

Your Guide To Private Fostering



www.lancashire.gov.uk

What is private fostering?

Private fostering is when a child or young person is looked after by someone who is not a close relative for a period of 28 days or longer. Proper arrangements need to be put in place for this, ideally before it happens. This is simply to make sure that the child or young person is being looked after properly, they are safe and their needs are being met appropriately.

To be clear, a close relative is the child or young person's:

- grandparent
- brother
- sister
- uncle
- aunt

This includes marriage, civil registration or if you are a step-parent.

Anyone else will need to make sure that correct arrangements are in place. This applies if the child or young person is under 16, or 18 if they are disabled. It doesn't apply though to a child or young person in local authority care.



Why it is important to tell us

We simply want to keep all children and young people safe. To help us to do this and to support families all parents and carers must notify their local authority. When you do this you'll receive advice on what will happen next, you'll get further information, and we'll make sure you get all the help you need as well as answering any questions you have.

Children can be vulnerable when they are separated from their family as they might not see them very often. It is especially important that we know when this is happening so that we can make sure they are safe and well.



Examples of private fostering

There are many circumstances that lead to a child or young person being looked after by someone else. We've listed some examples below for you:

- A teenage girl living with a friend's family because of relationship problems with her father and step-mother
- A disabled young man living with his mother's friend after his mother has died
- A young boy living with his mother's cousin. His mother lives in a different country, is sick and needs lengthy treatment. She will not be able to care for her son during this time



What the law says

By law, the local authority, where the child will be living, should be informed about any private fostering arrangements before they happen - ideally, weeks beforehand.

If it happens quickly because of a family emergency the authority should be informed within 48 hours of the child or young person going to live somewhere else.



By law, you must tell us

Tell us by calling

freephone 0300 123 6720



CHECKLIST FOR WHEN YOU CALL

It would be really helpful if you can let us know as much detail about the arrangement as you can when you call us. We'll need to know information including:

The child's full name

The child's
date of birth

Details of
the address

It is an offence not to!

Please remember to let us know at least six weeks beforehand, or if not, let us know as soon as possible. Once we know we can work together to look after the child as best we can.

If you are not sure if the private fostering regulations apply to you just

ask us by telephoning
0300 123 6720



Who should tell us?

Either the child's parent or the private foster carer should tell us. Sometimes another adult who knows the child or young person informs us. Anyone employed by the local authority has a duty to tell us if they think that we don't already know of the arrangement.

NOT SURE IF SOMEONE IS BEING PRIVATELY FOSTERED?

If you answer 'yes' to all of the following statements then the arrangement is probably a private fostering one, and you should tell us.

- The child or young person is under 16 and living with someone else or under 18 if they are disabled
- The arrangement will be for 28 days or more
- The arrangement is for less than 28 days for one stay but a number of stays add up to 28 days or more when they are all added up eg. when parents work away from home during the week and is looked after by another carer
- The proposed carer is not a close relative of the child, for example is not a sister, brother, aunt or grandparent
- If your child is already being cared for by a private foster carer or you are already privately fostering a child then you must tell us as soon as possible



What must the authority do?

WHAT ACTION WILL WE TAKE?

Children who are privately fostered are protected by law, under the Children Act 1989 and the Children Private Arrangements for Fostering Regulations 2005.

WHAT THE AUTHORITY MUST DO AND THE CHECKS WE'LL MAKE

Local authorities don't register private foster carers but we have certain duties when children are privately fostered, to their parents and their carers. We need to work with parents and carers to make sure the arrangements made are suitable for the child. To do this properly we'll need to:

- Contact parents, carers and the child or young person to help plan how the temporary care will work to undertake a private fostering assessment
- Visit the child or young person within seven working days of us being told of someone being privately fostered
- Make sure that everything is suitable with the carers and any other adults living in the home
- Ensure the accommodation is suitable and safe. We'll offer advice to everyone involved



The checks we'll make



- We will visit the child or young person regularly to make sure they are being well looked after
- We will offer support and advice to a private foster carer about looking after someone else's child and how their needs can be met.



- We will do safeguarding checks with the police and other relevant agencies. We will request a Data Barring Scheme check (this used to be known as a CRB check) on anyone living in the house who is over 16.



At the heart of what we do

We'll work with everyone involved to try to make private fostering arrangements a success.

However, the wellbeing and safety of the child or young person must remain our highest priority.

