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Private Fostering

What is it?

A 'Privately Fostered' child is a child under the age of 16 (18 if disabled) who is cared for and accommodated by someone other than a parent or close relative* for more than 28 days. There are a variety of reasons why a parent may be unable to care for their own child on a short or long term basis and a private fostering arrangement can be a positive response from friends and the local community to a family in need of support. However, any child separated from their parents is potentially vulnerable and we all have responsibilities to ensure the alternative care they receive meets their welfare and safety needs.

*Close Relatives are Step Parents, Grandparents, Brothers/Sisters or Aunts/Uncles.

Examples of private fostering include:

- Children / young people whose parents work or study long or anti-social hours
- Children / young people sent to the UK for education or health care by birth parents from overseas
- Children / young people living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce or difficulties at home
- Teenagers living with their partner's family
- Privately fostered children are not looked after children.

Parents and private foster carers should notify the local authority

The Parent/s (or those with Parental Responsibility) and the private foster carer have a duty to notify the local authority of the name and address of the private foster carer, six weeks before the start of the private fostering arrangement.

If the arrangement is already in place, they must notify the local authority at once.

Who are the key contacts?

For notifications from practitioners, parents, private foster carers or other members of the public Tel: 01422 393336

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Partner agencies should notify the Local Authority

When completing forms with and meeting children, young people and their families, we should all ask questions about who lives in the household and who has parental responsibility — this can help in identifying a private fostering arrangement.

Professionals such as teachers, early years settings, health care practitioners and others should notify the local authority if they become aware of or believe that a child is living in a private fostering arrangement.

The role of the Local Authority and arrangements in Calderdale

The Children Act 1989 places a legal duty on local authorities to protect and promote the welfare of privately fostered children, to check that the arrangements for the child/ren are safe and that the child/ren are well cared for. Section 44 of the Children Act 2004 extended these duties to include children who are proposed to be, but not yet, privately fostered. The duties are set out in the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.

Where the local authority is informed of a proposed or existing private fostering arrangement:

- The child's Social Worker will undertake an initial Regulation 8 visit within 7 working days of the date of notification
- The child's Social Worker will carry out an assessment of the suitability of the arrangements for the child
- The child's Social Worker will visit the child every six weeks during the first year of the private fostering arrangement and then every 12 weeks thereafter. They should be seen at the placement and spoken to alone where this is appropriate

For more information

CSCB: www.calderdale-scb.org.uk/professionals/private-fostering

Calderdale Council: www.calderdale.gov.uk/socialcare/family/private-fostering

Private Fostering; Information for Families: www.calderdale-scb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Private-Fostering-families-AW-New.pdf