

What if things go wrong?

If you are unhappy with the private fostering arrangement, speak to the child's parents as soon as possible.

If any problems cannot be sorted out, please contact The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. We will do everything possible to help the private fostering arrangement succeed.

What does the council do?

When a private fostering arrangement has been made we have to make regular visits and checks.

We will do so sensitively as we do not wish to intrude in arrangements which are working well.

If we find anything to be unsafe, unhealthy or unsuitable for your child, we **MUST** act to safeguard their welfare.

We will speak to you and the child's parent carer to offer advice.

We can also offer training and signpost you to support services from the council or other agencies.

If we believe problems are more significant, we may say that you cannot care for the child. We will then ask the parent to make alternative private fostering arrangements. We have legal powers to end a private fostering arrangement but will do so only if necessary.

Get in touch

If you are:

- Planning a private fostering arrangement
- Already caring for someone else's child
- Not sure if you are a private foster carer

Please contact:

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
Bracknell Forest Council
Time Square
Market Street
Bracknell RG12 1JD

01344 352005



MASH@bracknell-forest.gov.uk



If you need a reasonable adjustment to communicate with us, please call 01344 352000 or email: customer.services@bracknell-forest.gov.uk.



Private Fostering

A Guide for Carers

Bracknell Forest Family Placement Team

www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/private-fostering

Introduction

This leaflet is for adults who have made (or are thinking of making) a private arrangement to take care of someone else's child. This arrangement could be 'private fostering'.

Under the Children Act 1989, councils must make sure children who are, or will be, privately fostered are safe and well cared for. In Bracknell Forest, this is the job of Children's Social Care.

Our role is to support everyone involved. We:

- must make sure that the health and well-being of the child is being taken care of
- can give you any advice and information to make sure your arrangement runs well

What is private fostering?

Private fostering is when a parent (or someone with parental responsibility) agrees for their child under 16 (or under 18 if the child is disabled) to live with an adult who:

- is not related to them
- provides day-to-day care
- for 28 days or more

It is NOT private fostering if the adult taking care of the child is their:

- grandparent
- aunt or uncle
- brother or sister
- half-relative
- step-parent
- or any other person related to the child by marriage.

A child might be privately fostered for many reasons, for example:

- They were sent to the UK for education or health care by birth parents who stay overseas
- Parents have separated, divorced or there are arguments at home
- They are teenagers living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Parents work or study unsociable hours, have financial difficulties or an illness and they cannot care for their child

Private fostering is not the same as foster care. Foster care is where a child is looked after by social services and cared for by approved foster carers. A privately fostered child is not 'in care'.

What you must do

As a private foster carer, you have some legal responsibilities.

You should tell the council about any private fostering arrangement at least 6 weeks before the arrangement starts.

If the arrangements are made in an emergency, you **MUST** notify the council within 48 hours.

If there are any changes to the private fostering arrangements, you **MUST** tell the Council within 48 hours. This might include:

- if the child leaves your home
- if you change your name or address
- if anyone in your home is convicted of a criminal offence
- if the child has a serious accident or dies

If you did not know this, do not worry – let the council know now. It is an offence not to tell the council about private fostering arrangements.

As a private foster carer you do not have the same rights as the child's parents (parental responsibility). This means you must discuss and agree any arrangements for the child's care with the parents. For example:

- where they go to school (the school should be told about the private fostering arrangement)
- hobbies and interests
- ongoing health needs and medical treatment
- what discipline is and is not acceptable
- religious or cultural needs
- what contact the child will have with their parents and other members of their family
- when and how you should let parents know how their child is doing

You will also need to agree financial arrangements for the child's care and maintenance.

Writing this down will help everyone be clear about what is best for the child.

What might help

You may be able to claim benefits such as child benefit or universal credit.

Visit the GOV.UK website for further information.