***Private Fostering – Guidance for Carers***

**What is Private Fostering?**

Private fostering where someone is, in their own home, providing care and accommodation for children under the age of 16 (or 18 if the child is disabled), which is expected to last for more than 27 days. It does not include care provided by a parent or relative (grandparent, siblings, aunts or uncles or any person with parental responsibility).

Fostering is private if you have made the arrangement with the parents of the child yourself – possibly, but not necessarily, for payment.

It is **not** fostering which is arranged by a Social Worker on behalf of Children’s Services.

**If I am a Private Foster Carer what must I do?**

Once you begin to plan to enter into a private fostering arrangement, you will need to notify the Children’s Services as soon as possible. Strictly speaking, this should be not less than 6 weeks and not more than 13 weeks before you receive the child.

In an emergency, or if you are already looking after a child, you should notify us within 48 hours by calling 01670 536400.

**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 at any time the subject of a care order, or order removing a child or preventing the individual looking after a child.
* A person who has been convicted of certain offences.
* A person who has been concerned with a voluntary or registered home which has been removed from the register.
* A person refused registration as a childminder etc.

**What will happen after I have notified** Children’s Services**?**

A Social Worker will contact you to arrange to visit you at your home normally within 7 working days of your notification being received. 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 this 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 2 referees who can comment on your suitability to act as carers.

Following the Social Worker’s visit you will receive a letter from Children’s Services 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 eg the number, sex and age of children, standards of equipment or accommodation and any arrangement for the care of a child. Social Services can prohibit someone from privately fostering children where they are of the opinion that the person or 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 GP 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. Visits will take place within the first few weeks of the placement and then every 6 weeks in the first year and then every 3 months thereafter. The Social Worker will also visit at other times if you ask them to. The Social Worker will also visit the child and their parents (if possible) to obtain their views about the placement.

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