



# **Private Fostering Policy**

**Reviewed and updated July 2012**

## **Private Fostering**

	Page No
<b><u>Introduction and definitions:</u></b>	4
Introduction	4
Definition of a Private Fostering Arrangement	4
Examples of children living in Private fostering Arrangements	4
Legislation relating to Private Fostering	4
Private fostering Professionals	5
<b><u>Service Promotion and development</u></b>	6
Training for Staff	6
Raising awareness within Oxfordshire County Council	6
Raising Awareness to external agencies and members of the Public	6
The role of other agencies in assisting the local authority	7
<b><u>Private fostering Service Review</u></b>	8
Annual review	8
Case reviews	8
Monitoring compliance	8
Inspection - the role of Ofsted	8
<b><u>Private Fostering Casework</u></b>	9
Notification	9
Responding to notifications	9
Language schools and overseas students	9
Dealing with situations where the local authority has not been notified	9
Assessment	10
Assessing the suitability of Private fostering arrangements	10
Content of assessment	11
Child Trafficking	11
Links with other Registration/Notification Procedures:	12
a) Childminding	12
b) More than 3 Privately Fostered children	12
Monitoring	12
Statutory visiting requirements	12
Ongoing monitoring	12
Changes in circumstances	13
Ending a Private fostering arrangement	13
<b><u>Legal Powers</u></b>	14
Disqualification	14
Persons Disqualified from being Private Foster Carers	14
Dealing with Disqualifications	14
Requirements	15
Prohibitions	16
Cancelling a Prohibition	16
Private fostering arrangements which are not satisfactorily safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare	16

<b><u>Services for Private fostered children, their parents and their carers</u></b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Advice and support</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Support for Private foster Carers</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Support for Parents</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Support for Privately Fostered Children</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>After Care</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Disabled children</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Post 16 support</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Appendix 1 - Notification of a Private Fostering arrangement</b>	<b>20-22</b>
<b>Appendix 2 - Private Fostering Flowchart</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Appendix 3 - Agreement between Parents and Private Foster Carers</b>	<b>24-29</b>
<b>Appendix 4 - Notification of end of Private Fostering arrangement</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Appendix 5 - Declaration of suitability form</b>	<b>31-32</b>
<b>Appendix 6 -Guide to Private fostering Leaflets for Parents</b>	<b>33-34</b>
<b>Guide to Private Fostering Leaflet for Carers</b>	<b>35-36</b>
<b>Guide to Private Fostering for host families</b>	<b>37-38</b>
<b>Appendix 7- Guide to Private fostering Leaflet for Children</b>	<b>39</b>

## **Introduction and Definitions**

### **Introduction**

Our aim is to raise awareness of private fostering, to provide guidance on our statutory responsibility, to check that Private fostering arrangements are suitable and meet the needs of the child and, if necessary, to prohibit unsuitable carers.

### **Definition of a Private fostering Arrangement**

A Privately fostered child is a child under 16 years old (or 18 years old if disabled) living away from his/her birth parents for longer than 28 days with a person who is not:

- A parent of the child
- Someone who has parental responsibility for the child
- A close relative of the child

#### Definition of a Close Relative:

The Children Act 1989 (Section 105) defines a relative in relation to a child as: a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by affinity) or step parent (a married step parent, including a civil partnership). This excludes unmarried couples but in practice, unmarried or putative fathers will be included in all decision-making.

Private Fostering arrangements are made privately without the involvement of a local authority. The period for which the child is looked after by the Private Foster Carer should be continuous, but that continuity is not broken by the occasional short break. Exemptions to this definition are set out in Schedule 8 to the Children Act 1989.

The Private Foster Carer becomes responsible for providing day to day care of the child in a way which will promote and safeguard his welfare. Overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the Privately Fostered child remains with the parent or other person with parental responsibility.

### **Examples of children living in Private Fostering arrangements**

- Local children living apart from their families following difficulties at home
- Children who are being cared for by another family whilst their parents are in prison or hospital.
- Children attending language schools living with host families
- Asylum seeking children and refugees
- African and African Caribbean children with parents or families overseas
- Black and minority ethnic children with parents working or studying in the UK
- Trafficked children
- Children at independent boarding schools who do not return home for holidays
- Children brought in from abroad with a view to adoption (“entrustment”)

A child who is looked after by a Local Authority or placed in a residential home, hospital or school is excluded from the definition.

### **The Legislation relating to Private Fostering**

- ❖ The Children Act 1989 (part IX) as amended by the Children Act 2004
  - Part 9, and Schedule 8
  - Regulations made under Part 9 of the Act, as amended by Section 44 of the Children Act 2004

- ❖ The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 (which replaced the 1991 regulations)
- ❖ Replacement Guidance Children Act 1989 for Private fostering (issued 2006)
- ❖ National Minimum Standards for Private fostering (18 July 2005)
- ❖ The Human Rights Act 1998
- ❖ Working together to Safeguard children - Department of Health 2006
- ❖ Disqualification from Caring for Children (England) Regulations 2002

Oxfordshire County Council works within the legislative framework to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are, or will be, privately fostered within their area is being, or will be, satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

Private Fostering arrangements will be assessed and monitored to ensure that the Private Foster Carers, the arrangements for the child, and the accommodation is suitable. The local authority does not approve or register private foster carers but can prohibit a Private Fostering arrangement in certain circumstances.

### **Private Fostering Professionals**

The person within the local authority with expertise in private fostering is:

Gemma Jones,  
Private Fostering Social Worker  
Knights Court  
21 Between Towns Road  
Oxfordshire County Council OX4 3LX  
Email: [gemma.jones@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:gemma.jones@oxfordshire.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 01865 323167

Contact details are available on Oxfordshire County Council's website and also on Oxfordshire County Council's Private Fostering publicity material.

The Team Manager responsible for Private Fostering is: Mary Austin, [mary.austin@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:mary.austin@oxfordshire.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 01865 323167

The Area Service Manager responsible for private fostering is: Penny Browne,  
[penny.browne@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:penny.browne@oxfordshire.gov.uk) Telephone: 01865 323865/ 01865 222644

## **Service Promotion & Development**

### **Training for Staff**

Private Fostering is included in Oxfordshire's Safeguarding training. It is a requirement that all permanent Social Work staff attend this training.

