

The Children Act 1989 requires parents, professionals & anyone proposing to privately foster a child under 16, to notify the local authority immediately or within 6 weeks.

Private fostering is when a child under 16 (18 if disabled) is cared for by someone other than a parent, a person with parental responsibility or a close relative, for 28 days or more (including occasional short breaks).

A 'close relative' is a grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, step-parent, by marriage/civil partnership.

A 'private' foster carer can be:

- Extended family e.g. a cousin or great aunt
- A friend of the family
- The parent of a friend of the child
- Someone unknown to child/young person's family

How is responsibility shared?

- The private foster carer is responsible for providing daily care & promoting/safeguarding their welfare
- Private foster carer's rights come from the voluntary agreement made with the parent
- Responsibility for the child's welfare remains with the person with parental responsibility

Private foster carers can get support & financial help.

The Sheffield Connected Persons Team will assess the best interests of the child, including:

- listening to what the child wants
- arranging support for the child and the carer
- helping carer to apply to be a private foster carer
- ensuring cultural, linguistic, religious needs met
- undertake regular visits to see the child & carer
- signpost to other agencies as necessary

If the arrangement is deemed unsuitable, decisions will be made to safeguard the child's welfare.

Why are children in private foster care?

- children from abroad living with extended family
- host families for language schools
- parental ill-health
- parents move but student stays to finish exams
- teenagers estranged from their families
- children brought to the UK for adoption
- children at independent boarding schools placed with host families for holidays
- trafficked children

Host families & 'Homestay':

If a parent or student arranges the homestay, this is not a fostering arrangement.

If a setting arranges exchange visits (even if via a company), consider the safety of all pupils who are in the home of a family to whom they are not related.

Adults providing the care are in 'regulated activity' and your setting is the 'regulated activity provider'.

UK homestays - you should:

- obtain a DBS enhanced certificate with barred list information for all for students under 16
- consider obtaining a DBS enhanced certificate for students over 16, and
- use professional judgement to assess the suitability of the adults who provide the care
- Notify the local authority if the homestay is for 28 days or more

Homestay abroad - you should:

- liaise with partner schools to arrange effective safeguarding of all students involved
- make parents aware of the arrangement
- contact the foreign embassy or High Commission in the country to discuss checks
- Provide pupils with contact details for emergencies or if they feel uncomfortable

Useful web links/resources:

- [Private Fostering, Sheffield City Council](#)
- [The Children \(Private Arrangements for Fostering\) Regulations 2005](#)
- [Private fostering: better information, better understanding, Ofsted 2014](#)
- [Children Act 1989 Private Fostering, DfE](#)

To notify the **Sheffield Safeguarding Hub** about a possible private fostering arrangement ring:

0114 2734855

For advice about private fostering, ring the:

Connected Persons Team, tel.: 0114 2736489