



Is someone else's child living with you?
Essential facts about private fostering
Information and advice for private foster carers



If you have someone else's child living in your home, you may be a private foster carer.

If you answer yes to all the following questions, then you may be a private foster carer, regardless of whether you are receiving payment:

- Are you looking after someone else's child?
- Is the child going to be living with you for more than 27 days?
- Are you NOT the child's grandparent, brother or sister, aunt, uncle, step-parent, legal guardian, or other person with parental responsibility?
- Is the child under the age of 16, or 18 if they are disabled?

What is private fostering?

There are many reasons why parents might need to ask someone they trust, like you, to care for their child in a private arrangement. If parents need to be admitted to hospital for a long period of time, or are living abroad, or are in conflict with their child, they may turn to someone like yourself as a private foster carer.

Parents do not usually do this without a great deal of thought. It is important that you and the parents have discussed why they want you to look after their child, for how long, and what arrangements and contingencies should be made if, for example, the child falls ill or has an accident. You should also have discussed the child's health and education, needs arising from aspects such as race, ethnic origin or religion, and financial arrangements.

Notification to the local authority

The law says that you must notify the local authority – Children Young People and Families Service – if you are fostering a child privately. Failure to do this may be deemed an offence.

You have a duty to notify the local authority of an intention to privately foster a child, at least six weeks before the child moves in to your home. If a child comes to live with you in an emergency, you must notify the local authority within 48 hours of the move.

If you are already privately fostering a child, you should contact the Children Young People and Families Service – Fostering Team immediately by phoning 01226 775876.

What will Children's Services do?

The Children Act 2004 says that the local authority has a legal duty to make sure all privately fostered children are safeguarded and their well-being is promoted.

To ensure this, you will be visited by a social worker who will discuss the needs of the child with you, and who will see what support and advice you may need. They will need to establish that your household is safe and suitable for the child and what arrangements you have made for the child's health and education.



They will ask you to fill in forms to check records with health, education and other agencies. They will ask all members of your household over the age of 16 years to give consent to checks with the Criminal Records Bureau. They will:

- help you to work together with the child's parents
- help you to get support you may need to care for the child
- discuss arrangements with the child alone (if the child is old enough and if it is not considered to be inappropriate)
- discuss arrangements with the child's parents
- discuss with you any arrangements that they feel are not satisfactory
- notify other agencies of the arrangements
- consult with other agencies to obtain information about the child

Following these inquiries, the social worker will complete a report summarizing all the information and a decision will be made by their team manager with regard to the suitability of the private fostering arrangement with you. You will be informed of the outcome verbally and in writing.

If it is considered that the arrangement is not suitable, and that it would not be appropriate for the child to be privately fostered by you, the social worker will discuss with you, the child and the child's parents what the best alternative arrangement might be.

This could be a range of options, including the child returning to live with their parents, living with a relative or the child being looked after by a local authority foster carer.

If the arrangement is not considered suitable for the child, you must not continue to care for the child or this may be deemed to be a criminal offence.

You may appeal against the decision by informing the Children Young People and Families Service of your objection in writing, and you will be advised of further action you can take.

If the private fostering arrangement is considered to be suitable for the child...

The social worker will continue to support you and the child. The local authority has a legal duty to see children in private foster care on a regular basis – at least once every six weeks in the first year that they live with you and at least once every twelve weeks after that. They must see the child alone if the child is old enough and if this is not inappropriate. The social worker will help you to obtain services from other agencies as well as Children's Services to help the child and yourself if necessary.



Education

You will be given specific advice on education and health for the child. If the child is of school age, you will need to agree with the parent which school the child will go to, who will inform the school of arrangements, who will attend parents' evenings and school functions, who the teacher can contact in the event of problems, and what help and support the child may need with school and homework.

Health

The child in your care needs to be registered with a GP and dentist. Any allergies, illnesses or treatments need to be noted, and immunisations need to be up to date. You need parental consent in writing to be able to ensure that the child receives medical treatment when necessary and in the case of an emergency, the parents should be informed prior to seeking treatment, wherever possible. Having arrangements clearly agreed and in writing will ensure that the child's health needs are met fully.

Race, culture and religion

It is important that children retain their cultural identity, racial identity and religious beliefs. You should ask the parents about these issues so that you can make any special arrangements to carry on these practices. You may also need to be vigilant if a child is of a different ethnic origin to the local community and look out for discrimination and take action to deal with this if it occurs.