New employees will receive basic briefings on Private Fostering at new staff induction events.

There is a rolling programme of refresher training sessions on Private Fostering for the assessment and family support teams.

All teams have the opportunity to receive Private Fostering training at team meetings at their manager's request

There is a child protection module delivered to all school staff by the Social Inclusion Team, Private Fostering is included within this training.

Trainee Social Workers on placement within the Assessment and Family Support Teams are offered Private fostering briefings or one to one information giving sessions with the Private Fostering Social Worker (dependent on numbers).

### **Raising awareness - within Oxfordshire County Council**

We aim to ensure that all relevant internal staff are aware of Private Fostering and the procedure for Notification. Private fostering is included in Safeguarding training which is part of the induction training for all new members of staff and the refresher training for existing staff.

Relevant staff are trained in Oxfordshire through induction training and a comprehensive plan of team visits by the designated worker for private fostering. At these meetings, details about procedures and relevant paperwork are passed on to individual workers.

Details about Private Fostering are available on the internal Insite Pages as well as the external internet pages.

Communication activities for internal staff are reviewed and updated annually as part of the service's annual review.

### **Raising Awareness - external agencies and members of the public**

The national minimum standards, along with measures in section 44 of the Children Act 2004 and the 2005 regulations, are intended to better focus local authorities' attention on private fostering, in part by requiring them to take a more proactive approach to identifying arrangements in their area.

Oxfordshire County Council has allocated Private Fostering Social Worker who can co-ordinate enquiries and notifications alongside the assessment teams. There is a programme of communication activities, designed to raise the awareness amongst partner agencies about their responsibilities with regard to private fostering. Communication activities are reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

Members of the public are reached via publicity materials distributed to a range of external agencies including schools, health centres and libraries. Each year during "Private Fostering Week" organised by the British Association for Adoption and fostering (BAAF) Oxfordshire County Council publicises Private Fostering within Oxfordshire.

Oxfordshire has produced targeted and user-friendly leaflets and posters for raising awareness about Private Fostering. We have information for International Students available in different languages. Other

leaflets and posters can be available in other languages and formats on request. All publicity material contains details of who to contact within Oxfordshire County Council.

Information about Private Fostering is accessible on Oxfordshire County Council's website. This information includes a definition of Private Fostering, details of how and who to notify and a printable notification form. In this way, information is available for all professionals and members of the public.

Private Fostering posters and leaflets are displayed in the reception areas at all localities for Oxfordshire's Children, Education and Families Services.

### **The role of other agencies in assisting the local authority**

Each year Oxfordshire County Council targets different groups and organisations to ensure that they are aware of Private Fostering and their responsibilities in terms of notifying the local authority. The advice given to external agencies is that they are expected to inform parents and carers of a Privately Fostered child that they have a legal duty to inform the Local Authority of the arrangement. If these professionals have reason to believe that an arrangement has not or will not be notified to the local authority the professional will be advised to notify of the arrangement themselves. They do this by making a referral to the relevant assessment team in their area.

There is a programme of communication activities designed to target and inform external agencies about Private Fostering and the notification requirements. These activities are assessed and amended each year to ensure that new organisations are approached and the information is reaching organisations that may not be aware of their responsibilities.

Any agency interested in finding out more about Private Fostering is welcome to contact the Private Fostering Social Worker to request a presentation, leaflets and/ or posters.

Details about Private Fostering, including information about how to notify the local authority and a printable notification form is available on Oxfordshire County Council's internet page.

## **Private Fostering Service Review**

### **Annual Review**

The Private Fostering professionals within Oxfordshire County Council complete an annual review of all paperwork, procedures and training relating to Private fostering to ensure it is up to date and in line with current legislation.

The PF1 form is submitted to the Department of Education in May every year.

The local authority completes a AQA. All new notifications are to be recorded on the statistical data return and submitted annually to Ofsted.

An annual report on Private Fostering is submitted to the Local Safeguarding Board and the Head of Children's Services. The directorate must satisfy itself that its systems are effective in the protection of privately fostered children and that steps taken are documented adequately. The annual report includes statistics and outcomes and a report on the welfare of Privately Fostered children

### **Case Reviews**

The private fostering lead area service manager ensures compliance with Regulation 12 by auditing files to ensure that

- Statutory visits take place within timescales
- Decisions about suitability of arrangements are also within timescales and approved at managerial level
- Any concerns raised by privately fostered children/young people are Investigated.

A system is in place for recording the number and nature of enquiries received in relation to private fostering, including the responses given and action taken.

### **Monitoring compliance**

Confidential records must be kept on each privately fostered child and their carer, covering the following areas:

- The initial assessment, the private fostering assessment, all police and Framework checks, responses from GPs.
- Details of any disqualifications, prohibitions or requirements imposed.
- Decisions about offences and whether to consent or refuse to consent to a disqualified person privately fostering a child.
- Any advice and support offered to parent or carer. Any information or support given to children. Details of any investigation or any pattern of concern (child protection).

### **Inspection - The Role of Ofsted**

Oxfordshire's performance and progress under the standards was inspected against the national minimum standards and the 2005 regulations by Ofsted in August 2007.

## Private fostering Casework

### Notification

Where a child is to be placed with Private Foster Carers, the child's parents must inform the local authority in writing at least 6 weeks before the arrangement begins. If the arrangement is made at short notice the private foster carer must inform the local authority immediately after the placement is made.

Any person who is involved in arranging for the child to be Privately Fostered or a parent who knows that it is proposed that their child will be Privately Fostered should notify the local authority as soon as possible after the arrangement is made or as soon as he becomes aware of the arrangement.

Notification should be made by telephone to the local assessment team for the child. This should be followed up in writing using the Private Fostering Notification Form (Appendix 1)

#### North Assessment Team

01865 816670

#### Oxford City (Central) Assessment Team

01865 323048

#### South Assessment Team

01865 897983



### **Responding to Notifications**

Upon Notification of a Private Fostering arrangement (whether proposed or in place) the assessment team will notify the Private Fostering Social Worker and an initial assessment will be completed within 7 days. Please see appendix 2 Private Fostering Flow chart for details of roles and responsibilities.

