

Private Fostering

What is private fostering?

A child is privately fostered if:

- they are under 16 or 18 if they are disabled and
- they are living with someone **who is not a relative** . **This means they are not** their parent, step parent, grandparent, brother, sister, aunt or uncle (whether of full blood, half blood or by marriage/affinity). and
- it is for more than 28 days
- and
- the arrangement **has not** been made by the local authority.

Private fostering includes the following situations:

- where a parent makes an arrangement for a child to be cared for by someone else because the parent is ill or their working hours require such an arrangement
- where a young person with or without their parent's agreement , goes to stay with a friend's family because of tension at home
- teenagers living – with or without the agreement of their family , with the family of their boyfriend or girlfriend
- children / young person staying with another family whilst attending a school away from their home area.
- children from abroad whose parents do not reside in this country but have made an arrangement for the children to stay in this country with a family who are not relatives.
- children from abroad who are refugees , asylum seekers or migrants and stay with a family who are not relatives.
- Children from abroad who have been smuggled into this country to be exploited.
- children who are cared for by their parent's partners (ie their parent is not married or in a civil partnership with that person) while the parent lives elsewhere eg in hospital or in prison.
- children from abroad staying with host families whilst they have a holiday or medical treatment in this country or attending a language school
- children who are at boarding school but who do not go home to their parents in the school holidays but stay with another family
- child or young person who lives in the UK with their parents but stay with another family while their parents go abroad for an extended period to visit or care for extended family.

The parent and the private foster carer are both legally required to tell the local authority of the private fostering arrangement. This would be the local authority where the private foster carer lives.

The private foster carer becomes responsible for the day to day care of the child in a way which will promote and safeguard his welfare. The parent and the foster carer should agree how the arrangement will work so the child's needs are met and how the child will be maintained financially by the parent. However, local authorities have a duty to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are privately fostered within their area is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted. In carrying out this duty, local authorities must satisfy themselves as to a number of matters as are relevant in the circumstances, including the suitability of the private foster carer and his household and premises. The local authority has a duty to visit the child at regular intervals.

A privately fostered child is **not** a looked after child but they may be assessed by the local authority as a child in need.

It is estimated that there are 10,000 children living in private fostering arrangements in England and Wales but in most years there are only around 1,500 notification of such arrangements made to local authorities. While most of these 10,000 children may be safe, some may be very vulnerable. They may not be receiving the care which is needed for them to develop well. They may be being exploited and be child labourers or sexually exploited.

All those working with children and all those working in schools and early years provision have a responsibility to notify the local authority if they know or suspect that a child in their school is being privately fostered. Living apart from your family is often difficult for children and young people and they need the benefits of having a named social worker from the local authority to support them in their situation.

Parents are legally required to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement. Doing so can be very helpful for the parent as the local authority may be able to advise them that the carer they are considering may or may not be a suitable carer for their child, or support them to explore ways in which they can get help to keep their

child with them. If the child does go to live with the carer, the parent will be assured that the care of their child is being monitored.

Carers are also legally required to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement. It is not easy looking after someone else's child and the local authority can support the carer to meet the child's needs.

If you are a parent

or

a carer privately fostering a child

or

someone working in school or early years provision who knows or suspects a child is being privately fostered

Get in contact with:

Family Contact Point
Swindon Borough Council
Civic Offices
Euclid Street
Swindon
Wiltshire
SN1 2JH
Tel: 01793 466903

All professionals working with children have an important role in relation to safeguarding privately fostered children. If they become aware of a private fostering arrangement, and they are not confident that it has been notified to the local authority, they should contact the local authority themselves.