



**PRIVATE FOSTERING IN**

# Birmingham

**Information for  
professionals**



**BIRMINGHAM  
CHILDREN'S TRUST**

# Providing a safe and caring home for a child to live in

## Introduction

Private fostering is where parents make arrangements with someone outside their close family to look after their child for them for 28 days or longer. There were 1,500 children and young people reported as being cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements in England as of 31 March 2015. However, no one knows the actual numbers of children being looked after in this way: estimates range from 7,000 to 10,000 children or more.

Many private fostering arrangements remain under-reported and this is a concern as privately fostered children have been identified as a potentially vulnerable group.

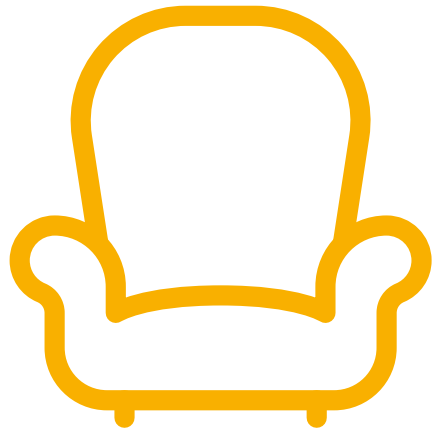
Many professionals who work with children and young people in Birmingham will come across private fostering situations and it is important that these are identified. Private foster carers and the parents of privately fostered children have a **legal duty** to notify Birmingham Children's Trust about these arrangements, but this duty is not widely known, and so they are rarely reported.

It is vital that the children's social care team is made aware of such arrangements so they can safeguard the welfare of these potentially vulnerable children. Here is what you need to know.

## What is private fostering?

Private fostering is an arrangement by which a child or young person under 16 (or under 18 if they have a disability):

- does not live with a parent (or step parent);
- is cared for by an adult who is NOT a close relative (in this context a close relative is a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, including both full and half relations and relations by marriage);
- is in a private arrangement made by the parent and the carer; and,
- is being cared for by a carer in a different home which lasts, or is intended to last, for a continuous period of 28 days or more.



Some examples of private fostering include:

- a teenager moving in with a friend's family because of a breakdown in relationships at home, or the parents move out of the area and don't want to disrupt their child's education;
- a child left with the unmarried partner of his/her parent because of the imprisonment of the parent; or,
- host families looking after children during term-time where the child is attending professional sports coaching or studying at a language school or boarding school during the summer holidays, where this is longer than 28 days.

### **What are the duties of a private foster carer?**

Private foster carers must:

- notify Birmingham Children's Trust of their intention to foster a child at least six weeks in advance or, if arrangements are made in an emergency, within 48 hours;
- provide a safe and caring home for the child to live in;
- arrange medical and dental care and ensure the child attends school;



- help the child to keep in touch with their family and meet any religious or cultural needs as far as possible;
- notify Birmingham Children's Trust of any change in their address, and of any person who moves into or out of the household; and,
- notify Birmingham Children's Trust within 48 hours when the child leaves their care, giving the name and address of the person now caring for the child.

### **What is the responsibility of the parents?**

The parents should:

- notify Birmingham Children's Trust of the proposed private fostering arrangement at least six weeks in advance or, if arrangements are made in an emergency, within 48 hours;
- retain parental responsibility for the child, so they must ensure the arrangement is suitable for the child, and that the carer has all the information they need to care for the child; and,
- be financially responsible for the child.

## What are the duties of Birmingham Children's Trust?

The Trust will:

- allocate a social worker to the family;
- assess the suitability of the arrangement and communicate with the parents, carer, child or young person and notify them of the outcome;
- visit the child/young person every six weeks in the first year and every 12 weeks for the following years to ensure arrangements continue to be suitable for the child/young person; and,
- provide advice to the carer and child/young person.

## What can other professionals do to help?

Education, health and social care professionals are often the first to become aware of private fostering arrangements. If you know or suspect that a child is being privately fostered, you should notify the Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS) immediately.

Preferably, if you have a secure email account, email **secure.CASS@birmingham.gcsx.gov.uk** or alternatively **CASS@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk** or call **0121 303 1888**.

You should inform the carer and/or parent of the referral.

Further information can be found online at **birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/privatefostering** including downloadable leaflets for parents, carers and young people.

If you have any other concerns about a child's welfare, you should notify the children's social care team immediately. All enquiries and referrals should be made via CASS (details as above).

If you would like a copy of this booklet in another language, in large print, in Braille or on audio tape or CD, please call **0121 303 3401** or email **trustcomms@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk**

