

Private fostering: Support for you and your child



A guide for parents and carers



Private fostering is different to working as a foster carer - it is privately arranged care between family and friends. If a child or young person, anyone aged under 16 years old or 18 years old if they are disabled, is being cared for by someone other than a parent or close relative for more than 28 days then they are being privately fostered.

Northumberland County Council Children's Services has a duty to make sure any child or young person, not in the care of a parent or close relative, is safe and well. To do this, we provide support, information and advice to parents, carers and children and young people, including:

- Visiting the child or young person to ensure they have settled in well with their carer
- Offering peace of mind by carrying out statutory checks to make sure the child or young person is living in a safe and appropriate environment
- Providing private foster carers with support, guidance and practical advice including details of benefits and financial support which may be available to them
- Advising parent's on their rights and legal duties concerning the child or young person's upbringing and wellbeing

- Helping to facilitate and build relationships between parents, carers and children and young people if necessary if you are providing private foster care to a child or young person, or your child is living with someone who is not a parent or close relative.

The law states that you must tell us about the arrangements six weeks before the child or young person begins living with their private foster carer; or in unplanned cases such as emergency situations, within 48 hours.

Do not worry

If you have been providing private foster care, or your child has been living with a private foster carer, and you were not aware you needed to tell us. It is not too late to tell us and you will not be in trouble for not doing so already. The most important thing is that you tell us about the arrangements today, using our contact details provided on the back page, so we can make sure that the child or young person is safe, happy and well looked after.

"Who counts as a close relative?"

Close relatives are parents, step parents, a partner with parental responsibility, grandparent, brother, sister, aunt or uncle or a special guardian – either by blood or by marriage.

"I'm not sure if I am providing private foster care for a child/ young person who is living with me. Can you give some examples of the situations that might count as private foster care?"

There are a wide variety of reasons which might lead to a child being privately fostered. The main thing to remember is that if you have a child or young person living with you, for over 28 days, and you are not their parent or a close relative, then you are privately fostering them.

Examples of occasions where a child or young person might be being privately fostered include:

- A child or young person who is living with a friend's family due to parental separation, divorce or arguments at home
- Teenagers who are living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- A child or young person living with their great aunt or uncle, cousin or second cousin, friend of the family or parent without parental responsibility
- A child or young person whose parents study or work involves unsociable hours, and they are unable to use ordinary day care
- A child who has been sent, by their birth parents from overseas, to live in the UK for education or health care

This list is not exclusive, if you are unsure if you are providing private foster care please contact us.

"I am a parent and my child is living with someone who is not a parent or close relative, am I giving up all rights to my child?" No, you have parental responsibility for your child even if they are living with a private foster carer. You should continue to

be involved in all decisions about your child's upbringing and it is very important you visit your child regularly and play an active part in their life.

"What if my child goes to live with someone new, do I have to tell you each time they move?" Yes, you must tell us each time your child goes to live with a new carer, who is not a parent or close relative. Please tell us within 48 hours and provide the name and address of the person who will now be acting as main carer for your child. This will help us ensure they are safe and well.

"My child is in a private foster care arrangement and I can't find out what is happening with their upbringing and wellbeing - can you help?" If you are unhappy with the amount of information you are being given about your child's life, or the way they are being brought up by their carer, then you can contact us. We will do everything we can to help you, including facilitating better relationships with your child's carer, make sure that someone appropriate is looking after your child and that they are safe and well.

Talk to us today

It is important that you tell us about any private fostering arrangements, whether you are a parent of a child or young person living with a private foster carer, or the child or young person's carer, as soon as possible; it is against the law to purposely withhold this information.





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