

## How to tell the council about a private fostering arrangement

To tell us about a private fostering arrangement

Please contact the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Call 020 7525 1921

or email [MASH@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:MASH@southwark.gov.uk)

### Southwark Council

London Borough of Southwark  
Sumner Road  
London  
SE15 5QS



Visit us at

[southwark.gov.uk/privatefostering](https://southwark.gov.uk/privatefostering)  
or call 0207 525 1921

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# Private fostering information and advice

for parents and carers



*Southwark*  
Council



Private fostering is when a child under 16 (or under 18 if they are disabled) lives with an adult who is not a parent or close relative for 28 days or more.

It also covers children who stay at a boarding school for more than two weeks of the school holidays.

It is a private arrangement made by the parents, carers and in some circumstances, the child or young person. It is not made by the council.

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## It is **not** private fostering if child is living with a:

- Parent or step-parent (by marriage only)
- Aunt, uncle, sibling, or grandparent (whether full or half-blood or by marriage)
- Foster carer approved by Southwark Council

## You must tell the council about a private fostering arrangement

Parents, and the person planning to care for a child, must tell their local council. By law, parents, carers and councils must do certain things to make sure children in private fostering arrangements are safe and well.

## If you are a private foster carer

You should tell the council about your intention to privately foster a child at least 6 weeks in advance. You should tell the council within 48 hours if you started looking after the child in an emergency. If you have not made a notification about a current private fostering arrangement in your home you should inform the council immediately. You should also allow a social worker to check your home, find out about the child or young person's views, undertake assessments, and make reasonable recommendations.

## If you are a parent

You should tell the council that your child is going to be privately fostered at least 6 weeks in advance. You should tell the council within 48 hours if you started looking after the child in an emergency. If your child is already in this arrangement you should notify the council immediately. It is your responsibility to ensure the needs of your child(ren), in these arrangements, are being met.

## Why it is important to notify us

It is estimated that many more children are living in private fostering arrangements than are known about. Privately fostered children are living away from their home and families which may leave them vulnerable. When we are not informed, the social care team cannot complete an assessment to ensure private foster carers are able and supported to promote the child's wellbeing.

## What we do

If parents are finding it difficult to care for their children due to shorter or longer term difficulties, private fostering can be a practical solution. However, any child separated from their parents is potentially vulnerable. We must ensure the alternative care any privately fostered child receives meets their welfare and safety needs and is in line with relevant legislation.

When we're told about a private fostering arrangement we do an assessment to check that the child's needs are being met. While the private fostering arrangement is in place the team will visit and provide advice and support to children, carers and parents.

We don't want to interfere with the arrangement – just ensure that it is meeting the needs of the child or young person.

