

Private Fostering guidance for professionals



What is private fostering?

Private fostering occurs when a parent arranges for their child to be cared for by someone other than a parent or close relative for more than 28 days.

A close relative means a step-parent, grandparent, brother or sister, aunt or uncle – either by blood or marriage. A child is anyone under the age of 16 or a disabled young person under 18.

Reasons why a child would be privately fostered

Usually a birth parent chooses and arranges a private foster placement. This could be because:

- A child who is living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce or arguments at home.
- Teenagers who are living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- A child whose parents study or work involves unsociable hours and they are unable to use ordinary day care.
- A child has been sent to this country for education or to access health care by their parents living overseas.

The Local Authority – Private Fostering Social Worker will need to assess these arrangements to ensure that the welfare of the child is safeguarded and promoted. Without the arrangement being overseen by the Local Authority, children who are privately fostered are a particularly vulnerable group.

What should professionals do?

Many professionals who work or who come into contact with children may come across private fostering situation.

Professionals in education, health, housing and social care fields therefore have a shared responsibility to work with the Local Authority to ensure that all privately fostered children are well cared for and safeguarded from harm.

As a professional, if you know that a child is being privately fostered you should initially encourage the parent or carer of the child to notify the Local Authority. You should follow this action up by contacting the Local Authority yourself and reporting the situation.



What do the parents/carers do?

The parents or carers of the child should advise the Local Authority of the private fostering agreement at least six weeks before the child moves to the carers.

Where a child has to move in an emergency, the parents or carers should notify the Local Authority within 48 hours.

The parent retains parental responsibility and will participate in all decisions about their child. The parent will provide the carer with as much information about the child as possible, including details about their health, dietary preference, school, hobbies, religion and ethnicity.

The carer should share details of what is happening in the child's life with the parent and ensure that they are included in any decision making regarding the child's upbringing.



What does the Local Authority do?

The Local Authority has a responsibility to check the suitability of private foster carers; this involves carrying out an assessment on them and requesting statutory police checks.

An allocated social worker from the Local Authority will then supervise the arrangement and will make regular visits to make sure the child is ok and monitor the overall standard of care provided. This will allow the Local Authority to provide advice and support to the carers, parents and child when needed.

Contact details:

Family Contact Point

Swindon Borough Council, Euclid Street, Swindon SN1 2JH

t: 01793 466903 Monday to Friday , 9am to 5pm.

This information is available on the internet at www.swindon.gov.uk. It can be produced in a range of languages and formats (such as large print, Braille or other accessible formats) by contacting the Customer Services Department.

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