

Private Fostering



Private fostering is when a child under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a 'close relative'.

This is a private arrangement made between a parent and a carer, for 28 days or more. Close relatives are defined as step-parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles or aunts (whether of full blood, half blood or marriage/affinity).

Situations involving private foster care can include:

- Teenagers living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Children sent to this country for health care or education, by parents living overseas
- Children living with a friend's family as a result of separation, divorce or arguments at home
- Children at Boarding Schools who do not return to their parents during holidays.
- Children on holiday exchanges or living with host families for a variety of reasons
- Children brought from abroad with a view to adopt
- Children whose parents work unsocial hours
- Children whose parents are in prison
- Children whose parents are serving in the forces.

Privately fostered children are often made more vulnerable by their living circumstances and by their status as they are often not identified and made known to their local authority.

What should you do?

It is the responsibility of everybody whose work brings them into contact with children and young people to report private fostering arrangements by ringing the First Response Team on 0845 4600001

What should parents/carers do?

If a private fostering arrangement is being considered, parents/carers of the child must notify the First Response Team on 0845 4600001 at least 6 weeks in advance as the timescale for assessment is 42 days.

If a private fostering arrangement is set up in an emergency, the First Response Team should be told as soon as possible, and within 48 hours of the arrangement being made.

What should a private foster carer do?

Private foster carers do not have parental responsibility for a child, which means that they have to ask the parents about any medical or dental treatment, school trips, taking the child on holiday or about any other major decisions relating to the child.

What will the local authority do?

When there is a private fostering arrangement, your local authority must:

- Check on the suitability of the private foster carers
- Ensure that advice is made available when needed

- Observe the overall standard of care
- Ensure that professionals in other services (Social Care, Education, Health etc) are aware of any Private Fostering arrangements
- The child's Social Worker must make regular visits to the child; on a weekly basis whilst the carer is being assessed by the First Steps Team and 6 weekly thereafter (following approval of the carer and private arrangement)

If you would like further advice, or wish to discuss with a Designated Safeguarding Lead, please do get in contact with us on 01494 815211.