

ARE YOU CARING FOR SOMEONE ELSE'S CHILD?

IS SOMEBODY ELSE'S CHILD
LIVING WITH YOU?



Private fostering information for CARERS

What is Private Fostering?

Private Fostering is a situation where a 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 for 28 days or more.

Essentially, carers may not know they are involved in the private fostering process; It is a private arrangement undertaken without the involvement of the authorities.

Private fostering occurs when you are looking after somebody else's child for 28 days or more as a family friend or someone who is not a close relative of the child, regardless of whether you are receiving payment. *If, however, you are a close family member or person with a legal parental position then the arrangement is not private fostering.*



Reasons why Private Fostering can happen

Parents might need to ask someone they trust, like you, to care for their child in a private arrangement. These are just some of the scenarios in which Private Fostering can take place:

- If the parents and child are in conflict
- If parents are living away from the child
- If parents are going to be admitted to hospital for a long period of time
- Teenagers who have become estranged from their parents
- Children whose parents are living in another country
- Children who attend language schools
- Children whose parents work unsocial hours
- Minority ethnic children with parents working or studying in the UK, who have chosen to make private fostering arrangements
- Children on holiday exchanges
- Children in boarding schools who do not return home during holidays
- Children brought from abroad with a view to 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 contact officers on 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:

- The child's name, date of birth, religion, racial origin and language**
- Length of time expected for the child to stay with you, the carer**
- Your name and address**
- Names and addresses of the child's parents or anyone that has parental responsibility**
- Date of placement (or expected date to start)**
- Your previous addresses from the past five years**
- Any previous convictions you may have (having convictions does not mean you're prevented from privately fostering a child, however, the convictions need to be considered)**
- If you have been disqualified from Private Fostering before**



What help and support is offered?



If the arrangement is approved, then social workers will continue to support you as the carer and the child.

Children's Services has a legal requirement to see children in private foster care regularly; this will be once a week until the private fostering assessment has been agreed. After that it will be at least every six weeks.

They will request to see the child alone. They will also arrange a meeting with you, the child's parents and the child every six weeks to see how the arrangement is working for you all and what support is needed.

If necessary, social workers will signpost you to other agencies to help you and the child.



What if approval of the placement is not agreed?

The social workers will discuss the situation with you, the parents and their child to find an alternative solution. This could involve:

- The child returning to live with parents, 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 care for the child.

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 the child is with you as a private foster carer, then it is important you let the allocated social worker know.



Contact information for private fostering:

0151 934 3596/2533