



# Are you aware of a child who is living with someone who is not a close relative?

**If so this could be a private fostering arrangement and you need to let us know!**

**Private fostering – important information for professionals**



# Somebody else's child – everyone's responsibility

## What is private fostering?

Private fostering is when a child 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 know to the child. 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 are placed with local authority approved foster carers, or via friends and family (kinship care) foster carers.

Many private fostering arrangements remain hidden and this is a cause for concern as privately fostered children, 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 are privately fostered. Such examples include those listed below.

- 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'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.
- Teenagers living with their girlfriend's or boyfriend's family.
- Children or teenagers on schoolholiday exchanges that last more than 28 days.



The children in this image are only models and are not privately fostered

- Children or teenagers who are on sports or music sponsorships living away from their families. A parent or an agency, such as a college or sports academy, would normally make such an arrangement.

## What are the council's responsibilities?

To keep children safe and support families, we need to make regular checks of private fostering arrangements. This is because the local authority has a legal duty to safeguard the wellbeing of children (The Children's Act 1989, Private Arrangements for Fostering Regulations 2005).

If the care of the child or the accommodation is unsuitable, the local authority can prevent or stop a child being privately fostered. We can also make sure the carer rectifies a problem, for example, fitting smoke alarms or fire guards in the home.

We also give advice and support for carers providing private fostering commitments and parents involved in the arrangement.

## What are the responsibilities of parents and private foster carers?

When a child is privately fostered, the child's parents retain parental and financial responsibility.



The law states that anyone directly involved in arranging the placement must notify the local authority about the arrangement.

Private foster carers are responsible for carrying out any duties agreed with the parents and must allow a representative of the local authority to visit the child and the premises where the child is being privately fostered, to make sure the child is safe and well cared for.

Parents are expected to be fully involved in planning for the future of their child and we advise that a written agreement is drawn up between the parent and the carer outlining the essential aspects of the arrangement.

## What does it mean for the child?

Children who are privately fostered have the same rights to protection and access to services as children living at home with their family.

Notifying the local authority ensures that they can:

- Carry out safeguarding checks.
- Monitor the arrangement to ensure the child's needs are met.
- Listen to the young person's wishes and feelings.
- Provide support services where appropriate.

It is your duty to notify the local authority if you are aware of, or involved in a private fostering arrangement.

To notify us about a private fostering arrangement or make further enquiries, please call: 0113 222 4403 or you can e-mail [kinshipcareadmin@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:kinshipcareadmin@leeds.gov.uk)

Further information is also available on our website: [www.leeds.gov.uk](http://www.leeds.gov.uk)

This information can be provided in large print, Braille, audio or a community language, please call: 0113 222 4403.



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