



Private Fostering Arrangement

A guide for parents and carers



THE LONDON BOROUGH

What is Private Fostering?

If a child is living away from their parent with another person/family this may be a Private Fostering Arrangement and will require invoking Private Fostering Regulations. Private fostering occurs when a parent (or someone with parental responsibility) makes an arrangement for their child or children to be cared for by someone else, who is not a close relative.

The person looking after their child or children is known as the private foster carer. A private fostering arrangement occurs when:

- Care of the child is **planned** to be or has already **been longer than 28 consecutive days**
- The child or young person is **younger than 16** (or 18 in the case of a child with disabilities)

The person is **not** a close relative or approved foster carer.

- *Close relatives are defined as step parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles or aunts whether of full blood, half blood or marriage*



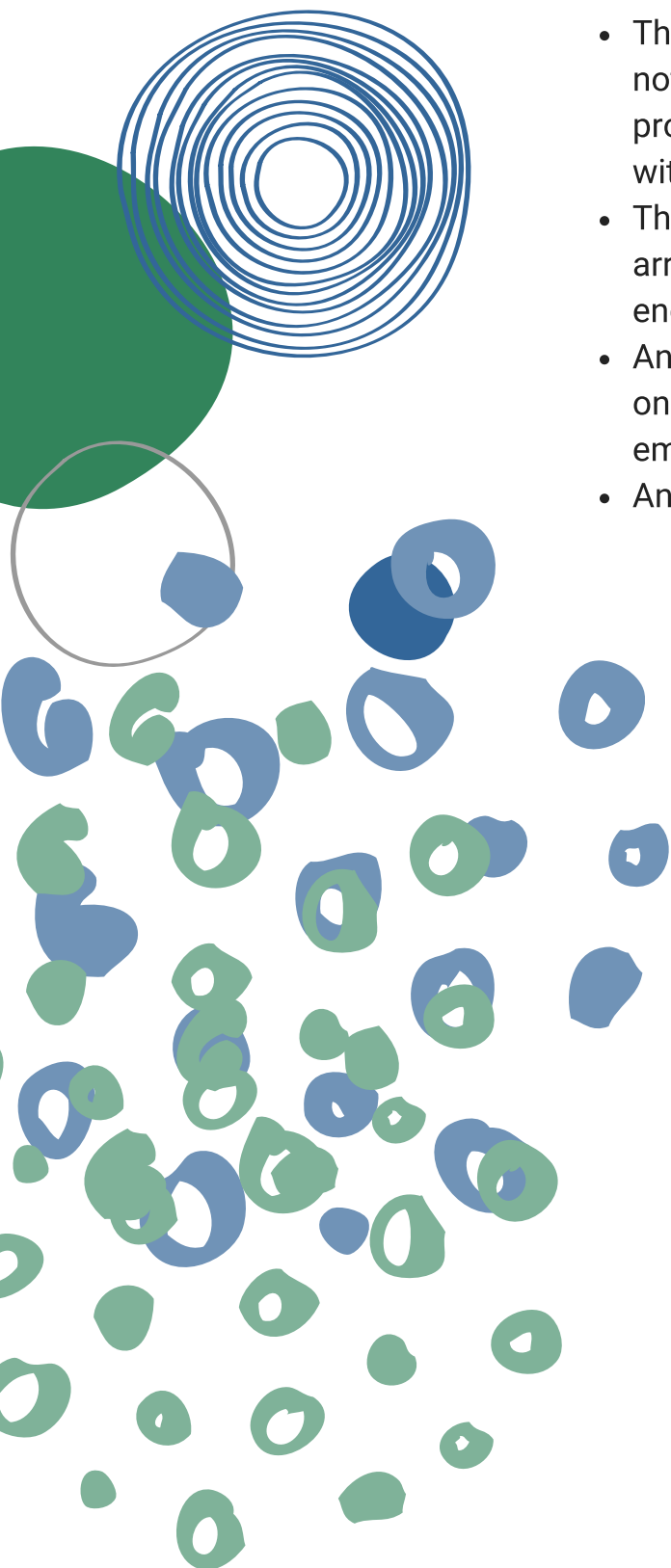
Notifications

A person who proposes to foster a child must **notify Bromley Council at least six weeks before** the arrangement is to begin. Bromley Council must be notified immediately if the arrangement is to begin **within six weeks**.

