

Swindon Borough Council's

Private Fostering Statement of Purpose

2025/2026

This should be read in conjunction with Private Fostering Procedure

Content:

1. Introduction
2. The legal definition of a privately fostered child
3. Overview of Services
4. Swindon Borough Council's Duties and Functions under the Children Act 1989 and Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005
5. Additional Duties under the Children Act 2004 and the Children (Private Fostering Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and how they will operate in relation to privately fostered children
6. Training of Staff
7. How Awareness of Private Fostering and the Notification Requirements will be promoted
8. Assessment of the suitability of Private Fostering Arrangements
9. Ensuring the Welfare of Privately Fostered Children are Safeguarded and Promoted
10. The Role of Other Agencies in Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Privately Fostered Children, including Encouraging Notification
11. Advice, support and information available for carers of privately fostered children (including prospective carers), to parents or those with parental responsibility;
12. Information and support for privately fostered children
13. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the Swindon Borough Council private fostering service.
14. Complaints, compliments or comments
15. Regulation and Inspection
16. Further information and Advice on Private Fostering

1. INTRODUCTION

This Statement of Purpose is designed to meet the statutory requirement established by the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 that



The local authority has a written statement or plan, which sets out its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and the ways in which they will be carried out/

It is our intention to work in partnership with children, carers and parents to ensure that:

- children are provided with high quality child care that meets their needs
- safeguarding children and their best interests at all times are of paramount importance
- we work together to safeguard and promote children's physical, emotional, health, educational, social and cultural needs
- private carers are provided with advice, and support which helps them to provide such care
- birth parents feel able to seek the help and guidance of the Local Authority

Our aim is to ensure that we create a culture in the Swindon where birth parents, individuals with parental responsibility and carers, feel comfortable in notifying the Local Authority of private fostering arrangements and that they are aware of the benefits to them and the children in their care of them doing so.

Every conversation starts with the child and the welfare of the child will remain paramount at all times and in every circumstance.

The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed, updated and modified whenever necessary, but not less than annually.

Any comments or enquiries regarding this Statement of Purpose should be passed to the Designated Manager for Private Fostering, Swindon Borough Council.

At the issue of this Statement of Purpose, the Designated Manager for Private Fostering is Claire Holmes, Fostering Team Manager, Swindon Borough Council- Cholmes@swindon.gov.uk

For Children's Social Care practitioners, this Statement should be read in conjunction with the Private Fostering Policy.

Any comments or enquiries regarding this Statement of Purpose should be passed to the service responsible for Private Fostering: **privatefostering@swindon.gov.uk**.

2. THE LEGAL DEFINITION OF A PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILD

'Private Fostering' is defined by The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 as a private arrangement made for the care of a child or young person under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) by someone other than:

- a parent of his or hers
- a person who is not a parent of his or hers but who has Parental Responsibility for him/her
- a close relative of his or hers, for example, a close relative is an aunt, uncle, stepparent, grandparent or sibling but not a cousin or great-aunt or great-uncle
- and she/he has been cared for and accommodated by that person; for 28 days or more; or the period of actual private fostering is less than 28 days but the private foster carer intends to privately foster him/her for a period of 28 days or more. A child 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 longer than 28 days

Private Fostering arrangements are diverse. However, arrangements which are private fostering include:

- children living apart from their families due to parental or family problems
- teenagers living with a friend, or friend's parent/carers, where relationships at home have broken down; or
- to complete a stage of education because of a family move
- children whose parents are working abroad or in another part of the country or serving in the armed forces
- children whose parents come into the country to study or work and find it difficult to care for their own children
- children sent to the UK for educational purposes, including those attending language schools, foreign exchanges or sport academies who stay with host families
- children attending residential schools who stay with a teacher, or a friend's parents during the long school holidays
- unaccompanied minors who are living with friends, relatives or stranger
- a child or young person who is in our care or placed in any residential home, hospital or school is excluded from the definition

3. OVERVIEW OF SERVICES

Swindon Borough Council has established clear policies and procedures on private fostering which set out how the authority discharges its duties in relation to the private fostering legislation; these can be found on the Council's website.

Swindon's Private Fostering Service is located within the Fostering Team at Clarence House, Euclid Street, Swindon, SN1 2JH.

The Private Fostering Service has two functions:

- To raise public and professional awareness about private fostering and, the requirements to notify the Local Authority of any actual or planned private fostering arrangements;
- To carry out an assessment of identified private foster carer/s, their household and accommodation and provide support to the child and the adults involved in the arrangement.