If, during the initial assessment it is established that the child is in a Private Fostering arrangement and they do not require additional Social Work support then they will be referred to the Private Fostering Social Worker who will complete the Private fostering assessment and continue to monitor the arrangement.

If it is clear that the arrangement is not appropriate during the initial assessment then the Assessing Social Worker will contact the parents to inform them that they will need to resume care of their child or they will need to find an alternative placement for their child. If the parents are unable to resume care of their child or find a suitable alternative carer the assessing social worker will look at other services the local authority can provide to the child to ensure their safety.

If at any stage of the assessment, information is obtained which suggests that a child already placed with a Private Foster Carer may be a child in need, the manager may authorise services (including financial support) under a Child in Need Plan and/or a Core Assessment to be carried out. Where the child is considered at risk of Significant Harm the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board's procedures must be followed.

### **Language schools and Overseas Students**

Notification of overseas students under 16 years old can be sent directly to the Private Fostering social Worker. They are then assessed in the same way as other privately fostered children. Children who stay with guardians in the holidays for more than 28 days will also be assessed under the legislation.

### **Dealing with situations where the local authority has not been notified**

In practice, many of the arrangements that become known to our service have been in place for some time without notification. As public awareness improves over time, it may be necessary to deal with un-notified arrangements. If it is decided that an offence has been committed by not notifying the authority, the case should be passed to the area service manager for family support. Consideration for the interest of the child should always be the priority.

Where a Private Fostering arrangement comes to the attention of the local authority which has been in place for a period of 3 months or more all professionals involved with the child will be contacted and informed about their role and responsibility to notify the local authority of Private Fostering arrangements.

The duty and assessment teams are regularly updated and reminded about Private Fostering. They have a responsibility to monitor calls about private fostering, in the same way they monitor any referrals. The duty team can refer specific situations to the designated Private Fostering Social Worker for guidance.

## **Assessment**

### **Assessing the Suitability of Private fostering Arrangements**

Oxfordshire County Council will determine the suitability of all aspects of a private fostering arrangement in accordance with Schedule 2 and 3 of the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.

We require at least one parent's permission for the arrangement in order for it to be classified as Private Fostering. All other persons with parental responsibility will be consulted and liaised with for the duration of the arrangement. If a parent or any other person with parental responsibility does not give permission for their child to stay in a Private Fostering arrangement they will be encouraged to resume care of their child.

If neither parent consents to an arrangement, for example when a teenager moves in with a friend against their parent's wishes then the Assessment Team will complete an initial assessment. Dependent upon the outcome of this the child will either be allocated a worker within the local authority, they will return home, or they will be referred onto the Early Intervention Team for on-going support. If, at any stage, either parent consents to the arrangement the Private Fostering Social Worker will be contacted to initiate a Private Fostering Assessment.

As part of the assessment process the following checks must be completed:

- 1) The child will be seen alone (or in the presence of a teacher, or impartial professional who is trusted by the child if this makes the child feel more comfortable) in order to ascertain their wishes and feelings
- 2) The allocated worker will visit the Private Foster Carers within their home, see the room where the child is sleeping and establish how the child's needs will be, or are being, met within the placement.
- 3) The parent(s) will be spoken to ascertain their views and wishes and to ensure they are aware of their continued responsibilities towards their child and the expectation that they are to resume care if any concerns arise.
- 4) Enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks to be completed for every member of the household over the age of 16
- 5) Checks will be made on Frameworki to identify any current or previous involvement with local Children's Services.
- 6) "Declaration of Suitability Forms" to be completed with all members of the household over the age of 16.
- 7) Risk assessment to be completed for any person within the household who has made a declaration or disclosure on either of the aforementioned forms.
- 8) The family's GP will be written to and asked to inform Oxfordshire County Council if they believe that the carer(s) or any member of their household may pose a risk to the child they are caring for or planning to care for.

Staff should consult the Private fostering Flowchart which sets out the duties of social workers and the designated worker. (Appendix 2)

All Private fostering cases will be monitored by the Private Fostering Social Worker however children who require additional services under the Children Act 1989 will be allocated to a Social Worker within their local Family Support Team.

The Private fostering assessment will be started within 7 days and completed within 42 working days from notification or as soon as the CRB checks(s) have been received and reviewed, whichever is sooner.

The child shall be seen every 6 weeks for the first year and every 12 weeks thereafter for the duration of the private fostering arrangement. The Private fostering arrangement is deemed to begin when the local authority become aware of it.

### **Content of assessment**

The Private fostering Assessment considers the following issues over a number of home visits.

- Proposed length and duration of the arrangement
- Finance: parental awareness of financial obligation towards the child
- Contact: arrangements with birth parents, other family members
- Health: arrangements for dental and healthcare; child's health care record, past inoculations, allergies etc
- Education: arrangements for attending school as well as attending school events, receiving school reports and dealing with any educational difficulties.
- Culture: Religious, cultural and linguistic considerations must be included.
  
- Suitability: of all household members, and the capacity of the private foster carer to protect the child
- Permanence planning; plans for the child's future

A blank agreement form is given to carers and parents to complete, this is to try to open discussions about the child's needs and the care that will be given to meet these. (Appendix 3)

Oxfordshire County Council will not authorise as suitable a Private Foster Carer whose own child is currently being looked after or accommodated by the local authority.

A Private fostering assessment form must be completed on Frameworki and signed off by the team manager. If any previously undisclosed criminal offences result from the enhanced disclosure the relevant area service manager will be informed and a decision made about whether a risk assessment can be completed or a disqualification is required.

