

Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Report to Scrutiny Board (Children & Families)

Date: 12 November 2015

Subject: Recommendation Tracking – Private Fostering

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. This report sets out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny review of Private Fostering published on the 17th of January 2013.
2. The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Scrutiny Board to monitor progress and identify completed recommendations; those progressing to plan; and those where there is either an obstacle or progress is not adequate. The Board will then be able to take further action as appropriate.

Recommendations

3. Members are asked to:
 - Agree those recommendations which no longer require monitoring;
 - Identify any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determine the action the Board wishes to take as a result.
 - Note the recommendations where satisfactory progress is being made.
 - Consider overall progress against the desired outcomes identified by the Board.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny review of Private Fostering.

2 Background information

- 2.1 It was agreed in June 2012 that the Childrens and Families Scrutiny Board would conduct an inquiry which would look at Private Fostering arrangements.
- 2.2 At its meeting in January 2013, the Scrutiny Board agreed a report summarising its observations, conclusions and recommendations. A number of desired outcomes were highlighted when the Scrutiny Board made its recommendation these are:
- That raising standards in providing support for Children and their Carers subject to a Private Fostering Arrangement remains a priority and that service delivery improvements are monitored.
 - That every organisation in Leeds that has regular contact with children, their families and Carers are aware of their statutory responsibilities, are in a position to identify if a private foster care arrangement is in place or likely to arise and are fully aware of the referral routes and key contacts so that cases can be reported.
 - That children in Leeds are aware of Private Fostering and how they can seek help and support should they need it.
 - To raise awareness of Private Fostering arrangements with faith and community groups.
- 2.3 The Board received the Director of Childrens Services and LSCB responses to the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Board at the March 2013 meeting and updates on progress were provided at the July 2013 and July 2014 meetings when it was acknowledged that of the 4 recommendations, 2 and 3 required further review.
- 2.4 The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Board to monitor progress and identify completed recommendations; those progressing to plan; and those where there is either an obstacle or progress is not adequate. The Board will then be able to take further action as appropriate.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 A standard set of criteria has been produced to enable the Board to assess progress. These are presented in the form of a flow chart at Appendix 1. The questions in the flow chart should help to decide whether a recommendation has been completed, and if not whether further action is required.
- 3.2 To assist Members with this task the Principal Scrutiny Adviser, in liaison with the Chair, has given a draft status for each recommendation. The Board is asked to confirm whether these assessments are appropriate and to change them where they are not. Details of progress against each recommendation are set out within the table at Appendix 2.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 Where internal or external consultation processes have been undertaken with regard to responding to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations, details of any such consultation will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

4.1.2 The Executive Board Member for Children's Services has been consulted on the response to the recommendations.

4.2 Equality and Diversity/Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 Where consideration has been given to the impact on equality areas, as defined in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme, this will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 This section is not relevant to this report.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 Details of any significant resource and financial implications linked to the Scrutiny recommendations will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 This section is not relevant to this report.

5 Conclusions

5.1 During the last 12 months we have made a number of improvements including:

- An actively delivered, robust and workable Communications Strategy
- The number of notifications of privately fostering arrangements has risen significantly.
- The number of Private Fostering arrangements worked throughout the year has increased to 77, the highest figure to date.
- Improved communication with the UK Border Agency, Children's Centres, The Fire Service, Health Visiting Teams and Education Guardianship Agencies. Further communication is planned with Leeds Children's Hospital Safeguarding Team.
- Practice Standards have been revised and circulated to all social work teams.

5.2 The following issues have made it hard for us to improve as much as we would like to:

- The continuing problem of the misunderstanding of the term 'Private Fostering'. (A term chosen by Central Government).
- Late notification of Private Fostering arrangements. This sometimes causes late assessments and thus delayed decision making.

5.3 Areas for development and improvement:

There a number of areas which we intend to focus on in the coming year in order to seek improvements in the service. These include:-

- Increased liaison with partner agencies, e.g. The Leeds Children's Hospital.
- Arrangements are in place for closer working with the newly formed Child Sexual Exploitation Team.
- Private Fostering Workers are being trained in issues relating to Female Genital Mutilation and other related topics.
- Continued awareness raising with Social Workers and other childcare professionals so that they will be better able to identify privately fostered children.

