PRIVATE FOSTERING

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Is someone else looking after your child?
WHAT IS PRIVATE FOSTERING?

Private fostering is an arrangement where your child is looked after full time by an adult who is not a close relative and provides accommodation for them in their own home. Your child will be:

• Under 16 years old (18 if they have a disability)
• Cared for by someone who is not a parent, someone with parental responsibility or a close relative
• Cared for by someone else for more than 28 days

Close relatives are defined as the child’s grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles or step-parents.

Private Fostering is not the same as regular fostering. Regular foster carers have been formally assessed and approved by the Local Authority and then work with us to look after other people’s children.

WHY MIGHT YOUR CHILD BE PRIVATELY FOSTERED?

Your child may live with another family for a number of different reasons, including:

• Living with a friend because of separation, divorce or arguments at home
• Living with the family of a boyfriend/girlfriend due to a family breakdown
• A parent suffering with a long-term illness
• You needing to work away from home or you work particularly long/unsociable hours.

WHY SHOULD THE LOCAL AUTHORITY BE MADE AWARE OF PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENTS?

If your child is living in a private fostering arrangement, or if you are planning for them to live in a private fostering arrangement then, by law the local Council need to be informed.

Safeguarding your child
Private fostering is a big responsibility

We are obliged to oversee the arrangements and to promote the welfare of the child to ensure they are protected and their needs are met.

Providing Support
Taking on the care of someone else's child is not often straightforward

Misunderstandings and conflicts can easily arise, even between friends. Living away from parents for any length of time can present challenges to children and their carers, and we can offer support to all parties.
YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Although the private foster carer will be taking on the day-to-day care of your child you will still have parental responsibility. You should remain involved in all important decisions concerning your child. It is up to you to ensure the private fostering arrangements are suitable for your child and that they continue to remain so.

As the child's parent, financial responsibility remains with you. Financial arrangements are made directly between yourself and the carer.

It is important that you give your child's private foster carers as much information as possible about your child's family history, their previous life experiences and medical history and that you agree arrangements for your child's care including:

• Their education- you must ensure your child receives full time education.

• Their hobbies and interests.

• Their health needs and any ongoing or anticipated medical treatment.

• Which methods of discipline and sanctions are/aren’t acceptable to you.

• How the religious and/or cultural needs of your child will be met.

• What contact the child will have with you and with other members of your family – it is important you stay in frequent contact with your child whilst they are living away.

• When and how the carer will update you on your child’s progress.

• How will you support your child financially.

You also need to:

• Let us know if your child moves out of the house they are living in- or if you are aware of anyone else moving in.

• Let us know if you have any concerns about the level of care your child is receiving.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

A social worker will be allocated to your child to ensure they are happy, safe and well cared for. The social worker will arrange to visit your child and their carer(s), and where possible yourself as the child’s parent. A decision will be made to determine whether this would be the best arrangement for your child following an inspection of the accommodation, an interview and speaking to all other members of the carer’s household. All members of the household will need to complete a disclosure and barring service (DBS) police check and enquiries will be made to guarantee the suitability of the private foster carer who will be looking after your child.

Other agencies already involved with your child (e.g. school, health visitors etc) may be contacted.
For more information, to notify us about a private fostering arrangement and to access the support available for you please get in touch with the Contact and Referral Team.

**CONTACT AND REFERRAL TEAM**

📞 0191 424 5010 (Mon - Fri 8.30am - 5pm)  
  or 0191 456 2093 (outside of office hours)

✉️ contactandreferralteam@southtyneside.gov.uk

🌐 www.southtyneside.gov.uk/privatefostering

If you know someone who would like this information in a different format or language contact the Customer Contact Centre on 0191 427 7000.