

One minute guide

Private Fostering



October 2021

What is Private Fostering?

Private fostering is when a child or young person under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) is living with someone who is not a close relative for 28 days or more. This might be a friend, a great aunt, a cousin or someone else known to the child or young person. A close relative is defined as a grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother or step-parent by marriage.

This type of arrangement is completely different to fostering arrangements where children and young people are placed with local authority approved foster carers, or via friends and family foster carers.

Many private fostering arrangements remain unknown to the local authority and this is a cause for concern as privately fostered children and young people, without the safeguards provided by law, are a particularly vulnerable group.

It is an offence not to tell the local authority about a private fostering arrangement. There are many reasons why children and young people are privately fostered. Such examples include those listed below:

- Parental ill health

- Children or young people who are sent to this country for education or health care by birth parents from overseas

- Children or young people who are living with a friend/boyfriend/girlfriend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce or arguments at home

- Children or young people whose parents work or study long or antisocial hours
- Children or young people on school holiday exchanges that last more than 28 days

- Children or young people who are on sports or music sponsorships living away from their families

Privately fostered children are not children in care

Parents and private foster carers should notify the local authority

The Parent/s (or those with Parental Responsibility) and the private foster carer have a duty to notify the local authority of the name and address of the private foster carer, as soon as possible before the start of the private fostering arrangement.

If the arrangement is already in place, they must notify the local authority at once.

If the arrangement is made in an emergency and is intended to last more than 28 days, this information should be provided as soon as possible of the child being placed

The role of the local authority and arrangements in Warwickshire

The Children Act 1989 places a legal duty on local authorities to protect and promote the welfare of privately fostered children, to check that the arrangements for the child/ren are safe and that the child/ren are well cared for. Section 44 of the Children Act 2004 extended these duties to include children who are proposed to be, but not yet privately fostered. The duties are set out in the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.

Where the local authority is informed of a proposed or existing private fostering arrangement:

A Connected Persons Social Worker will undertake an initial visit within five working days of the date of notification.

The Connected Persons team will carry out an assessment of the suitability of the arrangements for the child

The Connected Persons team will visit the child every six weeks during the first year of the private fostering arrangement and then every 12 weeks thereafter. The child should be seen at the placement and spoken to alone where this is appropriate.

In Warwickshire work with private foster carers is coordinated, assessed and reviewed by the Connected Persons team. Each privately fostered child is allocated a Connected Persons social worker and will provide ongoing support to the child and private foster carer.

Partner agencies should notify the local authority

When completing forms with and meeting children, young people and their families, all agencies should ask questions about who lives in the household and who has [parental responsibility](#) — this can help in identifying a private fostering arrangement.

Practitioners working with children, young people and their families from agencies including but not restricted to schools or health services, should notify the local authority if they become aware of or believe that a child is living in a private fostering arrangement.

Who are the key contacts and where can more information be found?

Contact the Children and Families Front Door for notifications from parents, private foster carers or other members of the public
tel: 01926 414144 or email triagehub@warwickshire.gov.uk

For more information

<https://fostering.warwickshire.gov.uk/private-fostering>

visit the Department for Education website — [Private Fostering](#)