

PRIVATE FOSTERING

Guide for Children
& Young People



Are you living away from your parents?

- Are you living with someone who isn't your parent or a close relative? A close relative means, grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, legal guardian or other person with parental responsibility.
- Are you under 16 years old, or 18 if you are disabled?
- Is there a likelihood you will be living there for more than 28 days?

If you have said yes to these questions, then you are being cared for in a private fostering arrangement.

What is private fostering?

Private fostering is when you are under 16 years old (or 18 if you have a disability) and you live with an adult who is not your mum, dad, aunt, uncle or grandparent. Your mum or dad will have agreed with this person that you will live with them for a certain length of time. This person is called a private foster carer.

There are many reasons why your mum, dad or guardian might need to ask someone they trust to look after you. Maybe your parents need to go into hospital for a long period of time or are going to be living abroad.

The person who they ask might not be a close relative; it may be a friend of theirs or a distant relative, such as your mum's aunty or your dad's cousin.

Your mum, dad or guardian will not usually do this without a great deal of thought. It is important that your mum, dad or guardian have discussed with you why they want someone to look after you and what arrangements should be made for you in case you become ill or have trouble at school.

You don't need to worry about being looked after in a private fostering arrangement, you can enjoy it. Lots of children are living in private arrangements made by their parents or carers.

Why do other people need to be involved?

Children's Services at Wirral Council are required by law to know whether young people are living with someone who isn't a parent or close relative. This is to make sure that we know our young people are protected, safe and happy and to prevent children and young people becoming unhappy and potentially vulnerable.

It is our role and responsibility to make sure you are being cared for properly and that you get any help you may need.

In order to do this, you will have a dedicated social worker who will come and visit where you are staying and find out whether:

- you are happy to stay in the arrangement
- you can get to school and home again from where you are living
- you think the house is suitable for you to live in
- your parents/carers are staying in touch with you
- everything is being done to help you live happily and safely
- your religious, cultural and medical needs have been sorted out and discussed with you

The person caring for you will also be visited by a social worker who will check they are looking after you properly and ensuring your needs are being met.

How often will my social worker come to see me?

After the first visit the social worker will come and see you within six weeks, then again six weeks after that until you have been living with the private foster carer for a year. After that, the social worker will visit you around every 12 weeks.

You can contact your social worker at any time. They will leave you their contact numbers and you can ask to see them when you want to. A social worker will also visit your private foster carers every six weeks during the first year and every 12 weeks in the second year.

What will my carers do for me?

- Give you regular meals – like breakfast, dinner and tea
- Make sure that your hair and skin are properly looked after
- Make sure you have warm clean clothes and a bed of your own
- Make sure you go to school so you can learn
- Take you to the doctor or the hospital if you are sick or injured or if you need vaccinations
- Take you to the dentist so your teeth are looked after properly.
- Make sure you have a chance to make friends and to enjoy sports and hobbies that you like
- Help you stay in touch with your family
- Help you follow your religion and customs that are important to you and your family

Are there things private foster carers must not do?

Your parents or relatives who have made the arrangement, should still make any major decision about your life. You are still their child.

Your parents may have discussed your care with the private foster carer and come to an agreement about the different decisions which can be made.

Private foster carers cannot:

- Change your name
- Change your school
- Move you to another family
- Take you to another part of this country without asking your mum, dad or guardian's permission. They need to say 'yes'
- Take you overseas to another country without asking your mum, dad or guardian's permission. They need to say 'yes'
- Say yes to any serious medical treatment, your own mum, dad or guardian have to agree to this. If they cannot be contacted a doctor will make that decision

What should you do if you are not happy?

If you are not happy you must talk to your mum, dad, guardian or social worker (your social worker will give you their contact details) OR you may find it easier to talk to someone you see every day like a class teacher or school nurse.

You can also contact a support person (called an advocate) who will listen to any concerns you have and will be able to talk about your concerns on your behalf, if you wish. The support people are provided by a company called Barnado's and their number is **0151 650 5488**.

If you feel you are unhappy about anything, you can use the Comments, Compliments and Complaints form that has been given to you by your social worker.

What else will my social worker do?

Your social worker will need to complete a single assessment to check that your needs and wishes can be fulfilled in your circumstances.

Your social worker will also complete a private fostering assessment to check that your private foster carers can provide the right environment for you to live.

Both of the assessments are seen by managers who decide whether it is safe for you to stay in the proposed arrangement and your needs are being met.

What if we have concerns regarding the care you are receiving?

In some circumstances we may consider that the private fostering arrangement is not suitable for you. If this is the case, you may go back to live with your mum, dad or guardian with help from us or you may go to live with another relative (like your grandparent) or an assessment is completed of your current situation and a plan agreed to ensure your needs are met.

What if everything is ok?

You can stay living within the private fostering arrangement and we will continue to keep visiting you. When you become 16 (18 if you have a disability) you are no longer considered to be in a private fostering arrangement.

If you want some additional support and help once you turn 16 you can access leaving care support in line with the leaving care offer.

Contact us

If you would like further information about private fostering please call us on **0151 606 2008**.