5.4 The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Board to monitor progress and identify completed recommendations. Progress in responding to those recommendations arising from the Scrutiny review of External Placements is detailed within the table at Appendix 2 for Members' consideration.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Members are asked to:

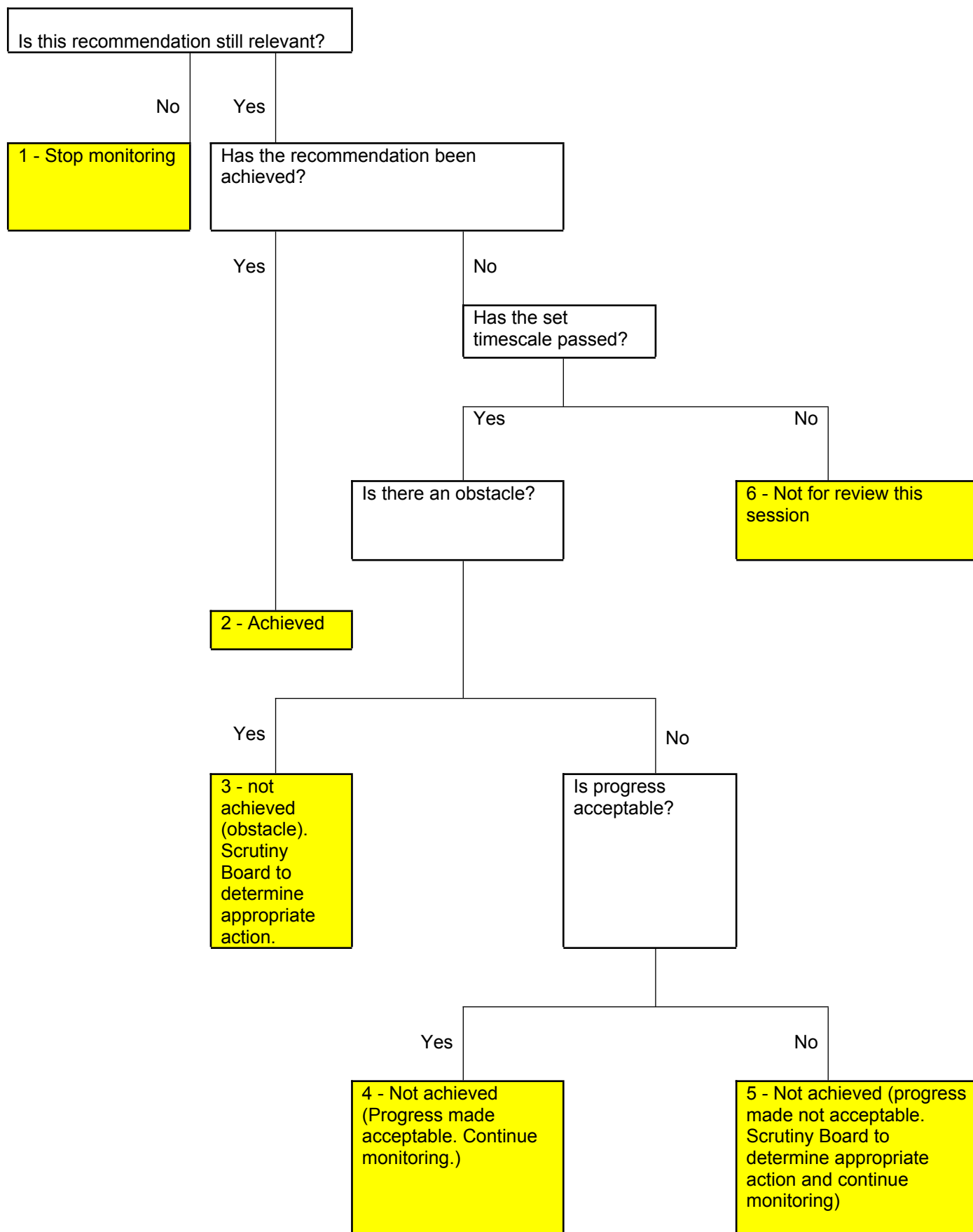
- Agree those recommendations which no longer require monitoring;
- Identify any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determine the action the Board wishes to take as a result.
- Note the recommendations where satisfactory progress is being made.
- Consider overall progress against the desired outcomes identified by the Board.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

Recommendation tracking flowchart and classifications:
Questions to be Considered by Scrutiny Boards



Review of Private Fostering Inquiry (12 November 2015)

Categories

- 1 - Stop monitoring
- 2 - Achieved
- 3 - Not achieved (Obstacle)
- 4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 5 - Not achieved (Progress made not acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 6 - Not for review this session