### **Child Trafficking**

There is increasing evidence of a link between organised crime, trafficking of children (forced marriage) and private fostering. Children are brought into the country illegally and dispersed for purposes of exploitation. This could include domestic work, work of a sexual nature or involvement in the drugs trade. The nature of private fostering means that children can enter the UK and live with unrelated adults while still remaining hidden from any agencies. If there is a suspicion that a privately fostered child may be a trafficked child then a referral will be made to the family support team and advice will be sought from the following agencies:

UKHTC - 0114 252 3891 [Margaret.moran@ukhtc.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Margaret.moran@ukhtc.pnn.police.uk)

ECPAT UK - 020 7233 9887 [info@ecpat.org.uk](mailto:info@ecpat.org.uk)

Details of risk factors can be found on:

Association of London Government Safeguarding procedure for trafficked children, [www.londoncpc.gov.uk](http://www.londoncpc.gov.uk).

## **Links with other Registration/Notification Procedures**

### **a) Childminding -**

A person planning to undertake childminding: day care for children under 8 for more than 2 hours a day or more than 6 days in any year and for reward; must register as a childminder - whether or not they are also private foster carers.

### **b) More than three privately fostered children -**

If a person plans to, or is, privately fostering more than three children, he must register as a "children's home". There can, in exceptional circumstances, be an exemption, by the Local Authority. The Head of Service will need a report, signed by the Service Manager, setting out reasons why exemption is considered appropriate. These would usually relate to:

- Arrangements made in an emergency
- Arrangements likely to be short term.
- Children are a sibling group, and should not be separated.
- Geographical considerations: close to important relatives or school.
- Very exceptional other circumstances.

The Head of Service will discuss with the legal advisor before agreeing an exemption, unless the numbers of children are to be more than three for no more than two weeks, and other considerations - such as are indicated above - are important.

## **Monitoring**

### **Statutory visiting requirements**

The arrangement must be monitored by the allocated worker every six weeks during the first year, and every 12 weeks in subsequent years until the child turns 16 years old (18 years old if disabled). Statutory visits should be recorded on the Private fostering Reg 8 forms on Frameworki. The child should be seen alone during every visit (unless they are very young or refuse to do so). In addition visits should be arranged in a variety of settings to ensure the child has the opportunity to talk openly.

### **Ongoing Monitoring**

During the Reg 8 visits the allocated worker must give consideration to and report upon the following issues:

- The child's physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development. Is it appropriate and satisfactory?
- The child's needs arising from his religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background. Are they being met?
- Are there any financial arrangements made between the parents and carers? Are these arrangements working?
- The carer's ongoing capacity to look after the child
- Is the child registered with a GP? Are their health needs being met?
- Are the child's educational needs being met?
- Does the care provided meets the needs of the child?
- Are contact arrangements established and are they satisfactory for the child?
- Who is making the day to day decisions? How much consultation is taking place between parents and carers?
- How are other household members interacting with the child and are there any visitors to the home who need to be assessed?

Where the local authority has concerns that a child may not be achieving a satisfactory level of health or development without the provision of services, an assessment is undertaken under Section 17 of the

Children Act 1989, in accordance with the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (2000)

### **Changes in circumstances**

Private foster carers are required to notify the local authority of certain changes in circumstances, either in advance or within 48 hours of the change. These circumstances include:

- Change of address
- Any further offence of which he or a person who is part of or employed at this household has been convicted
- Any further disqualification imposed on a person who is part of or employed at the household under section 68 of the Children Act 1989
- Any person who begins to be part of or employed at his household, and any offence of which that person has been convicted, and any disqualification or prohibition imposed on him/her under section 68 or 69 of the Children Act 1989 or under any previous enactment of either of those sections
- Any person who ceases to be part of or employed at his household

If the parent of a privately fostered child, or other person with parental responsibility for the child, plans a geographical move, they must notify the local authority of a change of address.

If the private foster carer moves with the child to another local authority then information must be passed to the new local authority by the previous local authority.

If the local authority are notified that a new offence has been committed by someone within the Private fostering household a new Risk assessment will need to be completed.

### **Ending a private fostering arrangement**

Regulation 10 is concerned with notification of the end of the arrangement. A person who has been privately fostering a child must notify the local authority within 48 hours of the arrangement ceasing.

In the event of the child being seriously injured or worse, the local authority must be notified immediately.

All private fostering notifications must be in writing Children (private arrangements for fostering) Regulations 2005, reg. 11 using the end of arrangement notification form. (Appendix 4)

## Legal Powers

### Disqualification

#### **Persons Disqualified from being Private Foster Carers**

Certain individuals are automatically disqualified from being private foster carers due to past activities or offences. The circumstances that disqualify a person from private fostering include:

- Those that have been convicted at any time of certain offences.
- Parents whose children have been subject to a Care Order or Supervision Order.
- Where a carer's rights and powers over a child have been removed at any time.
- Where a carer has been refused registration as a childminder.
- Where a carer lives in a household with someone else who has been disqualified.

This list is NOT exhaustive. The list of relevant offences is long and includes a whole range of sexual offences and offences against the person including injury and threat of injury however long ago. If a potential Carer or member of their household has been convicted of a sexual offence or an offence against the person of any kind or any offence involving children the Social worker **must** consult legal services as to whether this would disqualify them.

The Local Authority has a discretionary power to lift a disqualification, but only in "the most exceptional circumstances". Legal advice should be sought and the Area Manager authorisation sought before any decision to lift a disqualification is made.

The private foster carer should be informed in writing, whether the Local Authority has chosen to lift a disqualification or not. Reasons for the decision and details of the appeals procedure should also be given.

Where a private foster carer disagrees with a decision to refuse to lift a disqualification s/he should appeal to the Family Proceedings Court within 14 days of the notice of refusal.

Full details regarding disqualification can be found in Children Act 1989 'Guidance and Regulations' – Private Fostering.

#### **Dealing with Disqualifications**

The carers and all members of their household over the age of 16 are required to complete a "Declaration of Suitability" in which they have the opportunity to disclose any reason why they may be disqualified from caring for a child. (Appendix 5)

If a disclosure is made or the Social Worker becomes aware of any reason why the carer or any member of their household may be a "disqualified person" the service Manager will be notified. The local authority has the right to waive the restriction under certain circumstances having regard to the date of the offence or order, the type of offence, the degree of culpability and the persons activity and involvement with children since the offence.

