



Havering 7 minute briefing

Private Fostering - Looking after someone else's child

<p>1. What is Private Fostering?</p> <p>Private Fostering arrangements are legally defined under section 66 of the Children Act 1989. Private fostering is the term used to describe a private arrangement made for a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if the child is disabled) by the child's parent (or someone with parental responsibility) to live with a carer who is not a close relative of the child in the carer's home or school settings for longer than 28 days on a full-time basis. A close relative is defined as being a: grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or stepparent (by marriage/ civil partnership) of the child. Private Fostering is often a wise step taken by parents to ensure temporary care of their children, and it's not illegal.</p>	<p>4. Partner agencies should notify the local authority</p> <p>Schools, Housing, GPs, Police, early years and health settings play an essential role in identifying privately fostered children. In our different roles we may meet, talk to and complete forms with children, young people and their families. We may see children being taken to or collected by people other than their parents; or children may mention that they are staying with someone else, as their parents have gone away for a long time.</p> <p>It is good practice to ask questions about who lives in the household and who has parental responsibility - this can assist in helping to identify potential private fostering arrangements.</p> <p>Professionals from all agencies have a duty to notify the local authority if they become aware of or believe that a child is living in a private fostering arrangement.</p>
<p>2. Common examples of private fostering can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children / young people living with a friend's family because their parents are working or studying long and / or anti-social hours; ▪ Children / young people sent to the UK for education (language schools, or those attending independent boarding schools who do not return home for the holidays) or for health care by birth parents who live overseas; ▪ Children / young people living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, illness, divorce or difficulties at home; ▪ Teenagers living with their partner's family; ▪ Unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors who are living with friends, distant relatives or strangers. 	<p>5. Where the local authority is informed of a proposed or existing private fostering arrangement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An assessment Social Worker together with a Supervising Social Worker (Private Fostering) will undertake an initial private fostering Regulation 8 visit within seven working days of the date of notification; ▪ The child should be seen at the placement and spoken to alone where this is appropriate; ▪ The Assessment Social Worker will carry out a single assessment of the suitability of the arrangements for the child and the timescales involved in the arrangements; ▪ Once the arrangement is established, a Social Worker will be allocated to the child and will visit the child every six weeks during the first year of the private fostering arrangement and then every 12 weeks thereafter; <p>Extra support may be available to the carer and child under Section 17 or 20 of the Children Act.</p>
<p>3. Privately fostered children are not children in the care of the local authority.</p> <p>Parents and private foster carers should notify the local authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Parent/s (or those with Parental Responsibility) and the private foster carer must notify the local authority of the name and address of the private foster carer, six weeks before the start of the private fostering arrangement; ▪ If the arrangement is already in place, they must notify the local authority. If the arrangement is made in an emergency and is intended to last more than 28 days, this information should be provided within 48 hours of the child being placed. 	<p>6. National Learning around unsuitable private fostering arrangements.</p> <p>There is national learning around unsuitable private fostering arrangements made for children and young people. When we think about Private Fostering we often remember the tragic death of Victoria Climbié:</p> <p>https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/273183/5730.pdf</p> <p>However, a Private Fostering arrangement can be a positive response from friends and the community to a family in need of support. That's why we want to ensure everyone works together to keep children safe, wherever they are living. Find out more here:</p> <p>https://familyserviceshub.havering.gov.uk/kb5/havering/directory/advice.page?id=1XIO5mSuRs4</p> <p>Private Fostering - Havering Safeguarding Children Partnership (safeguardinghavering.org.uk)</p>
	<p>7. More Information</p> <p>For more information and to notify Havering of a Private Fostering arrangement:</p> <p>Havering Council Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Phone Monday to Friday (9am to 5pm) 01708 433 222 ▪ Out of hours/Weekends 01708 433 999 ▪ Email: Tmash@havering.gov.uk <p>Refer online: www.havering.gov.uk/privatefostering</p>

