

The social worker can help you and the child's parents draw up an agreement about how the child will be cared for by you. It is vital that you have all the essential information you need about the child/young person – their health/ medication; education; religion; culture; interests and hobbies; dietary requirements and any other important information.

The council can offer private foster carers a range of support and advice about caring for someone else's child. We can also offer carers access to the training programme offered to all Ealing local authority approved foster carers which includes; child development, behaviour management; health and safety and more. In addition Ealing runs a support group for children and carers in private fostering arrangements

You have a duty to let the council know about any changes in your household. You should also let the council know if the arrangement stops- within 48 hours – and give full contact details about the adult who is now caring for the child/young person.

Legal Information

Children in private fostering arrangements are safeguarded by various pieces of legislation and guidance including:

- Children Act 1989
- Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005
- National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering July 2005

How to notify the council

If you are planning, are already involved in or have a query relating to private fostering please call

Ealing Children's Social Care:

Tel: 020 8825 8000

Ask to speak to a member of Ealing Children's Integrated Response Service (ECIRS) who will be able to help you.

Further Information

Department for Education

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-private-fostering>

Coram BAAF Adoption and Fostering Academy

<https://corambaaf.org.uk/fostering-adoption/kinship-care-and-private-fostering/private-fostering>

Somebody Else's Child

www.privatefostering.org.uk

Child Law Advice

<https://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/private-fostering/>

Victoria Climbié Foundation

<https://vcf-uk.org/>

Prisoners Families Helpline

www.prisonersfamilieshelpline.org.uk

Private Fostering Arrangements

IS SOMEONE ELSE'S CHILD LIVING WITH YOU?

Or is someone else caring for your child?

- ✓ Are you a parent planning for your child to be cared for by someone else full time?
- ✓ Are you caring for someone else's child or teenager full time?
- ✓ Is the child or young person under 16 (or under 18 if they are disabled)?
- ✓ Is the private carer a distant relative, family friend or neighbour and not a close relative?
- ✓ Has the child or young person been looked after for 28 days or more?

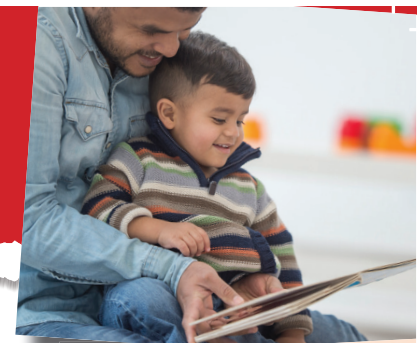
If the answer to these questions is 'yes' then you may be involved in a 'private fostering' arrangement.

This leaflet explains more about private fostering, including everyone's responsibilities and the support available.



Ealing

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What is private fostering?

Private Fostering is the term used for private care arrangements made between a parent and an adult who is not a close relative, to care for a child aged under 16 (or under 18 if they are disabled), full time for 28 days or more.

Private foster carers may be distant relatives, be a friend of the family or be carers previously unknown to the child.

It is not private fostering if the carer is a close relative – i.e. a parent, step parent or legal guardian; grandparent; brother, sister, aunt or uncle.

Parents (or guardians) remain legally responsible for their children and must be involved in all the planning and decision making processes of the private fostering arrangement even though the child is not living with them.

Why does private fostering happen?

There are many reasons why a parent may look for someone else to care for their child for an extended period. Some common situations are:

- Children being sent from abroad for education or medical treatment
- Young people not getting on with their parents moving in with the family of a girl/boyfriend

- Children going to live with a friend's family as a result of parental separation or divorce
- Children being cared for while their parent/s is in hospital or prison
- Children on holiday exchanges or attending language schools living with a host family
- Children whose parents arrange care whilst they are away for work or study.

Why is it important that the council knows about the arrangement?

It is a legal requirement! Not all parents and carers realise that the law says that they must tell their local council that they are planning to or are involved in a private fostering arrangement. The council has a legal duty to check that the arrangements are safe and suitable for the child/young person and that they are well cared for.

What will the council do?

A specialist social worker within Children's Services will make contact with parents, private foster carers and the child/young person to make sure all are satisfied with the arrangements. The council will carry out an assessment and various checks to make sure that the care arrangements are safe and suitable. If the council is satisfied that things are fine, it will support the arrangement so that it runs smoothly and in the best interests of the child/young person. If there are any concerns, the council might stop the arrangement or make certain requirements.

The social worker will visit the child/young person in line with statutory requirements to monitor the arrangement. They will help the child/young person in appropriate ways depending on their age and circumstances. The social worker can offer carers a range of information and support, for example with child development, welfare benefits, holiday or youth activities.

What do parents need to do?

If you are a parent planning to arrange private care for your child with someone who is not a close relative, full time for 28 days or more, you should notify the local council in the area the carer lives, six weeks in advance of the arrangement starting or in an emergency, within 48 hours. You should also let us know if an arrangement stops – within 48 hours.

You will be contacted by social worker who will explain more about what you need to do to make sure that any arrangement set up is legal and in the best interests of your child. They can provide advice on a range of matters to help, including assisting you and the private foster carer to make a written agreement about how your child will be cared for. This should include details of how you will financially support the arrangement. The agreement should make clear that you must be involved in all the major decisions concerning your child.

You should provide the private foster carer with as much information about your child as possible, including their:

- Health and school records
- Dietary preferences
- Interests
- Religion and ethnicity
- Immigration status.

You should also talk to your child to make sure they understand and are comfortable with the arrangement. You should make clear what you will do to keep in contact with your child whilst they are being cared for away from you. .

What do carers need to do?

If the parent hasn't done so, you must notify your local council that you will be looking after someone else's child, six weeks in advance of any planned arrangement starting or in an emergency within 48 hours. It is a legal offence not to do so. You must do this even if you do not receive payment for being a private foster carer.

A social worker will then visit you to carry out certain checks to make sure that the arrangement is safe and suitable for the child/young person. This will involve DBS checks for all members of the household over 16.