

# Is someone else looking after your child?

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If your child is living with someone who is not an immediate relative for more than 28 days, it may mean you are in a private fostering arrangement.

## WHAT IS PRIVATE FOSTERING?

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A Private Fostering arrangement is essentially one that is made, without the involvement of a local authority, for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative for 28 days or more.

### **A private foster carer is not:**

- A grandparent
- A brother or sister
- An uncle or aunt
- A foster carer approved by Solihull Council

### **Some situations where a child might be being privately fostered are:**

- Children living with a friend's family because of separation or divorce
- Children sent to this country for education or health reasons by birth parents living overseas
- Teenagers living with friends or family because of strained relationships at home
- Children whose parents work or study at unsociable hours meaning it is difficult for them to live at home.

Private fostering is sometimes described as 'hidden' fostering as many parents often don't realise that they are in a private fostering arrangement.

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MY CHILD?

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You are still responsible for your child while they are living in private foster care. It is your duty to support them financially and it is important that you stay in contact with your child and have as much involvement in their life as possible.

You should give the carer as much information as you can about your child, such as likes and dislikes, bedtime routine and cultural values so that the carer can ensure that your child's needs are met. The carer is responsible for making sure your child attends school (ideally the same school they went to before the arrangement to minimise disruption) and is also responsible for making sure your child gets any necessary medical attention including GP/Dentist/Optician appointments.

You should write down any arrangements you make with the private foster carers outlining the expectations. Your child's social worker can help and advise you about this.

### **WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE IN A PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENT**

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The law says that you must notify us at least six weeks before your child goes to live with a private foster carer, or immediately if the arrangement is made in an emergency. Solihull Council has a legal duty to make sure that your child is safe and well looked after - It is an offence not to report a private fostering arrangement.

## HOW WILL A SOCIAL WORKER BE INVOLVED?

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Where the private fostering arrangement is agreed by the local authority as suitable for your child(ren) a social worker will visit your child and the carer at the carer's home every six weeks in the first year of the arrangement to check that all the needs of your child are being met and that things are going well. The social worker will talk to your child about their wishes and feelings about the private fostering arrangement. If the arrangement continues after one year, the visits may reduce to every three months. If circumstances change and the arrangement comes to an end, you must let us know immediately.



## CONTACT US

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If you think you might be in a private fostering arrangement, please call us on 0121 788 4300. For more information visit <https://bit.ly/2krupeZ>