details: Hilary.loades-bannon@brighterfuturesforchildren.org
- **Service Manager CSPoA**

Name: Jackelyn Dance

Contact details: Jackelyn.dance@brighterfuturesforchildren.org
- **Service Manager Together for Families**

Name: Sabina Baz

Contact details: Sabina.baz@brighterfuturesforchildren.org
- **Service Manager Corporate Parenting**

Name: Roselind Moodley

Contact details: Roselind.moodley@brighterfuturesforchildren.org
- **Team Manager CSPoA**

Name: Leigh Goldson

Contact details: Leigh.goldson@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

- **Team Manager Adoption & Permanence**

Name: Rachel Sheean

Contact details: Rachel.sheean@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

- Within BFFC's the role of Agency Decision Maker for Private Fostering is held by the Head of Service – Corporate Parenting, Fostering, Special Guardianship & Adoption.

In the absence of the Head of Service, the responsibility for these decisions is delegated to the Service Manager, Corporate Parenting.

All the above Officers are based at:

Floor 1, Civic Offices, Bridge St, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 2LU

Children's social workers

Responding to notifications of private fostering arrangements and undertaking the initial screening is undertaken by named social workers employed within the Reading Children's Single Point of Access Service (CSPoA).

The social work role to children who are subject to a private fostering arrangement is provided by named social workers employed within BFFC's Together for Families Service.

The supervising social worker role for private foster carers living within Reading Borough is provided by named social workers employed within BFFC's Adoption & Permanence Service.

Contacting BFFC for information and advice on private fostering:

The Family & Friends Team of the Adoption & Permanence Service should be contacted by any staff, parent, carer or member of the public needing advice regarding private fostering:

Address: BFFC Adoption & Permanence Service, Floor 1, Civic Offices, Bridge St, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 2LU

Telephone: 0118 9374451

Email: Familyandfriends.referral@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

Information regarding private fostering can also be found on Reading Borough Council's website:

<https://www.reading.gov.uk/children-and-education/caringforchildren/privatefostering/>

or on the Brighter Futures for Children website:

<https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/for-parents-carers/private-fostering/>

(Please see Appendix 1 – The organisational structure of the agency – for further details).

7. How relevant staff are trained to ensure that they have appropriate understanding of and expertise in private fostering

All relevant staff within Brighter Futures for Children and Reading Borough Council receive

training in relation to private fostering to provide an appropriate understanding of:

- relevant legislation and regulations
- the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering
- BFFC's Private Fostering policy and practice guidance

with a particular focus on:

- ensuring that those professionals who may come into contact with privately fostered children understand their role in notification.

Specific training is provided for those teams with a responsibility for responding to notifications of private fostering arrangements, assessing the suitability of arrangements, and monitoring the welfare of privately fostered children; with a particular focus on ensuring that the welfare of privately fostered child(ren) is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

Awareness raising training is provided for other professionals on a regular basis to ensure that those professionals who may come into contact with privately fostered children understand their role in notification.

8. How awareness of the notification requirements is promoted with other agencies and within the wider Reading community

Brighter Futures for Children is aware of the need to raise general awareness within the Reading community of the requirement for Brighter Futures for Children to be notified of any children or young people who are living in private fostering arrangements in the Reading area.

Promoting an understanding of private fostering and the notification requirements, should help to ensure that relevant professionals and other adults who are having contact with children and families will notify Brighter Futures for Children if those making the arrangements fail to make a notification. It is often these services who will first become aware of a private fostering arrangement.

The Adoption & Permanence service is tasked with promoting awareness of the notification requirements amongst staff within all areas of Children's Social Care, and amongst community professionals, community faith group leaders, and residents within the borough, through a programme of awareness raising events and by ensuring that comprehensive written information about private fostering is easily accessible via Reading Borough Council's website. Awareness raising is ongoing and is aimed at teaching and reinforcing the roles and responsibilities of everyone in relation to the notification of private fostering arrangements.

