

Someone else's child is living in my house

If you are planning to privately foster a child, you must:

- make an arrangement with the parent about how the child should be cared for and uphold this agreement
- inform us at least six weeks before the child comes to live with you
- work with social workers to make sure that the child's needs are fully assessed and met
- allow social workers to carry out all the necessary checks
- make an arrangement with the child's parents about the type of information they would like to receive about their child and provide this information on a regular basis.

Please note:
You are responsible for looking after the child on a day-to-day basis. The child's parents maintain parental responsibility and by law the need to be involved in all decisions made about their child.

What information do I need to give to Family Services/Children Services?

When you contact us you must give us the following details:

- personal details of the child
- your name and address as the private foster carer
- the names of everyone aged over 16 living in your home.



Practitioners responsibilities

Practitioners responsibilities

What is Barnet Family Services/Children Services responsible for?

We are responsible for making sure that all privately fostered children are well cared for and safe. We will do this by:

- completing an assessment to ensure that these care arrangements meet the child's needs
- making compulsory police checks on the private foster carers and anyone aged over 16 living in that household
- ensuring that the private foster carer receives the relevant support and advice required for looking after someone else's child
- ensuring the child's educational, emotional, cultural and physical needs are met
- helping parents and private foster carers to work together for the benefit of the child
- taking action if the care provided is not satisfactory.

We are not responsible for:

- the day to day care for your child
- any financial dispute between the parents and the private foster carer.

As a practitioner what must I do if I know of a privately fostered child?

If you are a practitioner working with children, it is important that you notify us if you are in contact with a child in private foster care, as this will ensure their safety against abuse or neglect and will also help ensure that the child is being cared for properly.

Privately Fostered children will come into contact with a range of professionals, for example they should be registered with a G.P. and if they are of school age then they should be attending school.

All practitioners have a responsibility to notify us if they believe a child they are in contact with is in a private fostering arrangement. The notification should include the name and address of the private foster carer.



If you know of a child living with someone who is not their parent or close relative*, that child could be privately fostered and you should read this.

*Parent, Grandparent, Aunt, Brother, Sister, Uncle, Step-parent or Legal guardian

Introduction and law

What is Private Fostering?

Private fostering is a private arrangement that is made between the parent and the person caring for the child.

A 'privately fostered' child is one aged under 16 (or under 18 years if they are disabled), who is cared for by an adult for more than 28 days who is not their:

- parent
- close relative, i.e. grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or step parent
- legal guardian.

Privately fostered children could include:

- adolescents that have to live away from their family as a result of separation, divorce or disputes at home
- children who are living with somebody else because their parents are studying or working during unsociable hours
- children sent to this country for education or health care opportunities by birth parents living overseas
- cultural exchange students

- refugee children or teenagers living with the family of a girlfriend or boyfriend
- any child whose parents have made a private arrangement for them to be looked after by someone else.

The law

The Children Act 1998 states that parents and private foster carers must notify their local council of the private fostering arrangement, ideally before the arrangement begins.

If you intend to, or are already caring for a child in a private arrangement, the law requires you to tell us six weeks before arrangement begins or immediately if the arrangement is in place. Parents and private foster carers who do not notify us would be breaking the law.

Barnet Council's Family Services/Children Services has a duty to safeguard the welfare of all children in the borough. This includes privately fostered children.

Under this duty, we have to make sure that the child is being properly cared for, we will visit the child to monitor the care and give help and advice to the carer when it is needed.



Introduction and law

My child is living in someone else's home

What you must do if someone else is or will be looking after your child

If your child is due to be cared for by someone, you have chosen to privately foster your child, you must:

- notify us at least six weeks before the arrangement commences. If your child is already living with the private foster carer then you must notify us immediately
- ensure that the private fostering arrangement is safe for your child
- agree on financial arrangements for your child
- keep in regular contact with the private foster carer to make sure that your child is being looked after as you would wish
- if your child's carer changes address, or if you decide to change carers you must notify us of this change immediately. If you do not notify us we will not be able to make sure your child is safe.

Information you will need to give the private foster carer includes:

- health details
- school details
- ethnic and cultural background
- eating preferences
- hobbies
- religion.

This information will give the carer a clear understanding of your child's needs, and will help them to look after your child properly.



Are you still able to make decisions regarding your child's needs?

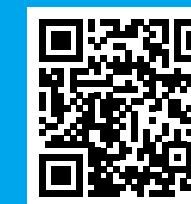
Yes, the private foster carer is only looking after your child on a day-to-day basis. You still have parental responsibility for your child and should continue to be involved in all important decisions concerning their development. This is why you need to keep in regular contact with your child and the private foster carer.

If you have any concerns regarding your child's private fostering arrangement, in the first instance you should try and discuss this with the carer. If your concerns remain, then contact us and we will investigate further.

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Any questions?
Learn more...



For more information
please contact our MASH team:
tel: 020 8359 4066
email: mash@barnet.gov.uk
or visit www.barnet.gov.uk/private-fostering