

PRIVATE FOSTERING

INFORMATION AND ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Please read this information to help you understand Private Fostering and what you should do about this type of arrangement.

Private Fostering is generally when a child under 16 (18 if they are disabled) lives with an adult who is not a close family member for 28 days or more. 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 Local Authority.

It is not a private fostering arrangement if child is living with a:

- parent
- step-parent (by marriage only)
- aunt or uncle, brother or sister, grandparent (whether full or half-blood or by marriage)

A Privately Fostered child is not a looked after child.



WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY REGARDING PRIVATE FOSTERING RESPONSIBILITIES AND NOTIFICATION?

It is a legal requirement for parents and the person intending to privately foster a child to notify their Local Authority. The law also requires parents, carers and Local Authorities to undertake important responsibilities in order to promote the welfare of children who are in Private Fostering Arrangements.

IF YOU ARE A PRIVATE FOSTER CARER

You should advise your Local Authority of your intention to foster a child at least 6 weeks in advance or, where you have received a child in an emergency, not more than 48 hours thereafter. If you have not made a notification about a current private fostering arrangement in your home you should inform your Local Authority immediately.

You should also allow the social worker to inspect your home, see the child in order to ascertain their views, undertake assessments, and make reasonable recommendations.

IF YOU ARE A PARENT

You should advise the Local Authority of the private fostering arrangement of your child at least 6 weeks in advance or, where the arrangement is made in emergency, not more than 48 hours thereafter. You should also inform the Local Authority immediately if you have not notified about an existing arrangement. You have the responsibility to ensure the needs of your children, in these arrangements, are being met.





WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO NOTIFY US

A large number of Private Fostering arrangements are 'hidden'. It is estimated that there are more private fostering arrangements in Southwark than what the Local Authority has been notified about. Privately fostered children are living away from their home without an adult with parental responsibility living with them. This could make the children vulnerable while they and the carers remain unsupported. When not notified, Social Care professionals cannot complete assessments to ensure Private Foster carers are able to promote the child's welfare in the home.



WHAT WE DO

Private Fostering arrangements can be a positive response from within the community where families encounter shorter or longer-term difficulties to provide appropriate care for their children themselves. However, these children could be vulnerable and therefore, these arrangements need to be compliant to the legislation relating to Private Fostering.

The Local Authority has a responsibility to ensure that privately fostered children's welfare is safeguarded. Upon receiving notification, Children's Social Care will undertake a Private Fostering assessment on the suitability of the Private Fostering arrangement. While the Private Fostering arrangement is in place Children's Social Care will continue to visit and provide advice and support to children, carers and parents.

We don't want to interfere with the private fostering arrangement - just ensure that it is meeting the needs of the privately fostered child or young person.



How to NOTIFY

To notify Southwark Children's Social Care about a Private Fostering Arrangement please contact

MASH on **0207 525 1921** or email

MASH@southwark.gov.uk.

Southwark Children's Services
London Borough of Southwark
Sumner Road
London SE15 5QS