It is the Council's policy that all private fostering notifications are referred to Swindon Borough Council's Contact Children and Families Team where they will be recorded and screened. The assessment (with the exclusion of host families / children from other local authorities) will then be passed to the Assessment and Child Protection Team (ACP), who will be responsible for completing the statutory assessment in respect of the child / young person and monitoring their welfare.

The private fostering social worker is responsible for the assessment of the private foster carer, their household and accommodation and supporting the carers.

Swindon Borough Council is committed to achieving high standards in relation to their private fostering provision. To achieve this a social worker has been designated as the specialist private fostering social worker.

The designated private fostering social worker will undertake work to promote general awareness raising of private fostering and will offer advice and information to the public, professionals and external agencies including voluntary and community groups. The private fostering social worker is the designated person to whom requests for advice and information about private fostering should be referred to. In the absence of the private fostering social worker, the Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Pod Assistant Team Manager or the Fostering Team Manager should be consulted.

The Private Fostering Social Worker role is held within the Fostering Service. The Service Manager has the ultimate decision-making responsibility with respect to

findings of suitability, imposition of requirements, prohibitions, disqualifications and exemptions for proposed or actual private fostering arrangements.

Responsibilities of the Private Fostering Social Worker

The primary responsibilities are to:

- Assess the suitability of the private foster carers and other members of the household;
- Assess the suitability of the accommodation and the wider environment;
- Carry out all necessary checks i.e. **DBS's** for private foster carers and all members of the household who are over 16 years of age; medicals checks in respect of the private foster carers;
- Liaise closely with the child's social worker if involved about the suitability of the arrangement and the extent to which the placement is meeting or is likely to meet the child's needs and promote his/her welfare;
- Ensure all necessary paperwork i.e. assessment and agreement forms are completed and signed by the private foster carers and parents (if appropriate);
- Make a recommendation as to the suitability of the private arrangement in all aspects required by regulations;
- To provide additional advice, support and assistance to the carer where necessary;
- To carry out the annual review of the private foster carer and the arrangements;
- To provide advice and information on private fostering.
- To make the necessary referrals to promote the safety and wellbeing of the privately fostered child.

4. SWINDON BOROUGH COUNCIL'S DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS UNDER THE CHILDREN ACT 1989 AND CHILDREN (PRIVATE ARRANGEMENTS FOR FOSTERING) REGULATIONS 2005 AND HOW THEY WILL OPERATE IN RELATION TO PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILDREN

The duties of the Local Authority in relation to private fostering are set out in the Children Act 1989, the Children (Private Arrangement for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and, amendments are contained within the Children Act 2004. The National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005 set out a number of standards to be met by all Local Authorities in discharging their duties which cover the following areas:

- Statement of Purpose
- Notification
- Safeguarding and promoting welfare
- Advice and support
- Monitoring and compliance

Swindon Borough Council has a duty to be notified about all private fostering arrangements in its geographical area of responsibility and to satisfy itself that the welfare of children who are being privately fostered are paramount (Children Act 1989 Section 67(1)).

As soon as the Local Authority becomes aware of a proposed arrangement to privately foster a child or young person within their area, or where a child or young person is being privately fostered within their area, the Local Authority will assess the suitability of the arrangement.

Where a child or young person already has an allocated Social Worker, then the private foster carer, those with parental responsibility or any professional working with a child or young person must contact the Social Worker to notify them of the arrangement. The allocated Social Worker will be responsible for carrying out an Initial Visit and Private Fostering Assessment.

Where a child or young person does not have an allocated Social Worker, including those children receiving support from the Child in Need Service, then the private foster carer, those with parental responsibility or any professional working with a child or young person must contact Swindon Borough Council's Contact Children and Families Team.

Where the Local Authority has received notification under Regulation 3 (The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005) they must arrange for an officer of the authority, within seven working days to:

- visit the premises where it is proposed that the child will be cared for and accommodated

- visit and speak to the proposed private foster carer and to all members of the household
- visit and speak to the privately fostered child alone unless the officer considers it inappropriate
- speak to and if it is practicable to do so, visit every parent or person with Parental Responsibility for the child; and
- establish such matters listed in Schedule 2 (2005 Regulations as above) as appear to the officer to be relevant Where notification is received about a child who is already being privately fostered the duties of the officer remain the same as in section 67(1) of the Children 1989 Act. The assessment should include:
 - the wishes and feelings of the child or young person about the arrangement;
 - the suitability of the private foster carer's household and their capacity to care for the child or young person;
 - that arrangements are in place to meet the child's health and educational needs;
 - that adequate and clear arrangements are in place between the private foster carer and the birth parents covering such areas as contact, financial support, decision making, health care and more

All privately fostered children will have an Assessment completed following notification of the private fostering arrangement, in order to assess their needs and to ascertain whether they require any additional services to be provided.