Where a proposed Private Foster Carer is a disqualified person a decision will be made, at Service Manager level, to either

- a) refuse to allow a person who is disqualified from privately fostering a child, or
- b) Arrange for the allocated worker to complete a risk assessment to establish the carer's current circumstances and views about past offences and events.

If, following the risk assessment, the carer is then deemed suitable the risk assessment will be placed on the child's records on Frameworki. The Parents will be informed that a risk assessment has been completed and, where appropriate the Private Foster Carers will be asked to share the risk assessment with the child's parents.

Where the carer is a disqualified person who is not suitable to care for a child immediate discussion should take place with the child's parents as to the making of alternative arrangements for the child. Unless it would not be in the best interests of the child concerned, all reasonable steps must be taken to secure the child's return to his or her parents, any other person with parental responsibility or a relative, with support where appropriate. In order to determine the best outcome for the child an Initial Assessment or Core assessment under the Assessment Framework should be undertaken.

A Disqualification letter will be sent to the parents and to the carer and s/he will be advised that an appeal may be made to the family proceedings court within 14 days of notification of that decision.

### **Requirements**

Where a person is privately fostering or proposes to privately foster, the appropriate local authority may impose requirements as to:

- The number, age and sex of children who may be privately fostered.
- The standard of accommodation and equipment to be provided by them.
- The arrangements to be made with respect to their health and safety
- Particular arrangements to be made with respect to the provision of care for them.

The local authority may specify a period of time by which these requirements must be met (Schedule 8. Para 6(1))

Requirements must be specific and are imposed on the Private foster carer.

Examples of requirements may include:

- Maintaining a record/ details of the child and his/her family
- Discipline
- Safety
- Sleeping arrangements
- This list is not exhaustive

If a requirement concerns a child's safety the parents should be fully informed of the situation. They may be advised to or decide to remove the child from the placement while an appeal is pending.

Before imposing a requirement good practice would be to work towards an action plan between the private foster carer and the social worker to address the concerns.

Requirements shall be imposed by notice in writing (by recorded delivery or by hand) addressed to the person on whom it is imposed and informing him of:

- The reasons for imposing the requirement
- His right to appeal against it
- The time in which he may do so

A local authority may at any time vary any requirement, impose any additional requirement or remove any requirement. Consultation should take place with the legal department in respect of requirements.

The private foster carer has a duty to comply with any such requirements. Failure to do so is an offence under Section 70 of the Children Act 1989. If a private foster carer does not comply with a requirement, the local authority should consider whether it would be appropriate to impose a prohibition on the persons concerned.

A person aggrieved by a requirement under Paragraph 6, Schedule 8 may appeal to the court. The appeal must be made within 14 days of notification.

While the appeal is pending the requirement shall not have effect (Schedule 8, paragraph 8, Children Act 1989).

### **Prohibitions**

A local authority has the power to prohibit a person from privately fostering children where they are of the opinion that:

- The person is not suitable
- The premises are not suitable
- It would be prejudicial to the welfare of the child for him to be, or continue to be, accommodated by that person in those premises.

*Children Act 1989, Part IX, Section 69 (2)*

A prohibition may be imposed on a person who intends to privately foster or on a person who is already privately fostering. A prohibition may apply generally to a person, or specifically to a named child or named premises.

If a requirement is not met the local authority may impose a prohibition on the private foster carer. Consultation needs to take place with the legal department before a prohibition can be served.

Any prohibition would not have effect unless:

- The time specified for compliance had expired
- And the requirement has not been complied with

A prohibition shall be imposed in writing (by recorded delivery) addressed to the person on whom it is imposed and informing him:

- The reason(s) for the prohibition
- His right under Paragraph 8 of Schedule 8 to appeal against the prohibition.
- The time in which he may do so

The private foster carer will be able to appeal in writing against a prohibition by writing to the Head of Service within two weeks of receiving the notice of prohibition.

When a prohibition has been issued the child's parents should be fully informed and advised to find alternative suitable care for their child. The local authority should also consider whether child protection procedures are required.

### **Cancelling a prohibition**

The local authority has the power to cancel a prohibition, and thus to respond appropriately to action taken by the private foster carer, or new information. Consultation with the legal department is requirement before a prohibition can be cancelled.

The private foster carer should be informed in writing (by recorded delivery) where a prohibition has been lifted.

Where a prohibition has been lifted the child's parents should be notified.

### **Private fostering arrangements which are not satisfactorily safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare**

Unless it would not be in the best interests of the child concerned, the local authority must take reasonable steps to secure that the child is looked after by a parent, any other person with parental

responsibility, or a relative. They must also consider whether they should exercise any of their functions under the Children Act 1989, including whether or not to consider accommodating the child under Section 20 of the Act, or offering support under section 17 of the Act. Decisions under Section 67(5) of the Children Act 1989 should not be taken by the Social Worker working alone. Concerns should be discussed with senior managers together with legal services.

## **Services for Privately Fostered Children, their parents and their carers**

### **Advice and Support**

When Oxfordshire County Council is made aware of a Private Fostering arrangement parents and carers are given the appropriate "Guide to Private Fostering" leaflet which explains their respective responsibilities and Oxfordshire County Council's role in assessing and monitoring Private Fostering arrangements. (Appendix 6)

Carers are seen and where practical parents are seen to discuss the private fostering arrangement. Parents and carers are, where possible, invited to attend meetings together and are given guidance on issues to be clarified for the best interests of the child (such as finances, dietary requirements, discipline).

Parents and carers are given the contact details for the Private Fostering Social Worker who they, or any other person involved with the child, can contact directly for further information and advice.

### **Support for Private foster carers**

Advice will be given to carers and parents in relation to the need for any child benefit and child tax credit claims to be transferred to the private foster carer.

Information, advice and guidance can be given to Private Foster Carers, in the same way as they are to our in-house foster carers on amongst other things:

- Behaviour management,
- bullying,
- computer safety,
- physical intervention,
- sanctions,
- spiritual development,
- hair and skincare.

Private foster Carers can access the "Skills to Foster" training and the "KEEP" 12 week programme for kinship carers via their allocated worker.

