



Are you looking after somebody else's child?

A guide to private fostering
for parents and carers

Failure to notify the local authority of private fostering arrangements either by the parent or private foster carer is against the law and could lead to court actions.

What is private fostering?

Private fostering is when a child who is under 16 or 18 if they have a disability, is being cared for by someone who is not a close relative and this arrangement has, or is going to last for more than 28 days.



What is a close relative?

The Children Act states a close relative to a child is a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt. They could be a full or half relation or could be related by marriage. The term also includes a step-parent.

The different types of private fostering

The term private fostering covers a number of arrangements, for example:

- children who are sent from abroad to live with another family in this country
- children who are at boarding school and stay with another family in their school holidays
- a teenager who is living with a friend's family as they are not getting along with their own
- children who are living with another family because their own parents are unable to look after them because they are separated or divorced
- children who are living with another family because their own parents are ill or in hospital for a long time.

What the law says

By law, if you are privately fostering a child or teenager and live in Newham, you need to notify us. Newham's Children & Young People's Service need to know of any proposed private fostering arrangement six weeks in advance. But if this arrangement is already in place, you need to let us know immediately.

What are your responsibilities as a parent?

If you are about to arrange for your child to be looked after by someone who is not a close relative, you need to inform us six weeks before the arrangement happens. If the arrangements are already in place, you need to let us know immediately (please see contact details).

What are your responsibilities as a private foster carer?

If you are caring for a child who is not closely related to you, you have a duty to notify the Children & Young People's Service to inform us of this arrangement within 48 hours of the child coming to live with you.

We will need to know details about the following people: the child, you and your family, and the child's parents, or any person who was caring for the child or who was involved in arranging for the child to be privately fostered. We will also ask you how long this arrangement is intended to last.

What are our responsibilities as your local council?

It is our duty by law to ensure that the people who are caring for a child under a private fostering arrangement do not pose any risks to that child and the care being provided is both safe and appropriate. We will carry out an assessment which will include:

- visiting and speaking to the privately fostered child, taking into account their feelings and wishes
- visiting and speaking to the private foster carers and to all members of the household
- where it is practicable to visit and speak to the parents of the child, or the person who has parental responsibility for the child
- carrying out checks with the police and other agencies (for instance, social services, the probation service and education service)
- regularly visiting the child to make sure they are being well cared for and their needs are being met.

Contact details

For further information, or to discuss a private fostering situation with a social worker, please contact your Customer Service Centre or telephone 020 8430 2000.



Complaints

We take complaints very seriously. If you are unhappy with our service or the way you have been treated please let us know.

Please complete the form in the Complaints and Compliments leaflet, which can be found at your Customer Service Centre, libraries, leisure centres and other council buildings.

Alternatively you can make a complaint by:

Writing to us

Please **download the** Children and Young People Services complaint form from the Newham Council website and send it to:

Customer Relations Team
Newham Dockside
First Floor East, 1000 Dockside Road
London E16 2QU

Or **email us:** customerrelations.team@newham.gov.uk

Telephone us: 020 8430 2000 (**Textphone:** 020 8430 2412)

Newham Council is regulated and inspected by Ofsted and their contact details are as follows:

Ofsted

Freshford House
Redcliffe Way
Bristol
BS1 6NL

Telephone: 08456 40 40 40

The Children's Rights Director for England

The Children's Rights Director for England is called Roger Morgan. With his team Roger spends lots of time listening to what children and young people who live away from home have to say about how they are looked after.

So if you want to talk to somebody who is independent of Newham's Children and Young People's Service, this is who you can contact:

Office of the Children's Rights Director

Ofsted
Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

Free Phone: 0800 528 0731
Website: www.rights4me.org



Monday - Friday
9:00am - 5:00pm



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