Whilst local authorities do not formally approve or register private foster carers, Swindon Borough Council has a duty to satisfy themselves that the welfare of a privately fostered child or young person within their area is being safeguarded and promoted.

Additional Duties under the Children Act 2004 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 Under the Children Act 2004 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 Local Authorities are required to raise public awareness in their area of the requirements regarding notification of private fostering arrangements.

Notifications must be given to the Local Authority when there is a proposal to privately foster a child or when a child is already being privately fostered. This will enable the Local Authority to make such enquiries, to determine whether the welfare of privately fostered children is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted. This is achieved through assessment and monitoring of arrangements within statutory timescales. These measures, along with the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005, focus Local Authorities' attention on private fostering and require them to take a more proactive approach with partnership agencies and other professionals in identifying arrangements in their area. Local Authorities are expected to improve notification rates

and compliance with the existing legislative framework for private fostering and, therefore, to address the key problems identified with the former scheme. It is intended that these additional measures will improve the arrangements for safeguarding children and young people in private fostering arrangements.

5. ADDITIONAL DUTIES UNDER THE CHILDREN ACT 2004 AND THE CHILDREN (PRIVATE ARRANGEMENTS FOR FOSTERING) REGULATIONS 2005

The Children Act 2004 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 stipulates that; Local Authorities are required to raise public awareness of their statutory obligation to notify the local authority of private fostering arrangements in their area. The local authority children's services department must be informed 6 weeks before, or (immediately) upon discovering a private fostering arrangement (in writing).

Upon notification, a social worker will visit the home to speak to the carer and the child to ensure the child is safe, carry out background checks and ensure support is provided.

Support may include:

- *Advice on benefits, funding, free school meals, local services...
- *Parenting support and advice
- *Mediation services with the child's birth family
- *Access to training
- *Ensuring children's cultural needs are being met.

6. TRAINING OF STAFF

The Designated Manager for Private Fostering has the lead responsibility for ensuring relevant staff have appropriate understanding and expertise in relation to private fostering. The responsibilities include the review and updating of Practice Guidance and assessment documentation, undertaking briefing sessions of staff and maintaining

awareness of Private Fostering. Information about private fostering will be circulated to relevant professionals within the Children and Families Service and partnership agencies such as health and education, additional, specific training to staff across the Borough and its partners will be made available if there is a request to provide this.

The Designated Manager reports on activities undertaken through the preparation and presentation of the Private Fostering Annual Report.

7. HOW AWARENESS OF PRIVATE FOSTERING AND THE NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS WILL BE PROMOTED

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to promote public awareness in their area of the statutory notification requirements regarding Private Fostering. The Designated Manager is responsible for developing a strategy to raise public and professional awareness about private fostering. This will be done using a range of media, including posters, leaflets, web articles and training opportunities. The Designated Manager reports annually on activities undertaken to raise awareness of Notification requirements through the preparation and presentation of the Private Fostering Annual Report.

Our aims are:

- to increase the notification of private arrangements by raising awareness of private fostering
- to provide guidance on our statutory responsibilities to members of the public, parents, children, all local authority and partner agencies
- to establish and assess the suitability of private fostering arrangements
- to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people living in such arrangements and that their needs are being met
- to provide support and advice to private foster carers, children/young people and their parents as appropriate

This will be achieved by-

- Swindon Borough Council publicity materials will contain information about the legal definition of privately fostered children/young people. The procedure for notifying the Local Authority, the benefits of notification and the consequences of non-notification.

