

Private Fostering

Summary Leaflet

Do you know a child or young person who is being cared for by someone
who is not their parent?

What is Private Fostering?

Private Fostering is when a child under the age of 16 (or under 18 if disabled) is being or it is intended that they are, looked after for more than 28 days by someone who is not a parent, person with parental responsibility or a close relative. Private foster carers may be adults from the extended family such as a cousin or great aunt/uncle. They may also be a friend of the family or other connected person.

Who is regarded as a close relative?

A close relative is someone who is a grandparent, brother, sister, aunt and uncle (whether by full relation or through marriage or civil partnership), or a step-parent.

When is the arrangement not regarded as Private Fostering?

A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for him or her has done so for fewer than 28 days without a break in the care. If the child visits their parent or has an occasional overnight stay, this will not break the period of the Private Fostering arrangement, as long as the intention is for the child to return to the same Private Foster Carer.

How is this different from other fostering arrangements?

A Private Fostering arrangement is different from a local authority foster placement because the local authority is not involved in making the arrangement and is not paying for the child's care.

What are the common situations that result in a child being Privately Fostered?

Children are often cared for in a Private Fostering arrangement for a variety of reasons. Children may be unable to live with their birth parents due to family breakdown, ill health, where a parent is serving a custodial sentence, or where the parent is unable or unwilling to look after their child. Teenagers may also be estranged from their parents due to difficulties in their relationship. There are also a number of other situations where a child may be being Privately Fostered. Children or young people from overseas may be staying with their extended family or may be living with a host family whilst attending language schools or undergoing medical treatment. Children or young people may also have parents who are working or studying in the UK and living away from their child or young person's home area. Children and young people who are asylum seekers or refugees, or may have been brought into this country by child traffickers, may be living in a situation that would be regarded as Private Fostering.

What should I do if I think that a child may be being Privately Fostered?

Parents who arrange for children to be cared for by Private Foster Carers, and the Private Foster Carers who are offering to look after someone else's child, have a duty to inform the local authority in advance, or as soon as possible afterwards, about the arrangement. If you become aware of a child who is being cared for in a situation that may meet the criteria for it being a Private Fostering arrangement, you should inform the local authority about the arrangement. You should do this by contacting the East Riding of Yorkshire Council's Children's Safeguarding Hub.

What responsibility does the East Riding of Yorkshire Council have?

The East Riding of Yorkshire Council has a responsibility for assessing and monitoring Private Fostering arrangements. Responsibility for ensuring the welfare and safety of children who are being Privately Fostered rests with the Council's Children and Young People's Safeguarding and Support Services and is undertaken by the Children's Safeguarding Teams in the area where the Private Fostering arrangement is taking place.

What are the reporting requirements?

There is a legal duty to notify the local authority of a proposed or actual private fostering arrangement.

The private foster carer must notify the local authority at least six weeks before the arrangement is to commence. If the arrangement is to commence within six weeks the notification must be given immediately. The notice must also be given immediately if the child is being privately fostered but prior notice was not given, e.g. if the child was placed in an emergency, or if it was not anticipated that the arrangement would continue for 28 days or longer. A parent, or any person who is involved in making the arrangement must notify the local authority as soon as possible after the arrangement has been made. A parent and any other person with parental responsibility for the child who has not been involved in making the arrangements, but is aware of the proposed arrangement must notify the local authority as soon as they become aware of the arrangement. The notification is made to the local authority where the child will be fostered, and must include information about the child, the child's parents and the carer as well as details of the expected length of, and reasons for the arrangement.

All practitioners have a duty to inform the local authority if they believe a child or young person is living with private foster carers.



Where can I find out more information?

Further information about Private Fostering for parents, children, Private Foster Carers and professionals can be found on the East Riding Safeguarding Children Partnership website:

www.erscp.co.uk

The Department for Education also has further information on private fostering arrangements:

Department for Education - private fostering arrangements

www.gov.uk

East Riding of Yorkshire Children's Safeguarding Hub

If you want to discuss a child that you are worried about, or make a referral you can contact the

Children's Safeguarding Hub

During office hours (Monday to Thursday 08.30am to 5pm, Friday 8.30 am to 4.30pm) you can contact the Children's Safeguarding Hub by telephone on (01482) 395500 - Choose 'Option 1' and a social worker will be able to talk through your worries with you and discuss what happens next.