

PRIVATE FOSTERING



INFORMATION FOR PROFESSIONALS

**Do you know of children who are looked after
by someone other than their parents?**



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.

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

28
days



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 (not necessarily consecutive days) 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.

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
- > 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
- > A child staying with a family friend or relative for three days a week with the intention that the arrangement reaches a total of 28 days or more
- > 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

6 What is the law governing private fostering?



Privately fostered children are safeguarded by the Children Act 1989 (Part IX) and the Private Fostering Regulations 2005. Local councils need to be notified about private fostering arrangements. Although an offence is committed if private foster carers do not notify the council, studies show that councils are rarely notified and if they are it is nearly always after the arrangement has started.

IN ORDER TO RAISE THE PROFILE OF THESE CHILDREN THE LAW WAS REINFORCED BY THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW PRIVATE FOSTERING REGULATIONS IN JULY 2005.

What does the Private Fostering Team do? 7

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.

HARINGEY COUNCIL IS **NOT** RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DAY-TO-DAY CARE OF PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILDREN OR FOR ANY (FINANCIAL) DISPUTES BETWEEN THE PARENTS AND CARERS.



8 What are the main responsibilities of private foster carers?



- > To advise 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).

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

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- > 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

It is a legal requirement for private foster carers and parents to notify the private foster carers' local council of their private arrangement.

10 What is the task of professionals involved?

Private foster carers are legally required to notify their council but many do not, often because they do not know that they have to. This means that the council is unable to check whether or not 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 in explaining to private foster carers and parents that they have a duty to notify the local council.

Professionals involved should notify the Private Fostering Team if they are not satisfied that Haringey Council has been, or will be, notified of the arrangement, so that the Private Fostering Team can then discharge its responsibilities.

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

Haringey Council **Private Fostering Team**

4th Floor, 40 Cumberland Road
London N22 7SG

020 8489 4734

privatefostering@haringey.gov.uk



We want every child in
Haringey to be happy, healthy
and safe with a bright future

The **Children's Service**
in **Haringey**