Written information and training sessions will continue to be made available to professionals and voluntary agencies who have regular contact with children, young people, and carers, as part of Brighter Futures for Children's rolling programme of awareness raising activities, in order to ensure that they are clear about their role and responsibilities in relation to private fostering arrangements. BFFC's Awareness Raising Programme – Private Fostering – 2024/2025 – can be accessed on Reading Borough council's website (see link below).

All agencies will be made 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 BfFC is not aware of such arrangements, they cannot carry out their duty to satisfy themselves that the welfare of the child(ren) concerned is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

Information regarding private fostering can also be found on Reading Borough Council's website:

<https://www.reading.gov.uk/children-and-education/caringforchildren/privatefostering/>

or on the Brighter Futures for Children website:

<https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/for-parents-carers/private-fostering/>

9. How Brighter Futures for Children determines the suitability of all aspects of a private fostering arrangement in accordance with the regulations

Brighter Futures for Children undertakes a range of checks and enquiries to ensure that any proposed or actual private foster carer, is able to discharge the responsibilities of a private foster carer to a satisfactory standard.

Where Brighter Futures for Children are notified of a private fostering arrangement, and an initial screening assessment confirms that the care arrangement for the child(ren) constitutes a private fostering arrangement, a Section 17 Single Assessment will be completed of each child who is to be privately fostered, in order to ascertain the child's needs, views, wishes and feelings. Whenever possible this will include a social worker speaking to and, if it is practicable to do so meeting, with the child(ren)'s parent(s), or with a person with parental responsibility for the child(ren).

Where necessary an in-depth Single Assessment will be undertaken, or services provided in order to meet the assessed needs.

Alongside assessment of the child an assessment of the proposed or actual private foster carer(s) will be undertaken. This will include a social worker:

- Visiting the home where it is proposed that the child(ren) will be cared for and accommodated.
- Speaking to the proposed private foster carer(s) and to all members of their household.
- Seeing around the private foster carer(s)' home and completing a home safety check.
- Visiting and speaking to the child (including seeing the child alone unless it is considered inappropriate).

The assessment will ascertain whether the private foster carer(s), and their household and premises, provide an environment in which the child(ren)'s welfare will be safeguarded and promoted, and will determine the carer(s)' likely capacity to look after the child(ren) and to provide a safe and stable environment for the child(ren) for the anticipated duration of the placement.

The assessment of a private foster carer must also include:

- Enhanced DBS checks on the private foster carer(s), and all members of the household aged 18 or over.
- Mosaic checks on all household members.

- Local authority social care record checks on the carer(s) against all previous addresses in the last 10 years.
- Police National Computer (PNC) checks where a child has been placed in an emergency or where it is anticipated that a child may be placed prior to the completion of DBS checks.

Other checks may be taken up in respect of the proposed or actual private foster carer(s), their household members, or their address, as appears appropriate. This may include checks with:

- Probation.
- The carer(s)' GP.

In recognition of the fact that many of the children and young people who move to the UK under the Homes for Ukraine scheme will not be joining families with whom they or their parent(s) already have a well-established relationship, assessments of Homes for Ukraine carers will also include three personal references being taken up for each carer (these can be joint references if a couple).

10. How Brighter Futures for Children satisfies itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in the Reading area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted

Private foster carers are responsible for providing the day-to-day care of the child(ren) who are placed with them under private fostering arrangements, in ways that will promote and safeguard each individual child's welfare. The overall responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of a privately fostered child remains with the child's parent(s) or with any other adult(s) who hold parental responsibility for the child concerned.

Accepting the above, 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.

Where Brighter Futures for Children receives notice that a child is being privately fostered, it will make such enquiries and visits as are necessary to satisfy itself that the child's welfare is being appropriately safeguarded and promoted. This will involve completing an assessment of the child's needs together with an assessment of the private fostering arrangement.