Private Foster carers will be given culturally appropriate information about other relevant services (such as CAMHS, the Hubs, youth support services) and referrals will be made where appropriate.

Carers will be given the name and contact details of the named social worker and the number for the out of hours emergency services.

### **Support for Parents**

Parents also have the right to advice about local authority and other agencies' services (in culturally appropriate materials) as above.

Parents should be supported to maintain contact with the child and they will be encouraged to make arrangements directly with the carer where it is appropriate to do so.

Where the Private Fostering arrangement is the result of disagreements within the parental home between the child and parents a referral will be made to mediation services to see if any work could be done to improve relationships with a view to the child returning home.

All efforts at mediation and avoiding the need for the parent to have the child privately fostered or for the child to continue to live away from home should be explored and documented on the case file.

Where an arrangement is prohibited, parents should be provided with advice and support to make alternative arrangements. Parents will be given the contact details of the allocated worker.

## **Support for privately fostered children**

Privately fostered children are sent an age appropriate letter prior to the initial assessment visit explaining the purpose of the Private fostering visits. This is explained again during the visit and a leaflet is given which was designed by, and for, Privately Fostered children. (Appendix 7)

Children will be able to talk to the designated Social Worker alone at least once every 6 weeks during the Regulation 8 visit. Every Privately Fostered child is given details of who to contact if they feel at risk and they are given contact details, including the email address and phone number for their allocated worker.

Privately Fostered children are advised that they can arrange to see their worker in-between Regulation 8 visits. In addition visits are made to the child in a range of settings to maximise the opportunity for children to be able to voice any concerns they may have.

Referrals will be made by the allocated Social Worker to other agencies for any additional support that the child requires including CAMHS and The Hubs. If the child requires additional services under the Children Act 1989 a referral will be made to their local assessment team.

Children who do not speak English or whose English is limited are given information about Private Fostering in their first language.

## **After Care**

### **Disabled Children**

The local authority will provide details of its procedure for transition planning (disabilities team) to all disabled Privately fostered children who qualify for on-going support.

### **Post 16 support**

Children without a disability do not qualify for leaving care services, but they and their carers will be given information about opportunities for independent living, further education and other support agencies at the final statutory visit before they turn 16 years old. Children who require additional support at the age of 16 will be referred to their local assessment team or their local Hub (depending upon need).

*“The local authority can advise, assist and befriend such a young person if he asks for help and his previous private foster carers do not have the necessary facilities to advise or befriend him. Assistance may be in kind or, in exceptional circumstances, in cash which may also be conditional on repayment, except where a person is in receipt of certain benefits.”* (Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering, 3.7)

This does not preclude the local authority considering that the child ceasing to be privately fostered continues to be a ‘child in need’. In this case, the local authority has the power to support the young person under s17 CA 1989. Many young people continue to be vulnerable and need continuing support and assistance to enable them to make the transition to adulthood and independence.



**Notification of a Private Fostering Arrangement:**

Name of child:.....

Gender:                    Male/ Female                    Date of Birth: .....

Place of Birth: ..... Nationality:.....

Racial Origin..... Religion:.....

1<sup>st</sup> Language:..... Level of fluency in English:.....

**Name, address and contact details of person(s) with parental responsibility:**

Parent 1:

Name(s).....

Address.....

.....

Phone number..... Email.....

Parent 2:

Name(s).....

Address.....

.....

Phone number..... Email.....

**Name, address and contact details of person(s) whom the child will be staying with:**

Name(s).....

Address.....

.....

Phone number..... Email.....

**Name and Date of birth of every person who lives within the carer's household:**

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Previous addresses in the last 5 years:.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Name of School/ Education Provider:**

Name(s).....  
Address.....  
.....  
.....  
Phone number..... Email.....  
Course title/ year group:.....

**Name address and contact details of any guardian or other significant people involved with the child:**

Name(s).....  
Address.....  
.....  
.....  
Phone number..... Email.....

**Name and address of any siblings who are living in the UK:**

.....  
.....  
.....

**Names of people involved in arranging the placement?**

Date the child is due to move in to the placement .....

Date the child is due to leave the placement.....

**Reason for the Private Fostering Placement being arranged:**

**Please give any other relevant details such as any existing health conditions or disabilities:**

**Name of child:**.....

**Parental signatures:**

I have read and understood the document “Private fostering – A guide for parents” which explains my rights and responsibilities whilst my child is living elsewhere. I am in agreement with my child being privately fostered with the carers specified in the notification document.

**Signed**..... **Date** .....

**Signed** ..... **Date** .....

**Carer’s signatures:**

I have read and understood the document “Private fostering – A guide for carers” which explains my rights and responsibilities whilst I am looking after somebody else’s child and I am happy to care for the child detailed in the notification document.

**Signed**..... **Date** .....

**Signed** ..... **Date** .....

**Checklist:**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Further details</b>
Notification form	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....
Declaration of suitability form(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....
CRB form(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....
Medical consent form	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....

# Private Fostering Flow Chart

All forms are found on the Intranet

Information is received about a Private Fostering arrangement by the Assessment Team who will confirm arrangement meets Private Fostering

**If no other social work tasks identified** - fast track Initial Assessment to Private Fostering Assessment and notify Private Fostering Worker **by email**.  
**If other social work tasks** are identified, the Private Fostering Worker will liaise with the Social Worker at point of Assessment as Private Fostering tasks should be completed in addition to other Social Work Tasks

Private Fostering Worker will send notification letter to parents, carers and child and:-

Notification from language schools of Private Fostering Arrangement, the Private Fostering Worker will send notification letter to language school and:-

- Meet the carers and all other members of the family residing in the house.
- Private Fostering a Guide for Parents and Carers to be given to the appropriate persons.
- Notification form to be signed.
- Declaration of Suitability and CRB forms to be signed by every member of the household who is over 16 years old.
- Private Fostering Assessment form to be completed.

- See the child individually on their own to ensure their wishes and feelings are heard.
- Provide leaflets about Private Fostering and a Notification of End of Placement form which should be returned if the placement ends or breakdown.
- Standard letter to be sent to child's school to inform them of our involvement
- Standard letter to be sent to Private Foster Carer's GP requesting information about risk

- Meet the carers and all other members of the family residing in the house.
- Notification form to be signed by the Carer.
- Declaration of Suitability and CRB forms to be signed by every member of the household who is over 16 years old.
- Private Fostering Assessment form to be completed.

