

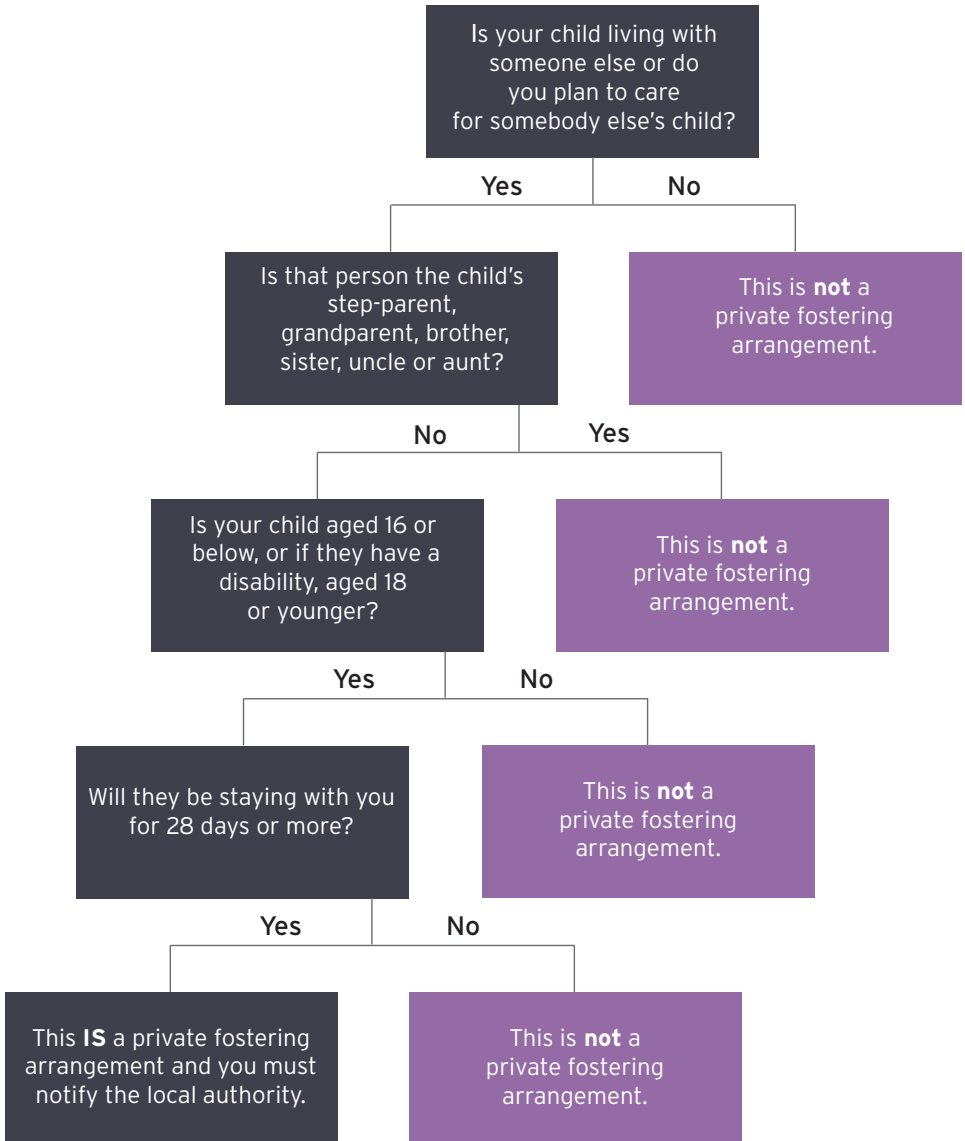


# Are you looking after somebody else's child?

Questions frequently asked by parents



# What is private fostering?



All arrangements are made privately, without the help of the local authority.

Examples of privately fostered children include:

- children with parents and family abroad
- children attending language schools
- children sent to the UK for educational purposes
- children at boarding schools who do not return to the parental home during holidays
- children on holiday exchanges
- local children living apart from their families due to parental problems
- 'sofa-surfers'
- unaccompanied immigrant children
- children who stay in a residential school for more than two weeks of the school holidays

## **Do I have to notify the local authority?**

Yes, the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 place a statutory duty on parents and private foster carers to notify the local authority of any private fostering arrangement that is occurring or due to start. Even if the child's parents or guardians do not want the local authority involved, you must inform the council as it is an offence not to do so.

## **When do I have to inform the local authority?**

Ideally, the local authority should be made aware before the arrangement commences. Any person involved in arranging the placement for the child must notify the local authority as soon as possible after the arrangement has been made.

A parent of a child and a person who is not a parent of the child, but who has parental responsibility for the child, who is not involved in arranging for the child to be privately fostered but is aware that it is proposed that the child should be privately fostered, must notify the local authority as soon as possible after they become aware of the arrangement.

