

Notification of Private Fostering Arrangements (Oct 2019)



One Minute Guide



What is private fostering?

Private fostering is when children and young people under the age of 16 years or under 18 if they are disabled, are cared for on a full time basis by a person who is not their parent, who does not have parental responsibility or who is not a "close relative" **for 28 days or more**. Close relatives are defined as:

- grandparents
- brothers and sisters
- uncles and aunts, or
- step-parents (if married to the partner or in civil partnership)

There are many circumstances in which an unmarried partner becomes the carer for a child. **A parent's unmarried partner is not a step-parent in this context**. It is a common misunderstanding and parents/carers are often unaware of the legal requirements to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement.

Who should notify the Children & Families Service of a private fostering arrangement and when should this be done?

Any parent proposing to have their child looked after by someone other than a close relative for more than 28 days, or a carer who is proposing to look after someone else's child, must notify the Children and Families Service via 01609 780780 **at least 6 weeks before the arrangement is due to begin**.

Under the Private Fostering Arrangements (2005), any professional who comes into contact with children, are under a duty to inform the Children & Families Service about any private fostering arrangements they are made aware of. **To make a notification of a private fostering arrangement, professionals should call 01609 780780.**

What if the arrangement is less than 6 weeks away or is already in place?

A professional, parent or carer should tell the Children and Families Service via 01609 780780 within 48 hours.

What if a child is being accommodated by a school?

If it is intended for a child to remain in a residential setting outside of term time for more than 14 days this becomes a private fostering arrangement and the parent/carer must give written notice stating the estimated number of children, **not less than 2 weeks before the arrangements begin**.

Is there a limit on the number of foster children?

In cases where a person is privately fostering, or proposes to foster privately **more than three children who are not siblings at any one time, then that person needs an exemption from the local authority**.

If a private foster carer exceeds the usual fostering limit or, where exempted, privately fosters a child not named in the exemption and in so doing exceeds the usual limit they shall be considered to be running a children's home. **Any person who is considered to be running a children's home without being registered may be found to be guilty of an offence.**

Where should notice of a private fostering arrangement be made to?

A professional, parents/ or carer should notify **the Local Authority Customer Resolution Centre on 01609 780780**.

What happens after a notification has been made?

NYCC's Children & Families Service is legally responsible for the safety and welfare of all privately fostered young people in the county and will undertake an assessment and DBS check of prospective Private Foster carers.

As part of this responsibility, a Social Worker will make contact with the child, parent and carer to arrange a visit and ensure the right support is in place along with on-going monitoring of the arrangement.