

## What you need to do now?

The law (Children Act 1989) says that local authorities must make sure all children in their area are safe and well looked after. The law also says that it is an offence for a parent or carer not to let the local authority know of private fostering arrangements, which includes any changes to these arrangements. Please contact your local children's social care service if you think you are privately fostering a child.

If you are not sure about whether what you are doing is private fostering, please call your local children's social care service for advice (contact details provided on back page of this leaflet) – please do not delay. You can discuss your own situation with a social worker, who can let you know if it is private fostering, and whether children's social care do need to be involved with you and your family.

When you call, children's social care services will ask you to provide some details about your situation such as where you live, when the child came to live with you, and what the situation is for them and their family.



## Get in touch

### What happens if you don't tell children's social care?

It is important that you let children's social care know as soon as possible, if you think you are caring for a privately fostered child – you should not wait until they have been living with you for 28 days.

If you don't tell your local children's social care service about your private fostering arrangement you will be breaking the law, and you could be putting a child's safety and well-being at risk.

If you are a private foster carer, you could be putting yourself at risk, and missing out on help and support.

#### If you live in Leicestershire

Please email [childrensduty@leics.gov.uk](mailto:childrensduty@leics.gov.uk)  
or call the First Response Team  
on **0116 305 0005**

#### If you live in Rutland

Please email [childrensreferrals@rutland.gov.uk](mailto:childrensreferrals@rutland.gov.uk)  
or call **01572 758407**

#### If you live in Leicester City

Please call the Duty and Advice Team  
on **0116 454 1004**  
or email [das.team@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:das.team@leicester.gov.uk)

# PRIVATE FOSTERING

## INFORMATION FOR CARERS



If the answer to these questions is 'yes' you may have made a private fostering arrangement – please read on for advice.

## What is private fostering?

Private fostering is when a child under the age of 16 (under 18 if the young person is disabled) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a close relative and where this has lasted, or is expected to last, for 28 days or more. For this purpose, a 'close relative' is defined as a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of full blood, or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step parent.

### **You can be a private foster carer for many different reasons, including if:**

- A young person has fallen out with their own family and comes to live with you because you are a family friend.
- You are a host family for an overseas student at a nearby private school.
- Your partner has gone away and left their birth child with you, and you are not that child's biological parent, nor do you have legal parental responsibilities for them.

If you - or someone you know - are in a similar situation and have a young person living with you who is not a close relative, you'll need to make your local children's social care service aware immediately.

The regulations for private fostering and those relating to the 'Homes for Ukraine' and associated sponsorship schemes, differ slightly. If necessary, please discuss this with your allocated social care worker or with children's social care services – this leaflet provides information about private fostering situations as opposed to situations where children have come to the UK from the Ukraine.

## Why do children's social care services need to be involved?

In short, because the law requires it. The law was introduced to ensure that children in private fostering arrangements are well cared for, that they are safe and that their needs are being met.

Many private fostering arrangements are positive for all involved, with private foster carers successfully looking after a child during – what is often - a difficult time in their life. A privately fostered child may have gone through a period of change and may not see their family often; because of this, it is important that we consider the child's needs, and check to see if they are OK.

Children's social care services are responsible for checking arrangements to make sure privately fostered children are well looked after. Therefore, a children's social worker from one of your children's social care teams will visit you and the child within a week from when we find out that they are living with you. They will then visit you and the child at a minimum of every six weeks during the first year, and at a minimum of every 12 weeks after that. You will also undergo a private fostering carer assessment.

## Private Fostering Carer Assessment

A private fostering carer assessment will involve a social worker coming to visit you to see how you are meeting the needs of the privately fostered child in your care. In doing this, they will also explore how you care for your own birth children, or other children in the home, if this is relevant to you. The social worker will also ask some questions about your childhood, your lifestyle (including your finances) and your network of family and friends, that may be offering you support. They will also need to do some checks on you and any other adults in the home as part of

the assessment e.g., employer and criminal records checks. An important part of the private fostering carer assessment will be to explore what support you need in your care of a privately fostered child.

## What kind of support do we offer?

In addition to the visits from a childcare social worker, we also want to support you as a carer. Following a successful private fostering carer assessment, you (as the child / young person's carer) will receive on-going support. What this includes may differ depending on where you live – please ask your assessing social worker what support is available to you from your local children's social care service.

As a private foster carer, you may be able to claim benefits such as child benefit, tax credits and housing benefit. Contact your local Citizens Advice office for advice about what benefits you may be entitled to.

When a child lives in a private fostering arrangement, the child's parents or carers who have legal responsibilities, do not lose any legal rights and responsibilities they have for that child. They are expected, therefore, to continue to financially support their child. Parents or carers with legal responsibilities, should be consulted about important things like school and health matters and should be involved in any decisions made about the child. Parents can end a private fostering arrangement at any point.

