

Private Fostering

Information Guide for carers,
parents and professionals



What is private fostering?

Children who are cared for and provided with accommodation by people who aren't their parents or a close relative could be in a private fostering arrangement.

Here are some common examples of private fostering arrangements:

- A child sent to live in the UK for education or health reasons, being cared for by a host family.
- A young person who has gone to live with a girlfriend's, boyfriend's or friend's family.
- A child living with a carer because their parents' circumstances mean that they are unable to look after him or her; these could include unsociable work hours, health issues or even a prison sentence.

Typically the following applies to private fostering arrangements:

- The child or young person is under 16 (or 18 if they are disabled)
- The full time carer is not the child's parent or a close relative
- The arrangement is intended to last for more than 28 days
- Arrangements have been made privately between the parent and the carer

Private fostering arrangements do not apply when:

- The child is in the care of a local authority foster carer
- The carer has parental responsibility over the child
- The carer is a close relative of the child*

* Please see the definition of 'relative' as set out in The Children Act at the end of this leaflet.

What do you need to do?

Any parent, carer or professional who is aware of a private fostering arrangement has a duty to inform the local authority.

If you are a parent making private fostering arrangements for your child, you need to let Derbyshire Children's Service know in writing at least six weeks before the arrangement begins. If the arrangement is due to start in less than six weeks or the child is already living with the carer you need to let Derbyshire Children's Service know immediately.

Derbyshire Children's Service can help you complete a written agreement with the carer, covering:

- Arrangements for financially supporting the child
- Permission for the carer to seek emergency medical treatment
- How you plan to keep in contact



If you are a carer about to enter into a private fostering agreement you need to:

- Inform Derbyshire County Council's Children's Service of the plans within the same timeframe as that for parents outlined above
- Have a prearranged visit from a social worker to your home to ensure it is safe and appropriate for the child to live there
- Let the social worker meet any other adults who live in your home
- Undergo a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check on you and other adults in your home These steps are in place to ensure that the child is safe and as happy as possible. In fact, most planned private fostering arrangements are found to provide a highly satisfactory care environment.

If you are a professional who works with children in education, health or social care you are likely to come across private fostering situations. As it is often the case that local authorities don't know about private fostering arrangements you must:

- Explain to the parents or the carers that they must notify Derbyshire County Council Children's Service of the private fostering arrangement immediately
- Contact Derbyshire County Council Children's Service and give as much detail as you know about the child and the private fostering arrangement

Why are Children's Services involved?

To help us keep children safe and support families who are looking after privately fostered children: All parents and Private foster carers must notify the Local Council of a private fostering arrangement. If not, they miss out on essential welfare checks for children plus other support and services.

These include:

- advice on claiming benefits and possible funding for essential items
- support with finding school places and registering with GP/ medical practice
- parenting support and advice
- helping in bringing families in crises back together, where a child/ Young Person is in an arrangement following relationship breakdown.

What do I have to do if I am privately fostering or my child is privately fostered?

Call Derbyshire County Council Fostering Service preferably at least six weeks before the placement begins. You could be breaking the law if you do not notify us about a private fostering arrangement.

Whilst the parent retains parental responsibility for the child, the private foster carer becomes responsible for the day-to-day care of the child in a way which will promote his/her welfare. It is very important that the parent and private foster carer agree on how the child will be cared for.

Welfare concerns

The majority of children in private fostering arrangements will be happy and thrive.

However, some will;

- Suffer from loss, separation and emotional distress
- Suffer abuse and exploitation Have no contact with their parents
- Move from carer to carer, sometimes across countries
- Have no one in the UK with legal rights to make important decisions for them
- Remain in the UK without any formal documents and without legal status or other rights such as the right to work and education.

All these issues can be better managed, prevented and resolved if children are identified and referred to the right services sooner.

Keeping children safe is everybody's responsibility If you are concerned that a child or young person is being harmed through abuse or neglect, or for advice and guidance on all child protection issues please contact Derbyshire County Council Children's Service on tel: **01629 533190**



What else do you need to know?

Once Derbyshire County Council Children's Service has been informed of a private fostering arrangement, a representative will:

Visit the carer, the child and the carer's home within seven days

Talk to the child to find out how he or she feels about where they are living

Contact the parents to talk about the arrangement

Undertake an assessment of the child's needs and the suitability of the care arrangement

Make sure that DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks are completed on all adults in the carer's home

Continue to visit the child and carer at least every six weeks

Offer ongoing advice and guidance to the private foster carer

These steps are carried out to make sure the child or young person is safe, well cared for and happy

If you would like this leaflet produced in large print, Braille or any other language, please call 0800 083 7744 or email

privatefostering@derbyshire.gov.uk

Definition of relatives according to The Children Act: The responsibilities of parents and carers in private fostering arrangements are covered by law as set out in The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004, The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005.

The law states that the local authority must be informed about all private fostering situations. The parent, carer and any professional who knows about the arrangement has a duty of care to inform the authority's children's service giving details about the arrangement.

Close relative

Child is not in a private fostering arrangement

- Parent
- Sibling (full blood, half blood)
- Grandparent (full blood, half blood or by marriage)
- Aunt or uncle (full blood, half blood or by marriage)
- Step parent (if parents married)
- Another adult with parental responsibility for the child (or an SGO or RO*)
- A child placed for adoption under UK adoption legislation

Distant relative

Child is in a private fostering arrangement

- Step sibling
- Great aunt or uncle
- Great grandparent • Cousin
- Step parent (if parents not married)
- Step parent (if parents are now divorced)
- Any other adult who has no legal order for the child (known or unknown to the child)
- An adoptive parent where the adoption is not recognised in the UK

*SGO = Special Guardianship Order RO = Residence Order Both these orders are granted by a court and result in the carer sharing parental responsibility with a parent

What are the next steps?

To find out more about Private Fostering or to tell someone that you think a child might be privately fostered you can call: **0800 083 7744** or email privatefostering@derbyshire.gov.uk

Or you can go on-line:

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/social-health/children-and-families/foster/thinking-of-fostering/types-of-fostering/private-fostering/private-fostering.aspx>



Useful information and resources

Welfare Benefits Team Derbyshire County Council

Email: welfarebenefits@derbyshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01629 531535 from 11am to 4pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/social-health/adult-care-and-wellbeing/benefits-debt-and-legal-matters/welfare-benefits/welfare-benefits.aspx>

Kinship Charity - Private Fostering Information

<https://kinship.org.uk/private-fostering>

Further guidance about private fostering is available at GOV.UK – National minimum standards for private fostering.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-minimum-standards-for-private-fostering>

Somebody Else's Child - a video guide to Private Fostering

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dAgl2qrdyxE>

Derbyshire County Council Policy and Procedures

https://derbyshirecaya.proceduresonline.com/p_private_fost.html

You can also find helpful information about private fostering on the **Coram BAAF** website

<https://corambaaf.org.uk/practice-areas/kinship-care/information-kinship-carers/what-private-fostering>

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