

Private Fostering



Information and
advice for
Parents



Is my child privately fostered?

If you have made an arrangement for someone else to look after your child, and you are not sure whether it is a private fostering arrangement, the following will help you.

- Is your child living with someone who is not a relative, legal guardian or a person with parental responsibility?
- Is your child aged under 16 (or 18 if they have disabilities)?
- Is it a full time arrangement?
- Will the arrangement last for 28 days or more?

If you have answered “yes” to these questions, your child is being cared for in a private foster care arrangement.

If the local authority has placed your child with Foster Carers then this is not a private foster care arrangement.

If the person caring for your child is a close relation (parent, step-parent, sibling of the child, brother or sister of the parent or grandparent) they are not a Private Foster Carer.



What is Private Fostering?

Private Fostering is an arrangement made by parents for someone outside the family to care for their child because they are unable to do so.

Private Foster Carers are not approved as local authority Foster Carers and have usually not been trained to become Foster Carers. Families find Private Foster Carers themselves.

There are many reasons why parents may be unable to provide full time care for their child, for example:

- If a parent is going into hospital
- If a parent is going abroad for a long period of time
- If 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.

Parents do not usually choose to place their child with Private Foster Carers without good reason and a lot of thought. It is important that parents get to know the carers as much as possible before making the final decision.



What do I need to do?

If you intend to place your child or children with Private Foster Carers you must let Powys County Council's Children's Services know straight away. Ideally you should give them written notice of your plans, at least 6 weeks before the placement starts – but don't worry if your child is due to move in less time than this, just let Children's Services know as soon as possible.

If your child has already been placed with Private Foster Carers you must notify Children's Services immediately (within 48 hours).

Details of who to contact are at the back of this booklet.



Why do Children's Services need to be involved?

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

Children's Services will provide advice and support for parents, children and the Private Foster Carers.



What if I don't tell you?

Both you and the Private Foster Carer would be breaking the law. You could be prosecuted and fined.

Plus the carer would miss out on the help, advice and support of Children's Services.



What happens next?

Once Children's Services have been told about the planned arrangement they have a legal duty to check whether or not it is suitable.

They will write to you, sending you a form to complete with information about you and your child.

A Social Worker will then arrange to visit you, your child and the Private Foster Carer to discuss the plans. They will need to check:

- The suitability of the Private Foster Carers, and other people living in their home.
- The suitability of the premises where your child will be living.
- How long the arrangement will last.
- Your child's wishes and feelings about the arrangement.
- Health and education arrangements for your child.
- The arrangements for contact between you and your child.
- The financial arrangements.



The Private Foster Carers and anyone aged 16 and over living in their home will be asked to sign forms allowing Children's Services to request checks from the police, GP and education authority. This is to make sure that suitable adults will be caring for your child.

If the Private Foster Carers, or anyone living in the household do not agree to this process it will not be possible to undertake these checks & the placement may not be considered as suitable.

The Social Worker will write a report about the arrangement. Children's Services will then make a decision about the Private Foster Carer's suitability. You will get a letter telling you the decision.

If the carers are told that they are not suitable to foster a child privately they can appeal against the decision.

If the matter cannot be resolved, the Social Worker will contact you so that you can make other arrangements for the care of your child.



Making the placement work.

If the placement is agreed, a Social Worker will visit the Private Foster Carers and your child regularly and will keep in touch with you too. This will continue as long as the placement lasts.

It is important that you work with the Private Foster Carer and the Social Worker to make the placement as successful as possible for your child.

You must provide the carers and Social Worker with contact details –an address and phone number where you can be contacted at all times.

You should also tell the carers about your child's likes and dislikes, interests, routines, diet, religion and cultural background, and medical information such as allergies.

As well as this you should also give the carers any personal items such as toys, photos and clothes that might help your child settle into their new home.



A written agreement should be drawn up between you and the Private Foster Carer so that it is clear who is responsible for what.

The Social Worker will be able to help you with this, and will provide a written agreement form to help you.

Using this form will ensure that everyone is clear about how long the placement will last, and ensure that everyone is clear about their responsibilities.

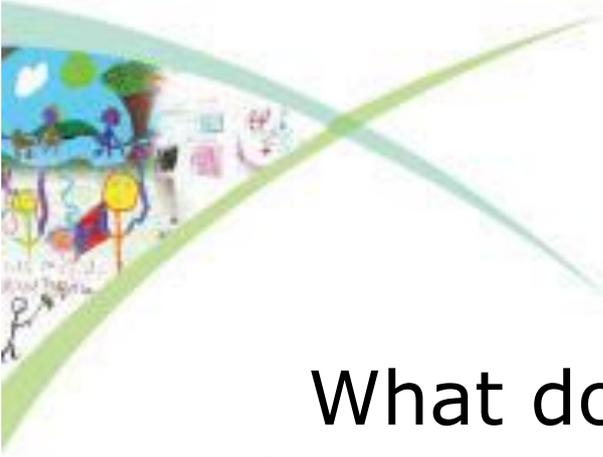


Financial Arrangements

Any financial arrangement for the care of your child is made between you and the Private Foster Carers 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.

If there is a disagreement about the financial arrangements, it is your and the carer's responsibility to resolve this. Children's Service will not become involved. As parents, the financial responsibility for your child remains with you.

If you are claiming benefits, including child benefit or support from the CSA you must inform the Dept of Work and Pensions and CSA Dept that you are no longer caring for your child.



What do I do if there are changes to the arrangement?

You need to let Children's Services know if there are any changes including:

- Change of your contact details
- The ending of the private fostering arrangement – in which case Social services will need to know your child's new address and who will be caring for him or her.



What next?

Contact Powys Children's Services for advice and information and to advise them of:

- A planned private fostering arrangement
- An existing private fostering arrangement
- Changes to an arrangement.

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