



## Private Fostering Professionals Practice briefing

## Private Fostering

- Private fostering is when a child or young person under 16 years old (or 18 if they have a disability) is looked after for a period of 28 days or more by someone who is not a parent, close relative, legal guardian or person with parental responsibility. Close relatives are step-parents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters and grandparents.
- The local authority must be notified so they can assess and support them to ensure it is a safe place for the child.

### A private foster carer might be:

- extended family e.g. cousin or great aunt
- family friends of the privately fostered child
- someone with no relation to the family – who is willing to privately foster a child
- However, close relatives such as an aunt, grandparent, step-parent, brother or sister looking after a child would not be regarded as a private foster carer

### Examples why a child might be privately fostered...

- If the parent has chronic ill health, is in hospital or in prison;
- when parents who live overseas send their children to this country for education;
- when parent and child don't get on, so child is living with a friend's family;
- when parents' study or work hours/commute etc prevents them looking after the child themselves;

### Examples why a child might be privately fostered...

- where parents have separated or divorced, and may have no stable home;
- when young people want to live with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend;
- when children/young people in boarding schools cannot return to their parents in the holidays, e.g. a parent in the Armed Services may have been deployed overseas;
- unaccompanied asylum-seeking children/young people who are living with friends, distant relatives or strangers.

### Questions for practice

- Has the child said that they are no longer living with their parents e.g. are staying with friends
- Is the child vague about who is looking after them and what their relationship to them is?
- Are you unsure who is looking after the child and what their relationship to the child is? Have you checked that those called e.g. 'Auntie', 'Uncle' etc. are relatives rather than the term being used as a form of respect?
- Are you unsure if the carer has parental responsibility for the child?

### Contacting the local authority.

- If you become aware of a private fostering arrangement, you should ensure that children's services are aware
- this advice includes a wide range of people who come in contact with children including teachers, religious leaders, doctors and health visitors. Professionals should also encourage the child's parent or carer to notify children's services
- you will not be breaching confidentiality by notifying children's services, but you will be helping to safeguard a child

### Contacting the local authority

For further information or to discuss your situation with a social worker contact us.

Referral to Front Door Services:

Intake Team West

Hounslow House

4th Floor

Telephone 0208 583 6662