



One Minute Guide Private Fostering – Families and those who are Private Foster Carers

What is Private Fostering?

Private fostering is where a private arrangement has been made by the child's parent (or someone with parental responsibility) for a child under the age of 16 to live with a carer who is not a close relative* of a child (or up to the age of 18 years old if the child is disabled). This arrangement has also been made without the involvement of any organisations e.g. Slough Childrens Trust.

*Close relative is defined as the following: grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt (whether full or half blood by marriage) or step parent (by marriage or civil partnership) of the child. Close relatives do not include great-aunts or uncles, great grandparents or cousins.

The arrangement is classed as private fostering if it is expected to last for more than 28 days or more with the child living with someone who is not a close relative on a full time basis. This also includes the child living with people who are friends of the family or a boyfriend or girlfriend's family.

Examples of Private Fostering include:

Local children living apart from their families

- Children / young people whose parents work or study long and / or anti-social hours which makes it difficult to use ordinary day care or after school care
- Children whose parents are not able to care for them due to illness, abuse, divorce, separation or imprisonment
- Single parents who are in hospital for 4 weeks or more (planned or unplanned) and who arrange care for their child with people not defined as a close relative or friends

Children staying with friends because of family difficulties

- Children / young people living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce or difficulties at home
- Teenagers living with their boyfriend or girlfriend's family
- Teenagers 'sofa surfing' at a friends house because they don't get on with their own family

Children with parents overseas

- Children / young people sent to the UK for education or health care by birth parents from overseas
- Children from overseas staying with a host family while attending a language school for 28 days or more
- Overseas children at boarding school who do not return home during the holidays and stay with a host family in the UK

There are also some other areas where children and young people would be classed as privately fostered. This includes children brought into the UK from abroad for adoption who would be privately fostered until formal notice of adoption is undertaken. Also children who arrive in the UK seeking asylum with adults who are not close relatives (see definition above) are privately fostered.



What do I have to do as a parent or private foster carer?

If you are a parent or someone with parental responsibility of a child or children aged 16 years or younger (18 years if disabled) and are considering asking someone who is not a close relative to look after that child for 28 days or more, then you have a legal responsibility to let Slough Children's Trust know.

Telling the Trust does not mean that you cannot continue with this arrangement, the Trust just wants to check that the child's welfare is being safeguarded and promoted in this living arrangement. Your child will not be called a looked after child if you tell the Trust.

If your child is already living with someone who is not a close relative and you intend them to stay there for more than 28 days, the parents and the private foster carer must tell Slough Children's Trust at once (contact details below).

Telling the Trust is not 'telling' on someone who has asked you to look after a child or young person. It is the safest thing for both the child and you.

What will Slough Children's Trust do if I tell them?

The Trust has a responsibility given to it by a couple of legal acts to make sure that all children are safe and those children who are living with people who are not close relatives are protected and safeguarded.

The Trust will visit the home of the people asked to look after the child, will speak to the child or young person alone and complete a suitability assessment within 7 days. All private foster carers and other members of the household over 16 years old will also be asked to complete a DBS check if they do not have one already.

The Trust is also there to provide support and advice for private foster carers caring for a child who is not a close relative and is also there to let children and young people know what being privately fostered means for them and what support is available to them.

If the initial assessment and checks are satisfactory, then someone will visit the privately fostered child every six weeks to check that the child or young person's needs are met with additional visits if deemed necessary. If the arrangement lasts more than 12 months in subsequent years, the visits will be at least three monthly with additional visits if deemed necessary.

Who do I tell or talk to for advice?

Speak to Amita Sharma and let her know if you are considering a private fostering arrangement or are already looking after a child or young person who is not a close relative of yours and this will carry on for a while. Amita can be contacted on 01753 875530 or 07715 242548 during office hours. You can also email Amita via Amita.Sharma@scstrust.co.uk at any time.