

7 Minute Briefing: Private Fostering

1. Context: It is estimated that about 10,000 children and young people are privately fostered. In over 50% of cases councils are not being notified and when they are informed, it is nearly always after the arrangement has started. This is a huge cause for concern, as privately fostered children are without the protection provided by the council, are a particularly vulnerable group.

2. What is Private Fostering? It's an arrangement that is made privately and without the involvement of a local authority, for the care of a child under the age of 16 years (under 18 years, if disabled). Care is provided by someone other than a parent/close relative with the intention that it lasts for 28 days or more. This should not be confused with placements where the local authority have been involved in placing the child with a family member / friend as an alternative to foster care.

7. Notification of a private fostering arrangement. This should come from the parent/carer, but professionals can help in identifying these arrangements & advising parents/carers of their responsibilities. If you know a child is being privately fostered & you think the council is unaware, please notify Children and Families Contact Swindon via email: contactchildrenandfamilies@swindon.gov.uk or call 01793 464646 or encourage the carer/parent to. You will not be breaching confidentiality.

3. Continued. A child who is privately fostered is a child or young person looked after by someone other than a parent, step-parent, sibling, aunt, uncle or grandparent for a period of more than 28 days.

Support and advice will be offered to all parties involved with a private fostering arrangement.

6. Questions to consider to help establish whether a child is privately fostered? Q - Is it clear who the child is living with, and what relation the person is to the child?

Q Is there anything unclear on files or records about the child's living arrangements?

Q Is the child living with someone other than a parent, someone with parental responsibility or a relative?

Q Do you know what the child's living arrangements are (who with, for what purpose)?

Q Has the child been living, or is likely to live, away from home for more than 28 days, or a series of days totalling 28 days or more?



4. Why are children/young people privately fostered? There are many reasons, such as parental ill health, sent to the UK by birth parents from overseas for education or health care. Children/young people living with a friend/boyfriend/girlfriend's family following parental separation /divorce or arguments at home. Children/young people whose parents work /study long or antisocial hours. Children/young people on school holiday exchanges lasting more than 28 days. Children/ young people who are on sports/music sponsorships living away from their families. A parent or an agency, such as a college or sports academy, would normally make such an arrangement.

5 What happens? Once the local authority receives a notification, they will visit the child and check the arrangement is suitable. A child can be removed from a carer if there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. The private fostering social worker and children's social worker will assess the arrangement jointly in order to identify the need for any ongoing support.

Find out more on the [Private fostering - Swindon Safeguarding Partnership](#) and [Private fostering | Swindon Borough Council](#)

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