Brighter Futures for Children will ensure that regular welfare supervision visits are undertaken to all privately fostered children, through-out the duration of their placements. The frequency of visits will be determined by the needs and circumstances of the particular case. However, every child who is being privately fostered will be visited at least once every 6 weeks in the first year of their placement and at least once every 12 weeks thereafter. This is the minimum level of visiting; in addition, every child who is fostered privately will be visited when reasonably requested by the child, the private foster carer(s), a parent of the child, or any other person with parental responsibility for the child.

Privately fostered children will be seen alone at each visit, unless the social worker considers it inappropriate, and, where the child's preferred language is not English, with an interpreter, who is independent of the child's parent(s) and of the private foster carer(s). The allocated social worker will ensure that each privately fostered child has a way of contacting the local

authority if they wish to speak to a social worker between visits. In carrying out its duties and responsibilities in relation to privately fostered children, Brighter Futures for Children will undertake to seek the wishes and feelings of the child about the arrangements for their care.

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 carer(s) can meet the religious, cultural, language and racial needs of the child who is placed with them. If concerns are identified in respect of whether any of a child's needs are being appropriately met within a private fostering arrangement, this will be addressed with the private foster carer(s) and additional supports put in place if required.

Where the care of a privately fostered child is unsatisfactory and this cannot be addressed satisfactorily, Brighter Futures for Children 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 of the child.

If anything suggests that the child may be at risk, Child Protection Procedures will be followed, and a risk assessment undertaken. Where necessary the Berkshire Joint Legal Team will be consulted in determining any actions to be taken.

11. Managerial oversight

Managerial oversight of the local authority's private fostering services is maintained through a number of processes, including:

- Maintaining a Private Fostering Management Spreadsheet.
- Individually tracking the progress and outcome for all privately fostered children.
- Periodic audit.
- Consultation with children, young people and their carers (through annual placement reviews and reviews of the Child in Need Plans).

In addition to ongoing management oversight of our private fostering services, the BfFC Head of Service Corporate Parenting and BfFC Team Manager Adoption & Permanence, jointly produce an annual report on Brighter Futures for Children's private fostering services. This report details how the authority has complied with its duties and functions in relation to Private Fostering during the preceding year, the outcome of its work in relation to privately fostered children, and how the welfare of privately fostered children in the Reading area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

The annual report will be provided to Brighter Futures for Children's Director of Family Help & Safeguarding Children's Services, and to the Director of Children's Services, and presented to:

- Brighter Futures for Children's Quality Assurance & Improvement Committee.
- The Reading Borough Council Corporate Parenting Panel.
- The Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership.

12. The advice and support that is available to private foster carers, and prospective private foster carers, parents, and others with parental responsibility for children who are, or are to be, privately fostered, and others concerned with privately fostered children

Brighter Futures for Children has produced a leaflet for parents of privately fostered children, private foster carers, and professionals, that provides a brief overview of private fostering: 'Private Fostering – A guide for parents, carers and professionals'.

The leaflet is attached as Appendix 2 and can also be accessed at:

<https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/for-parents-carers/fostering-and-adoption/family-and-friends-carers/>

The leaflet can be translated into other languages as required.

12a Private foster carers and prospective private foster carers

Private foster carers, and those who are intending to privately foster a child(ren), are entitled to receive information, advice, and support from the responsible local authority. Providing support to private foster carers is primarily the responsibility of the Brighter Futures for Children Adoption & Permanence service.

Prospective and actual private foster carers will be advised of the benefits of ensuring that all aspects of any private fostering arrangement are agreed and recorded in a written agreement with the child(ren)'s parent(s). Having a written agreement in place will generally support the stability of the placement and reduce any risk of a placement ending prematurely. Brighter Futures for Children can provide advice around the drawing up of a written agreement and a template for written agreements can be provided to proposed or actual private foster carers if required.

Private foster carers will be informed about when they need to notify Brighter Futures for Children of changes in their circumstances or contact details.