The person providing notification should give them as much information as possible. This should also include:

- The name and current address of the person giving notice, the parent or anyone else with and that of the proposed or current private carer and his/her addresses within the previous five years.
- The date on which the intended private fostering arrangement will start or when it started and proposed end date.
- Any conviction, disqualification or prohibition imposed on the private foster carer or any other person living or employed at his/her household.
- Any court orders relating to the child.

View the contact details on the page 9



The law governing Private Fostering

Local councils have a duty of care to privately fostered children, as defined in the Children Act 2004.

The Government's measures on Private Fostering are defined in:

- The Children Act 2004
- The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005
- National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005

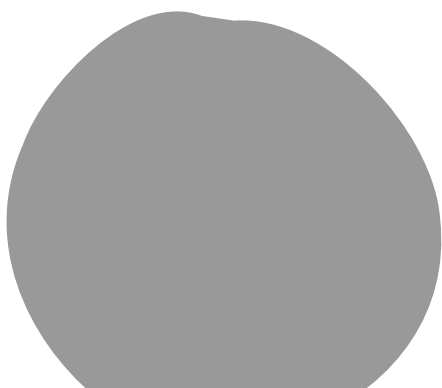
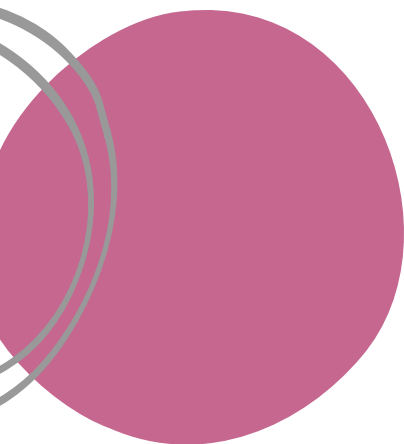
There are some people who are disqualified from becoming private foster carers because they, or a member of their household, are disqualified under the 'Disqualification for Caring for Children Regulations' (England) 2004.

We have the power to stop a person from private fostering if the arrangement is found unsuitable. We can also make requests or requirements about improving specific areas of concern to assist with matters which we believe are in a child's best interests.



The private foster Carer must also **notify** Bromley Council of any **change of their circumstances** regarding the private foster arrangement.

