

Things you can do

It is important that if you do work with children and young people that you are familiar with and understand the term private fostering and understand your responsibilities regarding safeguarding. Professionals can help us identify these arrangements and advise parent and carers of their responsibility to inform us.

- When a child is being registered at a GP surgery or school ask them what their relationship is to the carer. Remember 'aunty' or 'uncle' can be used as an informal term and may not actually mean that person is a close relative.
- If you think you have identified a private fostering arrangement speak to the families who might be involved and ask the private foster carer and parent (or person with parental responsibility if details are known to you) to notify Knowsley Council.
- Let the private foster carer and parent (or person with parental responsibility if you know who they are) know that you will also need to inform the local authority.
- Ensure school admission policy and practice is robust and that evidence of a child's identity and the person with parental responsibility or relationship are seen.

If a child that you know is being privately fostered and you think the local authority is unaware, please inform Knowsley Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on **0151 443 4311** or visit **www.knowsleyscp.org.uk**

Once a referral is made the department will visit the child and check the arrangement is suitable. A child can be removed from a carer if there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. The arrangement will be assessed by a fostering social worker.



Do you work with children or young people?

Help us to identify private fostering arrangements

FOR MORE
INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT
WWW.KNOWSLEYSKP.ORG.UK
OR CALL 0151 443 4311



KNOWSLEY
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
PARTNERSHIP



PRIVATE FOSTERING - A GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONALS

What is Private Fostering?

Private fostering is an arrangement when a child who is under 16 (under 18, if disabled) is cared for by someone other than their parent or close relative (e.g., great aunt, cousin, the child/young person's friend's parents, mum's friend, or a neighbour) for 28 consecutive days or more within their home. It also includes children who stay at a residential school for more than two weeks of the school holidays.

Families find private foster carers themselves, and it is their responsibility to find carers that are suitable. People who offer a home for children and young people on a private fostering arrangement do an excellent job, often stepping in when a family is in crisis. Each private fostering arrangement will be different, depending on the child or young person's circumstances and their needs.

Examples of private fostering arrangements may include:

- A teenager living with their friend's family because they don't get on with their own family.
- Child or young person living with a friend's family because their parent's study, work away or work unsociable hours.
- Child or young person staying with another family because their parents have separated or divorced.
- Child or young person staying with another family due to their home being damaged or inhabitable.
- Child or young person on school holiday exchanges that last more than 28 days
- Child or young person who are on sports or music sponsorships living away from their families. A parent or an agency, such as a college or sports academy, would normally make such an arrangement



What is the difference between fostering and private fostering?

Private fostering is very different from the care of children by the local authority through approved foster carers. Foster carers attend training and complete an assessment to care for children who are under the care of the local authority. Private foster carers are not approved by the local authority, they do not receive training, complete an assessment, receive an allowance, or have regular contact with the local authority.

Why does Knowsley Council need to know about a private fostering arrangement?

The law places a duty on the parents of the child (or those with parental responsibility) and the 'foster carers' to notify the local authority if a child or young person under the age of 16 is living with them for 28 days or more. This should be done as soon as the arrangement has been made. Sometimes an arrangement is unplanned. In such cases, we should be notified as soon as it becomes apparent that the child will be staying with a person for 28 days or more.

Many privately fostered children experience feelings commonly associated with being separated from their birth families – loneliness, confusion, and anxiety. If we aren't informed of private fostering arrangements the private foster carer and the young person will not be able to access the support that is available to them. We will check that the children and young people are kept safe, well cared for, in appropriate accommodation and happy.



Why we need your help

Families are not always aware of the requirement to notify us, and therefore it is important that we have the help of professionals with this.

Many privately fostered children and young people remain invisible whilst their safety and vulnerabilities are underdetermined. They may be living with adults who might not be suitable to care for children or young people, and therefore they must be identified, and we must be notified.

Things you can look out for include:

- Is someone else collecting the child from school?
- Has the child or young person mentioned that they are not staying at their usual home, or their parents are away for a long time?
- Does the child or young person's carer seem vague about the child's routines (bedtimes, after school activities etc), their health history, development checks and immunisation record?
- Has the school been informed of a change of address for the child?
- Has the child or young person been staying with a friend for a long period of time?