

what is your role?

private
fostering



Childrens Safeguarding



many professionals
who work with
children will come
across private
fostering situations.

professionals in police,
housing, faith and
cultural communities,
education, health
and social care fields
have a shared
responsibility to
work together
to ensure that
all privately
fostered
children are
well cared for
and are safeguarded
from harm.



what are the rules governing private fostering?

Privately fostered children are safeguarded by the Children Act 1989 (Part IX) and associated regulations.

what the private foster carer must do:

- advise their local council of their intention to privately foster a child at least 6 weeks in advance or, where a child is received in an emergency, not more than 48 hours thereafter
- notify their local council within 48 hours when a child leaves their care, giving the name and address of the person into whose care the child has been moved.



what birth parents must do:

- advise the local council of the private fostering arrangement at least six weeks in advance or, where an arrangement is made in an emergency, within 48 hours, and at the end of such an arrangement
- retain parental responsibility, participating in all decisions about their child
- provide the prospective carer with as much information about the child as possible, including their health, dietary preferences, school, hobbies, religion and ethnicity
- it is the parents' responsibility to ensure that the proposed private fostering arrangement is suitable for their child.

what the local council must do:

- check the suitability of private foster carers
- make regular visits to the child and monitor the overall standard of care provided
- ensure that advice to carers is made available when needed.

what is the problem?

Studies show that local councils are often not being notified about private fostering arrangements, despite this being an offence under the Children Act 1989. When they are, it is nearly always after the arrangement has started. This is a cause for concern, as privately fostered children, without the safeguards provided through the Children Act and associated regulations, are a particularly vulnerable group.

what should professionals do?

Private foster carers are legally required to notify their council but many do not, often because they do not know that they have to. This means that social services are unable to check whether the child is being properly cared for.

It is vital that social services are aware of such arrangements so that they can safeguard and promote the welfare of potentially vulnerable children. Ideally, notification should come from the carer and parent, but education, health and social care professionals can also play an important role, as they are often the people who have the first contact, in explaining to private foster carers and parents that they have a duty to notify the local council.

If you know that a child is being privately fostered, encourage the carer or parent of the child to notify the local council. By doing so you may help to ensure that the welfare of the child(ren) concerned is safeguarded and promoted.

If you have concerns about a child's welfare you should contact social services. If you have concerns that a child may be at risk of harm you should follow your local child protection procedures. **What to do if you're worried a child is being abused** (www.doh.gov.uk/safeguardingchildren/index.htm) provides guidance for the practitioners in these circumstances.

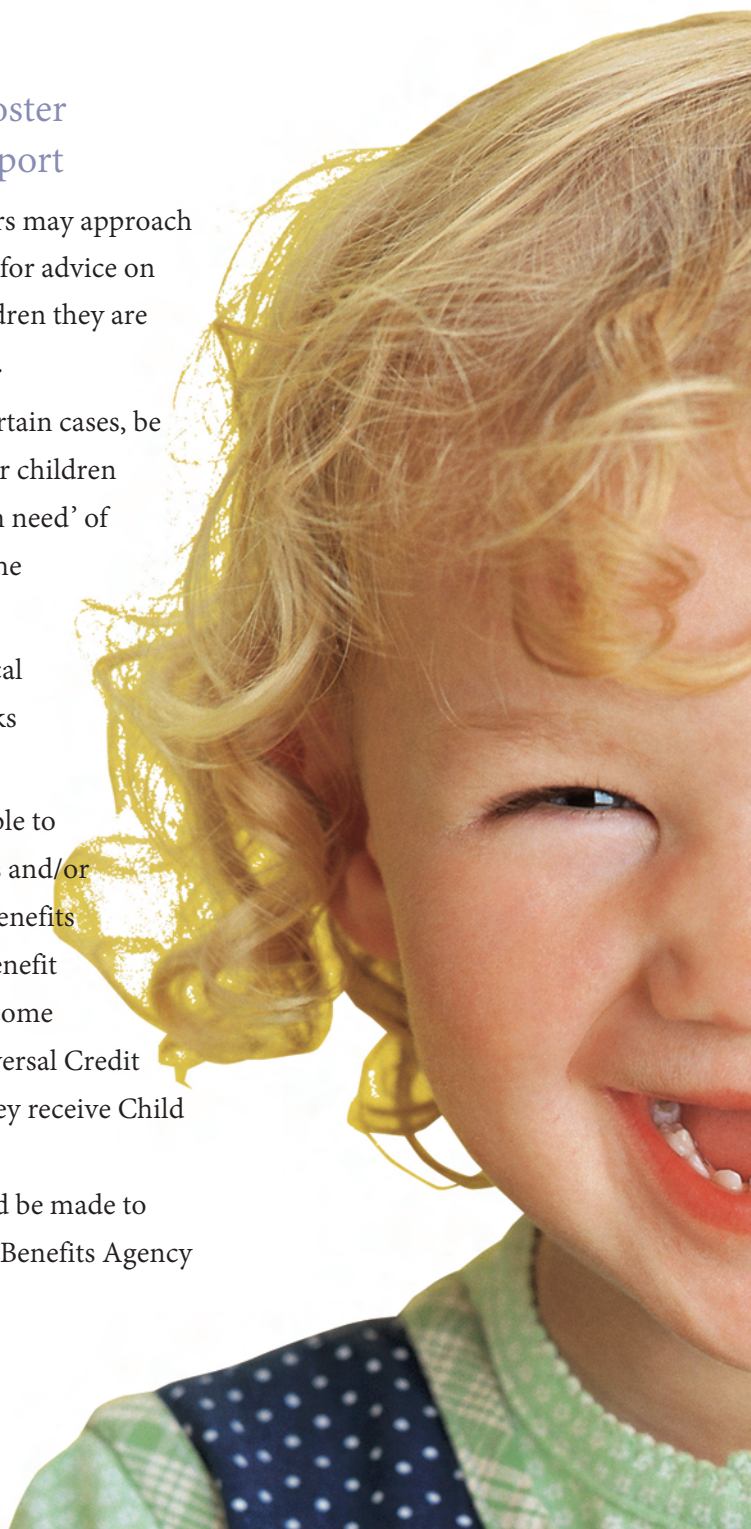


how private foster carers get support

Private foster carers may approach their local council for advice on caring for the children they are privately fostering.

- there may, in certain cases, be help available for children deemed to be 'in need' of services under the Children Act
- there may be local support networks for carers
- carers may be able to claim tax credits and/or social security benefits such as Child Benefit and possibly Income Support or Universal Credit Allowance, if they receive Child Benefit.

Enquiries should be made to the carer's local Benefits Agency Office.





where do I go for further information?

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

Safeguarding Children
Shropshire Council
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND.

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

BAAF
www.baaf.org.uk



Childrens Safeguarding

photographs posed by models