Prospective and actual private foster carers will also receive advice and support aimed at enabling them to provide appropriate care for the child(ren) who are placed with them and to meet the child(ren)'s individual needs. This includes ensuring that the child(ren) have access to universal services such as health and education. This may also include advice on:

- Caring for the child(ren); including, obtaining practical support, parenting strategies, providing emotional support for the child(ren), managing issues of separation and loss, ways to ensure that the child(ren) remain in contact with their family; valuing and supporting the child(ren)'s culture and religion, and other aspects that will enhance their ability to provide effective care.
- Any issues that arise for other members of the household as a result of the private fostering arrangement.
- Where to get financial support: while the financial responsibility to maintain the child(ren) remains with the adults who hold parental responsibility for them), private foster carers can claim child benefit and child tax credit, if not being paid to the parent(s).

- Promoting family contact.
- Keeping relevant records on the child(ren)'s progress, development, and life experiences, to share with the child(ren)'s parent(s). This information will be important when the child(ren) returns to live with their family.

It may also include:

- Signposting and assistance in accessing local resources such as appropriate childcare, health care, nursery, or school.
- Providing links to support groups in the area.
- Providing information on the advice and support that is available from other agencies, including health services, education, housing services, youth support services, independent advice and advocacy services, voluntary organisations, and community groups.
- Providing information on training and how to access this.

Advice to private foster carers may be given in a number of ways:

- Individually by the Adoption & Permanence social worker, health visitor or other professionals.
- In a support group, learning from other carers.
- Through bespoke training for private foster carers or more general training for all foster carers or Connected Carers.

Private foster carers will be given the contact details of the Adoption & Permanence social worker who they can go to for advice and support if they have any significant worries about the care of the child(ren) who are placed with them, or if they would like to request a visit to the child(ren). Private foster carers will also be given details of how to access the Brighter Futures for Children Out of Hours Service.

12b Parents and others with parental responsibility for children who are, or are to be, privately fostered

The parents of privately fostered children are entitled to receive information, advice, and support from the responsible local authority, whilst their children are living away from their care, in private fostering arrangements. Providing support to the birth parent(s) of a privately fostered child is primarily the responsibility of the child's allocated social worker in the Brighter Futures for Children Together for Families Service.

Brighter Futures for Children will make reasonable attempts to ensure that parents who have placed their child(ren) in a private fostering arrangement are made aware of the support and information that is available to them. Whenever possible this will be done in person and confirmed in writing. If this is not possible but contact details are available for them, written information will be sent, and contact made by phone and/or email.

Parents will be informed that they are required by law to notify Brighter Futures for Children if they change address, and they will be asked to keep both Brighter Futures for Children and their

child(ren)'s carer(s) informed of any changes to their contact details so that Brighter Futures for Children and their child(ren)'s carer(s) can maintain contact with them.

Parents may need advice on a wide range of issue which their child(ren)'s allocated social worker, or the Adoption & Permanence social worker should be able to provide. This may include:

- Advice around whether or not private fostering is the right choice of care for their child(ren), or whether a specific private foster carer(s) is able to meet their child(ren)'s needs.
- Advice and support around making alternative arrangements for the care of their child(ren) where Brighter Futures for Children considers that it is not appropriate for the child(ren) to be privately fostered, or where a private fostering arrangement is prohibited, and no other arrangement is contemplated.
- If applicable, advice on the desirability of, if possible, keeping siblings together – unless a child has particular needs which precludes them being with their sibling(s).
- Advice on what to do if they are concerned about their child(ren)'s care (both for information and if a situation arises).

Parents may also require help in looking for an alternative to private foster care in the event that they are unhappy with a proposed or ongoing arrangement.

Parents will be advised about the importance of them promoting positive attachments for their child(ren) and of the implications of child(ren) living away from home with someone else if parental involvement and contact is not maintained. They will be encouraged to remain in close contact with their child(ren) throughout the duration of any private fostering arrangement.

Information and advice will include looking at what can be done to help the child(ren) to return to their family and end the need for the private fostering arrangement. In each case Brighter Futures for Children will consider whether support, or referral to another agency, would remove the necessity for the child(ren) to be privately fostered and, where feasible and in the child(ren)'s best interests and with the parent(s)' consent, provide that support or make that referral.