- A dedicated web page for private fostering is available on Swindon Borough Council's website [Private fostering | Swindon Borough Council](#) which includes information on private fostering, the notification process, Statement of Purpose and other useful links.
- Swindon Borough Council will display posters and disseminate publicity materials to key partners in health, education and the voluntary/community sector and council offices. Information shared will contain the contact details for private fostering enquires.
- Advertisements will be placed in the local media;
- Private fostering presentations/training will be provided to all staff within the Children and Families Service.
- Private fostering presentations/training will be offered to partner agencies, to ensure private fostering remains on the agenda;
- Targeted private fostering campaigns will be completed, to include; presentations, social media and attending community events;
- Working with and providing information to elected Council Members including the Lead Member for children and Swindon Borough Council's Safeguarding Partnership to help raise the profile of private fostering.

8. ASSESSMENT OF THE SUITABILITY OF PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENTS

On receipt of a referral or notification to Swindon Borough Council's Contact Children and Families Team, screening will be undertaken and a decision made within one working day, resulting in allocation to the appropriate social work team.

A visit to the child, the proposed carer and the accommodation will be made within seven (7) working days of the notification or within six (6) weeks (and not more than 13 weeks) if the notification is given in advance. Visits will be undertaken by a qualified Social Worker tasked by a Manager with conducting a full assessment of the suitability of the Private Fostering arrangement.

This Private Fostering assessment will also gather as much information as possible required under the regulations, including duration for the arrangement and the arrangements in place to safeguard the child. Where possible the child will be seen alone with their wishes and feeling gathered and understood. The assessment will also

explore and assessment of the child's needs and the carers capacity to meet these needs and provide care.

It is determined that an assessment of the suitability of the Private Fostering arrangement should take no more than 42 days from the Notification.

Alongside the formal assessment the following will be completed;

Agency checks, including; education, health, employer, children's social care records check, probation service etc.

- An enhanced DBS check
- Personal references
- Medical

9. ENSURING THE WELFARE OF PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILDREN ARE SAFEGUARDED AND PROMOTED

*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. **Section 67 (1) Children Act 1989***

In considering the welfare of the children privately fostered within Swindon, regard has been given to Section 1 (3) of The Children Act (1989) and the following values and principles have been devised to inform good practice:

- The welfare of the child is considered as paramount;
- Parents and legal guardian's primary responsibility for their child is recognised and respected;
- Children have a right to be treated with dignity and respect;
- Children should be valued as individuals with regard to race, culture, language, religion, gender and disability;
- Children have a right for their physical and emotional needs to be met;
- Children have a right to a safe, child-centred environment;

- Children need opportunities for independence and exploration within safe boundaries;
- Children have a right to continuous and consistent care;
- Due consideration should be given to the wishes and feelings of children and parents/guardians;
- Partnerships between parents/guardians, caregivers and the Local Authority are valued.

The private foster carer is responsible for providing the day-to-day care of the child in a way which will promote and safeguard their welfare. Responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the privately fostered child remains with the parent or persons with parental responsibility.

However, it is the duty of Swindon Borough Council to satisfy itself that the welfare of children who are, or will be, privately fostered within their area is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

Swindon Borough Council will ensure that privately fostered children and young people's welfare is safeguarded and promoted by staff adhering to the private fostering regulations as outlined below:

Where the Local Authority receives notice that a child is being privately fostered, it will make such enquiries and visits to ensure that the child's welfare is being appropriately safeguarded and promoted. This will be done within the statutory timescales.

An assessment of the private fostering arrangement, together with an assessment of the child's needs will be completed. All private foster carers and their adult household members will have an Enhanced DBS check undertaken alongside relevant checks to ensure suitability to care for a privately fostered child.

Swindon Borough Council will ensure that all private fostered children in its area are visited within the first seven days of notification as part of the Assessment and spoken to alone (if appropriate).

Privately fostered children will be visited at least once every six weeks in the first year of their placement and at least every twelve weeks in the second and subsequent years. This is the minimum requirement; however, the frequency of visits will be determined by the needs and circumstances of the particular case. Additional

visits will be made to a privately fostered child when reasonably requested by the child, the private foster carer, the child's parents or any other person with Parental Responsibility for the child.

The child 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 parents and the private foster carer.

A continuous part of the placement monitoring will be to check that the placement meets the child's needs and that they are safeguarded and protected.

In accordance with the regulations, written records will be completed following each visit. These will include conclusions drawn on the arrangement, whether the arrangement continues to be suitable, whether the child/young person was seen alone (if not, why not), his/her wishes and feelings about the arrangement, any concerns raised and any relevant advice given.

All privately fostered children will be provided with the contact details of the private fostering team and their own social worker (if applicable) whom they can contact for support, information or advice or should they have any concerns, worries or questions. Children will also be provided with details of advocacy services, the complaints procedures and organisations that they can contact should they wish to talk to someone independently.

