

# Factsheet



## Private fostering

### A guide for parents and carers

**If you are looking after someone else's child, or your child is being looked after by someone else, this may be private fostering.**

Private fostering is an arrangement where a child under 16 (or 18 if they have a disability) is cared for and lives with an adult who is not a close relative, such as a friend or neighbour. It is not private fostering if the person caring for the child is a close relative like a grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle or step-parent.

Private fostering isn't the same as fostering. There is no formal assessment and approval process. An arrangement is made between the parent and the private foster carer. There is no official financial support available, financial arrangements are made between the parent and carer.

If the arrangement is for more than 28 consecutive days, the law requires the child's parents (or those with parental responsibility) and the private foster carers to notify us by calling **03000 26 79 79** or emailing **scd@durham.co.uk** This should be done as soon as the arrangement is made (or as soon as it is apparent that the placement is likely to be for 28 days or more).

### What happens next?

The child will be allocated a social worker to make sure they are safe and well cared for. They will visit the private foster carer and, where possible, the parent and any person with parental responsibility who was involved in making the arrangement. The child will be seen and asked about their wishes and feelings about where they are living.

We will check the private foster carer's suitability to look after the child, including a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, viewing the accommodation and seeing all members of the household. Other agencies already involved with your child (eg school, health visitor) will be contacted to find out whether they think the child's needs will be met.

We will work with the parent and private foster carer to set up an agreement including finance, education, health and contact arrangements, as well as considering the child's hobbies/interests and religious or cultural needs. We will arrange to see the child on a regular basis, at least every six weeks for the first year.

### Responsibilities

The private foster carer will provide day-to-day care for the child, but parental responsibility is held by the parent or legal guardian who should be involved in all important decisions that affect the child. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure the private fostering arrangements are suitable for the child.

The private foster carer and parents must notify us of any significant changes during the arrangement. This includes change of address, someone joining or leaving the household, a household member having a court conviction, or any reason which means that they are no longer suitable to be a private foster carer.

If the private foster carer is concerned about any issue relating to the child they should contact the social worker. We will support you in promoting and safeguarding the child's welfare.

Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format.

03000 26 79 79