

PRIVATE FOSTERING



Is your child living with someone else?

An information guide & essential facts for parents about private fostering.

Answering yes to all of the following questions will mean your child is in private foster care:

- Is your child living with and being looked after by someone else?
- Is your child being cared for by someone who is NOT the child's
- grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, step parent, legal guardian, or any other person with parental responsibility?
- Is your child going to be cared for 28 days or more?
- Is the child under age 16 (or 18 if they are disabled)?

What is Private Fostering?

Parents can often ask people they trust to look after their children for many reasons:

Examples include:

- you are going into hospital for a long time,
- your child is living with a friend's family as a result of arguments at home,
- your teenager is living with the family of their boyfriend or girlfriend.

If this situation lasts over 28 days, then your child is in private foster care.

It is important that parents and carers have discussed why they want the child to be looked after, for how long and what should happen if the child falls ill or has an accident. Their education and health needs in addition to making financial arrangements should be discussed.

Notification to Children's Services

If you are planning to make a private fostering arrangement for your child, or if your child is already in a private fostering arrangement you need to inform Children's Services as soon as possible.

Children's Services have a duty to make sure all privately fostered children are safeguarded and that their wellbeing is promoted.

What will Children's Services do?

Children's Services will work in partnership with the child, you the Parent, and the private foster carer to ensure you have all the support and advice you need, in addition to establishing the household is safe and suitable for the child.

They will also:

- help and support you to work together with the private foster carers,
- help to make sure the best possible arrangements are in place for the child's health and educational needs.
- help to make sure that the child's racial, cultural, linguistic and religious needs are being met,
- discuss arrangements with the child (if appropriate),
- notify other agencies of the arrangements.

Finance

Finance for the child needs to be agreed between you and the private foster carers. You will need to inform the Child Benefit Agency that the child is no longer living with you and is now living with a private foster carer. This will allow the carers to claim benefits they may be entitled to for the child while they are living with them.



Working Together

It is important that you work together with the private foster and Children Services and the child sees you are working together for their benefit. This will help the child settle into their new home and reduce some of the anxieties they may have about living with carers.

Who to contact if this information is difficult to understand or you would like to speak to someone:

**The Children's Hub, Hartlepool and Stockton on Tees
Child & Adult Services Department, Civic Centre,
Victoria Road, Hartlepool, TS24 8AY**