



Private Fostering Information for Private Foster Carers

Many people look after other people's children for a night or a weekend. But if a child is living with you – and you are not an immediate relative – for more than 28 days, it may mean you are privately fostering them.

Who is responsible for the child?

The child's parents are still responsible for them while they are living with you, and should still be as involved as much as possible in their child's life. This means telling you about their child, supporting them financially, and keeping in touch with them regularly. The arrangements you have agreed with the parents should be written down.

It is important that you have the parent's written consent for their child to receive everyday medical treatment. You should have the Child's Personal Health Care Record and have details of their medical history.

The child's education and healthcare should not be disrupted, and wherever possible he or she should stay at the same school.

We can take action to stop a private fostering arrangement if there is evidence a child may be at risk of harm.

Child Benefit

Private foster carers can receive child benefit for the child they are looking after. Your social worker can tell you more about how to claim this.

Why is a social worker visiting me?

The law says that the local authority must be told about all private fostering arrangements. In Somerset this is Somerset County Council.

The social worker's job is to make sure that the child is safe and that their needs are being met in the right way for them while they are away from home.

Your social worker will visit you regularly. Over time you should get to know them well enough to talk about any practical difficulties you have and get help quickly.

How often will they visit?

The social worker will visit you and the child at your home every 6 weeks in the first year and every three months after that for as long as the child is staying with you.

The social worker will also talk to other people who live in your house and they will usually see the child on their own.

One of the things they will ask you about each time they visit is how long the private fostering arrangement is going to continue. This is so the plan remains focused on meeting the needs of the child.

Any changes in your circumstances or the child's, or the parents can be planned for. If your plans change, you must let the social worker know as soon as possible. Every time they visit, the social worker will write a report and give a copy to you.

What else can the social worker do for me?

The social worker is there to make sure that the placement works well, by supporting you to give the best possible care. They will be able to tell you about the information you should keep about the child and their family, where to keep it, and what you can share with parents and other professionals.

The social worker can offer you advice and training to meet the individual needs of the child, particularly if they have a different ethnicity, language, culture, or religion from your own.

They can also give you advice about:

- Play, playgroups, community resources
- Housing, Education and Health Services
- Diet, physical care, managing behaviour, contact with parents

What to do if you still have questions

If you want to know more, or to talk about anything in this information sheet, get in touch with your social worker.

Somerset County Council positively values diversity, and celebrates cultural and social differences. Our Equal Opportunities Promise is to provide all services of equal quality, which meet your needs and fulfil your rights. You can expect to be treated fairly with understanding whoever you are and whatever your background.

This document is available on request in other formats, including Braille and large print, and can be translated into other languages.

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