

Private Fostering

Advice for Professionals working with Children and Young People

Many people working with children don't realise that, by law, the local authority must be notified by parents and carers about a private fostering arrangement.

Professionals who work with children, like teachers, nursery staff and health professionals are often the first to spot a potential private fostering arrangement. As a professional working with children, you have a legal duty (under the Children Act 1989 and 2004) to notify the local authority when you become aware of a private fostering arrangement.

This guide explains what private fostering is, how to be alert to possible private fostering arrangements and what you need to do.

What is Private Fostering?

Private fostering is when a child under the age of 16 (or under 18 if they have a disability) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a close relative for a period of 28 days or more.

Close relatives are defined as step-parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles or aunts (whether of full blood, half blood or marriage/affinity).

This is different to fostering arrangements coordinated by a social worker due to worries about a child's safety or wellbeing.

There are lots of circumstances where a child might be privately fostered.

Here are a few examples of situations where a private fostering arrangement might be made:

- Children staying with another family whilst their parent receives hospital treatment or recovers from surgery or ill health.
- Children staying with another family while their parent works away from home.
- Children staying with another family while their parent is in another country.
- Children on student exchange holidays.
- Children sent to study in England while their family remain in another country.
- Teenagers that have had a fall out with their family and are staying with a friend's family.



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Be Curious

Signs that a child or young person is being privately fostered include...

- A child is regularly seen with a new or unknown carer.
- A child is accompanied to a medical appointment with someone that isn't their parent or main carer.
- A child mentions that they are not staying at their usual home or that their parents have been away for a long time.
- A carer seems vague about a child's routine (e.g. bed times, food preferences etc), their health history, development checks and immunisation record.

When coming into contact with a child for the first time think about private fostering; check what the child's relationship is with their carer and ask about the home situation.

What you should do if you become aware of private fostering arrangements

Both the parent and the carer have a duty to notify the local authority (where the carer lives) of their intention to make private fostering arrangements at least six weeks before it begins. If you are aware of, or suspect that, a private fostering arrangement is being made, you should:

- Check if parents and carers have informed Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council's Children's Services.
- Make a referral if parents or carers have not notified Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council.
- Notify Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council if you become aware that the arrangement has ended and provide the name and address of the person who will be caring for the child and as much detail about the new arrangement as possible.

To inform Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council of a Private Fostering Arrangement please contact:

Redcar & Cleveland Multi Agency Children's Hub

Please click here to complete a referral form <https://www.teescpp.org.uk/>

For advice on how to complete the form please see our [Making a Referral Guide](#).

- Tel. 01642 130700
- Email: RedcarMACH@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk

The MACH Team are always happy to provide advice and information to professionals about making a referral.



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What will Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council do?

When the Council are informed of a private fostering arrangement, a social worker will speak with the parent, carer and child to assess the situation.

The social worker will arrange for some checks of the private foster carer, their household and home to make sure they are suitable to look after the child. This will involve undertaking a DBS check of the carer and other adults in the household.

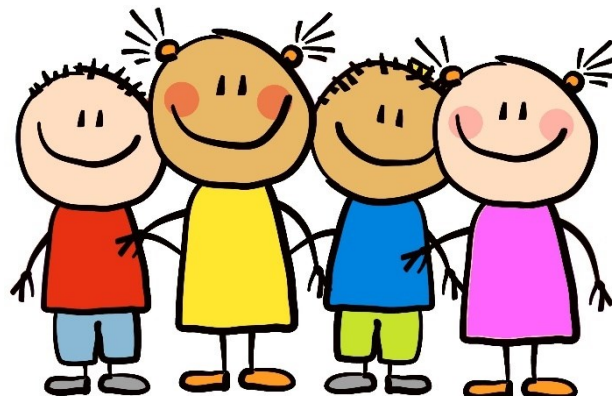
If there are serious concerns about the arrangement, the Council have the power to prohibit the arrangement.

The social worker will visit every six weeks to check things are okay and speak with the child (after one year this reduces to once every 12 weeks). They will make sure that the child has access to any help and support they may need.

You might feel that by sharing information you are breaking confidentiality or data protection, however it is your responsibility to inform parents/carers to report the arrangements to Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council and you must also notify the Council, this is set out in the Children's Act 1989 and 2004.

More information about Private Fostering is available at:

<https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/children-and-families-services/private-fostering>



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