

Private Fostering – Information for Parents/Carers



What is Private Foster Care?

If another person's child lives with you, then you could be a private foster carer. The Children Act 1989 requires you to inform your local council.

If you think that you are already a private foster carer you must get in touch with your local Children's Services Department straight away. (See contact details at the base of this page).

If you are:

- A parent asking for someone else to look after your child full time for more than 28 days
- Thinking of looking after someone else's child full time, or are presently doing so, for more than 28 days and you are not closely related to the child?

Then you are making a Private Foster Care Arrangement.

If you are a parent of children under 16 yrs old (18 yrs old if disabled)

You must tell us if:

- They are going to stay with the carer for more than 28 days and
- The carer is not a close relative
- And/or does not have parental responsibility from the Court

You need not tell us if:

- Your child will be away from you for less than 28 days
- They are in a residential home, boarding school or hospital
- The Local Authority has placed them with approved foster carers or adopters

When do you need to tell Children's Services?

Not less than 6 weeks and not more than 13 weeks before the child goes to live with the new carers, except in an emergency, when you should tell us within 48 hours or

If the child is already with a private foster carer, and the council does not know of this arrangement, then you should notify the council straight away.

If you are a carer of someone else's children under 16 yrs old (18yrs old if disabled) or are planning to do so

You must tell us if:

- You are not a close relative (grandparent, aunt, uncle, sibling) or you do not have parental responsibility and
- The child has been/will be with you for more than 28 days
- But NOT if the child is placed with you by a local authority

Why is it necessary to inform Children's Services?

Privately fostered children need to be protected from possible harm and to be looked after to a high standard. The local authority has a duty to check that private foster carers are suitable people to do the job. This means that we must:

- Carry out checks (with the carers' permission) with other professionals, referees who know the carers well and with the Criminal Records Bureau. This is to make sure that children are protected from carers who may pose a risk of harm to the child.
- Check that accommodation is safe and suitable
- Where appropriate provide the parent and carer with necessary help and support

Are there any people who are disqualified from becoming Private Foster Parents?

Generally, there are a number of circumstances where people are not allowed to look after other people's children. Examples of the main reasons for being disqualified are:

- A child of the individual has been the subject of a care order or there has been an order removing a child or preventing the individual looking after a child
- The person has been convicted of certain offences
- The person has been concerned with a voluntary or registered home, which has been removed from the register
- The person has been refused registration as a childminder

What will happen after you have notified Children's Services?

A social worker will contact you to arrange to visit you at your home. They will try to ensure that the visit takes place at a time when all members of the family are present. If this is not possible, they may visit again if they do not see all family members during the initial visit.

During the visit, the social worker will complete a form based on the information you provide to check that all aspects of the child's welfare and well-being are being addressed. They will also arrange for you to provide written consent to a variety of

checks to be made with other agencies. You will also need to provide the names and addresses of two referees who can comment on your suitability to act as carers.

Following the Social Worker's visit, you will receive a letter from the Children's Services Directorate advising you of whether or not the placement has been approved. If approval is refused, the letter will include details of the right to appeal to the Courts against the decision.

Children's Services can also impose requirements on private fostering arrangements such as the number, sex and age of children; standards of equipment or accommodation; and any arrangement for the care of a child. Children's Services can prohibit someone from privately fostering children where they are of the opinion that the person, premises or both are unsuitable.

If the placement is approved, the social worker will arrange for the child's parents to give you authorisation to seek general medical treatment for the child. They will also ensure that the child is registered with a doctor and a dentist. The social worker will also ensure that you are given a copy of a form detailing the child's medical history.

The social worker will visit you and the child on a regular basis to check the arrangements.

You will be expected to tell the Social Worker if there are any changes in the fostering arrangements, including the ending of the placement.

Contact your local Children's Services Department:

Telephone: (01983) 525790

Atkinson Drive, Newport, PO30 2LS