



Private Fostering Information

Do you know of children who are looked after
by someone other than their parent



Haringey Council

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Welcome to Fostering

Professionals in the education, health and social care fields often come across children who are privately fostered. They have a shared responsibility to work together to ensure that all privately fostered children are well cared for and are safeguarded from harm

Good partnership working can help to ensure that outcomes for privately fostered children are improved.

As council officers, our promise to you is that we will work side-by-side with you to support Haringey's people and ensure that the borough meets its potential.

This leaflet looks at what you should do if you come across a private fostering arrangement.





What is a private fostering arrangement?

A private fostering arrangement is when a child or young person under 16 years (under 18 if the child is disabled), is living away from home for 28 days or more and is being cared for by an adult who is **NOT** their:

- Parent
- Grandparent
- Person with parental responsibility
- Step-parent (by marriage or civil partnership)
- Aunt
- Uncle
- Sister
- Brother

Private fostering is normally an arrangement which is agreed between the child's parents and the private foster carers. A child looked after by the local authority is **not** a privately fostered child.





Private fostering arrangements

These could include:

- Children whose parents study or work involves unsociable hours, which make it difficult for them to use ordinary day care or after school care resources. This must include overnight stays
- Children sent to this country for education or health opportunities
- Cultural exchange students
- Children living with a friend's family as a result of arguments at home, parental separation, divorce etc.
- Teenagers living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Some refugee children
- Any child whose parents have made a private arrangement for them to be looked after by someone else
- Any child who is looked after by someone else on a private basis without the parents being involved.





What is the law governing private fostering?

Privately fostered children are safeguarded by the Children Act 1989 (Part IX), National minimum standards for private fostering 2005 and children (private arrangements for fostering) 2005. Studies show that councils are rarely notified and if they are it is nearly always after an arrangement has started. You have a legal duty to notify your council of a private fostering arrangement. In order to raise the profile of these children the law was reinforced by the introduction of private fostering regulations in July 2005.

We are required to:

visit the family within 7 days of the notification

carry out necessary checks such as a DBS and H&S etc

do an in-depth assessment on both the child and the carer called a Private Fostering Arrangement Assessment

visit the family every 6 weeks in the first year and every 12 weeks thereafter.



What does the Private Fostering Team do?

Haringey Council has legal duties towards privately fostered children. These duties are discharged through the Private Fostering Team. Social workers in the team will make a series of home visits, which usually include talking to the parents, the carers and all members of the carers' household and to the child who will be/is privately fostered.

The Private Fostering Team will also support the parents and private foster carers to work together for the benefit of the child. If the Private Fostering Team considers a private fostering arrangement to be unsuitable, and the child cannot be returned to his or her parents, the council has to decide what action to take to safeguard the child's welfare. This might include offering a range of support services to the carers or in some circumstances accommodating the child to ensure his or her safety. The Private Fostering Team is not responsible for the day-to-day care of privately fostered children or for any (financial) disputes between the parents and carers.



What are the main responsibilities of private foster carers?

To advise The Haringey Council's Private Fostering Team (or their local council) of their intention to privately foster a child at least 6 weeks in advance or, where a child is received in an emergency, not more than 48 hours thereafter

- To make sure they have received as much information about the child as possible
- To provide the child with adequate care, fulfilling all of their needs
- To enable social workers to fulfil their duties under legislation and regulations
- To notify Haringey Council's Private Fostering Team within 48 hours when a child leaves their care and to provide the name and address of the person into whose care the child has been moved. A private foster carer can only look after three children who are not siblings, but can care for more than three if they are all brother(s) and sister(s).





What are the main responsibilities of parents or persons who hold parental responsibility?

- To advise the council of the private fostering arrangement and where private foster carers live, at least 6 weeks in advance or, where an arrangement is made in an emergency, within 48 hours, and to notify the local council of the end of such an arrangement
- Continue to exercise parental responsibility, participating in decisions about their child
- To provide the prospective carers with as much information about the child as possible, including their health, dietary preferences, school, hobbies, religion and ethnicity
- To ensure that the proposed private fostering arrangement is suitable for their child
- To agree any financial arrangement with the private foster carers
- In some instances the parents are not available, which means that they are unable to fully comply with the above requirements. However, the child may still be privately fostered.





What is the task of professionals involved?

Private foster carers are legally required to notify their council but many do not know they have to. This means that the council is unable to check whether the child is being properly cared for.

It is vital that Haringey's Private Fostering Team is aware of such arrangements so that they can safeguard and promote the welfare of potentially vulnerable children. Ideally, notification should come from the carers and parents, but education, health and social care professionals can also play an important role by either explaining to private foster carers and parents their duty to notify the Private Fostering Team or make a referral on behalf of the family.

If you become aware of private fostering arrangements or if you want further information, please contact us.

Haringey Council

Screening Team

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