

# Is someone else looking after your child?

Private fostering information for parents



As of 1 July 2005, the Government introduced new legislation and guidance on private fostering. The aim of this leaflet is to provide information to parents who are having, or considering having their children looked after by someone else for more than 28 days.

This leaflet will give you information about your rights and duties as a parent.

Private fostering occurs when a child or young person under 16 years old (or under 18 years old if they have a disability) is cared for and provided with accommodation for 28 days or more by an adult who is not a close relative. A close relative is an aunt, uncle, step-parent, grandparent or sibling, **not** a cousin, grandaunt/uncle or family friend.

A private fostering arrangement is normally organised directly between the parent and the carer.

There are many private fostering situations. These may occur when:

- the young person is sent to this country to receive education or health care while their parents remain overseas.
- the young person's parents are working or studying long or antisocial hours

- the young person stays with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce, or arguments at home
- the young person is living with their partner's family.

## What should I do if my child is being or will be looked after by someone else?

You have a responsibility to ensure that your child is in a suitable and safe private fostering arrangement that provides for your child's cultural, religious, social, linguistic and other needs. If you think that your child will be in this accommodation for 28 days or longer, you have a legal duty to tell the Lewisham Council at least six weeks before the arrangement is due to start.

If the arrangement is due to start within six weeks or is already in place, then you must tell the Referral and Assessment Team at the Lewisham Council immediately.

The law states that you must tell us of a private fostering arrangement within these timescales. This information will help us to ensure that your child is well looked after and does not come to any harm.

A private fostering arrangement does not mean that you are giving up your rights to your child. This is a temporary arrangement and you still have parental responsibility and will continue to be involved in all decisions about your child's life. It is very important that you stay in contact with your child as much as possible. By staying in contact you will know of any changes in the circumstances of the carer, for example if they go on holiday or move house.

## **What information do I need to give the carer?**

You should ensure that there is a formal agreement, preferably in writing, with the private foster carer so that all parties are aware of the expectations that everyone is clear about their roles and responsibilities. You should give important information about your child and provide as much detail as possible. This should include what they like to eat, what they like to do in their spare time, and information about their school.

It is very important that you let the private foster carer know of your child's medical history and pass on details of his/her religious and cultural background. This will help the private foster carer to look after your child and understand them better.

## **Why does Lewisham Council have to get involved in this arrangement?**

Lewisham Council has a legal duty to ensure that your child is being looked after safely and that the arrangement is suitable for your child. We will make regular visits to your child and his/her private foster carer, and we are able to provide help and advice where necessary.

If the private foster carer is not giving you enough information or you are unhappy about the standard of care your child is receiving, then you should contact the Referral and Assessment Team as soon as possible.

We will work with you to ensure that your child is safe and well looked after.

If your child is being privately fostered or if you plan to have your child privately fostered, please contact the Referral and Assessment Team on 020 8314 3852 or visit [www.lewisham.gov.uk](http://www.lewisham.gov.uk). This team can give you further information and answer any questions that you may have.

For translation, please provide your details below:

Për përkthim, ju lutemi shkruajini më poshtë detajet tuaja:

Pour la traduction, veuillez fournir les détails ci-dessous:

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