



"To be at the heart of safeguarding excellence"

Factsheet –By Marisa de Jager

Private fostering - Guidance on children in private fostering arrangements

What is private foster care?

Private foster care is an arrangement where someone, other than a close relative, provides care and accommodation for a child for 28 days or more by an adult who is not a close relative. A close relative is an aunt, uncle, step-parent, grandparent or sibling.

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It is private foster care if:

- If the child is under 16 years of age - 18 if they have a disability
- If the arrangement is for 28 days or longer
- the child's new carers are not close relatives such as a cousin, grandaunt/uncle or family friend or have not been granted parental responsibility for the child by a court.

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There are many private fostering situations. These may involve children or young people:

- who are sent to this country for education or health care by their birth parents from overseas
- whose parents work or study long and/or antisocial hours
- who are living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce or arguments at home
- living with their partner's family

Arrangements for private fostering are usually made by the child's parent's, or people with parental responsibility, and the person who will privately foster them.

Any financial support for the private foster carer should come from the parents and should be agreed at the start of the arrangement.

It is **not** private fostering if:

- the child is cared for by close relatives, this includes parents, step-parents, aunts, uncles and grand-parents -it does not include cousins and great-aunts or uncles
- a social worker arranges the placement.

Help is available for privately fostered children and the people caring for them

The Children Act 1989 gives the LA a legal duty to safeguard the wellbeing of privately fostered children.

We must make sure they are:

- safe and well looked after
- healthy
- receiving a proper education
- encouraged to reach their full potential
- keeping in touch with people who are important to them
- living with someone who helps them value their culture
- properly supported when they become independent

When private fostering arrangements remain hidden children are vulnerable to abuse and neglect. This was highlighted by the tragic death of privately fostered child Victoria Climbié.

Parents, private foster parents and any one else involved must provide information about the child and the arrangements being made for their care. If you are involved in a private fostering arrangement and don't notify us you are committing an offence, and could risk a fine.

Information given to Parents & Private foster carers

If parents are planning for their child/ren to be privately fostered/ If a person plan to become a private foster carer - they must tell Children Social Care at least six weeks before the child/ren goes to live with new carers. In an emergency they should tell Children Social Care within forty eight hours of the arrangement beginning.

They must tell the LA in writing and include:

- the child's name, sex, date of birth, religion, culture and spoken language
- their name and address
- the child's parents
- the reason for private fostering and how long the arrangement should last

- anyone who has parental responsibility for the child
- anyone else who has looked after the child
- the name and address of anyone else who is involved directly or indirectly in the arrangement
- the intended start date of the arrangement or the date the arrangement started

Children Social Care will also need to know the following information from the carer:

- any offence you or any member of your household has been convicted of
- any disqualification or prohibition imposed on you, or any member of your household, under section 68 or 69 of The Children Act or under any previous enactment of either of those sections.
- When Children Social Care have this information a social worker will contact the parents and carers and explain the legal requirements and procedures for private fostering.
- The social worker will also visit the carers home and family to explain the legal requirements and procedures for private fostering.