



Private fostering

**A guide for children
and young people**



**achieving
for children**

What is private fostering?

If you are under the age of 16 (or 18 if you have a disability) and go to live with an adult (private foster carer) who is not your mum, dad, grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother, sister or step-parent, for more than 28 days, this is known as a private fostering arrangement.

The local council is not involved in making this arrangement, rather the person who normally looks after you sorts it out.

Longer than 14 days in a residential school or hospital is also considered to be private fostering.

Why are children privately fostered?

There are many reasons why children and young people are looked after by a private foster carer. For example:

- your mum or dad is ill, or have to go away and cannot look after you
- your parents might have moved to England to study or work, but are not able to find somewhere for all of the family to live together straight away. So they ask somebody to look after you for a little while
- you might have moved to England to go to school whilst your parents still live abroad, so you live with somebody else until you are able to return home
- you might be a teenager and have fallen out with your parents, and need some time away from the family home.

Who is responsible for me?

Although you might be living with someone else, your mum, dad or the person with parental responsibility for you is responsible for your health, safety and happiness. They must continue to make sure that you are being looked after properly.

Your parents should try to stay in touch with you and visit, telephone or write to you as often as possible, to make sure that you are happy and healthy.

Your parents must tell the local authority that they have arranged for somebody else to take care of you. Likewise, your private foster carer should also tell the local authority they are now looking after you.

Is there anything my private foster carer must not do?

Your private foster carer does not have permission to:

- change your name
- make you go to another school
- take you to a different part of the country
- take you abroad to a different country
- arrange for another family to look after you

If you need hospital treatment, your private foster carer must contact and ask your parent or guardian for permission, unless it is an emergency and they cannot reach your parent or guardian.

Why does the Council need to know that I am not living with my parents?

The Council needs to make sure that you are safe, happy and being looked after properly.

A social worker will visit you at your private foster carer's home and talk to you on your own to discuss the situation with you. They will continue to visit you whilst you live with your private foster carer, every six weeks for the first year and then every 12 weeks after a year. However, you have the right to ask to see or call your social worker any time, if you have something you would like to talk about.

The social worker will also speak to your private foster carer to see if they need any help or support and will check with your parents that they have agreed to you being privately fostered.

If you are not happy with the arrangements or there are concerns you are at risk, the Council can stop the private fostering arrangement.

What if I am unhappy or have a problem?

When children and young people live away from home, they often miss their friends and family. Or you might find it a little bit strange living in a new place, with new people. If you are sad or you have a problem, you can contact your social worker whenever you need to by using the email address or telephone number on the back of this leaflet.

It can be hard talking about your problems and some children find it easier to talk to somebody they already know like a friend, teacher or school nurse.

However, if you would prefer to talk to somebody you do not know, you can call the following special telephone numbers, which are free.

Childline: 0800 1111

Children's Legal Centre: 0845 120 3747

NSPCC: 0800 800 5000

To provide information of a private fostering arrangement contact:

Kingston or Richmond SPA on **020 8547 5008** (8am to 6pm)
(020 8770 5000 for out of hours/weekends)