

If the Children and Families team decide that an arrangement is unsuitable, and if the child or young person cannot be returned to their parents, Children's Services will decide what action to take to safeguard the child's welfare.

What are private foster carers' responsibilities?

- Inform the Children and Families team at least six weeks in advance of their intention to privately foster a child or young person or, in an emergency situation, within 48 hours of the child or young person's arrival.
- Allow a social worker to visit and see the child or young person.
- Provide information as required.
- Allow the social worker to inspect their home and make reasonable recommendations.
- Report any changes in the household.
- Comply with any legal requirement. For example, ensuring Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are undertaken on all those in the household over the age of 16.
- Make an agreement with parents about their expected level of involvement in the day-to-day care and decision-making about their child.
- Promote the child or young person's welfare in the home.
- Notify the Children and Families team within 48 hours when a privately fostered child or young person leaves their care, advising why and providing the name and address of the person into whose care the child or young person has been moved.

Contact the Children and Families Team

020 7323 3621

Out of hours: 020 8356 2710

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TEAM

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PRIVATE FOSTERING

A guide for professionals

All professionals who work with, or have contact with, children and young people have a shared responsibility to ensure that privately fostered children are well cared for and are safeguarded from harm.

Professionals play an important role by identifying and notifying the City of London Children and Families Team Services of private fostering arrangements and by ensuring that parents and carers are aware of their responsibilities.

The Children and Families team should be notified of all private fostering arrangements in the City.

What is private fostering?

Private fostering is when a child or young person under the age of 16 (under 18 if they have a disability) is cared for and provided with accommodation, for more than 28 days, by an adult who is not a relative, by private arrangement between the parent and carer.

Usually, a birth parent chooses and arranges a private fostering placement. Private foster carers do not hold parental responsibility.

A relative can be a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt. They can be a full or half relation, related by marriage or step-parents.

Partners of the mother or father of a child, and extended family members such as great aunts and uncles or parent's cousins, do not qualify as a relative.

Reasons for private foster care

A child or young person may be placed in a private fostering situation if they:

- Must live away from their family as a result of separation, divorce or disputes at home.
- Are sent to this country for education or health opportunities.
- Are a cultural exchange student.
- Have parents who study or work during unsociable hours, which makes it difficult for them to use ordinary child care provisions.

What are the rules governing private fostering?

Privately fostered children are safeguarded by legislation set out in Part 9 of the Children Act 1989; the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005; and Section 44 of the Children Act 2004 effective 1 July 2005. Standards of care and management for private fostering arrangements are set out in the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering (2005).

It is essential that the City of London Children and Families team is aware of such arrangements so that they can safeguard and promote the welfare of potentially vulnerable children.

Ideally, notification of a private fostering agreement should come from the carer or parent, although professionals, such as teachers and GPs, can play an important role as they are often aware of the situation.

You can find out more about the legal basis of private fostering on the Department for Education website at www.education.gov.uk or from the British Association of Adoption and Fostering at www.baaf.org.uk

What responsibilities does a parent have?

- To advise the Children and Families team of the private fostering arrangement at least six weeks prior to when the fostering begins (in an emergency, within 48 hours of when fostering begins) and when the arrangement comes to an end.
- To retain parental responsibility, participating in all decisions about their child.
- To provide the prospective carer with as much information about the child as possible, including their health records, dietary preferences, school records, hobbies, religion and ethnicity.
- To ensure that the private fostering placement is suitable for their child.

Professionals' responsibilities

- To inform the Children and Families team of any private fostering arrangements that you are aware of.
- Where possible, to encourage the parent or carer of the child to notify the Children and Families team of the arrangement.

What is the role of the Children and Families team?

- Assess the suitability of private foster carers.
- Make regular visits to the child or young person and monitor the overall standard of care.
- Ensure the child or young person is well cared for in a safe environment
- Carry out Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on the private foster carers and any person over the age of 16 in the household.
- Ensure arrangements are in place to keep a record of private foster carers and children who are privately fostered.
- Ensure that advice and support to carers is made available when needed
- Provide annual statistics of the numbers of privately fostered children in the City to central Government and the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children's Board.