

Private fostering: Support for you and your family



A guide for children and young people



We are Northumberland County Council Children's Services and we have a duty to make sure that children and young people who are being privately fostered are kept safe, happy and well.

What is private fostering?

To be classed as being privately fostered you could be:

- living with a family friend because of arguments at home
- your parents have arranged for you to stay with someone else whilst you go to school or are on your summer holidays
- your parents live overseas and you are staying with someone they trust whilst you live in the UK
- you might be living with your boyfriend or girlfriend's family

All of these circumstances could mean that you are being privately fostered.

If you're living with someone who is not one of your parents or a close relative for 28 days or more and you're aged 16 years old or below, or 18 years old and below if you have a disability, then you are being privately fostered.

It's nothing to worry about, but by law, we need to know about your private fostering arrangement and who you are living with to make sure we can keep you safe, happy and well.

Private fostering is different to being a fostered or looked after child in foster care. It is where your family and friends organise for you to be looked after by someone you know.

When your parent/s or foster carer tells us that you are living with them, we will visit you and talk to you about where you are living, check that your carer is able to look after you and that where you live is suitable. You will have a dedicated worker who you can rely on and who will visit you to make sure that you're still safe, happy and well. You will have your dedicated worker's phone number and they will be able to give you advice and support if you need it. They will talk to you about why you aren't living with your parents or a close relative and ask you how you feel about your situation.

Even if you are living with someone else, it is still your parent's responsibility to make all the important decisions about you and what happens to you. That means your carer should not:

- Change your name
- Take you overseas without the agreement of your parents, even if it is just for a holiday
- Move you to another family without arranging this with your parents and telling us
- Change your school without making an arrangement about this with your parents first

Your carer should do their best to make sure you are safe, happy and well. This means providing you with all the everyday care that you need, just like:

- Giving you regular meals, a place to sleep and a loving home where you feel safe
- Keeping you well by making sure your health needs are taken care of, like taking you to the doctor when you feel unwell or making sure you go to the dentist to look after your teeth

- Helping you to make friends by letting you take part in activities that you enjoy and allowing you to express yourself and follow your interests
- Making sure you go to school and helping you with your homework so that you can learn and thrive
- Helping you to keep in touch with your family, not just your parents but also your wider family like your brothers and sisters and grandparents
- Respecting your religious beliefs and customs and helping you to follow them

You can talk to us today

Ideally, your parent/s or carer should have told us about your private fostering arrangements before you started living with someone who is not one of your parents or a close relative. However, they may not be aware of private fostering support and the need to let us know. If they have let us know, you will have a dedicated worker. If you do not have a dedicated worker then you should encourage your carer, or another person you trust like a teacher, youth worker or school nurse, to talk to us and tell us about your private fostering arrangements. Your parent/s and carer/s won't be in trouble but we need to know as soon as possible.





Northumberland social care central contact details:

Onecall 24-7 phone line on **01670 536 400**

Email: childrentriage@northumberland.gov.uk

Please note out of office hours are for emergency referrals only and if emailing outside of office hours please be aware that this will be dealt with the next working day.

Web: www.northumberland.gov.uk/privatefostering