

Private FOSTERING

What is your role? A guide for professionals

What are my responsibilities?

Education, health and other professionals have a duty to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement that comes to their attention, where they are not satisfied that the local authority has been or will be notified of the arrangement by the parent or carer. Some of these arrangements may be recent; some may have been in existence for some time as the parent and carer may not be aware that it is a private fostering arrangement, and so not aware of the need to inform the local authority.

Background

Following the Laming report in to the death of Victoria Climbié, regulations relating to private fostering were amended and strengthened by Section 44 of the Children Act 2004. The Children (private arrangements for fostering) Regulation 2005 clearly sets out the role of the local authority, the parent and private foster carer and related professionals. Private fostering arrangements can be a positive response from within the community to difficulties experienced by families. Nonetheless, privately fostered children remain a diverse and potentially vulnerable group of children. Thus the local authority has a legal duty to satisfy itself that the arrangement is satisfactory and that the welfare of these children is being promoted and safeguarded.

What is a private fostering arrangement?

The law states that if a child is under the age of 16 (18 if they have a disability) goes to live with someone who is not a close relative for 28 days or more this is known as 'private fostering'.

- This is a private agreement between a parent and another adult and private foster carers may be from the extended family such as a cousin or great aunt, a friend of the family, the parent of a friend of the child or someone previously unknown to the child's family
- It is not private fostering when a child is living with a close relative such as a parent, grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether blood related or through marriage)

Privately fostered children could include:

- Children or young people who are sent to this country for education, health care by their birth parents from overseas
- Teenagers living with a friend's family because they do not get on with their own family
- Children living with a friend's family because their parents study or work involves unsociable hours, which makes it difficult to use ordinary day care or after school care
- Children staying with another family because their parents have divorced or separated
- A child from overseas staying with a host family while attending school or overseas students at boarding school who stay with a host family during the holidays

If you believe that a child is being privately fostered you should notify the local children's services office or call the number below.

If you have concerns that a child may be at risk of harm you should follow your local Safeguarding Board child protection procedures.

For further information & advice contact:

Angela Marsh 01384 815833/ mobile 07975233247

To make a referral please contact call 0300 555 0050

