

# Private Fostering

**Private fostering is defined in law as an arrangement that is made privately without the involvement of the local authority.**

It applies to the care of a child under the age of 16 (or under 18 if disabled) by someone **other than** a parent or close relative, for 28 days or more (including occasional short breaks).

A **'close relative'** is a grandparent, brother, sister, aunt or uncle, step-parent, whether of 'full blood' or 'half-blood' or by marriage.

**A 'private' foster carer is:**

- Extended family e.g. a cousin or great aunt
- A friend of the family
- The parent of a friend of the child
- Someone unknown to the child or young person's family

**How is responsibility shared?**

- The private foster carer is responsible for providing day-to-day care of the child or young person & promoting & safeguarding their welfare
- Private foster carer's rights come from the voluntary agreement made with the parent
- Responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the child or young person's welfare remains with the person(s) with parental responsibility.

'Private' foster carers may be entitled to support and financial help.

The Sheffield Families Adopters and Carers Team (FACT) will assess the arrangement to see what is in the best interests of the child, including:

- listening to what the child wants
- arranging support for the child and the carer
- helping carer to apply to be a private foster carer
- ensure that the child's cultural, linguistic and religious needs are being met
- undertake regular visits to see the child & carer
- signpost to other agencies as necessary

If they think the arrangement is unsuitable they will decide what action to take to safeguard the child's welfare.

**Host families:**

If your setting arranges for students under 18 to live with a host family e.g. as part of a school trip or exchange programme, this could be considered as a **"private fostering"** arrangement under the Children Act 1989 and/or the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

**The Children Act 1989 places a duty on:**

- Parents
- Any person who proposes to privately foster a child under 16 years old
- All professionals involved (including education settings)

... to notify the local authority of an intention to begin a private foster care arrangement immediately or within 6 weeks of it starting.

**Why are children in private foster care?**

Most frequently, young people are in private foster care for the following reasons:

- children from other countries sent to live in the UK with extended family
- host families for language schools
- parental ill-health
- parents have moved away but the child e.g. stays at school to finish their exams
- teenagers estranged from their families

**The Ofsted report into Private Fostering also refers to these reasons:**

- children brought to the UK for adoption
- children at independent boarding schools placed with host families for holidays
- trafficked children

Research shows there are 10,000 children & young people in Britain living in informal fostering arrangements unknown to local authorities.

**This can make children vulnerable to abuse.**

**All notifications to the Local Authority should be made to the service below with relevant details of the child, their parents and the carers**

**Families, Adopters & Carers Team (FACT)**

**Tel 2734998, Mon–Fri, 1.00–4.00pm**

**If unsure, ring the above number for advice or email: [adoptionssupport@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:adoptionssupport@sheffield.gov.uk)**

**Useful web links/resources:**

- [Private Fostering, Sheffield City Council](#)
- [The Children \(Private Arrangements for Fostering\) Regulations 2005](#)
- [www.privatefostering.org.uk](http://www.privatefostering.org.uk)
- [Private fostering: better information, better understanding \(Ofsted 2014\)](#)