

### **What is a Private Fostering Arrangement?**

Sometimes, a parent may set up an informal arrangement for their child/children to be cared for by a friend or distant relative.

If a child or young person aged under 16 years (or under 18 years if the child is disabled) is living away from home for 28 days or more (or is intending to) and they are being cared for by someone who is NOT a close relative, this is a private fostering arrangement.

A close relative is defined as:

- Parent
- Grandparent
- Person with parental responsibility
- Stepparent (by marriage or civil partnership)
- Aunt
- Uncle
- Sister
- Brother

Private fostering is an arrangement which is made between the child's parents/person with parental responsibility and the carers. A child looked after by the Local Authority is not a privately fostered child.

Parents must tell the Local Authority that they are making arrangements for their child to live with a private foster carer.

If someone is planning to become a private foster carer for a child, they must notify the local authority at least six weeks before the arrangement is due to start, or immediately if the arrangement is due to start sooner.

Parents retain parental responsibility, including financial responsibility for the child.

### **Examples of Private Fostering Can be the result of and Include:**

- Family breakdown and ill health in the family
- Children whose parents' study or work involves unsociable hours, which makes it difficult for them to use ordinary day care or after school resources. This must include overnight stays.
- Children sent from outside the UK for education (including boarding and language schools) or health opportunities
- Cultural exchange students

- Children living with a friend's family as a result of arguments at home, parental separation, divorce etc
- Teenagers living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Some refugee children
- Any child whose parents or persons with parental responsibility for them have MADE a private arrangement for them to be looked after by someone else
- Any child who is looked after by someone else that is not a close relative on a PRIVATE BASIS without the parents being involved

### **Ending of private fostering arrangements.**

A parent can end a private fostering arrangement at any time and without notice. If you are a private foster carer who thinks there are strong reasons why a child should remain in your care, you may wish to consider applying for a Child Arrangements Order or a Special Guardianship Order which would give you parental responsibility and confirm that the child should live with you. If you're not sure what's the best option for you and the child you're caring for, you should get some legal advice.

### **What are Children's Social Services required to do?**

The Local Authority does not formally approve or register private foster carers, but they have a duty to make sure that children are kept safe and well.

LAs must:

- Visit the family within 7 days of notification
- Carry out an assessment to determine the suitability of the arrangement.
- Visit the family every 6 weeks in the first year and every 12 weeks thereafter to monitor suitability of the private fostering arrangement and its benefit to the privately fostered child.

If the Local Authority determines that an arrangement is unsuitable and the child cannot return to his or her parents, the Authority must decide what action to take to safeguard the child's welfare.

Further information can be accessed here [The Children \(Private Arrangements for Fostering\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2006 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/2786/1)

### **What Can I Do as a Professional?**

If you become aware of private fostering arrangements, or want further information please contact your local authority fostering team.