

Children and Families Service

One Minute Guide

October 2013

PRIVATE FOSTERING

Information for Professionals

What is private fostering?

Private fostering is where a parent arranges for a child aged under 16 (or 18 where the child has disabilities) to be cared for by someone other than a close relative for 28 days or more.

It does not apply where the child is placed by the Council, voluntary organisations, or as a result of certain court orders.

A close relative is classed as a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt (whether of full blood or half blood or by marriage) or step parent.

Caring for someone else's child is not private fostering when the arrangement is made by the Local Authority (Children's Social Care), or when the person looking after a child is an approved foster carer.

Who are private foster carers?

Private foster carers can be from a child's extended family such as a cousin or great aunt. They may also be a friend of the family, the parent of a friend of the child, or someone previously unknown to the child's family who is willing to privately foster the child.

What is an example of a private fostering arrangement?

- A child whose parent (s) cannot look after them because of illness, work or study;
- A child from abroad sent to stay with another family;
- An asylum seeking or refugee child;
- A teenager who, having broken ties with their family, is staying with friends or other non-relatives usually on a short term basis;
- A language student living with a host family; or
- A young person staying with a family while attending a school away from home.



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What is the role of the local authority?

The local authority has a number of duties and responsibilities. A Social Worker will want to help keep the child safe and well by:

- Ensuring that the private fostering arrangement is suitable to care for the child;
- Offering support and advice on how to meet the child's physical, emotional, educational and cultural needs;
- Assisting private foster carers in working together with the child's parents for the benefit of the child; and
- Taking action if the care provided is unsatisfactory.

How can other agencies help?

Because Children's Social Care (which has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are privately fostered), **is not always aware** of an arrangement, it is important that professionals working with children and families inform Children's Social Care about any private fostering arrangements. **Teachers, health workers, police** etc may become aware of private fostering arrangements due to their contact with children and families. The local authority needs agencies who are working with children, young people and their families to identify these arrangements.

What should I do if I identify a private fostering arrangement?

You should encourage parents/carers to notify Children's Social Care. If you feel Children's Social Care has not been made aware by parents/carers, then you should notify Children's Social Care yourself via Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS) on **0300 123 5012** (option 2).

Where can I get more information?

- Read the Private Fostering Policy and Procedure

<http://www.online-procedures.co.uk/cheshireeastchildcare/contents/case-management/private-fostering/>

- Visit Cheshire East website - this includes a the handbook for professionals

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/education_and_learning/family_information_service/private_fostering.aspx

- Speak to your Manager or contact Children's Social Care (see ChECS number above).