Carers and parents will also have the contact details of the private fostering social worker and named social worker for the child if applicable whom they can contact should they require support, information, advice or have any concerns, worries or questions.

Carers will be provided with the support, information and advice necessary to enable them to be able to take appropriate care of the child they are caring for. Carers will be advised of training available and helped to access this.

Parents will be provided with support, information and advice to enable them to be able to take care of their own children. Where this is not an option for a period of time, parents will be provided with guidance and support on how to make sure that the private fostering arrangement meets the needs of their child and keeps them safe and protected. Support and services will also be made available for parents with regards to contact as the Local Authority has a duty to promote contact where children are living away from their parents or family of origin. The Local Authority will provide support around reunification if required.

Where the care of a privately fostered child is unsatisfactory and this cannot be addressed satisfactorily, Swindon Borough Council will, unless they consider that it would not be in the best interests of the child, take reasonable steps to ensure the care and accommodation of the child is provided by:

- A parent;
- A person who has Parental Responsibility;
- A relative.

If any concerns are raised about the child suggest that s/he may be at risk, Child Protection Procedures will be followed.

Swindon Borough Council Legal Services will also be consulted to advise on the appropriate action when necessary.

The Fostering Assistant Team Manager / Team Manager will carry out internal file audits on a regular basis and report back the findings to the Service Manager.

An annual report will be detail on how the Local Authority satisfies itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in their area are satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

Swindon Borough Council will also ensure that information regarding private fostering is available for members of the public and for professionals working with children, so that there is a clear awareness of these arrangements and associated procedures.

10. THE ROLE OF OTHER AGENCIES IN SAFEGUARDING AND PROMOTING THE WELFARE OF PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILDREN, INCLUDING ENCOURAGING NOTIFICATION

It is important that all those who may come into contact with a privately fostered child are aware of the notification process. In particular, professionals working in health and education who are often the first to become aware of such arrangements. Such agencies have a shared statutory responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of privately fostered children.

Partner agencies need to be 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 Local Authorities are not aware of such arrangements they cannot carry out their legal duty

and satisfy themselves that the welfare of the children concerned is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

Awareness raising/ training will be available to professionals who have regular contact with children, young people and carers to ensure that they are clear about their role and responsibilities in relation to private fostering arrangements.

Any agency interested in finding out about private fostering is welcome to contact the Private Fostering Team to request information, leaflets and/or posters. This can be done via the Private Fostering email – **privatefostering@swindon.gov.uk**

11. ADVICE, SUPPORT AND INFORMATION AVAILABLE FOR CARERS OF PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILDREN (INCLUDING PROSPECTIVE CARERS), TO PARENTS OR THOSE WITH PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY;

Swindon Borough Council's ongoing contact with children and young people in private fostering arrangements will also include a responsibility to provide appropriate advice and guidance and to identify any individual support requirements with the private foster carer.

Private foster carers and parents will be given the contact details of the private fostering social worker to whom they can go to for advice and support. In addition, they will be given the contact details of the child's social worker whom they can contact about the child. In the absence of the allocated Social Worker in either team, private foster carers, children and their parents can access a duty service and gain advice and support from a qualified social worker at any time. During weekends and evenings, they can also contact the Emergency Duty Service in Swindon.

Swindon Borough Council has produced literature, which is available to parents and carers including information leaflets and briefings on private fostering, their rights and responsibilities.

Where appropriate, parents and carers can be referred to external organisations for additional advice and support. Referrals can be completed by the Private Fostering Social Worker or the child's Social Worker, as appropriate.

Training is available to private foster carers and a welcome email is sent by the Fostering Training Coordinator to each carer with log in details to learn4u where they are able to access a catalogue of online courses, relevant to the needs of children.

Information and support will also be provided by the private fostering social worker throughout their contact with parents, private foster carers and professionals as appropriate.

12. INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILDREN

Privately fostered children will also be provided with information, using methods or formats appropriate to their age and level of understanding, including:

- About their 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 the social worker where they are unhappy about any aspect of the care they receive and how that information will be treated;
- What support is available to them and how to access that support when they need it;
- Advocacy services;
- Complaints procedure;
- Useful contact details
- Leaving care arrangements if they are "a person qualifying for advice and assistance" under Section 24 of the Children Act 1989 (i.e. privately fostered at any time while aged 16 or 17. The social worker will advise the young person prior to their 16th birthday that 'Post 16' support and advice is available.

