



## One Minute Guide Private Fostering – Professionals

### What is Private Fostering?

The legal definition of a privately fostered child is where a private arrangement has been made by the child's parent (or someone with parental responsibility and without the involvement of the local authority or Trust) for the child to live with a carer who is not a close relative\* of a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if the child is disabled) for 28 days or more.

\*Close relative is defined as: 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 on a full time basis.

### 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

#### 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 friend's 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
- Overseas children at boarding school who do not return home during the holidays and stay with a host family in the UK

Children brought into the UK for adoption are classed as privately fostered until formal notice of adoption is undertaken, and children who arrive in the UK seeking asylum either unaccompanied or with adults who are not close relatives (see definition above) including those children trafficked are all classed as being privately fostered.

Privately fostered children are **not** looked after children and they should not be referred to as such.



## Parental duty in relation to Private Fostering

The Parent/s (or those with Parental Responsibility) and the private foster carer have a duty to notify the Trust of the name and address of the private foster carer six weeks before the start of the private fostering arrangement.

If the arrangement is already in place, parents and private foster carers must notify the Trust at once. If the arrangement is made in an emergency and is intended to last more than 28 days, this information should be provided within 48 hours of the child being placed.

## The role of professionals, partner agencies and the community

There will be a large number of professionals and people working directly with families who will all be aware of children and young people who are living with people who are not close relatives. These people could be working in school and educational settings, health settings such as GP practices, local health centres, pharmacies or as health professionals in schools and Children's Centres, as well as working in the community and in voluntary organisations.

Health, education and other professionals have a responsibility to report suspected or known private fostering arrangements as detailed in '*Replacement Children Act Guidance on Private Fostering 2005 paragraph 2.6*'. To help them to do this all professionals are asked to ask themselves about who has parental responsibility for a child that they have involvement with and whether it is a close relative or not.

All professionals should notify the Trust (contact details below) if they become aware of or think that a child is living in a private fostering arrangement. Following notification this is not to say that the arrangement will need to stop, the Trust just wants to assure itself that the child's welfare is being safeguarded and promoted in this living arrangement.

## Slough's duty in relation to Private Fostering

The Trust has a duty placed on it by the Children's Act (2005) and Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 to ensure the welfare of privately fostered children notified to them is being promoted and safeguarded, and to give advice to those caring for them. The Trust is also required to raise awareness of notification requirements to partners and involve them in those activities. The Trust is also required to keep Privately Fostering children and young people updated about what it means to be privately fostered and what support available is available to them, for example the advocacy service.

The Trust will respond to all notifications by visiting the private fostering placement and speaking to the child or young person alone and completing an assessment regarding the suitability of the private fostering within 7 days of the notification. All private foster carers and other members of the household over 16 years old must consent to a DBS check.

If the initial assessment and checks are satisfactory, then a social worker will visit every six weeks during the first year 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.



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The Trust will act by following child protection procedures if at any stage the child or young person is deemed to be unsafe or the private foster carer refuses to co-operate with any checks or visits.

### Key contacts

Amita Sharma in the Children's Trust can be contacted for further information and advice in relation to private fostering. If you suspect that a child is living in a private fostering arrangement, please contact Amita to let her know. Amita can be contacted on 01753 875530 or 07715 242548 during office hours. You can also email Amita via [Amita.Sharma@scstrust.co.uk](mailto:Amita.Sharma@scstrust.co.uk) at any time.