

# Private Fostering

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Information for professionals



## What is private fostering?

**Children** (under the age of 16 years or 18 years if they are disabled), **who are cared for**, for more than 28 days by someone who is not their parent, step-parent, grandparent, immediate aunt, uncle, brother or sister are considered to be in **Private Foster Care**.

### What is the difference between private foster care and mainstream foster care?

If a child needs to be 'looked after' by foster carers the local authority will make the arrangements.

Private fostering occurs when individuals make arrangements themselves for their child to live with someone else.

### When might private fostering take place?

- Teenagers living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Children sent to this country for health care or education by parents living overseas.

- Children living with a friend or extended family member as a result of parental illness, separation, divorce or arguments at home.
- Children whose parents work or study long hours and the child stays with others during the week.

### What does the law say?

It is a legal requirement for parents and the person intending to privately foster and anyone else who is aware of the child being placed in a private fostering arrangement to notify their local authority.

The local authority must then ensure that the child is being safeguarded and cared for appropriately.

## Your responsibilities and how you can help

Most parents and private foster carers are not aware that they have to notify their local authority of any arrangements made. This makes it difficult for us to check if the children are being looked after properly.

Many professionals including teachers, doctors, health visitors, nurses, religious leaders and nursery staff have regular contact with children and may find out about such arrangements. We are asking you to inform us of any arrangements you become aware of and to remind parents and carers of their legal responsibility to inform us.



Informing the local authority of a private fostering arrangement is not breaking a confidence but it is good practice in safeguarding

Professionals, parents and private foster carers should inform us preferably in advance of any arrangements being made or as soon as they are told of this requirement.

Tel: 01494 586460

Email: [firststep@bucksc.gov.uk](mailto:firststep@bucksc.gov.uk)

## What we do when we are informed of a private fostering arrangement

Once informed of a private fostering arrangement we will work closely with those involved to ensure the welfare of the child. We will:

- Carry out a home visit to assess the suitability of the arrangement
- Provide support and advice to carers to ensure they are getting the help they need.



If you become aware of a private fostering arrangement please let us know straightaway.

**Contact us on 01494 586460**

For further information please contact:

Private Fostering Team  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
County Hall  
Aylesbury  
Buckinghamshire HP20 1UA  
Tel: 01494 586460

**[www.buckscc.gov.uk/privatefostering](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/privatefostering)**