



North Yorkshire
County Council

Is someone else looking
after your child?



Information
for Parents

Think 
Private Fostering

Private Fostering – what it means for you

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

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 adult is planning a private fostering arrangement;
- 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.

The private foster carer is responsible for the young person's health, education, and social, physical and emotional needs. They cannot care for more than three young people (excluding their own children) at once.

If you live in North Yorkshire and you are considering a private fostering arrangement for your child, or know that your child is being privately fostered, you must tell Children's Social Care immediately through the Customer Service Centre on **01609 780 780** email **customer.services@northyorks.gov.uk**. It is an offence not to. 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 your child 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, your child and the private foster carer.

They can also help by contacting other agencies who may be able to reduce the need for your child 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 told about the private fostering arrangement, they have a legal duty to check it is suitable. A social worker will visit you and the private foster carer to discuss the plans for your child.

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

- the suitability of the private foster carer and the suitability of people over 16 living with them;
- DBS clearance;
- the suitability of the home where your child will be living;
- how long the arrangement is expected to last;
- what your child feels about the arrangement;
- what arrangements have been made for your child's health and educational needs;
- what arrangements have been made for contact between you and your child; and
- what financial arrangements are in place or are proposed.

The social worker will ask everyone over 16 in the 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 in the household does not agree to this process, Social Care will not be able to check whether the person is suitable to be a private foster carer and the arrangement cannot go ahead.

The social worker will also ask you to make a written agreement with the carer that includes any special arrangements, like managing your child'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 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 be sent to a Senior Manager in Children's Social Care who will decide if the arrangement is suitable. The social worker will then write to you and the private foster carer with the decision.

If the arrangement is agreed, what happens next?

If the arrangement is agreed, the social worker will visit the private foster carer and give them their contact details. The private foster carer can contact them at any time if they have concerns about the welfare of your child or want to arrange a visit.

The carer will have a fostering social worker to provide support and advice and help access training courses that may help them. They can be referred to the Department for Work

and Pensions to see if they are entitled to any benefits if they want. If your child has a different racial, cultural or religious background from their private foster carer, this needs to be considered carefully. The carer will need to think about how they will provide for your child's particular needs to help them develop a positive sense of identity. This could include getting information in different languages.

Information in other formats such as Braille, large print or audio is also available from Children's Social Care.

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

If your child is old enough they will also get the social worker's contact details and information about what private fostering means for them. If they need physical or learning support the carer 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 visit every six weeks for the first year and every twelve weeks after that. The social worker will also keep in touch with you and this will continue for as long as the arrangement carries on.

Making the arrangement work

It is important that the private foster carer works with you and the social worker to make the arrangement successful. Private foster carers should arrange regular contact between the young person, your family and friends. They should ask you about your child's routine to make things as stable and

secure as possible, and for any personal items such as toys or photographs that might help them settle into their new home.

You will be encouraged to maintain regular contact with your child and the private foster carer and you must give them a contact address and phone number. You must give this information to the social worker as well.

Financial arrangements

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

If the private foster carer is claiming any benefits they will need to inform the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that they are privately fostering a child. They should also let DWP know about any money that they are receiving for private fostering.

Changes to the private fostering arrangement

The private foster carer needs to let the social worker know within 48 hours if there are any changes to the private

fostering arrangement. These include:

- a change of address
- someone else moving into the house
- if they, or another person in their household is convicted of a criminal offence;
- if the child goes missing; and
- the private fostering arrangement ending – the social worker needs to know the young person's new address, the new carers 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 we will write to them explaining why.

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

We will give you any advice and support you need about making alternative arrangements for your child.

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