

Private Fostering - Awareness Raising

Do you know a child/ren who is not living with their parents or a close family member? If so, that child may be being Privately Fostered.

In order to safeguard children in such arrangements, local authorities have a duty to identify, assess and monitor all private fostering. To enable this to happen, professionals working with children and young people have a responsibility to report any private fostering arrangements that you are aware of to the local authority.

What is Private Fostering?

Private fostering is when a child under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a 'close relative'. This is a private arrangement made between a parent and a carer, for more than 28 days. Close relatives are defined as stepparents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles or aunts (whether of full blood, half blood or marriage/affinity).

Sometimes it can be hard to tell if a private fostering arrangement is in place. Examples of private fostering can include:

- children living with a friend's family as a result of separation, divorce or problems at home.
- children sent to this country for education or health care by birth parents living overseas.
- asylum seeking and refugee children.
- teenagers living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- teenagers who have broken ties with their parents and are staying with friends or non-relatives.
- those living with host families whilst pursuing courses of study.

Why is it important that Westmorland and Furness Council is notified of private fostering arrangements?

Private Fostering is a private arrangement and can often be hidden from agencies. Privately fostered children can be vulnerable as they may not see their families very often. It is therefore important that their needs are assessed, and their situation monitored to safeguard their wellbeing.

By law the Council must be informed about any private fostering arrangement to ensure safeguards are in place for the child and advice and support can be provided to the carer.

What should I do if I am aware of, or suspect, a private fostering arrangement is in place?

Whether you're a neighbour, teacher, nurse, youth worker or anyone else who has contact with children we're encouraging you to work with the county council to identify private fostering arrangements for the safety and wellbeing of children in Cumbria.

To notify Westmorland and Furness council of a private fostering arrangement please contact the Multi Agency Children's Hub on 0300 373 2724.

The local authority will then carry out their legal duty to ensure that the child is safe and well looked after by organising regular visits and offering advice and support when needed.

Support available may include:

- Advice on claiming benefits and possible funding for some essential items
- Parenting support and advice
- Help in bringing families in crisis back together

Further information

If you require more information then visit: <https://wfscp.org.uk/resources-and-guidance/local-resources/private-fostering> (this page contains useful information and leaflets and posters available to download)

Professionals working with children should refer to the WFSCP Procedures for [Children Living Away from Home with Other Families](#)