

# A guide to private fostering for parents



## Is someone else looking after your child?

Someone else is looking after your child, or you have arranged for them to be looked after by someone else, then you may have had entered into a private fostering arrangement.

## What is private fostering?

Private fostering occurs when a parent arranges for their child to be cared for by someone other than a parent or close relative of the child for more than 28 days. A close relative means a step-parent, grandparent, brother or sister, aunt or uncle – either by blood or marriage. A child is anyone under the age of 16 or a disabled young person under 18.

### Reasons why a child could be privately fostered:

- A child who is living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce or arguments at home.
- Teenagers who are living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- A child whose parents study or work involves unsociable hours and they are unable to use ordinary day care.
- A child who has been sent to this country for education or health care by birth parents living overseas.

### What should I do if someone else is privately fostering my child?

To keep children and young people safe, the Government has made it the law for anyone whose child is being looked after by someone else to tell their local children's services.

If you think that your child may be living with private foster carers then you must call **Family Contact Point**, Swindon Borough Council to inform us of the arrangement.

The law requires that you tell the department about any private fostering arrangement at least six weeks before the arrangement begins. If your child requires emergency care, you must notify us that your child is being looked after by someone else within 48 hours.



## The needs of the child

In order to give the child the best support, it is important to work with the child's carers and the Local Authority to make sure they know all about how the child has been brought up by their parents.

It is important to share with the carer information about the child's health, favourite foods, how they are getting on at school, hobbies they are interested in or groups they attend. This information will help to keep continuity in the child's life.

## Does this mean I am giving up all rights to my child?

**No.** You will retain parental responsibility for your child and you should continue to be involved in all decisions concerning your child's upbringing. It is very important that you remain in frequent contact with your child.

## What will the Local Authority do for my child?

The Local Authority has a duty to make sure that your child is safe and will ensure the person looking after your child is suitable to care for them and gets the support and advice they need. A social worker will arrange to make regular visits to see how the child has settled.

## What if I decide to change my child's carer?

You must inform the Local Authority within 48 hours that you have changed the person who is caring for your child and give us the name and address of the person who will now be caring for your child. This will help the Local Authority ensure the wellbeing of your child.

## What if I can't find out what is happening with my child?

If the person who is caring for your child is not giving you enough information about the child or you are unhappy with how they are being looked after, then you should contact the Local Authority. We will do everything we can to help you and ensure that someone appropriate is looking after your child.

### Contact details:

#### Family Contact Point

Swindon Borough Council, Euclid Street, Swindon SN1 2JH

**t:** 01793 466903 Monday to Friday , 9am to 5pm.

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