

Information for people who are:

- making private arrangements for their child to be looked after by someone else
- thinking of looking after someone else's child
- thinking of becoming private foster parents.

What is private foster care?

Private foster care is an arrangement where someone, other than a close relative, provides care and accommodation for a child for 28 days or more.

It **is** private foster care if:

- the child is under 16 years of age - 18 if they have a disability
- the arrangement is for 28 days or longer
- the child's new carers are not close relatives or have not been granted parental responsibility for the child by a court.

Arrangements for private fostering are usually made by the child's parent's, or people with parental responsibility, and the person who will privately foster them.

Any financial support for the private foster carer should come from the parents and should be agreed at the start of the arrangement.

It **is not** private fostering if:

- the child is cared for by close relatives, this includes parents, step-parents, aunts, uncles and grand-parents - it does not include cousins and great-aunts or uncles
- a social worker arranges the placement.

Help is available for privately fostered children and the people caring for them.

What do I need to do?

Devon County Council (DCC) must be told about a private fostering arrangement before it starts or, in an emergency, within 48 hours.

The Children Act 1989 gives DCC a legal duty to safeguard the wellbeing of privately fostered children.

We must make sure they are:

- safe and well looked after
- healthy
- receiving a proper education
- encouraged to reach their full potential
- keeping in touch with people who are important to them
- living with someone who helps them value their culture
- properly supported when they become independent.

When private fostering arrangements remain hidden children are vulnerable to abuse and neglect. This was highlighted by the tragic death of privately fostered child Victoria Climbié.

Parents, private foster parents and any one else involved must provide information about the child and the arrangements being made for their care. If you are involved in a private fostering arrangement and don't notify us you are committing an offence, and could risk a fine.

Parents

If you are planning for your child to be privately fostered you must tell DCC at least six weeks before your child goes to live with new carers. In an emergency you should tell us within forty eight hours of the arrangement beginning.

You must tell us in writing and include:

- your child's name, sex, date of birth, religion, culture and spoken language
- your name and address
- the reason for private fostering and how long the arrangement should last
- the arrangements for the care of any other children who are not included in the private fostering arrangement
- the name and address of anyone involved in the arrangement – even if they are not directly involved.

When we have this information a social worker will contact you and explain the legal requirements and procedures for private fostering.

Private foster carers

If you plan to become a private foster carer you must tell at least six weeks before your child goes to live with new carers. In an emergency you should tell us within forty eight hours of the arrangement beginning.

You must tell us in writing and include:

- the child's name, sex, date of birth, religion, culture and spoken language
- your name and address and any addresses you have lived at in the last five years
- the reason for private fostering and how long the arrangement should last
- the name and address/es of:
 - the child's parents

- anyone who has parental responsibility for the child
- anyone else who has looked after the child
- the name and address of anyone else who is involved directly or indirectly in the arrangement
- the intended start date of the arrangement or the date the arrangement started.

We will also need to know:

- any offence you or any member of your household has been convicted of
- any disqualification or prohibition imposed on you, or any member of your household, under section 68 or 69 of **The Children Act** or under any previous enactment of either of those sections.

When we have this information a social worker will contact you. They will visit your home and family to explain the legal requirements and procedures for private fostering.

Anyone else involved in the arrangements, including anyone who has parental responsibilities for the child or who is aware of the arrangement, should give details in writing to DCC.

To discuss this further or find out more:

Email privatefostering@devon.gov.uk

Phone **0845 155 1013**

Web www.devon.gov.uk/cyps-privatefostering

To notify us of a private fostering arrangement:

Email mashsecure@devon.gcsx.gov.uk

Phone **0845 155 1013**