

Private Fostering

Information for carers, parents and professionals



What is private fostering?

Children who are cared for and provided with accommodation by people who aren't their parents or a close relative could be in a private fostering arrangement.

Typically the following applies to private fostering arrangements:

- the child or young person is under 16 (or 18 if they are disabled)
- the full time carer is not the child's parent or a close relative
- the arrangement is intended to last for more than 28 days
- arrangements have been made privately between the parent and the carer.

Private fostering arrangements do not apply when:

- the child is in the care of a local authority foster carer
- the carer has parental responsibility over the child
- the carer is a close relative of the child*

* Please see the definition of 'relative' as set out in The Children Act 1989 at the end of this leaflet.

Here are some common examples of private fostering arrangements:

- A child sent to live in the UK for education or health reasons, being cared for by a host family.
- A young person who has gone to live with a girlfriend's, boyfriend's or friend's family.
- A child living with a carer because their parents' circumstances mean that they are unable to look after him or her; these could include unsociable work hours, health issues or even a prison sentence.

What do you need to do?

Any **parent, carer** or **professional** who is aware of a private fostering arrangement is legally required to inform the local authority.

If you are a **parent** making private fostering arrangements for your child, you need to let Surrey Children's Service know in writing at least six weeks before the arrangement begins. If the arrangement is due to start in less than six weeks or the child is already living with the carer you need to let Surrey Children's Service know immediately.

Surrey Children's Service can help you complete a written agreement with the carer, covering:

- arrangements for financially supporting the child
- permission for the carer to seek emergency medical treatment
- how you plan to keep in contact.

If you are a **carer** about to enter into a private fostering agreement you need to:

- inform Surrey Children's Service of the plans within the same timeframe as that for parents outlined above
- have a prearranged visit from a social worker to your home to ensure it is safe and appropriate for the child to live there
- let the social worker meet any other adults who live in your home
- undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on you and other adults in your home.

These steps are in place to ensure that the child is safe and as happy as possible. In fact, most planned private fostering arrangements are found to provide a highly satisfactory care environment.

If you are a **professional** who works with children in education, health or social care you are likely to come across private fostering situations. As it is often the case that local authorities don't know about private fostering arrangements you must:

- Explain to the parents or the carers that they must notify Surrey Children's Service of the private fostering arrangement immediately
- Contact Surrey Children's Service and give as much detail as you know about the child and the private fostering arrangement.



What else do you need to know?

Once Surrey Children's Service has been informed of a private fostering arrangement, a representative will:

- visit the carer, the child and the carer's home within seven days
- talk to the child to find out how he or she feels about where they are living
- contact the parents to talk about the arrangement
- undertake an assessment of the child's needs and the suitability of the care arrangement
- make sure that Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are completed on all adults in the carer's home
- continue to visit the child and carer at least every six weeks
- offer ongoing advice and guidance to the private foster carer.

These steps are carried out to make sure the child or young person is safe, well cared for and happy.

The responsibilities of parents and carers in private fostering arrangements are covered by law as set out in The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004, The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 2005.

The law states that the local authority must be informed about all private fostering situations. The parent, carer and any professional who knows about the arrangement are legally required to inform the authority's children's service giving details about the arrangement.

Definition of a 'close relative' according to The Children Act:

Close relative - Child is not in a private fostering arrangement	Distant relative - Child is in a private fostering arrangement
Parent	Step sibling
Sibling (full blood, half blood)	Great aunt or uncle
Grandparent (full blood, half blood or by marriage)	Great grandparent
Aunt or uncle (full blood, half blood or by marriage)	Cousin
Step parent (if parents married)	Step parent (if parents not married)
Another adult with parental responsibility for the child (or an SGO or RO*)	Step parent (if parents are now divorced)
A child placed for adoption under UK adoption legislation	Any other adult who has no legal order for the child (known or unknown to the child)
	An adoptive parent where the adoption is not recognised in the UK

***SGO** = Special Guardianship Order

RO = Residence Order

Both these orders are granted by a court and result in the carer sharing parental responsibility with a parent

If you are concerned about the safety of a child, young person or an adult you can contact our **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)**.

Availability: Monday to Friday: 9am - 5pm **Phone:** 0300 470 9100

Email: mash@surreycc.gov.uk - emails are dealt with during normal office hours

Out of hours phone: 01483 517898 to speak to our emergency duty team.

If you have already been in touch with children's social care services and would like to contact your allocated social worker or family support worker directly, please find your local area number below.

Local Area Contact details

North east: 0300 123 1610

The north east area covers the following three boroughs:

Elmbridge (Esher, Walton on Thames and Weybridge)

Epsom and Ewell (Epsom, Ewell and part of both Stoneleigh and Worcester Park)

Spelthorne (Ashford, Laleham, Shepperton, Staines-upon-Thames, Stanwell and Sunbury-on-Thames)

North west: 0300 123 1630

The north west area covers the following three district and boroughs:

Runnymede (Addlestone)

Surrey Heath (Camberley)

Woking (Woking)

South east: 0300 123 1620

The south east area covers the following three district and boroughs:

Tandridge (Caterham and Oxted)

Reigate and Banstead (Redhill, Horley, Reigate and Banstead)

Mole Valley (Dorking and Leatherhead)

South west: 0300 123 1640

The south west area covers the following two boroughs:

Guildford (Guildford)

Waverley (Cranleigh, Farnham and Haslemere)

Website: www.surreycc.gov.uk/privatefostering

If you would like this information in large print, Braille, on CD or in another language please contact us on:

Tel: 0300 200 1005

Minicom: 020 8541 9698

Text: 07527 182861

Email: contact.centre@surreycc.gov.uk

Nëse dëshironi që ky dokument të jetë me shkronja të mëdha, në kasetë ose në një gjuhë tjetër, ju lutemi n'a telefononi në një nga numrat e mësipërm.

إذا كنت ترغب بالحصول على هذه الوثيقة في طباعة مكبرة، أو على شريط مسجل أو في لغة أخرى، فنرجو الاتصال بنا على أحد الأرقام المدونة أعلاه.

আপনি যদি এই ডকুমেন্ট বা বই বড় ছাপার অক্ষরে, টেপে বা অন্য কোন ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে উপরের যে কোন একটি নম্বরে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Si desea este documento impreso en letra grande, en casete o en otro idioma, rogamos que se ponga en contacto con nosotros llamando a uno de los números anteriores.

如您索取本文的大字體版本、錄音帶版本或另一語言版本，請撥以上任一電話號碼，與我們聯絡。

اگر آپ کو یہ دستاویز بڑے حروف کی چھپائی میں، ٹیپ پر یا کسی دوسری زبان میں درکار ہو، تو براۓ مہربانی اوپر دیئے ہوئے کسی ایک نمبر پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