Parents will be advised of the benefits of ensuring that all aspects of any private fostering arrangement are agreed and recorded in a written agreement with the private foster carer(s). Having a written agreement will generally support the stability of the placement and reduce any risk of a placement ending prematurely. Any agreement between a child(ren)'s parent(s) and private foster carer(s) should ensure that the child(ren)'s holistic needs are being met. Brighter Futures for Children can provide advice around the drawing up of a written agreement and a template for written agreements can be provided to proposed or actual private foster carers if required.

Parents and others with parental responsibility for a privately fostered child(ren), will be given the contact details of their child(ren)'s Together for Families social worker and the Adoption & Permanence social worker whose role it is to support their child(ren)'s carer(s). They will also be given details of how to access the Brighter Futures for Children Out of Hours Service.

12c Professionals who come into contact with privately fostered children

Professionals who come into contact with privately fostered children are able to access general information about private fostering via the Brighter Futures for Children website. If specific advice is

required, they should in the first instance contact the Team Manager of the Brighter Futures for Children Adoption & Permanence Service – please see section 6 above for contact details.

The Brighter Futures for Children Adoption & Permanence Service can also, on request, provide individual or group training for other key professionals to support them in gaining an appropriate understanding of the local authority’s private fostering policy and procedures, which can then be disseminated to their agencies.

13. The information and support available to privately fostered children

Every privately fostered child known to Brighter Futures for Children has a social worker allocated to them who is primarily responsible for monitoring their welfare and providing them with any additional support that they require that is not being provided by their carer(s), parent(s) or other involved agencies or services (including health or education).

Brighter Futures for Children recognises that privately fostered children should be able to access information, help and support when required so their welfare is safeguarding and protected.

Brighter Futures for Children is committed to providing privately fostered children with information, using methods or formats appropriate to their age and level of understanding. This includes information about:

- Private foster care and the carer(s)’ responsibilities.
- The meaning of their privately fostered status, and their right to be safeguarded.
- Their right to speak openly about their experience and to inform their allocated social worker if they are unhappy about any aspect of the care that they receive, and how any information that they share will be treated.
- What support is available to them and how to access that support when they need it. (This should particularly acknowledge the fact that privately fostered children are separated from their parents, and often from other close relatives and/or friends and will have associated feelings of loss).
- Maintaining their cultural and/or religious identity when they move to the placement (particularly if they are from a different culture to their carer(s)).
- Advocacy services, Children’s Rights Services.
- Whether the child will be eligible to receive advice and support from the local authority when they cease to be privately fostered.
- The Brighter Futures for Children complaints procedure.

This information is contained within BFFC’s leaflet for privately fostered children: ‘Private fostering – A guide for children’. This can be accessed at: <https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/for-parents-carers/fostering-and-adoption/family-and-friends-carers/>

Each child is provided with their own copy of the leaflet, which, depending on their age and level of understanding, may be explained to them by their allocated social worker. The leaflet will be translated into the child’s language of heritage if appropriate.

In addition, privately fostered children are given the contact details of the social worker who

will be visiting them whilst they are privately fostered. If of sufficient age and understanding, the child will be made aware of how they can contact their social worker if they have any worries about their care; if they would like the social worker to visit them to check on anything that is concerning them about their care, or if there are other matters that they want to talk about.

14. The training available to private foster carers (including prospective private foster carers)

All private foster carers will have a named social worker who is employed within the Brighter Futures for Children's Adoption & Permanence Service; this worker will assist the carer(s) to consider their individual training needs and to identify appropriate training. This may include training on behaviour management, attachment, dealing with loss, health and safety, first aid, fire safety, child protection, or caring for teenagers. Private foster carers can access the training that is generally available to Brighter Futures for Children Foster Carers and Family and Friends Carers, if this is appropriate to their learning needs: [Training for family and friends \(connected\) carers - Brighter Futures For Children](#).

The Family and Friends Team in the Adoption and Permanence Service will also facilitate private foster carers being linked to appropriate support groups if requested.

