

WHO IS CARING FOR YOUR CHILD?

IS YOUR CHILD IN PRIVATE
FOSTER CARE?



Private fostering information for PARENTS



What is Private Fostering?

Private Fostering is a situation where your child under the age of 16 years (or under the age of 18 years old if disabled), lives with a person who is not a close relative to them for 28 days or more.

Essentially, not many parents even know they are involved in the private fostering process. It is a private arrangement undertaken without the involvement of the authorities, however Children's Services must still be informed.

Private fostering occurs when a family friend of yours or someone who is not a close relative of your family is caring for your child.

If, however, your child is cared for by a close family member or person with parental position then the arrangement is not private fostering.



Reasons Private Fostering can happen



From a parental point of view, you may need your child cared for a number of reasons, which could include:

- **You and your child are in conflict/ have become estranged;**
- **You are living abroad, away from your child;**
- **You're going to be admitted to hospital for a long period of time;**
- **You and your children live in different countries;**
- **Your child attends language school;**
- **You work unsocial hours;**
- **Your child/children are on holiday exchanges;**
- **Your child/ children are in boarding schools and do not return home during holidays;**
- **You have brought a child from abroad for adoption.**

It is important that there has been a conversation between yourself and the private foster carer, so they know why you want them to look after your child. The child's health and education need to be discussed, contingencies should be made in case illness or injury occurs and any financial arrangements agreed.



What should you do?

The next steps would be to call **0151 934 3596/2533** to register your situation and obtain further advice. It is a legal requirement to do so and you may be committing an offence if you do not do so as soon as possible.

You will need to inform Children's Services about:

- **You child's name, date of birth, religion, racial origin and language Length of time expected for your child to stay with the carers**
- **Name, address of both you and your child's carer**
- **Date of placement (or expected date to start)**
- **Previous addresses of the carers from the past five years**
- **Any previous convictions of the carer (having convictions does not mean they're prevented from privately fostering a child, however, the convictions need to be considered)**
- **If the carer has been disqualified from Private Fostering before**



What help and support is offered?



If the arrangement is approved, the social worker will continue to support the carers and your child.

The social worker has a legal requirement to see children in private foster care regularly; this will be at least every six weeks.

They will request to see your child alone. They will also arrange regular six weekly reviews

Part of the plan could involve social workers signposting you to other agencies as well as Children's Services to help your child and carers if necessary.



What if approval of the placement is not agreed?

The social workers will discuss the situation with you, your child and the carers to find an alternative solution which could involve:

- The child returning to live with you, with support services provided
- The child moving to live with a relative
- The child being cared for by the Local Authority

It can be seen as an offence if approval has been denied by the Local Authority and you continue to place your child with carers.

If you wish to appeal against this decision, you should notify Children's Services, in writing, at the earliest opportunity. You will then be advised of what action the Local Authority will take and any further action you may wish to take.

If anything changes during the time your child is with their private foster carer, then it is important you let your child's social worker know.



Contact number for private fostering:
0151 934 3596/2533