

ONE MINUTE GUIDE

PRIVATE FOSTERING



Private fostering is an arrangement in which a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if the child has a disability) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or legal guardian, or a relative, for a period of more than 28 days.

WHO IS DEFINED AS A RELATIVE?

Under the Children Act 1989 a relative is defined as a 'grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or step-parent'. Therefore, a child who is being cared for by their cousin, great-aunt etc could be being privately fostered.

DUTY TO NOTIFY

Parents and private foster carers have a duty to notify the Local Authority at least six weeks before any arrangement begins, or as soon as practicably possible. Where a professional or agency becomes aware that a child is being privately fostered, or suspects that this is the case they should notify the Local Authority.

ASSESSMENT

A social worker must undertake an assessment of the proposed private fostering arrangement, how it will meet the needs of the child(ren), the safety of it, and overall suitability. The social worker must ensure that both the child(ren)'s parent(s), the private foster carer, and child(ren) understand and agree on the arrangements.

SUPPORT

An allocated worker must visit the child at least every six weeks during the first year of the arrangement and at least every 12 weeks after the first year. Speaking with the child(ren) alone and seeking their views. They can offer advice to the private foster carer on how to claim relevant benefits for the child(ren), as well as parenting support and assistance in maintaining positive family relationships.

LEGALITIES

- Private foster carers do not have parental responsibility for the child this remains with the parent(s)
- The child is not a 'looked after child' this is a private arrangement made by the parent(s) and private foster carer
- The parent(s) remain financially responsible for their child(ren) and should provide the private foster carer with financial support as needed
- If the Local Authority assesses the arrangement as unsuitable the child(ren) should return to the care of their parent(s), or an alternative safe care arrangement should be made