

# Private Fostering

## Information for Parents and Carers

This leaflet is information for parents and carers to give a clear understanding of private fostering and the role of East Riding of Yorkshire Council Children's Services.



## What is a private fostering arrangement?

Private Fostering is when a child under the age of 16 (or under 18 if disabled) is being or it is intended that they are, looked after for more than 28 days by someone who is not a parent, person with parental responsibility or a close relative. Private foster carers may be adults from the extended family such as a cousin or great aunt/uncle. They may also be a friend of the family or other connected person.

## Who is regarded as a close relative?

A close relative is someone who is a grandparent, brother, sister, aunt and uncle (whether by full relation or through marriage or civil partnership), or a step-parent.

## When is the arrangement not regarded as Private Fostering?

A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for him or her has done so for fewer than 28 days without a break in the care. If the child visits their parent or has an occasional overnight stay, this will not break the period of the Private Fostering arrangement, as long as the intention is for the child to return to the same Private Foster Carer.

## How is this different from other fostering arrangements?

A Private Fostering arrangement is different from a local authority foster placement because the local authority is not involved in making the arrangement and is not paying for the child's care.

## Do you need to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement?

**Yes.** Many young people in a private fostering arrangement, parents or private foster carers are not aware that there is a legal requirement to notify the local authority of such an arrangement for their child.



## **What responsibility does the East Riding of Yorkshire Council have?**

The East Riding of Yorkshire Council has a responsibility for assessing and monitoring Private Fostering arrangements. Responsibility for ensuring the welfare and safety of children who are being Privately Fostered rests with the Council's Children and Young People's Safeguarding and Support Services and is undertaken by the Children's Safeguarding Teams in the area where the Private Fostering arrangement is taking place.

## **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 the household where the privately fostered child is being cared for to ensure that the arrangement is suitable. Checks will also be made in respect of the Private Foster Carers to ensure that they are suitable to look after the child. As part of the assessment, the social worker will speak with the child and his or her parents. The completed assessment will be presented to the fostering panel and the Agency Decision Maker will determine whether the arrangement is suitable and is able to meet the child's needs. If the arrangement is suitable, a social worker from the Children's Looked After Team will be allocated, they will visit regularly, provide advice, arrange multi-agency review meetings and update the assessment every six months in order to monitor the arrangement. If the Private Foster Carer, or their household, is regarded as unsuitable, the local authority can take action to prohibit the Private Foster Carer from caring for the child.

## **What are the reporting requirements?**

The following people all have a legal duty to notify the local authority of a proposed or actual private fostering arrangement:

The private foster carer must notify the local authority at least six weeks before the arrangement is to commence. If the arrangement is to commence within six weeks the notification must be given immediately.

The notice must also be given immediately if the child is being privately fostered but prior notice was not given, e.g. if the child was placed in an emergency, or if it was not anticipated that the arrangement would continue for 28 days or longer.

A parent, or any person who is involved in making the arrangement must notify the local authority as soon as possible after the arrangement has been made.

A parent and any other person with parental responsibility for the child who has not been involved in making the arrangements, but is aware of the proposed arrangement must notify the local authority as soon as they become aware of the arrangement.

The notification is made to the local authority where the child will be fostered, and must include information about the child, the child's parents and the carer as well as details of the expected length of, and reasons for the arrangement.

## Where can I find out more information?

Further information about Private Fostering for parents, children, Private Foster Carers and professionals can be found on the East Riding Safeguarding Children Partnership website:

[www.erscp.co.uk](http://www.erscp.co.uk)

The Department for Education also has further information on private fostering arrangements:

Department for Education - private fostering arrangements

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

## East Riding of Yorkshire Children's Safeguarding Hub

If you are a young person, family member, carer, or member of the public and you want to discuss a child that you are worried about, or make a self-referral you can contact the Children's Safeguarding Hub:

During office hours (Monday to Thursday 08.30am to 5pm, Friday 8.30 am to 4.30pm) you can contact the Children's Safeguarding Hub by telephone on (01482) 395500 - Choose 'Option 1' and a social worker will be able to talk through your worries with you and discuss what happens next.

Outside of office hours, please contact the emergency duty team on (01482) 393939