

Are you looking after someone else's child?

trust

Information for
parents and carers



private fostering pr

What is...

...private fostering?

When a child under 16 (18 if disabled) lives with someone who is not a relative for more than 28 days, this is called 'private fostering'. A relative could be a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or step-parent.

Children in foster care fall into two main groups, those looked after by the local council or an independent fostering agency and those fostered privately.

The following are examples of where private fostering occurs.

- Children sent to this country for education or health care by birth parents living overseas.
- Children living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce or arguments at home.
- A teenager living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Children whose parents are in this country and are studying at language schools which makes it difficult for them to use ordinary day care or after school care.



What should I do...

...if I intend to be a private foster carer?

It is a legal requirement to notify your local authority if you are privately fostering. This helps us to work with you to make sure support is available for both you and the child and that the child's needs are properly met.

If you intend to privately foster a child the law requires that you notify us between 6 and 13 weeks beforehand, or if the child arrives suddenly, no more than 48 hours after he or she has arrived.

Once you have notified us we will arrange for a member of our fostering team to visit you and the child within seven days; we will need to see the child alone when we visit. We will also carry out formal checks with the police and the local health and education authorities.

We will visit you before and during the placement to make sure that the child is properly cared for and to offer you help and advice. We will not register or approve you but we need to satisfy ourselves that the home provided for the child is safe and that you are able to provide a reasonable standard of care.

If you are currently fostering privately and were unaware that you needed to let us know, we would like to make contact with you as soon as possible.

You can find out more about the legal position regarding private fostering by visiting the Department of Health website at www.doh.gov.uk



What if...

...the child is leaving my care?

You must notify us within 48 hours if the child leaves your care, telling us the reasons why and giving the name and address of the person who will be looking after the child.

Do I...

...need a formal agreement to privately foster?

It is very important to have a formal agreement with the child's parents and to make sure you have as much information as possible about the child you will be caring for. You should know about the child's usual routines, their health, education, religious and cultural needs, as well as more personal things like their favourite toy. Things to include in the agreement could be:

- how long you will be caring for the child;
- who will keep in touch with the child's school;
- who can give consent over medical matters;
- how to keep a child aware of culture or background;
- making sure you can afford to care for the child;
- keeping parents in touch with their children.

It is important to sort out these matters as early on as possible so that everyone is clear what is expected.



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What should I do...

...if I am the parent of a privately fostered child?

As the child's parent you are legally responsible for the child and must involve yourself in all the planning and decision making processes of the private fostering arrangement. You must notify us of the arrangement if the private foster carer has not already done so. You can do this by calling our foster line on freephone **0800 801 530**. We will assess the arrangement you have made. If we find the arrangement unsuitable for your child it is your responsibility to remove your child to a safe place.

You will be asked to provide the private foster carer with as much information about your child as possible, health records, dietary requirements, educational, religious and cultural needs as well as details of your child's daily routine, for example their favourite teddy, preferred breakfast cereal. This information is very important as it will help your child settle into their new home with as little disruption as possible. It will also help the private foster carer understand and meet your child's needs.

Staying in contact with your child is essential so even if it is not possible to have face to face contact you should keep in touch either by telephone, post or e-mail. You will need to tell your child and the private foster carer how you intend to stay in touch and how long you expect your child to stay.

How do I...

...find out more?

To notify us of a private fostering arrangement or for further help and advice about private fostering please call us on freephone **0800 801 530**.



This leaflet is issued by Essex County Council Children and Families Service.
You can contact us in the following ways:

By telephone:

0800 801 530

By email:

adoptionandfostering@essexcc.gov.uk

By post:

Adoption and Fostering Recruitment
Essex House
200 The Crescent
Colchester Business Park
Colchester CO4 9QQ

By fax:

01206 369113

Website:

www.essexcc.gov.uk/adoptionandfostering

**Essex County Council –
making Essex a better place to live and work**

The information contained in this leaflet can be made available in alternative formats: large print, braille, audio tape or disk. We can also translate the information into other languages.

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