



TRAFFORD
COUNCIL

PRIVATE FOSTERING

INFORMATION AND ADVICE
FOR PARENTS

**IS SOMEONE ELSE LOOKING
AFTER YOUR CHILD ?**

**THIS COULD MEAN YOUR CHILD
IS BEING PRIVATELY FOSTERED**



IS YOUR CHILD LIVING IN PRIVATE FOSTER CARE?

- Is your child living with and being looked after by someone else?
- Is your child below the age of 16? (18 if the child has a disability)
- Is your child being cared for by someone who is not their parent, grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, legal guardian, or other person with parental responsibility?
- Is your child going to be cared for, for more than 28 days?

If you have answered yes to all these questions, then your child is in private foster care.

ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT ASKING SOMEONE TO CARE FOR YOUR CHILD?

There are many reasons why you might need to ask someone you trust to care for your child in a private arrangement; if you need to be admitted to hospital for a long period of time, are living abroad, or in conflict with your child, you may turn to someone to be a private foster carer.

Parents do not usually do this without a great deal of thought. It is important that you and the carer(s) have discussed why you want them to look after your child and what arrangements and contingencies should be made if for example your child falls ill or has an accident.

You should also have discussed your child's health and education and agreed financial arrangements.

WHAT IS PRIVATE FOSTERING?

A private fostering arrangement is when a child, under 16 years of age (or 18 if the child has a disability) is looked after for more than 28 days by someone other than that child's parent, legal guardian, or close relative e.g., grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, legal guardian or other person with parental responsibility.



HOW SOON DO PARENTS NEED TO NOTIFY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY?

Parents have a duty to notify the Local Authority Children's Services of the intention to place a child in private foster care, no less than 6 weeks before the arrangement is intended to start, unless it is made in an emergency. If this is the case, notification should not be more than 48 hours after the child has moved in with the carer(s).

If any person realises that a private fostering arrangement is taking place, they should notify Trafford Children's Services First Response on:

0161 912 5125 or
firstresponse@trafford.gov.uk

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE THINKING OF HAVING SOMEONE WHO IS NOT A CLOSE RELATIVE LOOK AFTER YOUR CHILD?

If you are thinking of asking someone who is not a close relative to look after your child or think your child may already be in a private fostering arrangement, you need to contact Trafford Children's Services to register

your situation as soon as possible. It is a legal requirement, and you may be committing an offence if you do not.

Call Trafford Children's Services First Response on 0161 912 5125 and explain your circumstances and receive more information and advice. They will want to check that your household is safe and suitable for the child and what arrangements you have made for the child's health and education. You will be asked to fill in forms to check your records with Disclosure and Barring Service, Health, Education etc. You will need to share some basic facts such as:

- Your child's name, date of birth, religion, ethnicity, and language
- How long you expect your child to stay with the carer(s)
- Name and address of your child's carer(s) and anyone else who has parental responsibility for them.
- Date the arrangement is expected to start (or started)
- The previous addresses of the carer(s) covering the last 5 years
- Any offences the carer(s) may have been convicted of. (Having convictions does not mean they cannot privately foster, but the convictions need to be considered)
- If the carer(s) have been disqualified from private fostering before.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO NOTIFY CHILDREN'S SERVICES?

Every local authority has a legal responsibility to satisfy themselves about the welfare of children who are being privately fostered in the area .

When Children's Services are notified, they want to ensure that children in private fostering arrangements are safeguarded, and their needs are met. They will work with parents and carers and speak to children to ensure they are happy and safe.

WHAT WILL CHILDRENS SERVICES DO?

Children's Services will undertake an initial visit to the proposed carer(s) to check that the accommodation and private foster carer(s) can meet the needs of the child. They will also meet with the parents and the child to ensure that everyone understands the arrangement that will be in place. Children's Services will also inform local agencies such as schools and ensure that arrangements have been made to register the child with a doctor.

Assessments will be undertaken by a social worker – these will consider the private fostering arrangement and the safeguarding of the child. The final assessment will be discussed with managers in Children's Services to confirm whether the arrangement is suitable. If the arrangement is not suitable, the local authority may ask the private foster carer(s) to make several changes, or alternatively may prohibit the private foster carers from looking after the child.

If there is agreement the arrangement is suitable all parties will be informed. The local authority will support the parents and private foster carers to draw up an agreement which will meet the child's emotional, educational, health and cultural needs.

HOW OFTEN WILL CHILDRENS SERVICES BE IN TOUCH?

Ongoing support to the arrangement will be provided. The child will be allocated a social worker who will visit the child at least every 6 weeks for the first 12 months and at least every 12 weeks thereafter. The visits will consider how well the arrangement is working and the child's views will be obtained. If there are any concerns raised in respect to safeguarding and welfare of the child visits may become more frequent.

If the child wants the to be visited more frequently, the social worker will arrange for this to take place.



WORKING TOGETHER

It is important that you work together with the carers and that your child sees you are working together for their benefit. You need to provide carers with as much information as possible about your child.

You will need to agree what arrangements have been made about your child's family time with you and make sure your child understands. Your child may have a lot of anxiety about living with carers and worry about when they will see you again.

Family time can be in lots of different ways - face to face is best, but if this is not possible, you may need to use indirect forms of contact such as video calls, telephone, emails, text messages or letters.

You will also need to think together about what to do if there are difficulties. The child may have difficulties settling and this may be apparent through behaviors which are difficult to manage such as tempers, unusual behavior, bed wetting. You will need to discuss these with the carers. If these become very difficult the social worker can offer advice and strategies to help.

They can also offer training alongside other carers who deal with similar difficult behavior.

WHAT IF APPROVAL OF THE PLACEMENT IS NOT AGREED?

The social worker will discuss with you, your child and the carers what are the best alternative arrangements for the child. This could be a range of options including:

- The child returning to live with you, which may involve support services being offered
- The child moving to live with a relative
- The child being looked after by the Local Authority

If approval is NOT agreed by the local authority and you continue to place the child with carers, this may be seen as an offence. If you wish to appeal the decision, you should notify Children's Services in writing at the earliest opportunity. You will then be advised of what action the local authority will take and any further actions you may need to take.

WHAT IF THE PLACEMENT ENDS?

It is essential that you keep in touch regularly with the child's carers and the social worker and inform them of any changes in address or contact numbers.


You should agree with the carers in what circumstances the arrangement should end and how. It may be upsetting for your child if this is done suddenly without preparation or planning.

If your child moves, you must inform Children's Services of the situation within 48 hours and give the name and address of the person the child has gone to live with if this is not a return to your care.





CONTACT US



If you would like further information about private fostering, please contact us on:

0161 912 5125 or
firstresponse@trafford.gov.uk

If you would like this leaflet in another language or format, please ask First Response.

Talbot Rd, Old Trafford,
Stretford, Manchester M32 0TH



www.trafford.gov.uk

