

Private Fostering Arrangements

A Guide for Professionals

Professionals in education, health, police, social care and members of different community and faith groups have an important role in identifying and reporting Private Fostering Arrangements so that all privately fostered children get the quality of care they deserve.



What is Private Fostering?

Private Fostering is an arrangement made by a child's parent where the child lives with another carer.

A child is privately fostered if they are under 16 (18 if disabled) and cared for by a person who is not their parent or close relative for a period of more than 28 days.

A close relative is considered to be an aunt, uncle, grandparent, step parent or siblings. Other family members such as cousins or great aunts are not classed as close relatives for the purposes of Private Fostering.



A Private Foster Carer may be:

- A friend of the family
- The parent of a friend of the child
- Someone previously unknown to the child's family who is willing to privately foster a child

Examples of Private Fostering Arrangements:

- Children sent to this country for education or health care by birth parents living overseas
- Teenagers living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Children living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce, hospitalisation or imprisonment.

The law governing Private Fostering Arrangements

Local councils have a duty of care to privately fostered children, as defined in the Children Act 2004. The Government's measures on Private Fostering are defined in The Children Act 2004, The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005.

There are some people who are disqualified from becoming private foster carers because they, or a member of their household, are disqualified under the 'Disqualification for Caring for Children Regulations' (England) 2004.

It is estimated that there are over 10,000 children in the UK who are currently being privately fostered. However, many parents and private foster carers are unaware that they are involved in a Private Fostering Arrangement and their legal responsibilities to report any arrangements to the local council.



Responsibilities of the Parent and Private Foster Carer

The parent

- Advise the Children and Families Service at Redbridge Council of any proposed arrangement at least six weeks before it is due to begin
- Notify the Children and Families Service within 48 hours that the arrangement has begun, i.e. the child has arrived
- Provide the private foster carer with information about the child, including their health and school history, their interests, religion, dietary needs etc.
- Make appropriate financial arrangements for the child
- Participate in major decisions which affect the child in their care.

During a Private Fostering Arrangement the parent retains parental responsibility for the child at all times.



The Private Foster Carer

- Advise the Children and Families Service at Redbridge council of any proposed arrangement at least six weeks before it is due to begin
- Notify the Council within 48 hours that the arrangement has begun i.e. the child has arrived
- Notify the Council when the child leaves their care and provide details of the child's new care arrangements
- Provide day to day care and promote the child's welfare.

It is an offence not to notify the local council of a Private Fostering Arrangement.



Responsibilities of the local council

The local council has a duty to ensure that the welfare of a privately fostered child is safeguarded and promoted. This means that the council must:

- Visit the home of the private foster carer to ensure the suitability and safety of the environment and then carry out regular statutory visits
- Speak to the private foster carer and all members of the household to confirm suitability
- Visit and regularly speak to the child to find out their wishes and feelings
- Carry out regular statutory visits to confirm that the children are being appropriately cared for



- Visit if requested by the child, parent or private foster carer
- Contact the parents to discuss the suitability and duration of the proposed placement
- Ensure the child's cultural and religious needs are being met
- Provide foster carers, parents and the child with advice and support to promote the well being of the child.



References

The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005

National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering July 2005

Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering

Further information can also be found at www.education.gov.uk

Finding out more

If you would like to inform us about a private arrangement, or for more information please contact:

Children and Families Service

Lynton House, 255-259 High Road Ilford, IG1 1NN

Tel: 020 8708 3885

Out of hours no: 020 8708 5897

