

What does it mean for the child?

Children in private foster placements have the same rights to protection and access to services as children living within their family home. By notifying us, you can make sure that we visit and make enquiries to ensure that your child is safe. We will also make sure that the young person's wishes and feelings are listened to, and where appropriate, offer advice and support.

The Family Plus team helps:

- children who live with another family
- the parents of children who live with another family
- private foster carers

Once we have been told that your child is living with someone else, we will arrange to visit them. We will also contact you to discuss the situation.

Remember – the Family Plus team is here to help. We don't want to disrupt the arrangements you have made. We just need to know about the arrangement to check that the children are safe and being properly cared for. We also want to make sure that you are getting the help you need.

Contact us

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Have you arranged for your child to live with someone else?

Information about private foster care



Some parents arrange for their children to live with another family. Sometimes this is just for a few days; sometimes it's for a longer time. If it's longer than 28 days, it's known as private fostering and the people who the child lives with are known as private foster carers. The law says that you must notify your local authority if you are going to arrange for someone else's child to live with you.

If you have arranged for your child to live with someone else, you can get help from the Family Plus team. This leaflet explains more about private fostering and how the Family Plus team can help you.

What is private fostering?

Private fostering is when a parent arranges for their child¹ to live with and be cared for by someone who is not:

- a parent
- a relative²
- someone who has parental responsibility

These arrangements have to last for a total of 28 days or more. It doesn't matter if the carer is paid to look after the child or provides care for free – it is still private fostering.

Private fostering is different from public fostering, which is paid for and arranged by a local authority.

What the law says

Although private fostering arrangements are private, local authorities have certain legal duties and responsibilities to make sure that children who are privately fostered are protected. Once a local authority has been notified of an arrangement, they have to:

- visit the home where the child lives and carry out some checks
- make regular visits to make sure that the child is safe and well cared for
- make sure that advice and support is available to carers
- say whether or not they find the arrangement acceptable

A local authority has the power to stop a person from private fostering if the carer or the accommodation is not suitable. They can also make requests about specific areas of concern, for example, ensuring that a carer installs fire guards or smoke detectors.

What are the responsibilities of parents and carers?

When a child is privately fostered, the child's parents still have full parental responsibility in the eyes of the law. The law requires that parents and carers, and anyone else who makes a private fostering arrangement, must notify the local authority about it. Failure to give notification is an offence.

Private foster carers are responsible for carrying out any duties agreed with the parents and must allow a representative from the local authority to visit the child and their home.

There should be a written agreement between the private foster carer and the parents covering essential aspects of the arrangement.

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1. In private fostering arrangements, the law defines a child as someone who is under 16 or, if they are disabled, under 18.
 2. In private fostering arrangements, the law defines a relative as a child's brother or sister, grandparent, step-parent, aunt or uncle. An aunt or uncle must be the sister or brother of one of the child's parents.