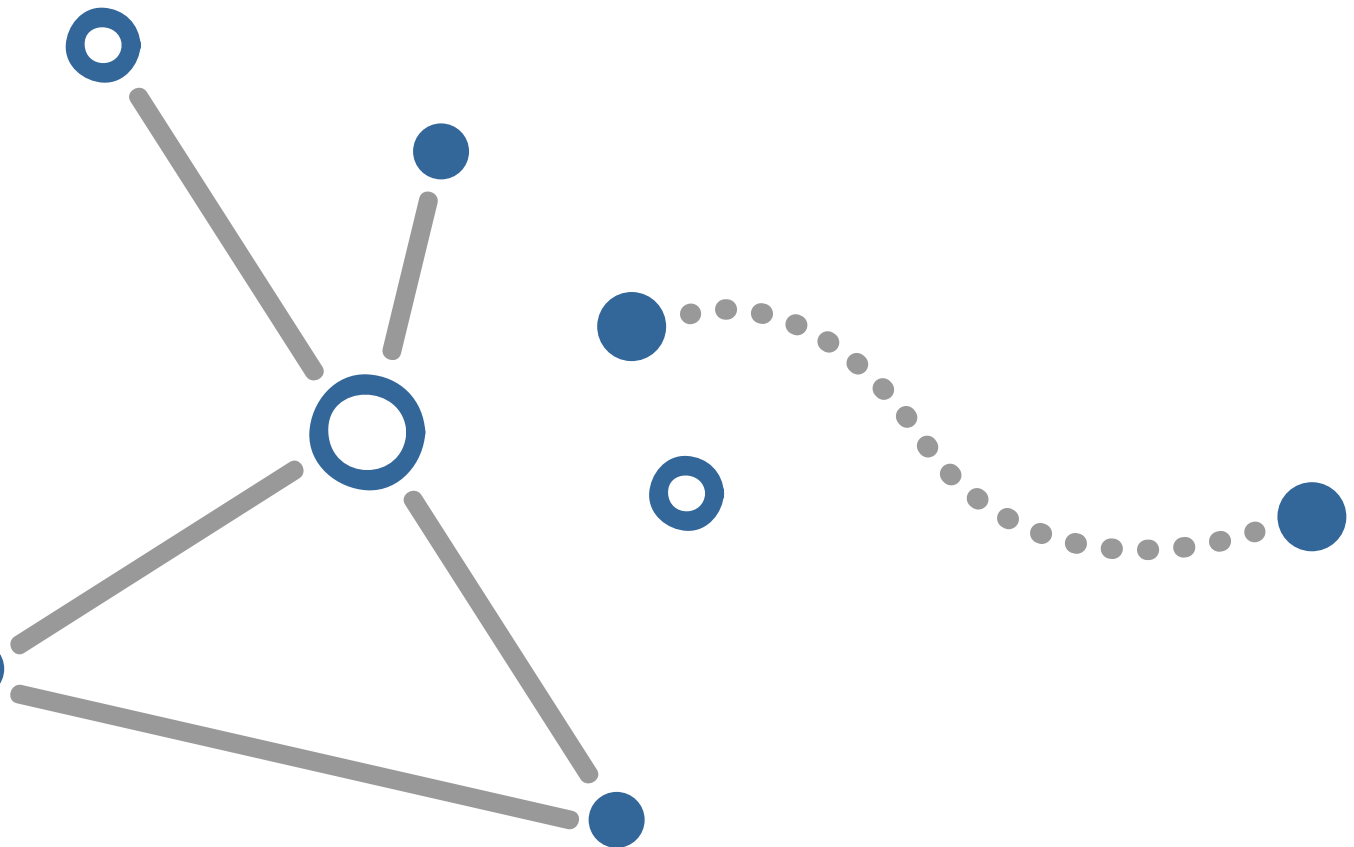
Bromley Council should also be **notified** if the child has a **new private foster carer**.



What are the main responsibilities of parents or persons with parental responsibility?

- To advise Children's Social Care of the proposed private fostering arrangement. This should be at least 6 weeks in advance where planned and within 48 hours in an emergency.
- Notify Children and Families Service within 48 hours that the arrangement has begun, i.e. the child has arrived.
- Continue to exercise their parental responsibility and to ensure that the proposed private fostering arrangement is suitable for their child.
- To agree and make appropriate a financial arrangement with the private foster carers.
- Provide the private foster carer with information about the child, including their health and school history, their interests, religion, dietary needs etc.
- Participate in major decisions which affect their child.

