



Looking after somebody else's child

A guide for professionals



achieving
for children

Private fostering is....

When a child under the age of 16 (under 18 if they are disabled) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a close relative for 28 days or more.

Close relatives are defined as step-parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles or aunts. To qualify as private fostering, the arrangement has not been made by the local authority, and the child or young person is not being looked after by an approved foster carer.

If I am aware of private fostering, what do I need to do?

Often professionals are the first people to become aware of children living away from their parents, and some of these children will be living in private fostering arrangements.

Many private foster carers are excellent and safe, but if the local authority is unaware of the arrangement, they are unable to offer any support. Therefore, if you are aware of a private fostering arrangement, you have a duty to notify the local authority, by contacting our Single Point of Access.

Everyone working with children and families has an important role to play in safeguarding the welfare of vulnerable children.

How do I recognise a privately fostered child?

The following questions have been designed to help you establish whether a child is privately fostered.

Is there anything unclear on files or records about the child's living arrangements?

Is the child living with someone other than a parent, someone with parental responsibility or a relative?

Do you know what the child's living arrangements are (who with, for what purpose)?

Is it clear who the child is living with, and what relation the person is to the child?

Has the child been living, or is likely to live, away from home for more than 28 days, or a series of days totalling 28 days or more?

Is the child an unaccompanied asylum seeker?

Do you think that the child may have been trafficked?

Who has parental responsibility?

The private foster carer is responsible for the day-to-day care of the child, but the parent maintains parental responsibility and is primarily responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of their child. Therefore, it is important to check whether a child is in a private fostering arrangement as you may be asking for consent from someone who does not have parental responsibility.

What does the local authority do?

A social worker will arrange to visit the child to ensure the private fostering arrangement is suitable. They will also regularly visit the child to see how they are feeling and help them tackle any issues they may have.

Additionally, the local authority can provide training and support to private foster carers. They can also provide advice on the benefits available to the private foster carer.

Frequently asked questions

Am I allowed to ask about a family's personal arrangements?

Yes, as a professional it is important to explore family relationships and ask the relevant questions to ensure that the child's safety and wellbeing is not at risk.

Am I breaching confidentiality by informing the local authority?

No, informing the local authority is needed to identify and safeguard vulnerable children. All calls will be treated confidentially.

Will the child be removed from the private foster carer?

If the arrangement is suitable and the needs of the child are being met, then the child will not be removed from the private foster carer's home.

Private fostering flowchart

W: www.richmond.gov.uk/private_fostering_flowchart.pdf

Useful links

Coram BAAF

England Advice and Information Service:

T: 020 3597 6116 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 1pm)

E: adviceengland@baaf.org.uk

Children's Legal Centre

T: 0845 1202948

W: www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Fosterline ... the foster carers' advice line

T: 0800 040 7675

Grandparents' Association

W: www.grandparents-association.org.uk

National advice and Information line 0845 4349585

Children and Families Across Borders (CAFAB)

T: 020 7735 8941

W: www.cfab.uk.net

E: info@cfab.uk.net

Prisoners' Families Helpline

T: 0808 8082003

W: www.prisonersfamilieshelpline.org.uk

Victoria Climbié Foundation

W: www.victoria-climbie.org.uk

To provide information of a private fostering arrangement contact:

Kingston or Richmond SPA on **020 8547 5008** (8am to 6pm)
(020 8770 5000 for out of hours/weekends)