

## What is private fostering?

Private fostering occurs when a child or young person under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for and provided with accommodation for 28 days or more by an adult who is not a relative\*, by private arrangement between the parent and carer.

A parent or person with parental responsibility chooses and arranges a private fostering arrangement.

Private foster carers do not hold parental responsibility.

Private fostering can take many forms, for example:

- Children and young people that have to live away from their family as a result of separation, divorce or disputes at home.
- Children and young people sent to this country for education or health opportunities.
- Cultural exchange students.
- Children of parents or person with parental responsibility who face short term prison sentences.
- Crisis periods for family when they require additional support from their wider/support network.
- Any child or young person whose parents or person with parental responsibility have made a private arrangement for them to be looked after by someone else.
- Parents who are terminally ill or/and receiving treatment in hospital.
- Teenagers / Parent relationship is strained.

\* These are only examples. There may be other arrangements that come to your notice which do not fall into any of these categories. Please contact Sandwell Children's Trust if you are in doubt whether it is a private fostering arrangement.

\* The Children Act defines 'relatives' in relation to a child as grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt. They could be full or half relation and could be related by marriage. Extended family such as a great aunt, great uncle or parent's cousins are not defined as a relative in the Children Act 2004.



# Private Fostering

A guide for Professionals



0121 569 3100

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## A shared responsibility

All professionals who work with or have contact with children and young people have a shared responsibility to ensure that privately fostered children are well cared for and are safeguarded from harm.

Professionals have a responsibility to identify and notify Sandwell Children's Trust of private fostering arrangements.

By monitoring and supervising private fostering arrangements, we can help to safeguard children who may be at risk of abuse or neglect.

Sandwell Children's Trust should be notified of all private fostering arrangements in Sandwell by calling Sandwell Children's Trust on **0121 569 3100**



## Legislation governing private fostering

Privately fostered children are safeguarded by legislation set out in Part 9 of the Children Act 1989; the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005; and Section 44 of the Children Act 2004 effective 1 July 2005.

Studies show that local councils are often not notified about private fostering arrangements, despite this being an offence under the Children Act 1989.

When they are notified, it is nearly always after the arrangement has started.

It is essential that Sandwell Children's Trust are aware of potential private fostering arrangements at the earliest opportunity so that assessments can take place as to the suitability of the proposed arrangement.

Sandwell Children's Trust **MUST** be made aware of any existing private fostering arrangements so that assessments can take place as to the suitability of that arrangement.

It is an offence not to report to Sandwell Children's Trust a private fostering arrangement that you are aware of.

Ideally, notification should come from the carer, parent or person with parental responsibility.

Professionals also play an important role as they are often the people who have regular contact with families.

## Professionals

As a professional you are legally responsible to inform the Trust of any private fostering arrangements that you are aware of.

Always contact Sandwell Children's Trust of any arrangement you become aware of by calling **0121 569 3100**

If you are unsure about the circumstances of a child please speak to us.

## Sandwell Children's Trust will:

- Assess the suitability of private foster carers.
- Make regular visits to the child or young person and monitor the overall standard of care.
- Ensure the child or young person is well cared for in a safe environment.
- Carry out Disclosure and Barring checks on the private foster carers and any person over the age of 16 in the household.
- We will keep a record of private foster carers and children who are privately fostered.
- Ensure that advice and support to carers is made available when needed.
- Provide annual statistics of the numbers of privately fostered children in Sandwell to the Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board and other regulatory bodies.
- If Sandwell Children's Trust decide that an arrangement is unsuitable and if the child or young person cannot be returned to their parents, Sandwell Children's Trust will decide what action to take to safeguard the child's welfare.