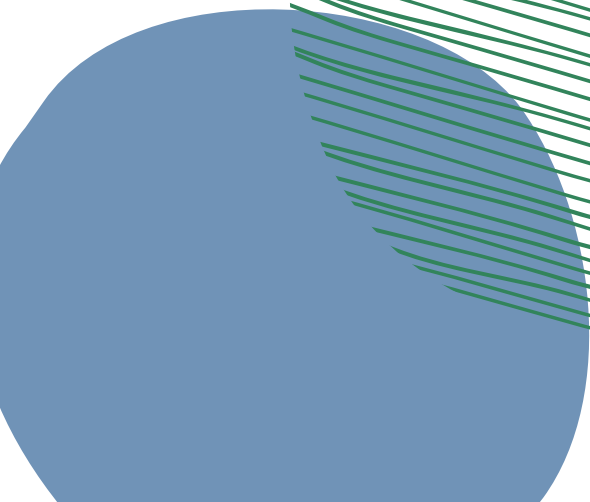
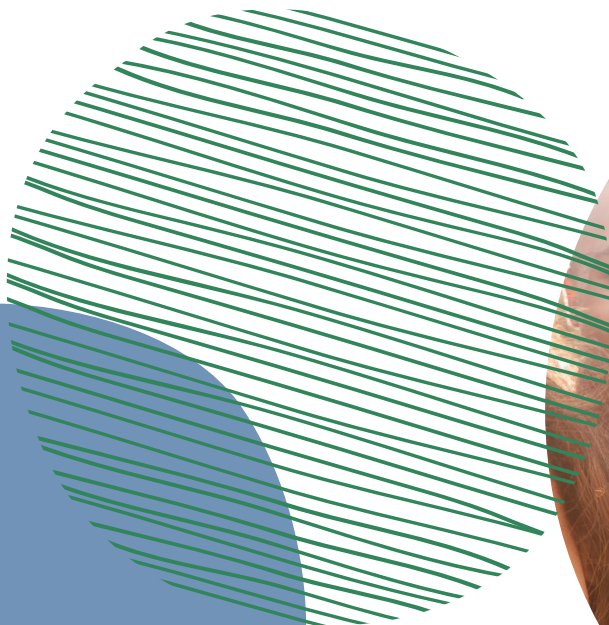
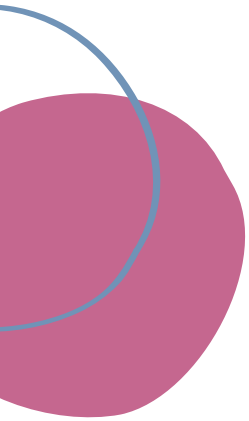
During a Private Fostering Arrangement the parent retains parental responsibility for the child at all times.



What are the main responsibilities of the private foster carer?

- Advise the Children and Families Service of any proposed arrangement at least six weeks before it is due to begin.
- Notify the Council within 48 hours that the arrangement has begun i.e. the child has arrived
- Notify the Council when the child leaves their care and provide details of the child's new care arrangements
- Must inform Children's Social Care of any person who is part of or employed at the household and/or who ceases to be part of or employed at the household.
- Provide day to day care and promote the child's welfare.

It is an offence not to notify the local council of a Private Fostering Arrangement.



What are the duties of the local authority once notified of a Private Fostering arrangement?

Bromley have a duty to make sure the private fostering arrangement is safe and suitable for the child.

Once a notification is received of a prospective private fostering arrangement, a social worker will arrange to carry out the following checks **within seven days** to establish whether the arrangement is suitable:

- Visit the premises where it is proposed that the child will be cared for and accommodated
- Visit and speak to the proposed private foster carer and people living with the foster carer
- Visit and speak to the child alone to ascertain the child's wishes and feelings unless the officer considers it inappropriate speak to and, if it is practicable to do so, visit the parent or person with Parental Responsibility for the child
- Investigate any other matters the social worker believes to be relevant such as whether an agreement for financial arrangements and for the care and maintenance of the child have been reached, arrangements for the child's education etc.

The social worker must ensure that the intended duration of the fostering arrangement is understood and agreed by both the parents of the child and the proposed private foster carer.

What will happen next?

Once the Social Worker has undertaken enquiries they must prepare a written report detailing their recommendations. If it is determine that an arrangement is unsuitable, action will be taken to protect the child where the arrangements are assessed not safe or suitable.

If the arrangement is suitable and ongoing, the social worker must arrange to visit the child **at least every 6 weeks** during the first year and **at least every 12 weeks** after the first year. The social worker will make regular visits to ensure the child's needs are being met and to provide advice and support. The social worker must complete a report after every visit and can also visit the child if the child requests this, or if the parents request a visit.

You can also ask to see the social worker at any time if you need help and advice.

What support is available to a Private Foster carer?

The child or children in your care are still the responsibility of their parents, and Children and Families Service will only be providing you with help and advice about caring for the children in your care.

The parent or person with Parental Responsibility will remain financially responsible for the child. The private foster carer should be able to claim benefits such as Child Tax Credit and Housing benefit for the period the child lives with them.