If a child has an allocated Social Worker within the Local Authority, then additional services and support will be put in place as per their status as a child in need, or a child in need of protection. In addition, and where appropriate, children will be given the contact details of the private fostering social worker who will also be visiting them while they are privately fostered.

13. ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SWINDON BOROUGH COUNCIL PRIVATE FOSTERING SERVICE.

The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 require Local Authorities to monitor the way in which they discharge their functions under Part 9 of the Children Act.

Swindon Borough Council monitors compliance and evaluates our effectiveness in improving practice in relation to private fostering via a number of means including:

- Performance data;
- Data collated on the Private Fostering Management Spread sheet;
- Tracking the progress and outcomes for all privately fostered children;
- Audit findings;
- Consultation/ surveys with children/young people and their carers.

Line Management and Auditing

As well as managerial oversight through supervision and signing off reports, the responsible Manager is expected to monitor compliance through carrying out audits of a sample of cases once every three months. These will then be moderated by the Service Manager.

The purpose of these audits is to ensure all required areas of work have been completed to a high standard, within the required timescales and that this has been achieved through:

- Multi agency working;
- Partnership with children and families;
- Child focused practice.

A summary of audit practice and findings will be incorporated into the annual report on Private Fostering which is presented to the Director of Children's Services.

Matters to be covered in the Annual Report on Private Fostering

The annual report will provide an overview of private fostering activity in the local area, the actions taken by the Local Authority and set out the extent to which local agencies are cooperating in respect of private fostering matters by having particular regard to the extent to which the Local Authority and other agencies have taken action to:

- Promote staff awareness of the requirements of the Private Fostering Regulations;
- Promote public awareness of the requirements of the Private Fostering Regulations;
- Identify whether service users may be acting as private foster carers;
- Identify whether children using their services are placed with private foster carers;
- Provide private foster carers or prospective private foster carers with advice, guidance and support;
- Promote access to relevant training by private foster carers;
- Notify the Local Authority of the placement or proposed placement of any children with private foster carers;
- Notify other Local Authorities of the placement or proposed placement of any Swindon children with private foster carers in another area;
- Identify the extent to which the requirements of the Regulations are being met in Swindon and what additional action is required by the Local Authority and partner agencies.

Consultation / Feedback from Children, Parents, Carers and Professionals

Swindon Borough Council will carry out periodic surveys to capture the views and experiences of children, parents, carers and professionals as part of the programme of service improvement and development.

The private fostering auditing process is designed to check that the views of children, parents and carers are being sought, listened to and evident within the assessment and decision-making process.

14. COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS OR COMMENTS

Swindon Borough Council recognises the importance of feedback and welcomes complaints, compliments and comments as a valuable form of feedback about its services and performance.

Information leaflets with details of how to provide feedback are given to private foster carers, privately fostered children and to their parents and/or legal guardians. Adults and children are encouraged to discuss any concerns about the service they received with their social worker and/or the team manager.

When a privately fostered child or a private foster carer has a query or is not satisfied with the service they are receiving, every attempt will be made to resolve the problem. However, should the matter become a formal complaint, the complaints procedure would be followed. In such cases the complainant will be advised to put their complaint in writing and the complainant will be provided with specific information on the formal complaints process. Through this process all children, birth parents, legal guardians and private foster carers will also be informed of their right to complain to Ofsted.

All privately fostered children will be provided information as to how to gain support from Advocacy Services about how to make a complaint and how to obtain access to an independent person who can help them with the complaint process.

Making a Complaint

Complaints, comments or compliments about the service can be lodged in a variety of different ways – these processes can be accessed via the internet using **www.swindon.gov.uk**.

15. REGULATION AND INSPECTION

The Office for the Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) has the responsibility to regularly inspect and regulate private fostering services to ensure that we achieve the aims and objectives as set out in the Statement of Purpose. All inspection reports regarding private fostering can be located at **Ofsted Gov website**.

Ofsted can be contacted directly by telephone 08456 404045.



By email at mailto: **enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk**.

Or in writing to:

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

16. FURTHER INFORMATION AND ADVICE ON PRIVATE FOSTERING

Advice and information about private fostering can be obtained from Swindon Borough Council's Fostering Service on **privatefostering@swindon.gov.uk**