



In this issue:

This edition contains resources about **private fostering arrangements** on pages 2-3. The learning from a recent multi-agency audit of use of the **neglect toolkit** is on pages 3-4, and also links to resources on working on cases where neglect is suspected or evident. On page 5 there are details of other new and revised resources; **Resolving Professional Differences**, **Working with Non-compliance**, and **Quick Guide to Strategy Discussions**. Read on for a reminder about **pre-birth planning**.

Pre-birth planning

The SSCB is currently working on a case review which includes work with unborn babies. Findings from the review will be cascaded to staff in due course. All staff are reminded of the guidance that is available to support decision making:

The child protection procedures are on the **South West Child Protection Procedures** (SWCPP) website. In particular refer to the chapter on [Safeguarding Unborn Babies](#)

The Somerset SSCB Prebirth Planning Toolkit, which contains local information not contained within the SWCPP chapter is available on the [SSCB website](#).

Lunchbox learning

[Click here](#) to open the SSCB Lunchbox Learning package which helps practitioners understand how to implement the pre-birth protocol. This is designed to be delivered in half an hour and also refers to other issues identified in the Child Sam [Serious Case Review](#) (2017).

PRIVATE FOSTERING

Private fostering occurs when a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) is provided with care and accommodation by a person who is not a parent, person with parental responsibility for them or a relative in their own home. A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for and accommodating them has done so for less than 28 days and does not intend to do so for longer.

([Working Together 2018, page 13](#))



The law and private fostering

- Children's Social Care have a legal duty to check whether or not the arrangement is suitable.
- The child is not a looked after under this arrangement, and Parental Responsibility (PR) remains with the parents.
- Private foster carers must give Children's Social Care at least 6 weeks' written notice of their intention to foster a child privately. If they are already caring for a child who is privately fostered, they must notify Children's Social Care immediately—see contact details below.

Invisible children

- There is a duty on the local authority to promote public awareness of private fostering, and to ensure that the public and other professionals are aware of the notification requirements when they become aware of a possible private fostering arrangement.
- The number of private fostering arrangements across Britain is not known, as local authorities are not aware of all of them.
- It is reported that poor regulation of private fostering is leaving hundreds of children vulnerable to abuse.

Private fostering in Somerset

"Private fostering arrangements are not being identified and action to raise awareness of the need to notify children's services of such arrangements is underdeveloped."

([Ofsted Inspection of services for children in Somerset, 2015](#))

If you become aware of private fostering arrangements please contact Children's Social Care:

