



is someone  
else looking  
after your child?

private  
fostering



Shropshire  
Council

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Childrens Safeguarding



## private fostering situations could involve:

- children sent to this country for education or health care by birth parents living overseas
- children living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce or arguments at home
- teenagers living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- children whose parents' study or work involves unsociable hours, which make it difficult for them to use ordinary day care or after school care.

If your child is being privately fostered, you should read the next few pages of this leaflet. They will help you to ensure that your child is properly cared for.

## what must I do if someone else is privately fostering my child?

It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that the proposed private fostering arrangement is suitable for their child.

The law requires that you tell your local council at least six weeks before the arrangement begins, unless the arrangement is made in an emergency in which case the notification must be made within 48 hours. Knowing where your child is will help the council to make sure he or she is being well cared for. If you do not inform the council they may not be in a position to protect your children from abuse or neglect. Although the council will not be as directly involved with your child as the carer, it has a duty to satisfy itself that the welfare of the child is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

It is an offence not to notify within the time specified. If in doubt, you should seek advice from the local council. Telephone: 0345 678 9021.

## what do I tell the carer?

Give the person who is to care for your child as much information as possible about your child, including their health, eating preferences, school, hobbies, religion and ethnic or cultural backgrounds. This will help the carer to understand your child and take better care of him or her.

## does this mean I am giving up all rights to my child?

No. You remain the person with parental responsibility for your child and should continue to be involved in all decisions concerning your child's development. It is very important that you remain in frequent contact with your child.

## what will the local council do for my child?

The local council has a duty to find out whether the carer is suitable to care for your child. They will make regular visits to see your child, and they will give help and advice to the carer when it is needed. This is very important as in some cases a parent may not be in a position to find out much about how their child is being cared for.

Shropshire Council may offer advice and support to young people between the ages of 16 and 21 who have been privately fostered. We will need to determine whether the young person is eligible for advice and support and if so, what we can offer. Financial support or assistance with accommodation will only be offered in exceptional circumstances, where there is a risk of the young person suffering significant harm and no other agency has a responsibility to provide this service.

## what if I decide to change my carer?

Your local council is there to make sure that your child is living in a safe environment and is properly cared for. They can only do this if they know where your child is, so you should make sure they are told of any change of carer or address.







children who are cared for on a full-time basis by people who are not their parents or a close relative\* may be in private foster care.

Private foster care occurs when a child under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) is cared for, and provided with accommodation, by an adult who is not a close relative\*, for 28 days or more, by private arrangement between parent and carer.

The local council has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of privately fostered children.

\* The Children Act defines 'close relative' in relation to a child as a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt. They could be a full or half relative, and could be related by marriage. The term also includes a step-parent. A cohabitee of the mother or father would not qualify as a close relative, neither would extended family, such as great aunt/uncle or parent's cousins. Where children are cared for by a 'close relative', the situation is classified as 'family and friends care' and different arrangements apply.

# where do I go for further information?

If you require further information on the contents of this leaflet, please contact Shropshire's Customer Service Centre on **0345 678 9021**.

Safeguarding Children

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<https://www.shropshirefostering.co.uk/>



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photographs posed by models

