

Private Fostering

What Is 'Private Fostering'?

A 'Privately Fostered' child is a child under the age of 16 (18 if disabled) who is cared for and accommodated by someone other than a parent or close relative* for more than 28 days.

*Close Relatives are Step Parents, Grandparents, Brothers/Sisters or Aunts/Uncles.

There are a variety of reasons why a parent may be unable to care for their own child on a short or long term basis and a private fostering arrangement can be a positive response from friends and the local community to a family in need of support. However, any child separated from their parents is potentially vulnerable and we all have responsibilities to ensure the alternative care they receive meets their welfare and safety needs.

What to do?

It is a legal requirement for people who make arrangements for a child to be privately fostered to notify us of their intentions at least 6 weeks in advance, or in emergency cases, immediately after the child becomes Privately Fostered.

The Parents and the private foster carers are responsible for notifying us.

Private foster carers should also notify us of any changes in their own circumstances whilst they are caring for the child or young person.

Private foster carers also need to let us know when a child or young person leaves their care, giving the name and address of the person they are moving on to.

What we will do?

It is our legal duty to make sure all private fostering arrangements are safe for the child or young person, but we can only do this if we are aware of the arrangement. Once informed of the arrangement it is our job to check the suitability of private foster carers, to make regular visits to the child or young person and to ensure advice, help and support is available when needed.

To notify us of a private fostering arrangement please contact your local Children's Services:

Bournemouth – Children's First: **01202 458101**
children.first@bournemouth.gov.uk

Poole – The Hub: **01202 735046**
childrenreferrals@poole.gov.uk

Information for professionals?

Private foster carers are legally required to notify us but many still don't know that they have to. This means we are unable to make sure the child or young person's welfare is safeguarded. Workers from all agencies need to help us by ensuring they are proactive in identifying and notifying us of private fostering arrangements that they are aware of. If you know a child or young person is being privately fostered and you think we are unaware please notify us or support the parent/carer to do so.

The following links provide more information about Private Fostering, the legal requirements and support for families:

[The British Association for Adoption and Fostering](#)

[Somebody Else's Child](#)