

# PRIVATE FOSTERING

## Guidance for Parents



**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council



# Is someone else caring for your child?

If your child is being looked after by someone who isn't a close relative for 28 days or more, this may be considered a private fostering arrangement.

## What is private fostering?

Private fostering occurs when a child under 16 (or under 18 if they have a disability) is cared for by someone who is not a close relative.

Examples of private foster carers include:

- Extended family members like cousins or great-aunts/uncles
- Family friends
- Individuals referred to as “aunt” or “uncle” but not biologically related
- A parent's partner or ex-partner who is not married to the child's parent

**Note:** If the local authority has formally placed the child with someone, or if the child is living with a close relative (e.g. grandparent, step-parent, aunt or uncle) this is not Private Fostering.

# Setting up a private fostering arrangement

If you're planning for someone else to care for your child, you must notify Darlington Children's Services.

Children's Services are legally responsible for ensuring the child's safety and wellbeing in these arrangements. They offer support to carers.

Even when privately fostered, parents retain full parental responsibility. This includes decisions about education, healthcare and whether the child can travel abroad.



# Assessment and approval

Once notified, Children's Services will:

- Send you a form to complete
- Assign a Social Worker to visit you, your child, and the carers
- Evaluate the suitability of the carers and their household
- Consider your child's views, health, education, and contact arrangements

All adults in the carer's household (aged 16+) must undergo background checks (DBS and others).

A formal assessment will be carried out and a decision will be made as to whether the arrangement is suitable.

You will be informed of the decision.

## If the arrangement is not approved

If the carers or their home are deemed unsuitable, or if the arrangement is not in the child's best interest, Children's Services will notify you of this.

# Making the arrangement work

To help your child adjust:

- Share your contact details with the carers and Social Worker
- Inform carers about your child's routines
- Provide personal items like toys or photos
- Ensure carers can support your child's cultural, religious, or racial identity
- Work with the social worker and carers to create a written agreement outlining responsibilities

## Financial considerations

Financial support for daily care is not provided by Children's Services. Any financial arrangements should be agreed upon between you and the private foster carers. Details should be included in the written agreement.

If you receive benefits such as Child Benefit, you **MUST** inform the Department for Work and Pensions that you are no longer caring for your child.

# Need help or more information?

Contact Children's Services on:

**01325 406222**

- Discuss a potential or existing private fostering arrangement
- Get advice or report changes in circumstances

For further details visit:

**WWW.DARLINGTON.GOV.UK/  
CHILDREN-AND-YOUNG-PEOPLE/  
CHILDRENS-SOCIAL-CARE/  
PRIVATE-FOSTERING**



Follow our QR code to access the website for more information on Private Fostering



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