Finance

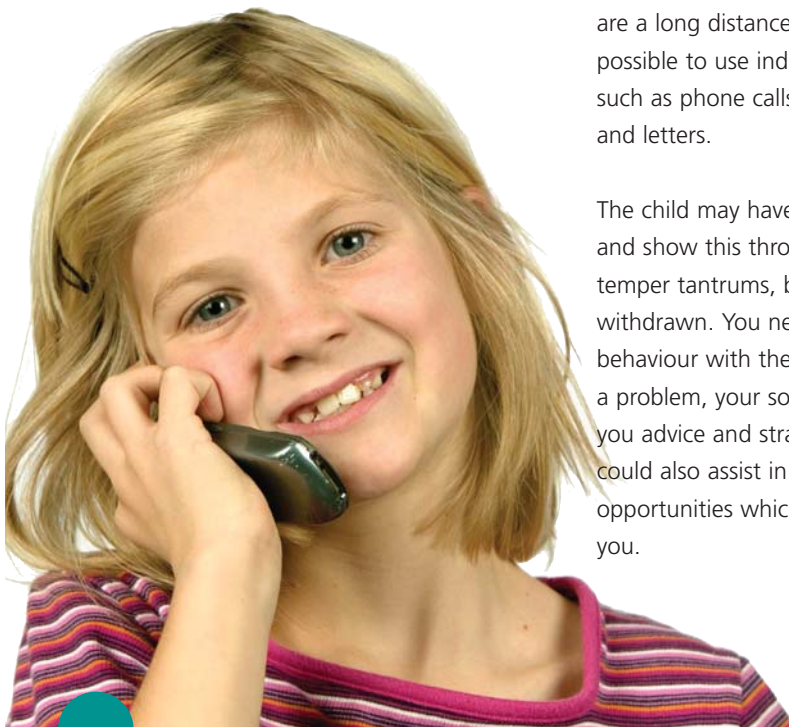
Finance for the child needs to be agreed between you and the parents. The parents will need to inform the Child Benefit Agency that the child is no longer living with them and is now living with you. If you are claiming benefits you may be entitled to claim benefit for the child if the parents are not receiving benefits themselves.

Working together

It is important that you work together with the parents and that the child sees you are working together for their benefit. Parents need to provide you with as much information as possible about their child. You will need to agree what arrangements are to be made about the child's contact with the parents and make sure the child understands. The child may have a lot of anxieties about living with you and worry about when they will see their parents again.

Contact can be in lots of different ways – visits are best, but if parents are abroad or are a long distance away, it may only be possible to use indirect forms of contact such as phone calls, email, text messages and letters.

The child may have difficulty settling in and show this through behaviour – temper tantrums, bedwetting, becoming withdrawn. You need to discuss the behaviour with the parents. If it becomes a problem, your social worker can offer you advice and strategies to help. They could also assist in finding training opportunities which could be invaluable to you.



What to do if your situation changes

You must inform the social worker if there are any changes in your household circumstances while you are privately fostering. For example:

- Change of address
- If someone moves in to your house or moves out
- If anyone living in your house commits an offence
- If you move to another local authority area
- If your financial circumstances change

What if the placement ends

You should agree with the parents about the circumstances in which the arrangement should end and what arrangements will be made for the child. It can be very disruptive and upsetting for the child if moves happen suddenly without any warning, preparation or planning.

You must inform the social worker within 48 hours of the arrangement changing and let them know who the child is now living with and why.



Remember, you must notify the local authority if you are planning a private fostering arrangement, or if a child is already privately fostered with you.

The Children Young People and Families Service – Fostering Team can provide you with more information on all the issues in this leaflet.

Call 01226 775876 to talk with a social worker from the team.

Nëse j'u nevojitet ndihmë për të kuptuar këtë dokument, j'u lutemi n'a kontaktoni.

若您需要幫助來理解本檔，請與我們聯繫。

यदि आप को इस दस्तावेज़ को समझने के लिए सहायता की आवश्यकता है तो कृपया हम से संपर्क करें

Jeżeli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tego dokumentu skontaktuj się z nami

ਜੇਕਰ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਲਈ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਮਦਦ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ

Обратитесь к нам, если для того, чтобы понять этот документ, вам нужна помощь

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کو سمجھنے کیلئے مدد کی ضرورت ہے تو براہ کرم ہم سے رابطہ کریں

If you need help understanding this document please contact us on 01226 775876.