15. The role of other agencies in assisting Brighter Futures for Children to carry out its duty under section 67(1) of the Children Act 1989

Other agencies need to be aware that failure by a private foster carer or parent to notify the appropriate local authority of a private fostering arrangement is an offence, and if Brighter Futures for Children is not aware of a private fostering arrangement in the Reading area, 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 Brighter Futures for Children of any 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. This will enable Brighter Futures for Children to then discharge its duty to satisfy itself that the welfare of the privately fostered child concerned is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

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

16. Commendations and complaints

Responsibility for responding to and managing any commendations or complaints regarding BFFC's Private Fostering services should be directed to:

Nayana George, Customer Relations & Information Governance Manager
Directorate of Resources



Freepost RTLS-CKGX-RKLL,
Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU

Telephone: 0118 937 2905

Email: <mailto:complaints@reading.gov.uk>

Text: Type SPKUP & your message to 81722

Any commendations regarding any Private Fostering services provided by BFFC should be directed to:

Maria Young
Director of Family Help & Safeguarding Children's Services,
Brighter Futures for Children,
Floor 1, Civic Offices,
Bridge Street, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 2LU

Email: Maria.young@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

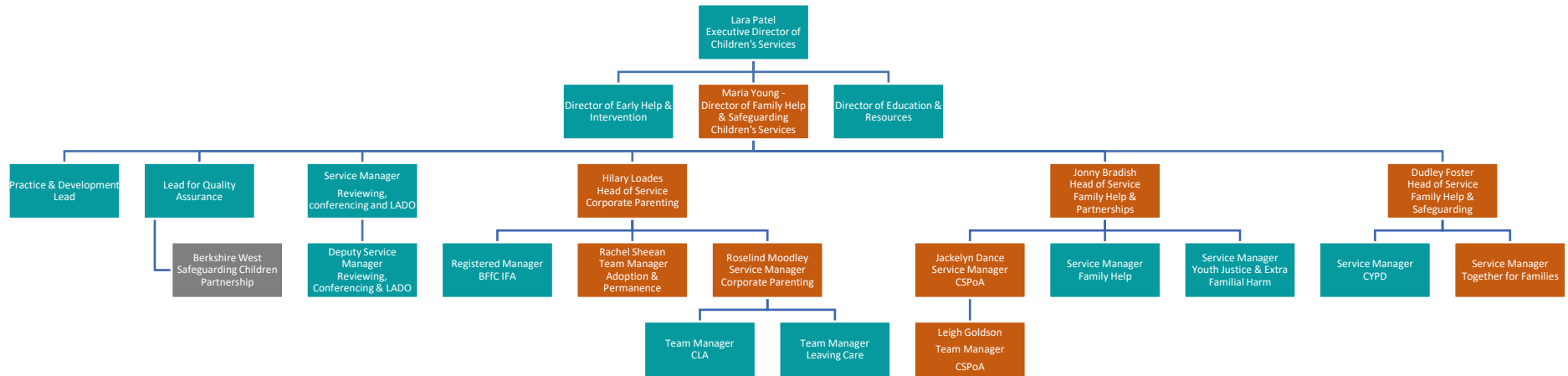
17. Feedback

Brighter Futures for Children welcomes feedback from its service users and other interested parties in relation to all aspects of its service provision and we are committed to learning from any feedback received. If you have any comments about our Private Fostering services, these should in the first instance be directed to Brighter Futures for Children's Head of Service for Corporate Parenting:

Hilary Loades-Bannon,
Head of Service, Corporate Parenting,
Brighter Futures for Children,
Floor 1, Civic Offices,
Bridge St, Reading RG1 2LU

Email: Hilary.loades-bannon@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

Appendix 1 – The organisational structure of the agency



Appendix 2 – Leaflets re Private Fostering

Private Fostering – A guide for children



Private Fostering -
Guide for Children - 2

Private Fostering – A guide for parents, carers, and professionals



Private Fostering -
Guide for Parents Car