Because of this we might not think that a private fostering arrangement is suitable. Sometimes we'll apply certain conditions to help it to work.

Your responsibilities as the parent

By law, the child or young person's parent or guardian has a duty to inform us of any private fostering arrangement that is already in place or is planned. You are still responsible for your child or young person and you need to make sure that the arrangement is suitable.

You should remain involved in making decisions about your child or young person's needs, just like you would if they were still living with you. The fact that they aren't living with you doesn't make any difference to this.

To help to understand the child or young person and to care for them as well as possible, you'll also need to inform the private foster carer about the following:

- Their likes, dislikes, hobbies, religion, ethnicity, cultural background and any other needs
- Their school, their doctor and their dentist

You should also:

Keep in frequent contact with your child or young person

Check regularly that they are being well looked after

Inform us within 48 hours after they leave the private foster carer, telling us the name and address of anyone else who is then looking after them.



of the child or young person

You'll need to make suitable financial provision for their care

If possible, it is best to put an agreement in writing with the carer about the care to be provided for your child or young person, including the proposed length of time they will live with them. This should include the financial arrangements you've put in place, their health and educational needs and what you would wish to be consulted on.

We need to work together to ensure that your child or young person is safe.

Although you might think you know the private foster carer well, we can ask for information about them from other agencies to make sure everything is suitable. You wouldn't be able to get this.

But we can only make sure all arrangements are in place to look after the child if we know about it so tell us, please. Telephone:

0300 123 6720



Your responsibilities as the private

We need you to let us know before the child or young person comes to stay with you. We'll let you know what is expected of you as their needs come first. Very simply, we need to make sure that their requirements are met by you during the time they are staying with you.

We'll work with you to discuss the child or young person's care. We'll need to make regular visits to your home and to see the child or young person alone.

Anyone over 16 in your house will have to have a DBS check

We'll want you to inform us within 48 hours if your home or family situation changes and/or if the child or young person goes on to live with someone else or returns to live with a parent.

We'll expect you to provide the name and address of the new person who will be looking after the child.



foster carer

You will not have parental responsibility for the child or young person and you should consult with whoever does.

Who pays for the child or young person's care whilst they are living with you?

The parent always remains responsible for the child or young person's financial support. We recommend that this is sorted out and agreed before they come to live with you. This should be done as quickly as possible. The person who receives child benefit should let the Benefits Agency know if the private fostering arrangement is to be for more than six weeks.

Help and support

It is important that there is support for everyone involved. We have a responsibility to protect any child, no matter where they are living.



Support and advice



The child or young person

You can receive advocacy support from the Children's Rights Service.
You will receive a regular visit to make sure everything is alright.



The private foster carer

We'll support you and offer advice about working with a child or young person's parent to help you.

We'll let you know of training courses we run for our own foster carers so that you can attend, if you want to



We may be able to put you in contact with other agencies if the child or young person has any specific or additional needs.



The parent or guardian

We'll support and offer advice about working with a carer both before and after your child is privately fostered.



If the arrangement is to last for more than six weeks you need to inform the Benefits Agency to ensure child benefit is paid to the correct person.

Health and education

Health

All children and young people should be registered with a doctor. If the child or young person has moved to a different area because of the private fostering arrangement they need to be registered with a different GP in the new area as soon as possible.

Education

If a child is of school age then they should attend a local school. They may need to go to a new school if they have moved into a different area. This should happen as soon as possible. Any discussions and arrangements regarding school should be held in good time to reduce the likelihood of any break in school attendance.

Staff from health and education organisations including GPs, nurses and teachers, should all encourage parents to notify us if they think or know that a child is being privately fostered. They are asked to tell us if they think we are not aware.



By law, you must tell us!

Remember, by law, if a child or young person is going to be looked after by a private foster carer, then the parent, carer or anyone else involved in making the arrangements must tell us before it happens.

If an emergency arrangement is made we should be informed of this within 48 hours.

Information is available in a number of other languages on the private fostering website - **www.lancashire.gov.uk**

How you can tell us

Useful addresses

Lancashire County Council www.lancashire.gov.uk
All initial referrals should be made by telephoning
0300 123 6720

British Association for Adoption and Fostering
(BAAF) www.baaf.org.uk

Somebody Else's Child www.privatefostering.org.uk



Lancashire
County
Council



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