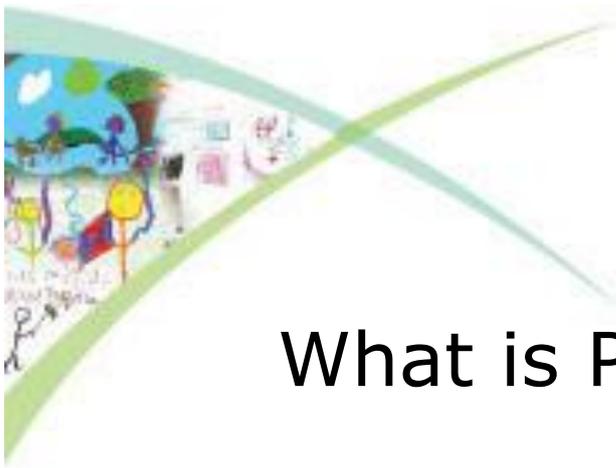


Private Fostering



Information
and advice for
Private Foster
Carers



What is Private Fostering?

Private Fostering is a private arrangement made by parents (or those with parental responsibility for a child) for someone to care for their child because they are unable to do so.

Private Fostering might happen when:

- A parent is admitted to hospital.
- Parents send their child to this country for education.
- A child wishes to remain in the same school when parents move.
- There is a breakdown in the relationship between parent and child.
- A teenager wishes to move to the home of a boy/girlfriend.
- Parents work anti-social hours so need help with the care of their children.
- A child who attends an independent boarding school & who is placed with you during school holidays as their parents are abroad.



Am I a Private Foster Carer?

- Are you looking after a child, or children who are not related to you?
- Are they aged under 16 (or 18 if they have disabilities)?
- Do they live with you as part of your family?
- Is it a full time arrangement?
- Has it been arranged between you and the child's birth family?
- Is the arrangement going to last or has it lasted more than 28 consecutive days and nights or more?

If you have answered "yes" to these questions, then this is a private fostering arrangement and you are a Private Foster Carer.

You are not a Private Foster Carer if you are looking after someone else's child for a period of less than 28 days, or if Children's Services have asked you to provide care for the child.

If you are closely related to the child (parent, step-parent, sibling of the child, brother or sister of the parent or grandparent) you are not a Private Foster Carer.



What should I do next?

If you are already caring for a child who is privately fostered you must notify your local authority's Children's Services Department immediately (within 48 hours).

If you are planning to foster a child privately you must give your local authority's Children's Services Department at least six weeks written notice of your intention to foster privately.

The details of who to contact are at the back of this leaflet.



Why do Children's Services have to be involved?

The law states that Children's Services has a legal duty to make sure that the welfare of all privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted.

Children's Services will provide advice & support to you, the child for whom you are caring and their parents.



What happens next?

Once Children's Services has been informed they have a legal duty to check whether the arrangement is suitable.

They will send you a form for you to complete with details about you, your home and the people who live in your household.

A social worker will visit you, and the child's parents to discuss the arrangement. They will need to check:

- Your suitability as a Private Foster Carer and the suitability of other people aged over 16 in your household.
- The suitability of the premises where the child will be living or is already living.
- How long the arrangement will last.
- The child's wishes & feelings about the arrangement.
- Arrangements for the child's health and education.
- Arrangements for contact between the child and parents.
- What financial arrangements are in place or planned.



The Social Worker will ask you to sign forms that allow them to carry out reference checks with the police, local authority, GP & education authority.

Everyone living in your household who is over 16 years old will be asked to agree to be checked.

If you or others in your household do not agree to this process we will not be able to undertake checks and we may not be able to consider the placement as suitable.

The Social Worker will write a report about the private fostering arrangement and will include the information you have given.

Children's Services will then make a decision about your suitability to be a private foster carer. You will get a letter telling you the decision.



What happens if I don't tell you I'm fostering privately?

You would be breaking the law & could be prosecuted and fined.

Plus you would be missing out on the help and support of children's Services.



What happens if the placement is not agreed?

Children's Services must decide if the arrangements are in the best interests of the child. This doesn't mean they have to be perfect, but that you and your accommodation have to be suitable.

If it is decided that you are not suitable to foster a child privately you will be advised in writing. If you wish to appeal against the decision you should do so within 14 days of being notified of the decision. In the first instance you should contact Children's Services to attempt to resolve the disagreement.



What happens if the placement is agreed?

If the placement is agreed, a social worker will visit you and the child regularly & keep in touch with the child's parents. This will continue as long as the placement lasts.



Making the placement work

It is important that you work together with the child's family, and the Social Worker to try to make the placement as successful as possible for the child.

It is important parents tell you as much as possible about their child; his/her health, diet, education and achievements, daily routine, hobbies, interests and activities, religion, cultural and ethnic background. This will help you understand the child and take better care of him/her.

You should make sure that parents give you a phone number and an address where they can be contacted.

To help the child settle into their new home with you, you should also ask for any personal items such as toys, photos and clothes to be sent.

A written agreement should be drawn up between you and the parents so that it is clear who is responsible for what. The Social Worker will help you with this, and will provide a written agreement form.

Using this form will ensure that everyone is clear about how long the placement will last, what the financial arrangements are and the arrangements for contact between the child and his/her family.



Financial Arrangements

Any financial arrangement is made between you and the parents and will not involve Children's Services. These arrangements should be included in the written agreement so that everyone is clear about what has been agreed.

Should any disputes regarding financial arrangements arise, it will be the responsibility of you and the child's parents to resolve the matter and Children's Services will not become involved. The financial responsibility of the child continues to be the child's parents.

If you are claiming any benefits, including Child Benefit or CSA support, you will need to inform the Dept for Work and Pensions or CSA dept that you are privately fostering a child. You need to let them know about any money you are receiving for private fostering.

You are advised to notify your insurers of the arrangements and to discuss with them whether your current cover is sufficient.



What happens if there are changes to the arrangement?

You need to let Children's Services know of any changes to the arrangement. For example:

- If you move house.
- If someone else joins your household
- If you, or anyone in your household are convicted of a criminal offence.
- The death of a child, or of the child's parents
- If the private fostering arrangement is ending.
(We will need to know the child's new address, who is looking after him or her, and their relationship to the child).



What Next?

You need to contact your local Children's Services office if you need additional information and advice on Private Fostering or to advise them:

- About a proposed Private Fostering arrangement (at least 6 weeks before the arrangement is due to start – or at least as soon as you can)
- If you already have a child living with you in a private fostering arrangement.
- If an arrangement is changing.

Your local Children's Services offices can be contacted on the following:

Brecon Tel: (01874) 624298

Ystradgynlais Tel: (01639) 844595

Welshpool Tel: (01938) 552017

Newtown Tel: (01686) 617520

Llandrindod Wells Tel: (01597) 827325

Children with Disabilities (North) Team

Tel: (01686) 617520

Children with Disabilities (South) Team

Tel: (01874) 624298