

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENTS

INFORMATION & ADVICE FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE



What is a Private Fostering Arrangement?

If you are under 16 (or 18, if you are disabled) and your mum or dad have asked someone who is not a close relative to look after you, or you have chosen to stay with a friend for 28 days or longer this is called **private fostering** and special rules apply.

This only applies if you are staying overnight and not just during the day

Why might they do this?

There are all sorts of reasons why this might happen. For example:

- **Illness** - your mum or dad is not well and cannot care for you for a while; *or*
- **Work** – or sometimes education - means they have to go away for a while; *or*
- **A break** - you and your parent(s) need a break from each other; *or*
- **Left home** - you have been unhappy at home and have left to stay with a friend; *or*
- **Thrown out** – by a parent or step parent following an argument

*Often these arrangements are made with grandparents or aunts and uncles – then **it is not** private fostering. But sometimes they live too far away – or you have chosen to stay with a friend or neighbour – then **it is** private fostering*

Is it like other types of fostering?

Sometimes when children cannot live at home or when they have been mistreated or neglected, the local council places them in a foster home. This is called being “in care” or “looked after by the local authority”. The Council decides where those children will live, not their parents.

*It is **not** the same as being “privately fostered” – your parent(s) have decided who you will live with and for how long.*

Who is responsible for you?

Your parent(s) are still responsible for you when you go to live with private foster carers. This means that they should still be involved in all the important decisions about your life – your health, your education, your religion, your future and so on. Your parent(s) and the private foster carers should make arrangements for you to see your family and friends. You can also arrange to keep in touch with them by phone, by texting, by email or by writing a letter.

It is also important that your parent(s) keep in touch with the private foster carers to make sure you are being well cared for.

What are the Private Foster Carer's responsibilities?

The private foster carer should care for you as though you were a member of their own extended family. They provide you with a home for so long as it is needed, see that you go to school, have regular health checks – immunisations, visits to the dentist and so on just as any caring parent would. They also make sure you keep in touch with your parents, brothers and sisters (if they are not with you), other family members and your friends. And if you have hobbies – Scouts, Brownies, swimming clubs, music lessons and so on – they will make sure you keep them up.

They will also help you to follow any religion and customs that are important to you and your family.

Things that Private Foster Carers cannot do

Private foster carers are not your parents and do not have legal responsibility for you. This means they cannot make big decisions in your life – such as changing your school, your name, taking you out of the country (without your parent's permission), or giving their consent for you to have medical treatment (other than minor or emergency treatment).

How does it work?

Ideally, the need for a "private fostering arrangement" will have been discussed with you and your views will have been taken into account by your parents. You should know who you are going live with, when and for how long. At the very least, you should have had the opportunity for a visit before moving in.

Sometimes things do not always work out that way – accidents and illness sometimes mean plans have to be made after, rather than before, you go to live with a private foster carer.

Your parent(s) and the private foster carers should agree the practical arrangements for your care and your parent(s) should ensure that the private foster has all the

information required to understand your needs and how to provide you with proper care.

Why is the council involved?

First and foremost, the arrangement is between your parent(s) and the private foster carer. The council does not make the arrangements but, for your sake, it needs to know that they have been made with your needs in mind and that you have been placed with someone who will keep you safe and care for you properly.

This is even more important if the arrangement is planned to last for a long time or if you are not going to be able to see your parents for a long time.

The law says that the council must make sure that you will be properly cared for.

When must the council be told?

They should be told 6 weeks before you are due to move to the private foster carer's home. If the plans are made more quickly, they should be told as soon as possible.

What happens next?

A social care worker will visit the home to see where you will be staying and meet the family you will be living with. They will check that they are a suitable family and that they have all the help and advice they need to make it work for you. They will also talk with your parents to make sure they understand what they have to do to make it work and that they will provide the private foster carer with the help and information they need.

They will also want to talk with you to make sure that you are happy with the arrangements that have been made, know how to get in touch with your parents and who else to turn to for help or advice if they should arise.

Regular visits

During the first year, a social care worker will visit you at least every 6 weeks to make sure all is going well. They will want to see you on your own and may even suggest taking you out for a walk, to the park or for a snack.

They understand that you may find it hard to tell them if there is a problem if you are in the private foster carer's home – it can be easier to talk when you are out.

Regular reviews

Twice a year, your social care worker will arrange for a meeting between yourself, your private foster carer and, if possible, your parents to meet and look at how things are going.

The meeting will be friendly but formal and give everyone the chance to say how they feel things are working out and if there are any problems to be sorted.

If there is a problem

The social care worker's job is to help sort out any problems. It may be something very simple – for example, you don't like some of the meals but are too embarrassed to say so. It may be more complicated – you haven't heard from your parent(s) and are really worried about it.

Or, if you really are unhappy living with the private foster carer and need someone to help you tell your parents about it.

Can the social care worker help with other problems?

The social care worker is there for you. You can discuss any problems that have arisen to do with your health, education, family or friendships – indeed anything that you are worried about.

Social care workers do understand that you may not wish to talk to them and so they may spend some time making sure that you know how to share a problem and get help if you need to.

How do I contact the social care worker?

You don't have to wait for the next visit – you can contact your social care worker whenever you need to.

There are also a numbers you can ring if you need to talk to someone urgently.

For further advice and information or to get a copy of this document in a community language, on audio tape or in large print:

Ring Call Derbyshire

08456 058 058

callcentre@derbyshire.go.uk

YOUR SOCIAL CARE WORKER'S DETAILS ARE	Name	
	Telephone	
	Address	
	Email	
OTHER USEFUL NUMBERS		
CHILDLINE	Emotional support for children and young people on issues relating to child abuse, bullying etc.	0800 1111 (24hour free service)
		email info@childline.org.uk www.childline.org.uk ,
CHILDREN'S LEGAL CENTRE	Represents the interests of children and young people in matters of law and policy affecting them. Providing free advice and information service by letter and phone.	01206 873820
		email clc@essex.ac.uk www.childrenslegalcentre.com
DERBYSHIRE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS & ADVOCACY SERVICE	Run by the County Council. It provides advice & support to children & young people in Derbyshire and can take up issues on their behalf. It is independent of social care.	office: 0808 100 2878 mobile: 07785 315 922 (ring or text)
NATIONAL YOUTH ADVOCACY SERVICE	Provides information, advice, advocacy and legal representation to young people up to 25 through a network of advocates.	0800 616101
		email help@nyas.net www.nyas.net
SEXWISE	Helpline providing information, advice and guidance for young people aged 12-18 on sexuality and sexual health. Issues dealt with include contraception, pregnancy, family planning clinics, sexually transmitted diseases, peer pressure and relationships.	0800 28 29 30
		www.ruthinking.co.uk
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SUPPORT	Children & young people support – provide details of many helplines and websites where children and young people can get information, advice and support. There are also specialist helplines which deal with specific issues e.g. eating disorders, abuse, sexuality, drugs, self harm,	Helpline: 020 8554 9004 (hours vary so ring for details)
		mailto:info@supportline.org.uk

	bullying, bereavement, etc	
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