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Private fostering

Someone else's child, everyone's concern

- Is your child living away from home?
- Are you looking after someone else's child?
- Do you know of a child that is living with someone who is not a close relative?

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Private Fostering

By law Children's Services have to check that privately fostered children are properly looked after. If you have answered yes to any of the questions on the front cover of this leaflet then this could be a private fostering arrangement and Children's Services need to know about it.

This leaflet explains a bit more about private fostering, your responsibility and the responsibility of Children's Services in ensuring the wellbeing of children in Central Bedfordshire Council areas.

Private Fostering – what is it?

A private fostering arrangement is essentially one that is made without the involvement of the council, for the care of a child/young person under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) by someone who is not a parent or close relative (or the person with parental responsibility for the child) for 28 days or more. Sometimes Children's Services may already be involved with the child/young person, their family or the private foster carer.

The Children Act 1989 defines a 'close relative' as a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt of the child. They could be a full or half relation and could be related by marriage. The term also includes a step-parent.

A cohabitee of the mother or father would not qualify as a relative, neither would extended family such as great aunt/uncle or parents' cousin.

“Private Fostering is an arrangement that is made without the involvement of a local authority”

An example of children who might be privately fostered could include:

- Children at boarding schools who do not return to their parents during school holidays;
- Children on holiday exchanges (where these last 25 days or more);
- Children who are sent to this country for education or health care by their parents;
- Children brought from abroad with a view to adoption;
- Teenagers temporarily estranged from their parents or living with the family of a friend;
- Children whose parents work unsocial hours, making normal child care difficult;
- Children of asylum seekers whose parents are not in this country but were brought in by someone and so were not unaccompanied at the time of arrival;
- Children staying with another family because their parents are separated or divorced or because of arguments at home.

“Do you know of a child that is living with someone that is not a close relative?”



Are you considering private fostering? If so –

- You must tell us in writing at least six weeks before the child comes to live with you;
- If the child is placed in an emergency you must tell us within 48 hours of the child coming to live with you;
- If you already have a child living with you then you must tell us immediately;
- 48 hours before the child is going to leave, you must tell us where the child is going to move to and who with;
- Private foster carers do not hold parental responsibility for the child or young person they are looking after.

“You must inform your local authority if you are considering fostering privately”



If you are the parent of a child being privately fostered –

- You must tell us as soon as possible about the arrangement;
- You will keep parental responsibility for your child, participating in all decisions about them;
- You must provide the prospective carer with as much information as possible to assist them with caring for your child properly, such as health information, dietary preferences, school, hobbies, religion and ethnicity;
- You are responsible for ensuring that the proposed private fostering arrangement is suitable for your child.

“You will keep parental responsibility for your child if he/she is privately fostered”



Once Children's Services know about a private fostering arrangement a social worker will –

Visit the home where the child will be living;


Visit and speak to the proposed private foster carer and to all members of their household to get information about them and their family;


Visit and speak to the child and where possible speak to the parents of, or other person with parental responsibility for the child;


Advise you about financial support which can be offered to help you care for the child. (For further information contact your local authority).

A social worker from Children's Services will visit you and the child regularly in order to help make sure all the child's needs are met.

If you require any further information, information in your own language, or if you want to tell us about a private fostering arrangement please contact the Access and Referral Team on:

 **0300 300 8585**

 **accessreferral@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk**

 **or write to:** Access and Referral Team, Central Bedfordshire Council, Watling House, High Street North, Dunstable, LU6 1LF

“As a private foster carer you may be eligible to claim financial help for the child”



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