

Who to notify if you are involved in or are aware of, a Private Fostering arrangement

If you want to notify the Local Authority about a Private Fostering arrangement or make further enquiries, please contact:

Hartlepool & Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub

Tel: 01429 284284 or 01642 130080

Email: childrenshub@hartlepool.gov.uk

Middlesbrough Multi-agency Hub

Tel: 01642 726400

Email: MiddlesbroughMACH@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Redcar & Cleveland Multi-agency Hub

Tel: 01642 130700

Email: RedcarMACH@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk

Out of hours and weekend contact

Emergencies Only

Tel: 01642 524552

Private Fostering Information for Professionals



What is Private Fostering?

A Private Fostering child is a child under 16 [or under 18 if you have a disability] cared for and accommodated by someone other than:

- A parent
- A person who is not the parent but who has parental responsibility
- A Close relative [Grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt]

for a period intended to last **more than 28 days**.

Private Fostering is based on parental consent - if a parent has not agreed for someone else to look after their child, then the arrangement is not Private Fostering.

Private Fostering arrangements are quite separate from arrangements made by the Local Authority for 'children in our care' and living with foster carers.

Private Fostering covers many situations, including children who are temporarily away from their families, children of overseas students and refugee or displaced children. This includes children who have had a disagreement with their parent(s) and have gone to live with a neighbour or a school friend's family.

What are the Local Authority's responsibilities?

Although it is a private arrangement, there are certain duties and responsibilities under the Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004 and the Children [Private Arrangements for Fostering] Regulations 2005 to ensure that children who are Privately Fostered are protected. It is the job of the Local Authority to check that these regulations are being observed.

By law they must make regular visits to make sure that children are safe and well cared for. They have to check various aspects of the Private Fostering arrangement, including carrying out checks on the Private Foster Carers and their premises, to make sure that the arrangement is a suitable one. The Local Authority must also provide advice to the Private Foster Carer.

The Local Authority do not approve Private Foster Carers but they have the power to stop a person from Private Fostering if the care is not suitable, or the accommodation is not suitable. On the other hand, if they consider something is not satisfactory, they can make the carer take action to sort out the problem, for example, by installing fire guards or smoke alarms.

What are the responsibilities of parents and Private Foster Carer?

When a child is Privately Fostered, the child's parents still have full responsibility in the eyes of the law. By law, the parents and carers, and any other person directly involved in arranging the placement, must notify the Local Authority about the arrangement. It is an **offence not to tell** the Local Authority about a Private Fostering arrangement.

Private Foster Carers are responsible for carrying out any duties agreed with the parents, and must allow a representative of the Local Authority to visit the child and the premises. Parents are expected to take part fully in planning for the child's future. It is expected that there will be a written agreement between the foster carer and the parents covering essential aspects of the arrangement.

What does it mean for the child?

Children in private foster placements have the same rights to protection and access to services as children living in their family home. The Local Authority being notified means that:

They can carry out safeguard checks

That they can investigate the circumstances surrounding the arrangement

That they can listen to the young person's wishes and feelings

When appropriate, they can provide preventative and support services

Where appropriate, they can provide support services after the end of the Private Fostering Arrangement.