



Private Fostering

Are you or someone you know looking after someone else's child?

Children privately fostered are one of the largest groups of vulnerable children in the UK.

To help keep our Croydon children safe and protected it is a legal duty that you notify Children's Services where you know a child is being privately fostered.

Private foster carers are also entitled to support and advice, if you have not yet notified the local authority, you could be missing out!

So if you know of a child or children who are living away from home with someone other than their parents, please contact us on **020 8726 6400**.

Delivering for Croydon

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What is private fostering?

Private fostering is when a child or young person under 16 years old (or 18 if they have a disability) is looked after for 28 days or more by someone who is not a close relative, guardian or person with parental responsibility.

Close relatives include parents, step-parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents. It is not private fostering if the arrangement was made by social services, or if the person looking after the child is an approved foster carer.

People become private foster carers for a variety of reasons. Private foster carers can be a friend of the child's family, or be someone who is willing to care for the child of a family they do not know.

Common situations may be:

- Children, adolescents and teenagers living apart from their families
- Children with parents overseas
- Children living with host families e.g. children coming to study in the UK.



Notifying children's services - what the law says

The Children Act 1989 gives children's services a legal duty to safeguard the wellbeing of privately fostered children.

This includes making sure they are:

- Safe and well looked after
- Healthy
- Receiving a proper education
- Being encouraged to reach their full potential
- Keeping in touch with people who are important to them
- Living with someone who helps them value their culture and sense of identity
- Properly supported when they become independent.

By law, your local social or children's services must be informed about all private fostering situations. The child's parent(s), private foster carer and anyone else involved in the arrangement are legally required to inform children's services. Despite this, many private fostering arrangements remain hidden, leaving children vulnerable to abuse and neglect. This was highlighted by the tragic death of privately fostered child Victoria Climbié.

Children's Services must be informed of any private fostering arrangement. The law states that the timescale for telling the local authority are as follows.

If the child is not yet living with private foster carers	Six weeks beforehand
If the child will move in with private foster carers in less than six weeks	Immediately
If the child is already living with private foster carers	Immediately

However if you are caring for a child who you think is privately fostered, please contact MASH.

Professionals should ensure that children's services know about all private fostering arrangements.

This includes a wide range of people who come in contact with children including teachers, religious leaders, doctors and health visitors. Professionals should also encourage the child's rent or carer to notify social services.

You will not be breaching confidentiality by notifying children's services, but you will be helping to safeguard a child. As a professional you have a responsibility to safeguard a child who is being privately fostered and where the local authority has not been informed.

The role of the local authority

Children's services will work in partnership with the child, parents and private foster carer to ensure that the best possible arrangements are in place for the child. This includes:

- Visiting the child and private foster carer
- Helping to make sure that the child's racial, cultural, linguistic and religious needs are being met
- Offering advice and support to the child, and wherever possible meeting with the parents to discuss private fostering arrangements and private foster carers.

Please contact Croydon Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub on: 020 8726 6000 to find out more or to inform them of a private fostering arrangement.

Croydon Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

Bernard Weatherill House
8 Mint Walk
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