



Strategic Partnership Boards
SAFETY SAFEGUARDING WELLBEING



Bitesize video guide: Private fostering

My name is Sabeena and I'm the named GP for child and adult safeguarding in Waltham Forest.

A private fostering arrangement is essentially one that is made without the involvement of a local authority for the care of a child under 16, or under 18 if they have a disability. Private Fostering is when the child is cared for by someone other than a parent or close relative and the intention is that it will last for 28 days or more and for a continuous period of time.

Private foster carers may be extended family, such as a cousin or great aunt. They could be a friend of the family, the child's friend's parent, or even someone previously unknown to the child's family who is willing to privately foster a child. If the child is being cared for by a close relative like a grandparent, sibling, uncle or aunt, whether these are full or half blood, or through marriage, or even a step-parent, they are not considered to be privately fostered.

The legal duties for a privately fostered child rest with the local authority in which that child resides.

There is a duty on anyone who becomes aware of the arrangement to notify the Local Authority, whether you are a parent, carer or professional. This is so the child can be assessed as safe. Whilst Private fostering arrangements can be a positive response from within the community to difficulties experienced by families, privately fostered children remain a diverse and potentially vulnerable group.

The private foster carer becomes responsible for providing the day to day care of the child in a way that promotes and safeguards their welfare. Overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the privately fostered child remains with the parent or other person with parental responsibility. Local authorities do not formally approve or register private foster carers.

This arrangement is not to be confused with placements where the local authority have been involved in placing the child with a family member or friend as an alternative to foster care.

Generally, the number of children known to be privately fostered is very low and this is thought to be due to under-reporting rather than an accurate reflection of the numbers.

In Waltham Forest, we have a dedicated Private Fostering Social Worker, who not only assesses children but raises awareness amongst professionals.

Your three messages to take away are:

- It is the responsibility of any professional that becomes aware of a Private Fostering arrangement to report this to the Local Authority as part of their safeguarding responsibilities. Referrals should go to MASHrequests@walthamforest.gov.uk
- If you are not sure whether an arrangement does come under 'Private Fostering' it is better to refer than not
- The private fostering social worker can come to your team to raise awareness. Please contact her at Selina.Mkandla@walthamforest.gov.uk