

If the arrangement is agreed

If the arrangement is agreed, a social worker will visit the private foster carers and your child regularly and will keep in touch with you for as long as the arrangement lasts, or until the child reaches the age of 16. (18 if disabled).

Making the arrangement work.

It is important to work with the carers and the social worker to make sure things so smoothly. Keeping a Child's routines, having their own possessions and having some structure helps them settle into their new surroundings.

You must:

- Give carers and the social worker an address and phone number at which you can be contacted at all times.
- Tell the private foster carers about any routines your child has at home.
- Give the private foster carers any personal items such as toys or photographs that might help your child settle into their new home.
- Consider if the carers can support your child's racial, cultural or religious background.
- Draw up a written agreement together with your social worker and the carers so that it is clear who is responsible for what. (your social worker can get all this information into a written agreement form).

Financial Arrangements

Any financial arrangement should be made between you and the private foster carers. Social Services will not provide financial support for routine care of the child. Details should be included in the written agreement. If you are claiming benefits including Child benefit, you must tell the Department for Work and Pensions that you are no longer caring for your child.

Next Steps

Contact the Contact Cares Team on 01744 676767 and ask to speak to someone about a private fostering arrangement if you need to:

- Advise about a proposed private fostering arrangement
- Advise that you already have a child living with you in a private fostering arrangement
- Get advice on private fostering
- Advise on a change of circumstance that might affect your agreement.

If you would like this leaflet in another language or format please call Children's Social Care on the number above.



St Helens
Safeguarding Children
Partnership

Private Fostering



Information and advice for parents

Is someone else looking after your child?

This could mean your child is being privately fostered. Find out what this means.

This leaflet is for parents whose child (under the age of 16, or under 18 if child is disabled) is being looked after by someone else for 28 days or more. It explains the law on private fostering and the role of social services.

Private fostering is an arrangement made by parents (or those with parental responsibility for a child) for someone to care for their child because they are unable to do so. Sometimes a young person has chosen to live elsewhere. If they are under 16 (18 if disabled) and living with someone who is not a close relative for 28 days or more, this is also called private fostering.

About private foster carers

A private foster carer is someone who cares for another person's child in their own home such as:

- Extended family members (great aunts, great uncles, cousins)
- Someone who is called 'aunt' or 'uncle' but is not related to the child.
- A friend of the family.
- Someone who is not married to the child's mother or father but is a partner or ex-partner.

Not everyone who looks after someone else's child is a foster carer. If the local authority/council has formally asked someone to care for the child then this is not considered as private fostering. If your child is living with a close relative that is a grandparent, aunt, uncle, step parent (by marriage or civil partnership), sister or brother then this is not private fostering.

Can my private foster carer decide everything for me?

If you are arranging for someone who is not a close relative to look after your child, you must give social services (also called Specialist Children's Services) at least six weeks written notice. If you have already placed your child with private foster carers you must notify social services within 48 hours. Details of who to contact are on the back of this leaflet.

Social services have a legal duty to make sure that the welfare of all privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted and that they are living in safe and suitable surroundings. Social services give advice to parents, private foster carers and any child who is being privately fostered.

If a child is privately fostered, the parent keeps parental responsibility, meaning that they still make decisions about where the child is educated, what medical treatment they can have and whether they can travel abroad. A private foster carer cannot change a child's name. A social worker will be allocated to you to tell you more about this, and other issues such as support services and benefit entitlements.



What happens next?

Social Services will send you a form to complete for you and your child. A social worker will visit you, your child and the private foster carers to discuss the plan and will need to consider:

- Suitability of private foster carers and others in the household.
- Where your child will be living
- How long they will be living there
- Your child's wishes and feelings
- Your child's health and education
- Contact arrangements between you and your child
- Financial arrangements.

Private Foster carers will need to sign forms that allow checks from the Disclosure and Barring service (DBS), probation service, local council, GP and education authority. It's important for everyone living in the household who is over 16 years old to have DBS checks too. The social worker will write a report (assessment) and a decision will be made as to whether the arrangement is suitable. You will get a letter telling you what the decision is.

What happens next?

Carers will be told in writing if they or the accommodation is not considered suitable or it would be prejudicial to the welfare of the child to live with them. Appeals against the decision made by social services should be made within 14 days of being notified. After this they can appeal to the Family Proceedings court within 14 days. If the matter still can't be resolved the social worker will contact you so that you can make other arrangements for your child's care.