

Private Fostering

Are You Looking After Someone Else's Child



What is Private Fostering?

Private Fostering is a private agreement where a parent asks another adult to look after their child.

If a child is under 16 [or under 18 if you have a disability] is cared for and lives with 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 'child 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.

Other organisations who may be able to offer advice and support:

Family Lives - provides a free 24 hour telephone helpline and website giving non-judgemental support and advice to people caring for children **www.familylives.org / 0808 800 2222**

Family Rights Group - provides a confidential advice service for families whose children are involved with Children's Services **www.frg.org.uk / 0808 801 0366**

The Fostering Network - a UK charity for foster care providing support to foster carers including private fostering **www.fostering.net / 0800 040 7675**

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

To notify the Local Authority about a Private Fostering arrangement or make further enquiries, please contact:

Hartlepool Children's Hub

Tel: 01429 284284

Email: childrenshub@hartlepool.gov.uk

Middlesbrough Multi-agency Hub

Tel: 01642 726400

Email: MiddlesbroughMACH@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Stockton Family Help Point

Tel: 01642 130080

Email: familyhelppoint@stockton.gov.uk

Redcar & Cleveland Multi-agency Hub

Tel: 01642 130700

Email: RedcarMACH@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk

Out of hours and weekend contact for all above:

Emergencies Only Tel: 01642 524552

How is it arranged?

Private Fostering is arranged and agreed by the child's parents and the person or family who will be caring for the child. It is based on **parental consent** - if there is no parental agreement, then the arrangement is not private fostering.

Is there a limit to the number of children a person can Privately Foster?

Yes they are not usually permitted to foster more than three children at a time - unless they are brothers and sisters.

Who pays for the care of the child?

The parent should arrange to pay for the upkeep of the child. Any financial arrangements are the responsibility of the parent and the carer. The person in receipt of Child Benefit should let the Department for Work & Pensions know that the child is to be privately fostered for longer than 6 weeks.

Who needs to know?

The law says that the Local Authority must be told so that they can make sure the child is well cared for. The Local Authority should be told at least 6 weeks [but no more than 13 weeks] before the arrangement is due to start.

If you are already privately fostering a child, or looking after a child in an emergency, you must notify the Local Authority within 48 hours.

What is Private Foster Carers responsibilities?

They must offer the child a safe and loving place to live and help the child keep in touch with their own family and a Social Worker. They must make sure that the child is registered with a GP and that their health needs and dental needs are met. They must also make sure that any needs arising from the child's religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background are met.

They must also tell the Local Authority if anyone else comes to live with them and when the child leaves their care, stating why and giving the name and address of the person into whose care the child has moved.

What will the Local Authority do after they are told?

The Local Authority has a duty to satisfy themselves that the welfare of privately fostered children is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted. They will:

- Make **regular visits** to make sure that children are safe and well cared for.
- Check different aspects of the private fostering arrangements to make sure that the arrangement is a suitable one, including carrying out checks on private foster **carers** and their **home**.
- Provide **advice** to children, private foster carers and parents.

The Local Authority do not **approve private foster carers** but:

- They have the power to **stop** a person from private fostering if the carer or the accommodation is not suitable.
- If they consider something is not satisfactory, they can make the carer take action to sort it out.

If the Local Authority is satisfied with the Private Fostering Arrangement:

Information you should keep:

It will be beneficial to any child that you are privately fostering if you keep a file of important information. The file should contain:

- Up to date health and medical information - including dates that the child has visited the doctor and/or the dentist.
- Copies of school reports, exam results and special pieces of work.
- Notes of the dates and means of contact with the child's parents and other important people in the child's life.
- Records of the child's out of school activities and special interests such as sport, music, drama, brownies/cubs, etc.
- Records of any money received in relation to the child's upkeep.
- Dates and nature of children's services contact.
- Photographs of special events and people in the child's life during their stay with you.

Notifications

You must notify the Local Authority when any of the following occur (in advance if possible) within 48 hours:

- If your address changes - including if you move to another local authority area.
- If someone moves into your house (if they are over 16 years old they will need to have an enhanced DBS check).
- If anyone moves out of the house.
- If you or anyone living at or employed in your home is convicted of an offence.
- If the placement ends - you must let the local authority know who the child is living with and why.