

Are you a child under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) living with someone who is not a close relative?

Is your child living with someone who is not a close relative?

Are you looking after a child who is not a close relative of yours?

(What is 'not a close relative'? A great aunt or great uncle, cousin or family friend)

yes You're legally required to inform the council.

Please call:
01670 623 978

You could be missing out on a range of services and support available for children, carers *and* families.



For further information visit:

www.northumberland.gov.uk/privatefostering

NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council



**Private Fostering
(Privately Arranged Care)**

PRIVATE FOSTER CARE IS PRIVATELY ARRANGED CARE:

Northumberland County Council is raising awareness of private foster care. They are spreading the message that families are legally required to let the council know about any private fostering arrangement, as part of safeguarding for children across Northumberland. Northumberland County Council has a statutory responsibility to ensure that children in privately fostered arrangements are safe and well.

A privately fostered arrangement exists where children under the age of 16, or 18 if disabled, are living with someone other than a parent, grandparent, biological aunt, uncle, or sibling for 28 days or more. This is very different from traditional fostering, and is a privately arranged care situation between two parties.

Audrey Johnson, Northumberland County Council lead for private fostering, provides an example of a privately fostered arrangement in Northumberland. (The name of the young person and some of the details have been changed to protect anonymity and confidentiality). "Sophie, from a neighbouring area, moved in with a family friend in Northumberland, following a series of issues within her family home. Her mum was fully supportive of this move to try and resolve their relationship breakdown.

Northumberland County Council has been able to offer supports to Sophie and her family including regular care team meetings which Sophie attends to review her situation, to ensure that Sophie is happy with her living arrangements and that she continues to feel safe. The team enabled Sophie's 'Auntie' to purchase a bed and new school uniform for Sophie. A very good working relationship has been built with Sophie's school, who keep Sophie's social worker up to date with Sophie's progress. Sophie and her 'Auntie' are always open to advice, and report that they have appreciated the support to make changes in their lives. There is ongoing support specifically to help Sophie continue to build a positive relationship with her mum.

On this occasion, the family notified the local council of their private fostering arrangement. However, there are times when Children's Services are not notified, and the family situation only comes to light in the event of financial or behavioural difficulties. When this happens, the situation becomes more complex and stressful for everyone concerned and can put pressure upon the placement which may be avoided if support is provided earlier. With Sophie and her family, there have been issues that they have had to overcome, but these were made considerably easier because the family involved their local social services team from the beginning. This means that supports, checks and expectations were all established at the start of Sophie living with her 'Auntie'.

There are lots of children and young people who are not able to live with their birth parents for one reason or another. Private Fostering can be a positive solution for families and avoid the child or young person coming into the care of the local authority.

If you are aware of a child who is being privately fostered or in a private fostering arrangement, please ask them to contact Client Relations on 01670 623 978 immediately. We need to ensure the child is being kept safe and we can offer help to the families, including emotional guidance and relationship building; all with the aim of keeping children safe and families together.

Councillor Lesley Rickerby, Executive Member for Children and Young People has said that, "Everybody has a role in keeping our children safe – whether you are a teacher, youth worker, neighbour, involved with school transport or a member of the public. Northumberland is encouraging everyone to raise awareness of private fostering in their community."

Should this document be required in a different language or a format suitable for people with sensory impairments the service will make arrangements to provide this.