



Keeping our children safe!

An explanation of private fostering
for care professionals



What is private fostering?

Children in foster care fall into two main groups, those looked after by the council or independent fostering agencies and those fostered privately.

Private fostering occurs when a child under 16 (18 if disabled) lives with someone who is not a relative for more than 28 days. A relative could be a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or step-parent.

A private foster carer may be a friend of the family, the parent of a friend of the child, or someone unknown to the child's family who is willing to privately foster a child.

The following are examples of where private fostering occurs.

- Children sent to this country for education or health care by birth parents living overseas.
- Children living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce or arguments at home.
- A teenager living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Children, whose parents are studying in this country at language schools, who live with other people while their parents study.

What is my responsibility?

Care agencies have a responsibility to notify Essex County Council Children and Young People's Service if they become aware of a private fostering arrangement.

We carry out an assessment to make sure that the placement is suitable and may contact you and other agencies requesting information about the prospective private foster carers. It is important that you provide us with a prompt response so we can ensure that the carers are right for the child.

We have a duty to visit the parent or carer and to speak to the child within seven days of the placement and then on a regular basis to make sure that proper care is being provided. We may need to liaise further with you and other agencies to make sure that the needs of the child continue to be met.

If at any time you become concerned about the child, the parent, anyone with parental responsibility, the carers or other people in the household you must contact us immediately.

Who do I contact?

To notify us of a private fostering arrangement or for further help and advice please call us on:

0800 801 530 or **0845 603 7627**.

For **child protection matters** please use the following telephone number: **0845 603 7634**. You can contact us on the above numbers between 9am and 5pm. For **out of office hours** call **0845 606 1212**.

This booklet is issued by

Essex County Council Schools, Children and Families Service.

You can contact us in the following ways:

By telephone:

0800 801530

By fax:

01206 844981

By post:

Adoption and Fostering Recruitment
Essex House, 200 The Crescent,
Colchester Business Park,
Colchester CO4 9QQ

By email:

adoptionandfostering@essex.gov.uk

Visit our website:

www.essex.gov.uk/adoptionandfostering



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