

Why do children's services have to be involved?

The Children Act 1989 gives children's services a legal duty to safeguard the wellbeing of privately fostered children. This includes making sure they are:

- Safe and well looked after
- Healthy
- Receiving a proper education
- Being encouraged to reach their full potential
- Keeping in touch with people who are important to them
- Living with someone who helps them value their culture and sense of identity
- Properly supported when they become independent

Despite this, many private fostering arrangements remain hidden, leaving children vulnerable to abuse and neglect.



Who do I contact?

If you live in Cornwall

Please contact the Multi Agency Referral Unit on **0300 1231116**

If you live on the Isles of Scilly

Please contact Children's Social Care for the Isles of Scilly on **01720 424354**.

This leaflet is also available in Chinese, Lithuanian, Portuguese and Polish.

If you would like this information in another format please contact:

Cornwall Council, County Hall
Treyew Road, Truro TR1 3AY

Telephone: 0300 1234 100
email: enquiries@cornwall.gov.uk
www.cornwall.gov.uk

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Private fostering

Is your child living with another family?

Are you looking after someone else's child?



Rights and responsibilities for families and professionals



What is private fostering?

Private fostering is when a child or young person under 16 year old (or 18 if they have a disability) is looked after for 28 days or more by someone who is not a close relative, guardian or person with parental responsibility.

Close relatives include parents, step-parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents.

It is not private fostering if the arrangement was made by Children's Social Care, or if the person looking after the child is an approved foster carer.

People become private foster carers for all sorts of reasons. Private foster carers can be a friend of the child's family, or be someone who is willing to care for the child of a family they do not know.

Common situations may be:

- Children, adolescents and teenagers living apart from their families
- Minority ethnic children with parents working or studying in the UK
- Children with parents overseas
- Children living with host families for a variety of reasons
- Children on holiday exchanges.

Notifying children's services – what the law says

By law, your local children's services must be informed about all private fostering situations. The child's parent(s), private foster carer and anyone else involved in the arrangement are legally required to inform children's services.

People involved in private fostering must inform children's services in writing within the following timescales:

If the child is not yet living with private foster carers	Six weeks beforehand
If the child will move in with private foster carers in less than six weeks	Immediately
If the child is already living with private foster carers	Immediately

What should professionals do?

Professionals should ensure that children's services know about all private fostering arrangements,

This includes a wide range of people who come in contact with children including teachers, religious leaders, doctors and health visitors. Professionals should also encourage the child's parent or carer to notify children's services. You will not be breaching confidentiality by notifying children's services, but you will be helping to safeguard a child.



What will children's services do?

Children's services will work in partnership with the child, parents and private foster carer to ensure that the best possible arrangements are in place for the child. This includes:

- Visiting the child and private foster carer
- Helping to make sure the child's racial, cultural, linguistic and religious needs are being met
- Offering advice and support to the child, their parents and private foster carer
- Where in the best interests of the child we will work together with all parties to reunite families

“ You have given us and Emily reassurance... without this help, we're not sure we would have got this far. We have enjoyed taking care of her and we hope she achieves all she wants out of life. Thank you for your support throughout. (Carer) ”

