

What you need to do now?

Please consider this checklist to determine if you should contact your local children's social care service. If you are unsure, please call your local children's social care service to clarify if the arrangement meets private fostering criteria (see overleaf for contact details).

Private Fostering Checklist

Yes No

Is the young person under 16 (or 18 if a child with disabilities)?

Are they being provided with accommodation by someone other than a parent, carers with parental responsibility or relative?

Are the parents in agreement with the arrangement?

Has the young person been accommodated for a period of 28 days or more? If not, is the intent to accommodate for a period of 28 days or more?

Are the young persons parents/carers with parental responsibility living in separate accommodation from the young person?

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 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.

In addition to the above, you also have a duty to:

- Contribute to the assessment of the suitability of the arrangement by providing relevant information about the child or carer when this is requested by children's social care services.
- Monitor the child's welfare and progress and provide support and guidance to the child's carer in accordance with your agency's remit.
- Be involved in ongoing liaison with children's social care services to address any welfare concerns or unmet needs of the child.

Get in touch

If you have become aware of a child who may be privately fostered, you have a responsibility to make the child's local children's social care service aware without delay.

If you work in Leicestershire

Please email childrensduty@leics.gov.uk or call the First Response Team on **0116 305 0005**

If you work in Rutland

Please email childrensreferrals@rutland.gov.uk or call **01572 758407**

If you work in Leicester City

Please call the Duty and Advice Team on **0116 454 1004** or email das.team@leicester.gov.uk

PRIVATE FOSTERING

INFORMATION FOR PROFESSIONALS

Are you working with a child who is living with another family under a private arrangement?



If the answer to this question is 'yes' you have a statutory responsibility to report this situation to your local children's social care service so that they can check if it falls under Private Fostering legislation. Please read on for advice.

What is private fostering?

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made without the direct involvement of a Local Authority. 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.

Privately fostered children are a diverse and vulnerable group that could include:

- Teenagers who, having broken ties with their parents, are staying in short-term arrangements with friends or other non-relatives.
- 'Sofa surfing' teenagers who have no fixed home.
- Children being brought into the UK for the purposes of adoption, where their home country's adoption order is not recognised by the UK government.
- Children sent from abroad to stay with another family, sometimes to improve the child's education opportunities or due to their parents not being able to care for them as they are accessing education themselves. These arrangements have often been made privately and directly between parents and the carers.
- Children from abroad who are attending school in England and who are living with host families – with these families often having been identified via a host organisation / agency.
- Children living at independent boarding schools who do not return home for holidays.

What are your professional responsibilities and duties?

Professionals have a statutory duty in relation to Private Fostering. If you are a teacher, health worker, or other professional, and have become aware of a possible private fostering arrangement, and where you are not satisfied that the local authority have been, or will be, notified of the arrangement (by a carer or person with legal parental responsibilities for the child/ren), you have a duty to let the local children's social care services know of the arrangement without delay (Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005). This is a matter of good practice also. Failure to notify children's social care services could place a child at risk.

The authority you will need to contact to notify about a private fostering arrangement will be the authority in which the private foster carers are living (as opposed to the original home local authority area of the child).

Here is a list of examples of possible scenarios which may alert you to a child that is being privately fostered:

At school, in an early years' setting, or youth club:

- A child suddenly disappears without warning.
- A child says they are staying with a friend or relative, or even a stranger. It is important in these circumstances, to establish the exact nature of these relationships.
- A child says that there is another child staying at home with them.

In the doctor's surgery or at a health clinic:

- A patient attends with a child who has not been seen before in clinic, or a known child attends the surgery with adults who are not known to the surgery.
- A patient attends regularly with different children who they refer to, for example, as their 'niece' or 'nephew', but who – on exploration – are not related to them through marriage or biologically.

What are the responsibilities of children's social care services?

Although it is a private arrangement there are certain duties and responsibilities under the Children Act 1989 and 2004, to ensure that children who are privately fostered are protected. Locally, it is for the children's social care service within Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and Rutland County Council to check that these regulations are being adhered to.

The law requires that children's social care services undertake regular visits to ensure that children are safe and well cared for, and that advice is available to those caring for them. It is also the responsibility of the local children's social care service to assess the suitability of the private fostering arrangement. They are required to say whether or not they accept the arrangement made, and in doing so strike a balance between the private responsibilities of parents, and the public duties to safeguard the welfare of children in private foster care.

Children's social care services within Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and Rutland County Council each have the power to stop a person from private fostering in their area, if the carer or accommodation is assessed as not being suitable. Alternatively, if they consider something is particularly unsatisfactory, they can make it a requirement that the carer takes action to remedy the problem e.g., by fitting suitable car seats or fitting stairgates.

