



# PRIVATE FOSTERING

Information for carers,  
parents and professionals



**SURREY**  
COUNTY COUNCIL



## WHAT IS PRIVATE FOSTERING?

Children who are cared for and provided with accommodation by people who aren't their parents or a close relative could be in a private fostering arrangement.

### **Here are some common examples of private fostering arrangements:**

- A child sent to live in the UK for education or health reasons, being cared for by a host family.
- A young person who has gone to live with a girlfriend's, boyfriend's or friend's family.
- A child living with a carer because their parents' circumstances mean that they are unable to look after him or her; these could include unsociable work hours, health issues or even a prison sentence.



### **Typically the following applies to private fostering arrangements:**

- The child or young person is under 16 (or 18 if they are disabled)
- The full time carer is not the child's parent or a close relative
- The arrangement is intended to last for more than 28 days
- Arrangements have been made privately between the parent and the carer

### **Private fostering arrangements do not apply when:**

- The child is in the care of a local authority foster carer
- The carer has parental responsibility over the child
- The carer is a close relative of the child\*

\* Please see the definition of 'relative' as set out in The Children Act at the end of this leaflet.





## WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

Any **parent, carer** or **professional** who is aware of a private fostering arrangement has a duty to inform the local authority.

If you are a **parent** making private fostering arrangements for your child, you need to let Surrey Children's Service know in writing **at least six weeks before** the arrangement begins. If the arrangement is due to start in less than six weeks or the child is already living with the carer you need to let Surrey Children's Service know immediately.

Surrey Children's Service can help you complete a written agreement with the carer, covering:

- Arrangements for financially supporting the child
- Permission for the carer to seek emergency medical treatment
- How you plan to keep in contact



**If you are a carer about to enter into a private fostering agreement you need to:**

- Inform Surrey Children's Service of the plans within the same timeframe as that for parents outlined above
- Have a prearranged visit from a social worker to your home to ensure it is safe and appropriate for the child to live there
- Let the social worker meet any other adults who live in your home
- Undergo a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check on you and other adults in your home

These steps are in place to ensure that the child is safe and as happy as possible. In fact, most planned private fostering arrangements are found to provide a highly satisfactory care environment.



If you are a professional who works with children in education, health or social care you are likely to come across private fostering situations. As it is often the case that local authorities don't know about private fostering arrangements you must:

- Explain to the parents or the carers that they must notify Surrey Children's Service of the private fostering arrangement immediately
- Contact Surrey Children's Service and give as much detail as you know about the child and the private fostering arrangement

## WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

Once Surrey Children's Service has been informed of a private fostering arrangement, a representative will:



Visit the carer, the child and the carer's home within seven days



Talk to the child to find out how he or she feels about where they are living



Contact the parents to talk about the arrangement



Undertake an assessment of the child's needs and the suitability of the care arrangement



Make sure that DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks are completed on all adults in the carer's home



Continue to visit the child and carer at least every six weeks



Offer ongoing advice and guidance to the private foster carer

**These steps are carried out to make sure the child or young person is safe, well cared for and happy.**

## Definition of relatives according to The Children Act:

The responsibilities of parents and carers in private fostering arrangements are covered by law as set out in The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004, The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005.

The law states that the local authority must be informed about all private fostering situations. The parent, carer and any professional who knows about the arrangement has a duty of care to inform the authority's children's service giving details about the arrangement.

### Close relative

Child is not in a private fostering arrangement

- Parent
- Sibling (full blood, half blood)
- Grandparent (full blood, half blood or by marriage)
- Aunt or uncle (full blood, half blood or by marriage)
- Step parent (if parents married)
- Another adult with parental responsibility for the child (or an SGO or RO\*)
- A child placed for adoption under UK adoption legislation

### Distant relative

Child is in a private fostering arrangement

- Step sibling
- Great aunt or uncle
- Great grandparent
- Cousin
- Step parent (if parents not married)
- Step parent (if parents are now divorced)
- Any other adult who has no legal order for the child (known or unknown to the child)
- An adoptive parent where the adoption is not recognised in the UK

\*SGO = Special Guardianship Order

RO = Residence Order

Both these orders are granted by a court and result in the carer sharing parental responsibility with a parent



## CONTACT US

If you are concerned about the safety of a child, young person or an adult you can contact our **Children's Single Point of Access (C-SPA)**

Availability: **Monday to Friday: 9am - 5pm**

Phone: **0300 470 9100**

If you have concerns about a child or young person email us at:  
**[cspa@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:cspa@surreycc.gov.uk)**

If you have concerns about an adult email us at:  
**[ascmash@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:ascmash@surreycc.gov.uk)**



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