- See the child individually on their own to ensure their wishes and feelings.
- Give them leaflets about Private Fostering.

- Private Fostering Assessment process to be started within 7 days (5 working days) of the child/young person starting the placement.

- Household arrangements for the child /young person to be seen including their room or place to sleep.
- Confirm education – school/college arrangements.
- Confirm financial arrangements with the parents.
- Contact with parents
- Health and safety in the

- Visit parents to discuss the arrangement.
- Notification and Medical Consent forms to be completed.
- Give parents Private Fostering leaflets

Private Fostering Worker will complete Private Fostering Assessment form and submit to Team Managers for signature and decision about placement via Frameworki workflow, CRB forms to be sent and paperwork to be uploaded into Frameworki.

**If approved** Reg 8 visits to be completed 6 weekly for the first year and 12 weekly thereafter until the placement ends. Reg 8 visits will be completed by the allocated Social Worker where there are other social work tasks identified, otherwise they will be completed by the Private Fostering Social Worker. Placements end in the following circumstances:

- The child returns to the care of a parent or close family member
- The child reaches 16 years or 18 years old if the child/young person is disabled.
- The carers obtain an Order which gives them legal responsibility for the child
- The child becomes accommodated or looked after by the local authority

**If placement is prohibited** discuss with Team Manager and explore other more suitable placements for the child/young person.

**Any convictions** recorded on the CRB disclosure form should be discussed with the Team Manager and a risk assessment completed before proceeding with the placement

- Returned CRB forms to be filed in accordance with OCC CRB Storage Policy by the Private Fostering Worker. **Not to be uploaded into Frameworki.**
- Case note to be entered onto child/young persons record in Frameworki by the Private Fostering Worker including the disclosure number and the issue date.

Notification of End of Placement  
 Now a single episode on Fwiworkflow titled 'Private fostering Arrangement Ended' this must be completed to ensure they no longer show as PF child.

Open last Reg 8 episode. Under outcomes delete Reg 8 visit and replace with 'Private Fostering Arrangement ended'. Upload notification of end of placement document onto Frameworki.

Send closure letter to child, parents and carers

**Private Fostering Worker: Gemma Jones 01865 323167. E-mail: gemma.jones@oxfordshire.gov.uk**

## Agreement between Parents and Private Foster Carers for

---

### **Money**

Include date of benefit transfer.

How much money will be available for the following?

- |                                 |   |                |
|---------------------------------|---|----------------|
| • School uniform                | £ | per week/month |
| • School trips                  | £ | per week/month |
| • General clothing              | £ | per week/month |
| • Clothes for special occasions | £ | per week/month |
| • Glasses                       | £ | per week/month |
| • Pocket money                  | £ | per week/month |
| • Travel expenses               | £ | per week/month |
| • Haircuts                      | £ | per week/month |
| • Other expenses...             | £ | per week/month |

How will this be paid to the carers? How often?

Any other money received by parents to be transferred over to carers:  
*(e.g. maintenance payments from other parents or trustee payments from a Will)*

### **Identification**

The parents have the following forms of ID for the child

Passport  Birth certificate  Other

These will be kept by:

### **Visits to family/ contact**

Names of family members the child needs to see regularly. How will this be arranged?

Are there any family friends who the child has regular contact with and how will this be arranged?

Is there anyone who the child must not see - please give reasons why

## **Food**

Are there any foods which the child must not eat - please give reasons.

Does the child have any allergies?

What should the carer do if the child eats something they are allergic to?

What is the child's favourite food?

What food does the child dislike

How do you/ would you like mealtimes to be managed where a child is not eating?

## **Religious & cultural practices and celebrations**

The following celebrations are important to the child:

*(e.g. Birthdays, Christmas, Eid, Passover, etc)*

The following arrangements will be made for the child on the celebration dates below:

*(e.g. child will be visiting grandparents on Christmas day. Mother will collect child on Christmas eve and return him/her back to placement at 4pm on Boxing day).*

The child attends the following places of worship on the following days/ times:

## **Medical issues**

The child is registered with....

In an emergency the carer should.....

On-going health issues

Any on-going health appointments?

*(When are these and what are the arrangements for taking the child to these appointments?)*

Parents views on medical treatment & blood transfusions

## **Language Issues**

Child's first language

Can the child read and write (in what language?)

## **Education**

Name of child's school

Year group

Any specialist timetable?

Main contact within school

Normal arrangements for half terms and holidays:

## **Behaviour management**

At home when the child misbehaves the parents do the following:

Parents are in agreement with the following forms of discipline being used:

- Naughty Step Yes/No
- Time Out Yes/No
- Removal of items Yes/No  
(please specify)for (specify period of time)
- Grounding Yes/No
- Other, please give details

Parents are NOT in agreement with any of the following forms of discipline being used:

## **Expected duration of the Private fostering arrangement**

Is there anything the carers can do to support the child to return home...

## **Holidays**

Pre-booked holidays for parents that the child will be going on:

Pre-booked holidays for the carers:

Where will the child be staying during the carer's holiday period?

If the child will be going on holiday with the carers please give details of how much money will be paid by the parents and when, who will be arranging and paying for holiday insurance for the child?

NB: Parents need to sign a consent form if they are in agreement with the child going on holiday with the carers.

## **Out of school activities/clubs**

The child attends the following groups on the following days each week:

Arrangements for out of school activities whilst the child is staying in a Private fostering arrangement:

Will the child continue to attend?

Who will provide transport?

How will this activity be paid for?

Clubs/groups the carer's children attend:

Do parents give permission for their child to attend any/ all of these groups? How will this be paid for?

**If problems arise within the placement what will happen?**

Who will be contacted?

Who will collect the child?

Where will the child stay?

