

Southwark Schools Safeguarding Forum: Private fostering

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What is Private Fostering ?

Private fostering is a private arrangement between a parent and a carer, to look after a child/children under the age of 16 (18 if disabled).

A private foster carer is not a parent or a close relative of the child. It includes cousins, a great aunt or uncle, neighbour, family friend, or a host family (e.g. for boarding school holidays)."

This arrangement would have to be more than 28 days, before being considered as PF arrangement.

Private Foster Carers do not have parental responsibility but can make day to day decisions for the child.

Why is it important to assess and monitor private fostering arrangements?

Victoria Climbié was cared for by her great-aunt in a private fostering arrangement.

Her tragic death in 2000 exposed serious failures in safeguarding and multi-agency communication.

The Laming Inquiry led to major reforms, including the Children Act 2004 and other updated regulations.

Local authorities now have a statutory duty to:

- **Assess private fostering arrangements.**
- **Visit privately fostered children regularly.**

Carers and professionals have a legal duty to notify the local authority if they know or suspect a private fostering arrangement.



Potential Signs of Private Fostering

- **A child is living with someone other than their parents**
- **Changes in who collects a child from school**
- **Lack of parental contact**
- **Signs of hidden arrangements**

Private Fostering Situations

Local children living
apart from their
families

Children from
overseas

Child care
arrangements

Asylum seekers and
refugees

Parents who may be
unwell

Children who may be
staying with friends for
a short time due to
family difficulties

Children attending
language schools

Children at
independent boarding
schools who do not
return home for
holidays

What are your responsibilities ?

Please notify Southwark Children's Services via a MASH referral.

If you are unsure on whether to make a referral, please access advice from MASH in the Assessment and Intervention Service on 020 7525 1921 or email MASH@southwark.gov.uk.