



Local Safeguarding
Children Partnership



Are you looking after someone else's child?



Private fostering information,
advice and support

Are you involved in a private fostering arrangement?

Hammersmith & Fulham Council has a strong commitment to support parents and carers to promote children's safety and wellbeing. In some circumstances, parents choose to make arrangements for someone else to look after their child for a period of time.



If it is a private fostering arrangement, we have a **legal responsibility** to carry out an assessment of the child's needs

What is private fostering?

If you are looking after someone else's child aged under 16 (under 18, if disabled) full-time for 28 days or more, and you are not the step-parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother or sister of that child, then you may be a private foster carer.

The law says you must tell your local council if you care for a child under a private fostering arrangement.

It is not private fostering if the arrangement was made by social services.



Why are private fostering arrangements made?

Private fostering arrangements are made in a wide range of circumstances, including when:

- the parent has gone abroad to visit family
- the parent has moved away from the area to work elsewhere
- the parent is in prison
- the parent is in hospital or is in treatment for a long-term illness, mental health condition, or alcohol and drug problems
- a child or young person has been sent to the UK from overseas for their education
- a young person has left home because of a difficult relationship with their parent/s
- a young person wants to live with their girlfriend or boyfriend's family.



What do I have to do if I am privately fostering or my child is privately fostered?

Call the relevant local authority, preferably at least six weeks before the placement begins.

It is a legal offence, under Children Act legislation, not to notify the local authority of any private fostering arrangement.

Whilst the parent retains parental responsibility for the child, the private foster carer becomes responsible for the day-to-day care of the child in a way which will promote their welfare.

It is very important that the parent and private foster carer agree on how the child will be cared for.



What support do we offer?



- Parenting support and advice.
- Advice on how to meet the needs of the child, including health, education and financial support.
- Help in bringing families in crisis back together.
- Advice and support to make sure the child's racial, cultural, language and religious needs are met.

Important information for professionals



If you work with children in any remit, you should have knowledge of your legal and statutory responsibilities.

Learning from case reviews has highlighted that children in private fostering arrangements can be more vulnerable to abuse and neglect. You must be aware of the need to recognise what a private fostering arrangement is and what action you would need to take.

What if I already privately foster but did not know that I had to tell Children's Services?



Please contact Children's Services immediately. You will not get into trouble and this will not be viewed negatively. Staff will be pleased to take your details and explain the first stage of the assessment process.

If you are involved or likely to be involved in a private fostering arrangement and have not already told Children's Services, or if you are in any doubt as to whether the regulations might apply to you, you should seek advice from the Children's Services team.

Contact details

Hammersmith & Fulham Council

Tel: 020 8753 6600

Email: familyservices@lbhf.gov.uk

In person: 145 King Street, Hammersmith, London W6 9JT



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