



# One minute guide

## Private Fostering

No. 9, January 2023

### 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 (kinship care) 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 looked after children

### 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, six weeks 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 within 48 hours of the child being placed.

## 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.

## The role of the local authority and arrangements in Leeds

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:

The child's Social Worker together with a Private Fostering Officer will undertake an initial visit within seven working days of the date of notification

A Private Fostering Officer from the Kinship Care Team will carry out an assessment of the suitability of the arrangements for the child

The child's Social Worker 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 Leeds work with private foster carers is coordinated by the Kinship Care Team. Each privately fostered child is allocated a Social Worker from the relevant area social work team. The private foster carer is allocated a Private Fostering Officer from the Kinship Care Team.

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

Contact centre for notifications from parents, private foster carers or other members of the public tel: 0113 2224403

Duty and Advice Team for notifications from practitioners tel: 0113 3760336

Referrals for Private Fostering assessments and other queries:  
[privatefostering@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:privatefostering@leeds.gov.uk) tel: 0113 378 3537.

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