

What is Private Fostering?

A private foster carer is someone other than a parent or close relative who cares for a child for a period of 28 days or more, in agreement with the child's parent. Private foster carers may be from extended family such as a cousin or a great aunt, a friend of the family, or the parent of a friend of the child. Close relatives would not be defined as private foster carers. Close relatives are defined as: a grandparent, a sibling, an aunt or uncle, or a step parent. Private fostering only applies to children under the age of 16, or under 18 if they are disabled.

Examples of private fostering situations



Children from abroad who attend school in the country, staying with host families



Adolescents temporarily estranged from their parents



Children in boarding schools who do not return to their parents in the holiday and stay with an education guardian



Children on holiday exchanges



Children where a parent is in prison or unable to care for them due to chronic ill health



Children from overseas where parents are not resident in the country



One Minute Guide

Private Fostering LSCB

November 2023

Legislation around private fostering

The main legislations that provide up to date information on Private Fostering are as follows:

- Section 67 Children Act 1989 and 44 Children Act, 2004
- The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005
- National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005

Notification of private fostering

Those involved in arranging for a child to be privately fostered are required by law to notify Coventry City Council of the arrangements. Families and carers often do not tell professionals or agencies about such arrangements, and they may not be aware that they need to do so. As a result of not informing the council of an arrangement, many private fostering arrangements remain hidden.

Children's services are not involved in making private fostering arrangements, but they are responsible for checking that the arrangements are suitable for the child. If you are someone working with children, it is important for you to notify children's services if you are in contact with a child/young person who is being privately fostered. This will help protect the child against abuse or neglect and provide reassurance that the child is properly looked after.

The role of Children's Services

Children's Services are not responsible for creation/organisation of private fostering arrangements, however they do hold several other roles within the process as follows:

- Where a private fostering arrangement is already in place or a child is in an emergency arrangement the carer or parent should tell Children's Services within 48 hours of caring for the child.
- A social worker should visit within 7 working days to see the child, the child's parents (if possible), the carers and other members of the carer's household.
- An assessment will be made about the suitability of the arrangements, including DBS checks on all members of the household aged 16 or over and references of the carers.
- A decision will be made on the suitability of the proposed arrangement by the lead manager for private fostering.
- An arrangement is a private fostering arrangement when the intent is that it will last for more than 28 days, even if it has only just commenced.
- If a private fostering arrangement is assessed as suitable, social workers will visit regularly, see the child alone, and ensure that the child's welfare is promoted, and their needs met.
- Private foster carers should inform social workers of any changes.
- If the arrangement is not suitable action will be taken to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

How to recognise the signs of private fostering

As a professional working with children, here are some of the signs that could indicate that a private fostering arrangement is taking place. If you believe this to be the case, then you must report this to children's services.



A child mentions that they are not living at home/living with someone else



A child being reluctant to give details about their situation



A child being accompanied by someone other than their parent/recognised carer



The child's carer is vague about their history such as health and education



A new child (other than an expected newborn baby) appears in the family



One child in the family being treated differently to the other children



If the child is from overseas, do you know the purpose of their visit, their carers, or the living arrangements?

Key Contacts and Further Information

[Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) [The Children Act 1989 on Private Fostering](#)

[The Children \(Private Arrangement for Fostering\) Regulations 2005](#)

[National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005](#)

[Safeguarding Children in Private Fostering arrangements](#)