Recommendation for monitoring	Evidence of progress and contextual information	Status (categories 1 – 6) (to be completed by Scrutiny)	Complete
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>That the Director of Children’s Services commissions and implements a more extensive Private Fostering communication, training and education plan aimed at statutory, voluntary and commissioned services who come into contact with children. This should aim to deliver the necessary skills required to identify a private fostering arrangement, provide knowledge about their statutory responsibilities and referral routes in order to report a private fostering arrangement.</p>	<p>July 13 position:</p> <p>The Private Fostering communications strategy 2013/14 has been completed jointly by the Service, Corporate Communications and with assistance from the LSCB Communications Team. (A copy is was attached to the report.) This is a comprehensive document drawing together aims and objectives, key messages, stakeholders and communication channels. The Strategy is supported by a detailed Marketing and Communications Plan as well as a detailed Communications Action Plan to address the scrutiny board enquiry and recommendations. (see attached Strategy for full details). The plan is a rolling programme of training and publicity events as well as rebranding all the publicity materials and more specific one off actions.</p> <p>New leaflets and posters are being prepared, which will be made available to a wide range of organisations as well as on line, posted on the web page dedicated to Private Fostering. The Child Friendly</p>		

City Leeds logo and “Somebody Else’s Child” strap line are being used as key messages.

As under reporting continues to be a concern for the local authority the strengthened communications strategy identifies a wide range of key stakeholders who will be targeted and advice and training for these key groups will be provided. The development of a multi-agency approach to private fostering and improved communication with professional groups will facilitate improved recognition and reporting of private fostering arrangements.

It has recently been Private Fostering week and as part of this week, the service has used the Council’s Insite carousel to publicise Private Fostering; a press release was sent out using an example of a successful private fostering placement to illustrate what private fostering is. This involved the young person directly along with his carer. The story was posted on the Foster4Leeds Website face book and Twitter account, which in turn was picked up by BAAF and shared with all their followers. A question and answer forum was set up using the Twitter account and this in turn was tweeted to an estimated 30,000 followers.

July 2014:

As a result of the improved Communications Strategy and Plan the notification reporting figures have increased significantly this year with 52 new notifications and a significant increase in the number of open cases – 24 in June 2014 compared with 14 last year. Over the entire year the cases of 63 privately fostered children were actively worked. Contact with 2 local education guardianship exchange services this year has been productive in terms of establishing working relationships in order to improve notification requirements. However there are difficulties presented in terms of receiving notifications in good time, due the volume of children that may come into the country at any one time and the short window in which to

	<p>conduct the assessments. The government is considering whether such arrangements will be taken out of the private Fostering Regulations and dealt with in a different way but as yet there are no changes to the Regulations.</p> <p>The “Private Fostering one minute guide” has now been published and is available on SharePoint and is included on the Private Fostering website. It has been sent electronically to every School Governor with a request that Private Fostering is discussed and promoted at School Governor’s Meetings. It has also been sent electronically to every School Head Teacher in Leeds (250 schools) with a request that Private Fostering is discussed and promoted during team meetings and consideration given to identifying any privately fostered children within school.</p> <p>In February of this year a schools audit took place, requiring all schools to send information they might have on children who were being cared for in private fostering arrangements.</p> <p>November 15: As a result of the improved Communications Strategy and Plan the notification reporting figures have increased significantly this year with 78 notifications and a significant increase in the number of open cases – 32 at 31 March 2015 (compared to 20 in March 2014).</p> <p>Private Fostering Practice Standards have been written and circulated to Team Managers and Social Workers. The private fostering workers are visiting Team Managers meetings with a view to cascading greater knowledge and understanding regarding the individual responsibilities of Social Workers and Team Managers. All Private Foster Carers, parents and Privately Fostered Children receive a copy of the relevant Information leaflets regarding private fostering.</p>	<p>2</p>	
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<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>That the Director of Children’s Services investigates how the information regarding private fostering can be disseminated effectively to young people in Leeds. This information should also advise them who they can speak to if they need help and support.</p>	<p>July 13 position: The Private fostering worker has been working directly with one young person who is privately fostered in order to get ideas of how best to communicate with young people who are privately fostered. His story may be also be used by the Breeze website as well as the LSCB communications team in order to access a much wider network linked directly to young people. A meeting is being arranged with the Children’s Voice and Influence team to develop further how we can best communicate directly with children who are privately fostered</p> <p>July 2014 position: We have been able to engage young people in improving our communication materials, including an interview with a young person to be posted on the website. Through the Voice and Influence group we are working with young people to create further publicity materials for the website and to use in schools. On July 9th 2014 there will be a “Flashmob” held in the Trinity Centre promoting Private Fostering. This kind of media event should attract young people as well as other people in the shopping arcade.</p> <p>November 15 Position: Specific leaflets for privately fostered children are in the pipeline and are expected to be available by end November 2015. We continue to work with young people to ensure their voices are heard. During Regulation 8 visits privately fostered children are seen and spoken with alone and their views are represented in the records of these visits.</p>	<p>2</p>	
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