

What if things go wrong?

If you are unhappy with the private fostering arrangement, speak to the private foster carers 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 private foster 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 the private foster carer cannot care for your child. We will then ask you to make alternative private fostering arrangements. We have legal powers to end private fostering arrangements but will do so only if necessary.

Get in touch

If you are:

- Planning a private fostering arrangement
- Someone is already caring for your child
- Not sure

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 Parents

Bracknell Forest Family Placement Team

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

Introduction

This leaflet is for parents who have made (or are thinking of making) a private arrangement with another adult to take care of their 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 your 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.

You might need your child to be privately fostered for different reasons:

- You have sent them to the UK for education or health care
- You have separated, divorced or there are arguments at home
- Your teenage child is living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- You work or study unsociable hours, have financial difficulties or an illness

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' because the arrangements have been made by you.

What you must do

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

If the person looking after your child lives in another area, you must tell the council for that area.

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 anyone involved in the arrangement changes their name or address
- if your child leaves the private foster home or moves to someone else's home

- if anyone in the carers' home is convicted of a criminal offence
- if your 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.

What you should do

Firstly, talk to your child so they know what is happening.

Only you can make certain decisions about your child (parental responsibility). You should discuss and agree any arrangements for your child's care with the private foster carers. 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 your child will have with you and other members of the family
- when and how you want to be told about how your child is doing

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

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