

Are you looking after
someone else's child?



Information
for Carers

Think 
Private Fostering

Private Fostering – what it means for you

This leaflet is for private foster carers to give them a clear understanding of private fostering, their responsibilities, and the role of North Yorkshire County Council's Children's Social Care.

Private Fostering – what it means

Private fostering is when a young person is being cared for by an adult (the 'private foster carer') who is not their parent and:

- is not the young person's legal guardian or a close relative. Close relatives are grandparents, step-parents, brothers and step-brothers, sisters and step-sisters, aunts, uncles and civil partners of close relatives;
- the young person is under 16 (or under 18 if they are disabled);
- the arrangement lasts for more than 28 consecutive days;
- it is a full time care arrangement; and
- the young person is living in the private foster carer's home.

As a private foster carer you will be responsible for the young person's health, education, and social, physical and emotional needs. You cannot care for more than three young people (excluding your own children) at once.

If you live in North Yorkshire and are intending to foster a young person privately, you must contact Children's Social Care through the Customer Service Centre on **01609 780 780** email **customer.services@northyorks.gov.uk** at least six weeks before the arrangement is due to start. It is an offence not to. You will need to provide written notice of your intention to enter a private fostering arrangement and they will explain what you have to do.

If you already care for a young person in a private fostering arrangement you must tell Children's Social Care immediately through the Customer Service Centre. In both cases you will be sent a Standard Notification Form to complete and sign.

Why Children's Social Care has to be involved

A private fostering arrangement does not mean that the young person is in care, but North Yorkshire County Council's Children's Social Care team is legally responsible for the welfare of all privately fostered young people in the county and has to make sure that your arrangements are suitable.

A social worker needs to be involved and they will provide advice and support to you, the young person and its parents. They can also help by contacting other agencies who may be able to reduce the need for the young person to be privately fostered, if that is possible and is the best thing for them.

What happens next

Once Children's Social Care has been notified about the private fostering arrangement they have a legal duty to check it is suitable. A social worker will visit you and the parents to discuss the plans for the young person.

The social worker will request a completed Standard Notification Form and will complete a Private Fostering Arrangement Assessment Record to check:

- your suitability and the suitability of people over 16 living with you;
- DBS enhanced checks;
- the suitability of your home;
- how long the arrangement is expected to last;
- what the young person feels about the arrangement;

- what arrangements have been made for the young person's health and educational needs;
- what arrangements have been made for contact between the young person and their parents; and
- what financial arrangements are in place or are proposed.

The social worker will ask everyone over 16 in your household to sign forms so that checks can be made with the DBS, the police, the local council, GP and the education authority. If someone does not agree to this process, Social Care will not be able to check whether you are suitable to be a private foster carer.

The social worker will also ask you to make a written agreement with the parents that includes any special arrangements, like managing the young person's health or education needs, so that everyone is clear about expectations and responsibilities.

The social worker will be able to help with this by using the standard Private Fostering Arrangement Record. This will ensure that everyone knows about how long the arrangement is expected to last, what the contact arrangements are, and any other details that have been agreed.

All reports and essential information will go to a Senior Manager who will decide if the arrangement is suitable. The social worker will then write to you and the parents with the decision.

If the arrangement is agreed, what happens next?

If the arrangement is agreed, a social worker will visit you and give you their contact details. You can contact them at any time if you have concerns about the welfare of the young person or wish to request a visit.

You will be offered support and training courses, and you can ask to be referred to the Department for Work and Pensions to see if you are entitled to any benefits. You will need to think about how you will provide for the young person's particular needs to help them develop a positive sense of identity, and if they have a different racial, cultural or religious background to you this needs to be considered carefully. This could include getting information in different languages or other formats such as Braille, large print or audio, and these are available from Children's Social Care.

If the young person needs physical or learning support you will be told about the other agencies that can help. This could include health services, education, housing, youth support services and voluntary agencies.

The social worker will also give their contact details to the parents so they can get in touch at any time if they have any concerns about the welfare of their child, or if they wish to request a visit from the social worker.

If they are old enough, the young person will also get the social worker's contact details and information about what private fostering means for them.

The social worker will visit every six weeks for the first year and every twelve weeks after that. The social worker will also keep in touch with the young person's parents. This will continue for as long as the arrangement carries on. In addition you will receive a social worker from the fostering team to provide support and advice whilst you have a child.

Making the arrangement work

It is important that you work with the young person's parents and the social worker to make the arrangement successful, and you should arrange regular contact between them and their family and friends.

You should ask the parents about the young person's routine to make things as stable and secure as possible and ask for any personal items such as toys or photographs that might help them settle into their new home.

The parents will be encouraged to maintain regular contact with you and their child and they must give you a contact address and phone number. They must give this information to the social worker as well.

Financial arrangements

Any financial arrangement you make with the parents will not involve Children's Social Care. You can claim child benefit and child tax credit if the parents are not already claiming it. Financial responsibility for the young person, however, remains with Holders of Parental Responsibility, usually the parents.

If you claim any benefits you will need to tell the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that you are privately fostering a child. You should also let DWP know about any money you are receiving for private fostering.

Changes to the private fostering arrangement

You must let the social worker know within 48 hours if there are any changes to the private fostering arrangement. This includes:

- a change of address;
- someone else moving into your house;

- if you, or another person in your household is convicted of a criminal offence;
- if the child goes missing;
- the death of a young person. You must inform the social worker and the parent within two hours of getting the information;
- the death of the young person's parents; and
- the private fostering arrangement ending – the social worker needs to know the young person's new address, the new carer and their relationship to the child.

What happens if the arrangement is not agreed?

We can stop someone becoming a private foster carer if we decide they or their home are not suitable. If that happens to you we will write to you explaining why.

If you wish to appeal against the decision you will have to do so within 14 days of receiving the written decision. You should contact the social worker first, who will discuss the situation with the General Manager and attempt to resolve it. If this is not successful you can complain to the North Yorkshire County Council Complaints, Commendations and Information Team on **01609 534193**. You can also appeal to the Family Proceedings Court.

We will also give the parent any advice and support they need about making alternative arrangements for the young person.

Contact us

W: www.northyorks.gov.uk E: customer.services@northyorks.gov.uk

T: **01609 780 780** (Monday to Friday 8.00am - 5.30pm closed weekends and bank holidays)

North Yorkshire County Council, County Hall, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL7 8AD

You can request this information in another language or format at

www.northyorks.gov.uk/accessibility