You can contact the following organisations for more help and information on this:

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

www.gov.uk/dwp

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)

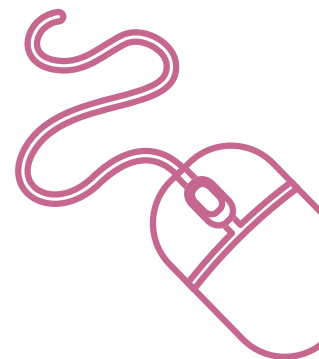
www.gov.uk/hmrc

Administers Child Benefit

Jobcentre Plus

www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus

Looks after Income Support



Contact information

If you would like to inform us about a private arrangement, or for more information please contact:



MASH Team

T: 020 8461 7373

E: mash@bromley.gov.uk

Private Fostering Hub

Bromley Council

St Blaise Building

Civic Centre, Stockwell Close

Bromley BR1 3UH

Emergency Duty Team

T: 0300 303 8671



Complaints, comments and compliments

If you are unhappy or would like to share any Complaints, Comments or Compliments about your experiences, you can do so verbally to any employee of Children's Social Care, in writing or by telephone to the Complaints Officer:

ECHS Complaints Team
Bromley Council
Civic Centre
Stockwell Close
Bromley BR1 3UH

Website: www.bromley.gov.uk

Call: 020 8461 7644

E-mail: cypsocailcarecomplaints@bromley.gov.uk

We aim to offer a helpful and efficient service, but recognise that sometimes we make mistakes, so if you are not happy with a service you have received from us, we want to know. We also want to hear from you if you have any questions, comments, suggestions or compliments about our services or staff.

Who may complain?

- Any child or young person (or parent or someone who has parental responsibility) who is being looked after by the London Borough of Bromley or is in need
- Any Bromley foster carer (including those caring for children placed through independent fostering agencies)
- Children leaving care
- Special guardians
- A child or young person (or parent) to whom a special guardian order is in force
- Any person who has undergone an assessment
- Persons wishing to adopt a child
- Adopted persons, their parents, natural parents and former guardians
- Such other persons as the local authority consider has sufficient interest in the child's or young person's welfare to warrant representations being considered by them

Timescales

A complaint must be made within 12 months of the event happening.

Complaints outside this timescale will only be dealt with at the Council's discretion.

There are three stages of the complaint procedure:

STAGE 1 Local Resolution

Our aim is to sort out your complaint swiftly and satisfactorily within 10 working days. If we need more time to investigate we will let you know and answer within 20 working days. The Team Manager of the service you are complaining about will usually take responsibility for resolving your complaint either by sending you a written response or by inviting you to a meeting.

At the end of Stage 1, if you are unhappy with the outcome, tell us why. You can ask for your complaint to be investigated further at Stage 2.

The Council may use its discretion not to proceed to a Stage 2 but offer mediation if circumstances dictate that no further progress can be made or the outcome will remain unchanged.

STAGE 2 Formal Investigation

At Stage 2 an investigation will take place by a Council Officer and an Independent Person. This will involve meeting with you to establish what you are unhappy about and also interviewing all the people involved in your complaint. After the investigation you will receive a written report. The whole process should take 25 working days, although this may be extended to a maximum of 65 working days depending on the complexity of your complaint.

If you are unhappy with your Stage 2 response, let us know why. You can ask for your complaint to be taken to the next stage of the procedures – Stage 3. You must do this within 20 working days of receiving your Stage 2 response from us.

STAGE 3 Review Panel

This panel will not re-investigate your complaint but will decide if the procedures were carried out correctly and the results were fair.

If you are still unhappy with the way your complaint has been investigated or you are not happy with your Stage 3 response, you can tell us why or contact the Local Government Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is not connected with the council and will listen to what you have to say.

Unreasonable or unreasonably persistent complaints

This is a complainant who remains dissatisfied despite their complaint having been thoroughly investigated and responded to, or one who makes unrealistic and/or inappropriate demands upon staff or the process. Under these circumstances the Council reserves the right not to follow its normal procedures.

Produced by:

Children's Social Care
LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY
Civic Centre, Stockwell Close,
Bromley BR1 3UH

