

**Are you doing someone a favour  
and caring for their child?**

**Is your child living  
with another family?**

**Do yourself a favour  
and tell the council**

## Who to contact?

To tell the council about a Private Fostering arrangement or for more information, please contact:-

Duty Social Worker  
Children's Services  
Cassaton House  
43-49 Fawcett Street  
Sunderland  
SR1 1RR  
Tel: 0191 520 5555

Email: [childrens.services@ssd.sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:childrens.services@ssd.sunderland.gov.uk)  
[www.sunderland.gov.uk](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk)

This information can be made available in large print, Braille, audio and other languages. Please contact the communications service on 0191 520 5555 or email [childrens.info@ssunderland.gov.uk](mailto:childrens.info@ssunderland.gov.uk).

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## Introduction

From time to time, children may go to live with another family for a little while. This could be for lots of reasons like:-

- A family crisis
- A parent being ill
- Teenagers living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Children coming from abroad for education or health care
- Children living with a friend's family because their parents have separated or divorced or after an argument at home.

When this happens it's known as a "Private Fostering" arrangement.

## What is Private Fostering?

Private Fostering is when a parent makes arrangements for their child (who is under 16, or under 18 if they are disabled) to live with someone who isn't a close relative (an example of a close relative is an aunt/uncle, grandparent, brother/sister or step-parent), for longer than 28 days. The person who has been asked to look after the child is known as a Private Foster Carer.

It is now the law for anyone who is involved in or knows about a Private Fostering arrangement, to tell the local council about it. This should be done at least six weeks beforehand. If the arrangement wasn't planned that far ahead, the council should be told no later than 48 hours after it has started.

## What should the Private Foster Carer do?

Private Foster Carers must tell the council about the arrangement. They should keep the council informed of any changes in their household or if they move house. They must tell the council when the arrangement ends, why it has ended and give the name and address of the person who is now looking after the child.

## What should parents do?

Parents should tell the council about the arrangement. Even parents who have not been directly involved in making the arrangements also have a legal duty to tell the council.

Parents keep their legal responsibility as a parent and so should still be involved in all decisions about the child's welfare and upbringing.

Parents should give the Private Foster Carer as much information as possible about the child including health records, what kind of food they like, hobbies, religion and culture.

## What should other people do?

Anyone who is aware of a Private Fostering arrangement has a legal duty to tell the council. That includes people such as:-

- Doctors
- Health Visitors
- Teachers
- Housing Officers
- Community Workers

## What will the council do?

The council has to make sure that the child is safe and being well looked after, and that the accommodation and care being given is satisfactory.

They will do everything they can to support the arrangement and make sure that:-

- Any physical, social and emotional needs of the child are being met
- Any religious, cultural and language needs are being met
- Arrangements have been made for the child's education
- There is enough money to cover the cost of caring for the child. This may be money from the parents or Welfare Benefits.
- The child is able to keep in touch with their family and that their wishes are listened to and their feelings taken into account

The council will also:-

- Give advice to Private Foster Carers
- Hold regular meetings to see how things are going

The council keeps a register of all Private Fostering arrangements and regularly visits Private Foster Carers and the children they are looking after to make sure the child is well cared for.

## What if the council isn't happy with the arrangement?

If the council has any concerns they will tell the parents (or the person who has parental responsibility if this is different). If the child was unable to return to their parents, the council will decide what action to take to make sure the child is kept safe and well.