

# Contact us on 01494 586454



Private Fostering is very different from the care of children provided by Buckinghamshire County Council through approved Foster Carers.

You have a **DUTY** to notify Social Care if you know or suspect that there is a Private Fostering arrangement that has not been reported.

## Private Fostering

Private Fostering is defined within the Children Act 1989 (Part IX) as a child under the age of 16 years (or under 18 years if disabled) being placed for more than 28 days in the care of someone who is who is not their parent, guardian, step-parent, grandparent, immediate aunt, uncle, brother or sister. This arrangement is made by private arrangement between the parent and carer.

**Private Fostering** occurs when a child:

- is an adolescent temporarily estranged from their parents
- is at boarding school and does not return to their parents during holidays
- is on a holiday exchange
- is brought from abroad with a view to adoption
- needs care as their parents work unsocial hours
- needs care due to parental illness
- Is brought into the country by someone and was not unaccompanied at the time of arrival, or whose parents are asylum seekers not in this country.

One of the problems with **Private Fostering** arrangements is that the needs and rights of children for support, protection, physical and emotional development are being neglected by an inadequate system of regulation.

A **Privately Fostered** child does not necessarily understand the arrangements. They may not be informed of their rights and therefore can be traumatised by the experience (Philpot, 2001; Holman 2003).

Birth parents who want to make private arrangements for the care of young children receive no help in identifying suitable people from their local authority, as there is no approval mechanism or maintained register. Birth parents have to make their own enquires and identify their own carers.

Despite this being an offence under the Children Act 1989, councils are often not being notified about **Private Fostering** arrangements until after they have started.

The above is a cause for concern, as privately fostered children, without the protection provided through the regulations, are a particularly vulnerable group.

## Who makes arrangements?

Arrangements are usually made by the birth parents and the private foster carer.

## What birth parents must do

- Retain parental responsibility, initiating and participating in all the decision-making processes in the placement.
- Provide the prospective carer with as much information about the child as is possible, including school records, health records, dietary preferences, hobbies, religion and ethnicity.
- If the prospective carer has not already done so, they **MUST** by law, advise the local council of the private fostering arrangement.

## What the private foster carer must do

- Advise their local council of their intention to foster a child at least six weeks in advance.
- Where an emergency placement is made, the private foster carer **MUST** advise their local council within 48 hours of the child's arrival.
- Notify their local council when a child leaves their care, stating why and giving the name and address of the person into whose care the child has moved.

## What the local council must do

- Check on the suitability of the private foster carers.
- The child's Social Worker **MUST** make regular visits to the child; weekly whilst the carer is being assessed by the Family and Friends Team and 6 weekly thereafter (following approval of the carer and private arrangement).
- Ensure that advice is made available when needed.
- Observe the overall standard of care.
- Ensure that professionals in other services (Education, Health, etc.) are aware of any Private Fostering arrangements.

## Regulations

A child can be removed from a private foster placement if there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm.

Although the primary responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child rests with the parent, the regulations are intended to help protect vulnerable children who are likely to be cared for longer term in households other than their own.

Private Foster Carers are legally required to notify their local council of any arrangements but many do not (or do not know that they have to). It is estimated that about 10,000 children in England are privately fostered.

Contact us on 01494 586454

Buckinghamshire County Council

**Local offices**

Social Care

Buckinghamshire County Council  
County Hall  
Aylesbury  
Bucks HP20 1AU  
Tel: 01296 387957

Social Care

Buckinghamshire County Council  
Easton Street  
High Wycombe  
Bucks HP11 1NH  
Tel: 01494 475076

Family & Friends Team

Buckinghamshire County Council  
King George V Road  
Amersham  
Bucks HP6 5BN  
Tel: 01494 586460

[www.buckscc.gov.uk/privatefostering](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/privatefostering)

**Further information**

For further copies, or if you would like to order this leaflet in other languages, please phone: 01494 586460

Urdu

یہ اردو اور دوسری زبانوں میں بھی  
میا کی جاسکتی ہے

Gujarati

આ લીફ્લેટ ગુજરાતી  
ભાષામાં મળી શકશે.

If you are concerned that someone is being hurt, please call **NSPCC** on **Free phone: 0808 800 5000**

The questions for this leaflet, and drawings on the inside pages, were created by Year 6 pupils at Millbrook School, High Wycombe.

© Produced by Children's Services, Buckinghamshire County Council. December 2010

Services for  
Children and Young People  
in Buckinghamshire

Private Fostering  
Information for  
Professionals

