

Private Fostering – One Minute Guide

What is private fostering?

Private fostering is the term used when a child or young person is cared for by someone who does not have parental responsibility for them, is not a parent or a “close relative”. This applies to a child or young person under the age of 16 years or under the age of 18 years if the child is disabled.

Private fostering regulations apply when a child or young person is cared for on a full-time basis for 28 days or more. A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately by the parent or person with parental responsibility.

Close relatives are defined as:

- grandparents
- brothers and sisters
- uncles and aunts, or
- step-parents (if married to the partner or in a civil partnership)

There are many circumstances in which an unmarried partner becomes the carer for a child. **A parent’s unmarried partner is not a step-parent in this context.** In this situation there is a legal requirement to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement.

Private foster carers can include a person who is part of the child’s wider family, a friend of the family or the parents of a child’s boyfriend or girlfriend.

Why is a child or young person privately fostered?

There are many reasons why children and young people are privately fostered including:

- Parental ill health
- Children and young people who visit this country from overseas, at the request of their parents, for education or health care
- Children and young people taking part in school exchanges which last more than 28 days
- Children or young people who are living with a family friend/ boyfriend or girlfriend’s family.

What should happen if a private fostering arrangement is planned?

The local authority has a legal duty to safeguard the wellbeing of children and young people and therefore need to assess the suitability of the private foster carer and to make regular checks of private fostering arrangements.

Any parent proposing to have their child looked after by someone other than a close relative for more than 28 days, or a carer who is proposing to look after someone else's child, must notify Hull Children, Young People and Family Services (Early Help and Safeguarding Hub – 01482 448879) **at least 6 weeks before the arrangement is due to begin.**

Under the Private Fostering Arrangements (2005), any professional who comes into contact with children, is under a duty to inform the children's service about any private fostering arrangements they are made aware of. **To make a notification of a private fostering arrangement in Hull, professionals should call 01482 448879.**

What happens after a notification is made?

Hull Children, Young People & Family Service is legally responsible for the safety and welfare of all privately fostered young people within Hull and will undertake an assessment (including obtaining references) and conduct a DBS check of prospective private foster carers.

As part of this responsibility, a Social Worker will make contact with the child, parent and carer to arrange a visit and ensure the right support is in place along with on-going monitoring of the arrangement.

Government legislation and guidance

This guidance replaces Chapter One of Volume 8 (Private Fostering and Miscellaneous) of the Children Act 1989 guidance, which was first published in 1991, and incorporates guidance on the new measures in the Children Act 2004, and in the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-private-fostering>

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2005/1533/contents/made>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-minimum-standards-for-private-fostering>

For more information, please click the link below:

<http://www.hull.gov.uk/children-and-families/adoption-and-fostering/private-fostering>