

# Private Fostering

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# What is private fostering?

- A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 years (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative, in their own home, with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more.
- Close family relative is defined as a 'grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt' (full blood and half blood) and step-parents; it does not include great-aunts or uncles, great grandparents or cousins.

# Private Fostering is not...

- Not an independent fostering agency
- The child is not Looked After by the Local Authority
- No legal obligation to provide financial support
- The carer does not have parental responsibility of the child

# Private fostering background

- The statutory guidance governing private fostering is the 'Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005'.
- Regulations came to increased attention following the death of Victoria Climbié in 2000. Victoria was privately fostered by her great aunt.
- Given the 'hidden' nature of much private fostering, local authorities have a duty to raise awareness of the need to notify the local Children's Social Care service.

# Private Fostering Standards & Regulations

- National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering
- Receiving and responding effectively to notifications and situations that arise involving un-notified arrangements.
- Undertaking visits to the child within 6 working days of receipt of the notification.
- Private foster carers assessment to be completed within 42 working days & child and family assessment within 45 working days
- Assessing the suitability of private fostering arrangements (including DBS, medical checks and personal references).
- Speak with parents, family time arrangements, financial arrangements

# Private Fostering Standards & Regulations

- Undertaking visits to private foster carers and the children they care for every 6 weeks in the first year reducing to every 12 weeks in the second year.
- Undertaking annual reviews of all arrangements to ensure they remain in the best interests of all concerned – principally the child.
- Meet with the carer and parent, or person(s) with parental responsibility, and determine the duration of the arrangement, family time and financial arrangements.
- Facilitate agreement on how parental responsibility will be exercised and how day to day decisions will be carried out between the carer and the parent.

# Private Fostering Standards & Regulations

Where the authority is not satisfied with the arrangements:

1. Take steps to either return the child to the care of his/her parents or consider what action is needed to ensure the safety and well-being of the child.
2. The authority has powers to prohibit or impose requirements on the private arrangement if this safeguards and protects the child.

# Private Fostering Standards & Regulations

Identifying privately fostered children is crucial because:

- Vulnerability and risk of abuse/neglect if these children stay hidden
- No one exercising PR
- Lack of permanence
- General welfare concerns
- Exploitation and trafficking risk

Everybody has a responsibility to report an identified child in a private fostering arrangement



# Raising Public Awareness to Notify the Local Authority



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**Private Fostering Awareness Day**  
6 November 2024

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**Identifying when a child has been trafficked**

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Does the child:

- Appear not to have any money but has a mobile phone and/or is expensively dressed?
- Receive unexplained/unidentified phone calls?
- Possess money and goods not accounted for?
- Exhibit self assurance, maturity and self-confidence not expected in a child that age?
- Have a prepared story very similar to those that other trafficked children have given?
- Show signs of physical or sexual abuse, and/or has contracted a sexually transmitted infection, or has an unwanted pregnancy?
- Have a history with missing links and unexplained moves?
- Go missing for periods that are unexplained?
- Appear to be malnourished?
- Appear to be misusing alcohol, drugs or other substances?
- Live with adults who are not their parents and with whom they do not appear to have a good relationship?
- Appear to have limited freedom of movement?
- Live with a number of other unrelated children?
- Appear not to be registered with a GP or enrolled in a school?
- Show disengagement with school activities?
- Appear excessively frightened of being deported?
- Dress in a manner inappropriate for her age?
- Have a boyfriend or girlfriend much older than them?
- Regularly get picked up by adults who wait for them?
- Self-harm, including cutting self and overdosing?
- Appear to have an eating disorder;
- Appear to be compromising their sexual health?

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**How will I recognise if a child is privately fostered?**

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If you're aware of a child under 16 years of age (or 18 if they have a disability) who isn't residing with their parent(s), they could be in a private fostering arrangement if they've been away from home for more than 27 days and are living with an adult who isn't a close relative.

- Has the child mentioned that they are no longer living at home / living with someone else?
- Is the child accompanied to school by someone other than a parent/recognised carer?
- Has a patient turned up at the GP surgery with a new child/ series of different children?
- Is a child frequently absent from school?
- Is there anything unclear on files/records about the child's living arrangements?
- Is it clear who the child is living with, and what relation the person is to the child?
- Has the child come from overseas? Do you know the reason for the child's entrance to the UK?
- Is the child in the UK for the purpose of education?
- Is the child an unaccompanied asylum seeker?

# Examples of Private Fostering Arrangements

- Children from other countries sent to live in the UK with extended family.
- Overseas students who are living with a carer or 'host family' for over 28 days.
- Younger children placed with friends of the family on a long-term basis following family breakdown or parent's ill health.
- Children in boarding schools who live with another family during school holidays.
- Teenagers estranged from their parents.
- A teenager (under 16 or 18 if a young person has a disability) living with friends or in the home of a boyfriend or girlfriend.

# Safeguarding

- Where the local authority has been involved in determining that a child's home environment is unsuitable due to safeguarding concerns, private fostering would not normally be an appropriate solution.
- It may be necessary to seek agreement to the child becoming looked after, either through accommodation or care proceedings. The identified carers might still be able to look after the child, but they would be assessed as Connected Persons rather than private foster carers.

# Safeguarding

- In some circumstances, a young person may be living with someone they know but without their parent's consent. It is important to note that parental consent is not actually required for such an arrangement to 'count' as private fostering. However, in this situation, the local authority must consider the whole situation and whether it is safeguarding the child to a satisfactory extent, or if they should consider accommodating them or taking any other action.

# Cautions and Grey Areas

- Has a Section 20 duty arisen? 'did it appear to the local authority that the child was in need of accommodation'.
- Is the local authority playing a 'central' role – did we ask the carer to look after the child, did we make it clear under what legal framework we/they are operating i.e., financial responsibility/ transport to carers' house!

# Contact

- Referrals to the IFD.
- PF email: [privatefostering@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:privatefostering@westsussex.gov.uk)
- Or, give us a call on Skype: Vicky Roadnight, Hellen Ranger, Ella Prior