## What must I tell the local authority?

- The name, sex, date and place of birth, religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background of the child
- The name and current address of the person giving the notice and their addresses within the previous five years
- The name and the current address of the proposed or current foster carer
- The name and current address of the parents of the child and of any other person who has parental responsibility for the child
- The name and current address of any person, other than those specified above, who is involved in arranging for the child to be privately fostered
- The name and current address of the minor siblings of the child, and details of the arrangements for their care
- The date on which it is intended that the private fostering arrangement will start or the date on which it did start
- The intended duration of the private fostering arrangement
- The reason for the private fostering arrangement

The local authority will assess the arrangements and make recommendations on its suitability.

## Why must I tell the local authority?

It is an offence to fail to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement, but more importantly, the local authority should be informed so that they can ensure that the child is safe and well looked after. The local authority can also support you and the child throughout the placement to ensure that all parties involved are happy.

## **What support is available to private foster carers and privately fostered children?**

Children's social care has a duty to ensure the welfare of a privately fostered child is safeguarded, and so a social worker will arrange to visit the child to ensure the arrangement is suitable. The social worker will also regularly visit the child to see how they are feeling and help them tackle any issues they may have.

Parents can also receive advice on how to work with private foster carers and on the financial implications of your child being privately fostered. If the duration of the arrangement is for more than six weeks the Department for Work and Pensions should be informed to ensure that child benefit is paid to the appropriate recipient.

## **Do private foster carers receive any financial support?**

The financial arrangements for privately fostering a child are made directly between you as the parent and private foster carer. Customarily, you will be expected to pay for your child's upkeep and it is advisable that you create a written agreement about how you will do this. The local authority is unable to provide any financial support to private foster carers.

## **I am the child's parent, what are my responsibilities?**

If you are the child's parent or have parental responsibility for the child, you must inform the local authority of where your child will be living. You will maintain parental responsibility for your child and it is your responsibility to ensure that the prospective private fostering arrangement meets the needs of your child. You should remain involved in making decisions in relation to your child's needs and regularly keep in contact with them.

## Is there anything I can do to prepare my child?

Firstly, it is important that you notify the local authority that your child is privately fostered. Secondly, to help the private foster carer fully understand your child and their needs, it is important that you share details of your child's family history, their medical history and agree the arrangements for:

- your child's education
- your child's health; any on-going medical treatment, anticipated treatment, details of their GP and dentist, etc
- your child's hobbies and interests
- meeting your child's religious and cultural needs
- contact between your child and their family and others who are important to them
- preferred methods of disciplining and rewarding the child
- updating you on your child's progress.

The agreed arrangements for the placement should be written down so both you and the foster carer know what to expect. It is important that you discuss the arrangements with your child so they understand the situation, how long they will be residing with the private foster carer, how to contact you, what to do if they have a problem, etc.

## What do I do if the situation changes?

Notify the local authority within 48 hours of your child leaving a private fostering arrangement, and inform them of the name and address of the person who is now looking after the child.

## Useful links

### Coram BAAF

England Advice and Information Service:

020 3597 6116 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 1pm) [adviceengland@baaf.org.uk](mailto:adviceengland@baaf.org.uk)

### Children's Legal Centre

0845 1202948 [www.childrenslegalcentre.com](http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com)

The Children's Legal Centre has many years of experience in providing legal advice and representation to children, their carers and professionals throughout the UK.

### Fosterline ... the foster carers' advice line 0800 040 7675

Fosterline, provides confidential, independent and impartial advice about all fostering issues, including private fostering. Fosterline advisers listen carefully to callers before suggesting the next steps that the caller can take to deal with any fostering-related issue. Every year Fosterline offers advice to thousands of callers and also helps them to identify how to access other services and sources of support.

### Grandparents' Association

National advice and Information line 0845 4349585

### Children and Families Across Borders (CFAB)

[www.cfab.uk.net](http://www.cfab.uk.net) 020 7735 8941

CAFAB is a registered charity which assists individuals and professionals in child and family welfare issues concerning two or more countries. Their helpline is open Monday to Friday, 10am to 1pm and 2 to 4pm. Alternatively email [info@cfab.org.uk](mailto:info@cfab.org.uk)

### Prisoners' Families Helpline

0808 8082003 [www.prisonersfamilieshelpline.org.uk](http://www.prisonersfamilieshelpline.org.uk)

If you are looking after a child because their parent(s) are in prison you can talk to the Prisoner's Families Helpline, a free and confidential telephone service.

### Victoria Climbié Foundation

[www.vcf-uk.org](http://www.vcf-uk.org)

An independent rights-based charity working with children and families offering a link between statutory agencies, care services, and BME communities.

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To provide information of a private fostering arrangement  
contact the Fostering Team

E: [fostering@achievingforchildren.org.uk](mailto:fostering@achievingforchildren.org.uk)