

What you need to know about Private Fostering



For parents and private foster carers



Derby City Council

Most children stay with friends and relatives at some time during their childhood. However, for some children these arrangements can be longer term.

If a child aged under 16 years, or under 18 years if they have a disability, is cared for by someone who is not a close relative, and they intend this to last for more than 28 days, this is known as a **Private Fostering Arrangement** and special rules apply.

Private Fostering is an arrangement made privately (that is without the involvement of the Local Authority) between the child's parents and the carer (who is not a close relative).

Under the Children Act 1989, a close relative is a parent, grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt (whether by full or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or stepparent.

Great grandparents are not classed as a relative and a partner of a birth parent must have been married or be married to the parent to be classed as a relative.

The period a child is cared for by the private foster carer should be continuous, but that continuity is not broken by the occasional short break.



Private Fostering and Childminding

Private fostering differs from child minding in that children in Private Foster arrangements live with the carer. Childminders can only offer day care and occasional overnight stays.

Private Fostering Arrangements are used by some parents to meet the needs of their children. Such agreements are acceptable providing specific guidelines are followed for the protection of the child. Some teenagers may choose to live with another family who is agreeable to care for them. The same rules apply.

What are your responsibilities as a Parent or Private Foster Carer?

The first consideration is; what is best for the child. If...

- you are going to or are looking after a child and think you could be a private foster carer; or,
- you are the parent of a child who is going to or is cared for by someone who is not a relative.

Contact the Local Authority for advice – you may be involved in a private fostering arrangement.

How can we help parents?

Under the Children Act 1989, the Local Authority has a duty to make sure that the arrangement is safe for the child and will provide for their needs.

The Local Authority:

- explores with parents, why the arrangement is needed.
- whether support can be provided to enable the child to stay or return home.
- clarifies how long the arrangement is likely to last, ensuring everyone is aware what is involved and the implications – this includes taking account of the child's views.
- assesses the private foster carers' suitability for the role, and that of other members of their household; ensuring that all the necessary requirements are met and the child is safe.

- the local authority has the power to prohibit a person from privately fostering if they, or their household, are judged to be unsuitable.

They also have the power to impose restrictions upon the way a person may operate as a private foster care – for example, the number of children they can care for or the length of time an arrangement should last. (Private foster carers have the right to appeal to a court against any such decisions).

How we help a Private Foster carers?

If you are caring for or thinking about caring for someone else's child, we will explain all that this entails and provide advice on;

- the assessment process
- the agreements between you and the parent.
- your rights and responsibilities.
- offer carers training to help support the placement.

How we help the child?

The first duty of the Local Authority is to ensure that the welfare of children who are privately fostered is safeguarded and their needs are met, whilst respecting the parent's right to make such private arrangements. To ensure this happens:

- the child will be visited regularly by social care.
- their wishes and feelings will be gathered.
- they will be offered an advocate.
- they will have a Child's Plan outlining their care needs and the roles and responsibilities of the Local Authority, parents, carers and other agencies involved with them.

Some things parents need to know about Private Fostering

If you are thinking about placing your child with a private foster carer or your child has moved into a Private Fostering Arrangement you should contact the Local Authority.

You remain responsible for him or her in every respect. You should be aware that:

- you retain parental responsibility for your child.
- where the child is very young, separation for longer than short periods of time can be emotionally damaging for many children.
- any person who has the care of someone else's child for 3 or more years has the right to apply to a court for an order granting them parental responsibility.
- you will need to provide the private foster carers with as much information as possible especially about any health needs including medication, allergies and diet, education needs, likes and dislikes, religious practices and important people your child wants contact with. This is so the carers can meet the needs of your child.

- Private Foster Carers need Information about how long the placement is likely to last and how you will maintain contact with your child.
- you will be encouraged to give your written agreement around the care arrangement and medical consent in case your child needs medical treatment. The Local Authority can help with this.
- you remain financially responsible for your child and will need to agree the arrangements for meeting the costs of his or her care. The Local Authority do not have a duty to provide financial assessment to Private Foster Carers.

We would strongly advise you to have a written agreement signed by both parties setting out clearly how your child's welfare is to be safeguarded and what expectations you have of each other. The Local Authority can advise and help with this.

What can parents expect from the Local Authority?

Arranging for someone to care for your child is not a decision to be taken lightly. It is important that they – and all other members of their household - are suitable and will take good care of your child.

If you tell us about a private fostering arrangement you will be asked to give us basic information about yourself, your child and the private foster carer.

The Local Authority will then:

- arrange to speak to you and the carer to ensure that they fully understand what this entails and are aware of their responsibilities.
- explore with you any other options to enable your child to remain with you or help you make the best alternative arrangements.
- gain permission from the carers to do background checks to ensure their suitability. (Private foster carers are not formally registered or approved).

- offer advice and assistance on how to make the arrangement work.

If, at any stage, the Local Authority has any concerns about the arrangements for the care of your child, they will be shared with you.

Some things private foster carers need to know

If you are caring for, or proposing to look after someone else's child by private arrangement, the first thing you need to do is contact the Local Authority: It is the duty of the Local Authority to ensure that children are safe and that persons wishing to become private foster carers, and all other adults in their household, are suitable. This means that:

- they must agree to police checks and provide references to establish their suitability to care for other people's children.
- agree for their accommodation to be visited to ensure it is suitable for the child.

- co-operate with the Local Authority so that they can complete an assessment to ensure they can meet the child's needs.
- agree to regular visits to check that the arrangements are safe and meeting the needs of the child.

If these requirements are not met, the Local Authority has the power to impose restrictions, including prohibiting persons from privately fostering children.

The decision to make a private fostering arrangement is first and foremost the parents decision. Wherever possible, the Local Authority will want to enable them to make suitable arrangements and assist the private foster carer to meet the child's needs. The Local Authority, however, do not have a duty to provide financial assistance.

When the child comes to live with you, you become responsible for his or her day to day care and upbringing. However, parents remain fully responsible for their child.

What can private foster carers expect from the Local Authority?

- provide advice and support to support the placement.
- assist you to obtain all the necessary information to meet the child's needs for the duration of the arrangement.
- regular visits to ensure that the arrangement is working well.
- be invited, along with Parents and if appropriate, the child, to regular meetings with Involved professionals to review the Child's Plan.

For further advice and information call Derby on 01332 642376 or email **PrivateFostering@derby.gov.uk**.

We can give you this information in any other way, style or language that will help you access it. Please contact us on **01332 642376** or **[derby.gov.uk/signing-service](https://www.derby.gov.uk/signing-service)**

Punjabi

ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਹੋਰ ਤਰੀਕੇ ਨਾਲ, ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਬੋਲੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਦੇ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ, ਜਿਹੜੀ ਇਸ ਤੱਕ ਪਹੁੰਚ ਕਰਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੋਵੇ। ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਇੱਥੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ: **01332 642376** ਜਾਂ **[derby.gov.uk/signing-service](https://www.derby.gov.uk/signing-service)**

Polish

Aby ułatwić Państwu dostęp do tych informacji, możemy je Państwu przekazać w innym formacie, stylu lub języku. Prosimy o kontakt: **01332 642376** lub **[derby.gov.uk/signing-service](https://www.derby.gov.uk/signing-service)**

Slovak

Túto informáciu vám môžeme poskytnúť iným spôsobom, štýlom alebo v inom jazyku, ktorý vám pomôže k jej sprístupneniu. Prosím, kontaktujte nás na tel. č.: **01332 642376** alebo na stránke **[derby.gov.uk/signing-service](https://www.derby.gov.uk/signing-service)**

Urdu

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