

What you need to do now?

Please get in contact with your local children's social care service, if you think your child is being privately fostered.

If you are in any doubt about whether this is private fostering, please call your local children's social care service for advice (see contact details provided on back page of this leaflet).

Please do not delay in contacting your local children's social care service.

When you call, children's social care services will ask you to provide some details about your situation such as your child's name, where they are living, and the details of the carer. You can discuss your own situation with a social worker, who can let you know if it is a private fostering situation, and whether children's social care do need to be involved with your child.



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 if you think you think your child is being privately fostered.

If you don't tell children's social care about your child's living arrangements, you may be breaking the law and you could be putting your child's safety and well-being at risk.

Our priority is to make sure that your child is safe where they are living and that you are supported to remain involved in their lives.

If you live in Leicestershire

Please email 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
or call **01572 758407**

If you live in Leicester City

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



PRIVATE FOSTERING

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Is your child living with someone else?
Are they not a close relative?



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.

The definition of step-parent is that they are married or civil partnered to you, as the child's parent. If you were unmarried to this person or were previously married and are now divorced from them, they do not meet this definition, and should be considered a private foster carer, unless they have legal parental responsibilities by other means e.g., a parental responsibility agreement (made with you), Adoption Order, or Child Arrangements Order.

If your child is living with a close relative (as defined above), they are not privately fostered. If your child is living with a step-parent who does not have legal parental responsibility, an extended family member, a friend, or an acquaintance, and they have been living there for more than 28 days, then this is a private fostering arrangement.

Your child may become privately fostered for different reasons, which may include:

- They may have fallen out with you or other members of the family, and they go to live with a friend's parent or with an extended family member.
- You (as birth parent or carer with legal parental responsibilities) may have had reason to leave the family home or ask for someone else (who is not a close relative) to care for your child.

If your child is living with someone else 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. Your local children's social care service will also ensure that the person or people caring for your child get the help and support that they need. They will also want to seek your views about where your child is living.

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 be seeing you very 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 the situation to make sure privately fostered children are well looked after. Therefore, a children's social worker will visit your child and their private foster carer, within a week of becoming aware of the situation (or when they learn that it is intended that your child is going to become privately fostered by a person in the next six weeks). They will then visit your child and their private foster carer, at a minimum of every six weeks during the first year, and at a minimum of every 12 weeks after that, until the private fostering arrangement stops. The private foster carer will also undergo a private fostering carer assessment.

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

What are your responsibilities as a parent or carer with legal responsibilities for a privately fostered child?

- When a child lives in a private fostering arrangement, you do not lose any legal rights and responsibilities you have for that child.
- You are responsible for letting children's social care services know about your plans for a child – firstly by phone and then in writing.
- You will be part of any decisions made about the child.
- You are expected to continue to financially support the child.
- You should be asked for your views about important things like school and health matters and involved in any decisions made about the child.
- You can end a private fostering arrangement at any point.
- Private foster carers are rarely given regular funding from children's social care services. They will be encouraged to claim any entitled benefits, if caring for your child long term.