

Private Fostering:

Does someone else look after your child? Or Do you look after someone else's child?

What is private fostering?

Your child is being privately fostered if he or she is:

- Under 16 years old (or 18 years old if disabled); and
- Being looked after for more than 28 days in the home of someone who is not a close relative or guardian.

(A close relative is a grandparent brother, sister, aunt or uncle)

Private fostering is **not** when someone looks after your child for a short time, e.g. while you are ill or on holiday. They would have to look after your child for at least 28 days in a year for it to be private fostering.

When might this arrangement be necessary?

Private fostering might happen when:

- Parents have sent a child to this country for education
- Children want to stay in the same school when parents move
- Family breakdown makes it necessary for a child to live apart from its parents
- A teenager wishes to move to the home of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Parents work anti-social hours so need help with the care of their children.

Private fostering is arranged between the family who will be looking after the child and:

- You, as the child's parent(s); *and/or*
- The child (if the child is older)

Any financial arrangement for the care of the child is made between the birth family and the private foster carer. The carer may be able to claim Social Security benefits such as Child Benefit for the child in their care.

In some cases, financial help could be available through assistance under Section 17 of the Children Act – where children are deemed to be 'in need'. This could also be true of a range of support services. We would be happy to provide details on request.

What will happen if I don't tell you?

The law says that you must inform your local Social Services Department if you are planning for your child to be privately fostered or he/she is already privately fostered.

You should do this at least six weeks before the arrangement starts – if you can't, for example, if it was an emergency, then tell us soon as you can. The law gives you just 48 hours.

If you fail to tell us,

- The carer would miss out on our help and support and,
- You would both be breaking the law. You could be prosecuted and fined.

Supportive, fair, effective...

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What happens next?

After you've told us, we will:

- give the private foster carer as much support and advice as they need
- make sure they have all the information they need and we have all the information we need
- check that the carer and other members of their household are suitable to look after your child - this will include criminal records checks
- check that their home is safe and secure
- visit them and your child regularly to make sure that all is going well
- keep in touch with you to offer support and advice.

As the child's parent(s), you will continue to be responsible for them.

What happens if the private foster carer doesn't pass all the checks?

We must decide if the arrangements are in the best interests of your child. This doesn't mean they have to be perfect, but we can stop the placement if we consider it isn't in your child's best interests.

Our contact details

If you need more help, please contact us.

Telephone: 01495 766693

E-mail: familyplacementteam@torfaen.gov.uk

Our Address:

The Family Placement Team
Torfaen Social Care and Housing Services
Civic Centre
Pontypool
Torfaen
NP4 6YB

*This factsheet can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.
Please contact us in order to arrange this.*