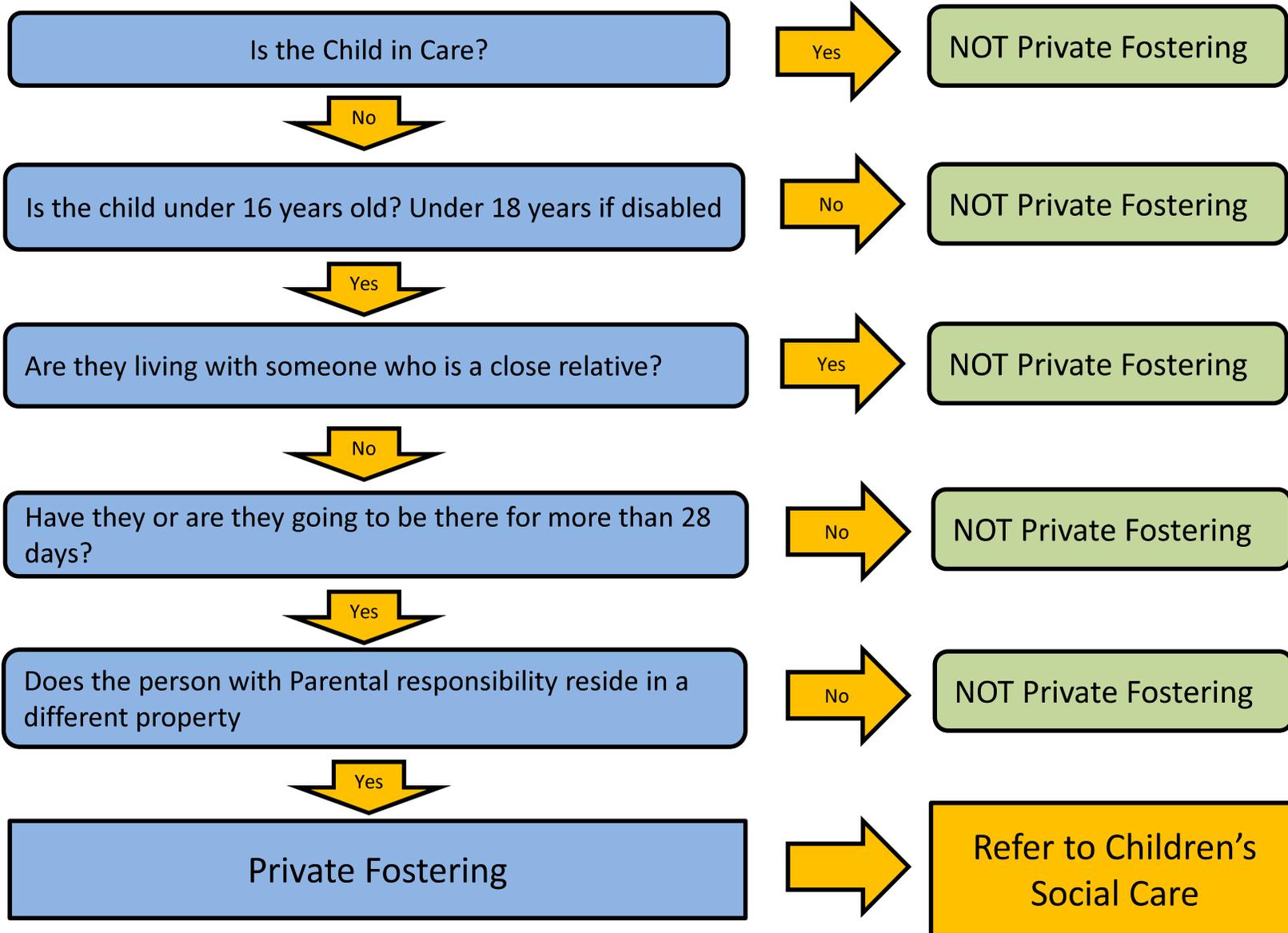
Email: childrens@somerset.gov.uk

Phone: 0300 123 2224 (please select option 1)



See [page 3](#) for a *quick guide to private fostering*, produced by Cheshire West LSCB.

Private fostering Quick Guide



AUDIT SUBGROUPS

The SSCB has two **Audit Subgroups** (ASG) which meet on a regular basis to look at the quality of multi-agency working and adherence to child protection policy and procedures.

The audits

The ASGs looked at the cases of **10 children** at the point that contact was made by an agency with Children's Social Care. The cases were chosen at random, from all those with one or more key words suggesting the possibility of hidden harm which could be leading to **neglect** (keywords such as 'domestic abuse' or 'drug').

Referral

Working Together 2018 explains that:

"Anyone who has concerns about a child's welfare should make a referral to local authority children's social care and should do so immediately if there is a concern that the child is suffering significant harm or is likely to do so. Practitioners who make a referral should always follow up their concerns if they are not satisfied with the response." (WT 2018, Chapter 1 paragraph 17)

Audit findings

- All the referrals were appropriate.
- In nine out of the ten cases the children could potentially have experienced neglect. The neglect toolkit was used in one case.
- With one exception, all the staff making the referral followed their own agency guidelines for making the referral.
- All the referrals made reference to the families' histories, and this was taken into account in the decision making.
- Harm to the children was not sufficiently evidenced in the referrals, some of which concentrated on the adult issues. Use of the neglect toolkit would have helped to overcome this.
- In about half the cases the multi-agency working at an early stage could have been improved.
- There was evidence of very high involvement from schools, and too much emphasis on the school supporting families.



Using the neglect toolkit when making a referral

- The **neglect toolkit is an effective tool**, and has been designed to help you assess children and young people who are at risk of, and experiencing, neglect. You can use it when you are concerned that the quality of care of a child or young person you are working with suggests that their needs are being neglected.
- Neglect can be experienced in many different ways and the **house is not always dirty** when children are being neglected.
- Best practice is to **complete the toolkit with the family**, and the audit subgroup heard examples of working with families and referring to 'the toolkit' which helped the family to understand agency concerns.

Neglect

Working Together 2018 explains that:

"The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)*
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger*
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)*
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment*

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs."
(WT 2018, Appendix A, Glossary)



Neglect toolkit
Available on the [SSCB website](#)

NEGLECT TOOLKIT
for children and families in Somerset
For assisting with the identification of Child Neglect

NSPCC resources on neglect

The [NSPCC website](#) includes information, research, resources and statistics on neglect.

NSPCC

Free training pack

The pack, available from Somerset SSCB, will support you in training people within your organisation to make an effective response to neglect by applying the neglect toolkit.

To **request your FREE copy** of this training resource please click on the image below, or email

LSCBTraining@somerset.gov.uk .



Developing an effective response to Neglect in Somerset

Somerset Safeguarding Children Board

Created in partnership with NSSCB

Things you should know

Quick links

A quick guide to strategy discussions

New guidance on strategy discussions has been developed by a multi-agency group and published on the [SSCB website](#). The guidance gives information about the purpose of a strategy discussion, attendance, agenda, and an outline of who should receive a copy of the minutes and action plan.

Working with non-compliance or disguised compliance by parents or carers

This new guidance was written in response to case reviews and an audit of agencies. The SSCB found that practitioners do not always know how to respond when plans to safeguard children are not adhered to due to family's non-compliance or disguised compliance. The guidance has been published on the [SSCB website](#).

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

If you're unsure whether the sexual behaviour of a child or young person is healthy, Brook provide a helpful, easy to use [traffic light tool](#). The traffic light system is used to describe healthy (green) sexual behaviours, potentially unhealthy (amber) sexual behaviours and unhealthy (red) sexual behaviours.

Protocol for Resolving Professional Differences in Work Relating to the Safety of Children (RPD)

The RPD protocol has recently been reviewed and relaunched, in response to case review findings. The process has been clarified and the different stages of dispute detailed, and illustrated with a flowchart. The protocol, and flowchart, have been published on the [SSCB website](#).

Contact the SSCB!

We welcome your feedback, please send to lscb@somerset.gov.uk.

The SSCB has a circulation list to send alerts when new newsletters or learning bulletins are published. If you do not currently receive these alerts and would like to sign up to the list, visit our website sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk

