

## 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
- Working Together 2018  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>
- London Safeguarding Children Board Child Protection Procedures  
<http://www.londoncp.co.uk/>

Parents and Private Foster Carers should notify the council about a planned arrangement six weeks in advance of it starting or in an emergency, within 48 hours. The council should also be told if an arrangement comes to an end and given details of who is now caring for the child/young person. These are legal requirements.

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. Parents should ensure essential information about their child/young person is given to carers, including: health; education; dietary needs; information about ethnicity, culture and religion; hobbies etc.

## Further sources of 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](http://www.privatefostering.org.uk)

### Child Law Advice

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

### Victoria Climbié Foundation

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

## Notify us

If you are aware of a private fostering arrangement, we want to hear from you. Please telephone:

**Ealing Children's Integrated Response Service (ECIRS) on 020 8825 8000.**

## Private Fostering Arrangements

# PRIVATE FOSTERING. WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

A guide for people who work with  
children and young people

Find out more about private fostering  
and the legal requirements involved in  
these arrangements.



**Ealing**

[www.ealing.gov.uk](http://www.ealing.gov.uk)



### What is private fostering?

Private Fostering is when a child or young person under the age of 16 (or under 18 if they are disabled) is living away from home full time for 28 days or more with an adult who is not their:

- Parent, step parent or legal guardian
- Grandparent
- Brother or sister
- Aunt or Uncle.

The arrangement is one made privately between a child's parents and the private foster carers, who take on day to day care of the child. Private foster carers may come from the extended family, be a friend of the family or be carers previously unknown to the child. This is a different situation to that where a child is looked after by the local authority and is living with approved foster carers. The parent (or guardian) still retains parental responsibility for their child throughout the time they are being privately fostered, even though the child is not living with them.

### Common reasons for private fostering

- Children or young people who are living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce or arguments at home
- Young people living with the family of a girlfriend or boyfriend

- Children who have been sent from abroad to the UK for education or medical treatment
- Children being cared for while their parent/s are hospitalised or imprisoned
- Children on holiday exchanges or attending language schools
- Children whose parents are away working or studying.

### Why does it matter?

It is known that thousands of children across the country are privately fostered, and in most cases the arrangements work well. It is also known that not all parents and carers realise that they have a legal obligation to notify their local council once they plan or set up a private fostering arrangement.

If the council is unaware of a private fostering arrangement it will not be able to offer support to the child/young person, parents or carers. A range of support can be provided.

It is also vital that the council knows about all arrangements so they can check that the best possible arrangements are in place and deal with those rare situations where there are serious concerns about a child's welfare.

### What are my responsibilities as a professional?

People who work with children and young people may come across private fostering situations as part of their daily activities. You might become aware of a potential or actual arrangement and can helpfully inform the parent or carer of their legal duty to contact the council and explain how they can do this.

If you are not satisfied that the council has been notified by the parent or carer, you also have a responsibility as a professional to let us know about the arrangement yourself.

### Contact us

If you know of, or have a query relating to a private fostering arrangement you should contact:

**Ealing Children's Integrated Response Service (ECIRS) on 020 8825 8000.**

If you have concerns that a child may be at risk of harm you should follow your local child protection procedures.

In an emergency outside normal office hours, please contact the Council's Emergency Duty Team on **020 8825 8000** or the Police.

### What Children's Services will do

Ealing council has a legal duty to visit and check that the private fostering arrangement is safe and suitable for the child/young person, and that they are well cared for. If there are concerns, the council can take action to stop the arrangement or make certain requirements.

In general if things are working well the council will offer support so that the arrangement runs as well as possible in the interests of the child/young person. A specialist social worker within Children's Services will arrange to visit the child/young person in line with statutory requirements. They will provide information and support in appropriate ways depending on the child/young person's age and circumstances. The social worker can offer a range of support to parents and carers and signpost them to sources of further advice or support; for example, concerning welfare benefits, holiday activities or other services needed.

Ealing also offer private foster carers access to the training programme offered to all Ealing local authority approved foster carers which includes; behaviour management; health and safety and more. Ealing also runs a support group for children and carers in private fostering arrangements.