**Permission is needed by parents before.....**

**Other issues not mentioned above:**



**CHILDREN ACT 2004: PRIVATE FOSTERING REGULATIONS**

*NOTIFICATION OF END OF PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENT*

**Full Name of Child:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date private fostering placement ended: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for private fostering placement ending: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name and address and relationship of person into whose care the child was received (*where has the child moved to and who are they living with?*)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO:**

**Gemma Jones**  
Private Fostering Social Worker  
Knights Court  
21 Between Towns Road  
Oxford  
OX4 3LX  
Tel: 01865 323167  
Fax: 01865 783303  
Gemma.jones@oxfordshire.gov.uk



## Declaration of Suitability Form

The Local Authority needs to enquire as to the carers suitability to take on the role of looking after someone else's child. In certain circumstances, people could be disqualified from becoming Private Foster Carers, according to current legislation, unless the Local Authority makes full enquiries and determines otherwise in writing.

It is therefore necessary for each member of the household over 16 years of age to answer the following:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Please answer Yes or No against each question.**

<u>Have you ever:</u>	YES	NO
Been involved with mental health services or been detained (sectioned) under the Mental Health Act?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Been diagnosed with a serious or terminal illness?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Been convicted of any offence against a child?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Had a child removed from your care by the order of any court?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Had an application by you for your registration as a child minder refused by any Local Authority? (Part X, Children Act 1989)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Been involved in Court proceedings in which the Local Authority were a party (e.g. a Care Order application)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Have you ever:

**YES NO**

Been prohibited by the Local Authority from acting as a private foster carer because you were considered unsuitable

(Children Act 1989 Section 69)?

Been disqualified from acting as a foster parent

(Disqualification for Caring for Children Regulations)?

*Answering yes to any of these questions does not necessarily mean that you will be unable to care for a child as proposed, but will mean that the Local Authority will need to know the details in order to consider the matter further and complete a risk assessment.*

Please give details of your Doctor:

Name of Doctor/ Practice: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

*We will not ask to see your medical records or ask for any other health information which is not relevant to Private Fostering. We send a standard letter to your GP asking them to contact us if they believe you to be a risk to children.*

If you would like to discuss any medical conditions or offences in private please contact the visiting Social Worker as soon as possible.

**Declaration:**

**I have answered the questions on this form honestly and fully and I consider myself to be a suitable person to undertake the role of 'Private Foster Carer'. I agree to my Doctor sharing any information which is relevant to my application as a Private Foster Carer.**

**Signed**.....

**Date**.....

*Section 70(a) of the Children Act 1989 provides that a person who makes any statement in this notice or information which he knows to be false or misleading, shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5.*

# Private Fostering

## A Guide for Parents



### Your child is in a Private Fostering arrangement if:

- They are under the age of 16 (or 18 if disabled)
- They are being looked after for more than 28 days
- By someone who is not a parent or someone with parental responsibility, or a close relative.

Close relatives are defined as follows:

- Grandparents,
- Adult brother or sister of full or half blood
- Aunt, Uncle or step parent whether of full blood, half blood or by marriage or civil partnership

**If your child is living in a Private Fostering arrangement or if you are planning for them to live in a private fostering arrangement then, by law the local Council need to be informed. We need to check that your child is being well cared for and that they are not living with people who pose a risk to them.**

### We will do the following things:

- We will check that all persons with parental responsibility are in agreement with their child living with the named person for the specified period.
- We will visit your child within 7 days of being told that they are living elsewhere.
- We will complete criminal record checks on everyone over the age of 16 who is living in the household.
- We will visit your child every 6 weeks for the first year and every 12 weeks after that to make sure that they are safe and being well cared for.
- We will speak to your child alone during visits to ensure that they have a chance to tell us about any concerns they may have.
- If the arrangement becomes long term (usually over 1 year) we will talk to you and the carers about legal options to provide your child with security and stability.
- We will update you about any issues or concerns that we may have whilst your child is living elsewhere
- We will liaise with other settings that your child attends (such as school) to gain their views on your child's welfare.

### Your responsibilities:

- You need to let us know if your child moves out or if you are aware of anyone else moving into the household
- You need to let us know if you have any concerns about the level of care that your child is receiving.
- You still have parental responsibility for your child and we would encourage you to have as much contact with your child as possible.
- We would ask that you work in partnership with your child's carer and bear in mind that they may also want to make plans at weekends and holiday periods which include your child.
- You still have financial responsibility for your child. The person caring for your child does not get paid for doing this. You will need to transfer any benefits (Child Benefit, Tax credits) over to your child's new carer.
- You are responsible for informing your landlord that your child is living elsewhere.

- You are also expected to provide money to the carer for any additional expenses such as school uniform, school trips, etc.
- If we feel that your child is at risk or is not being cared for will expect you to resume care of your child or to find an alternative suitable placement for them.
- We would ask you to discuss issues directly with the person who is caring for your child and for you to work in partnership with each other for the benefit of your child.
- You will need to provide the carer with full details of your child's medical history and sign a form to say what medical treatment you do and do not agree to your child receiving.
- You will need to inform your child's school of their new address and explain to the school how information about your child's progress and general issues should be dealt with. For example are you in agreement with your child's carer signing permission forms or do you want these sent directly to you? Who should receive school reports?
- You need to keep us informed if you move address or change your phone number.

**Some children already living in Private Fostering Placements have had a few difficulties with contact so they have asked me to include the following Guidelines:**

Please remember that contact with your child is very important to them, especially when they are living elsewhere so when you make arrangements to see or contact your child please follow the following guidelines:

- If you are coming round please ring the carer first to make sure that your child is at home (it is really disappointing for your child to hear that you have been to the house and they have missed you)
- When planning a time to meet please talk to the carer first to ensure that other plans have not been made.
- Discuss with the carer how your child is before you see them so that you are aware of anything which is happening for them at the time (for example find out if they have done really well at school or if they are struggling, if they have made any new friends, etc)
- Arrange to see your child on their own sometimes as well as seeing them at the same time as their brothers and sisters
- Turn up on time to see your child
- Do not turn up under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Do not address any issues with the carers in front of your child
- Please, please do not cancel visits at the last minute.

**If you have any questions about Private Fostering Please contact:  
Gemma Jones, Private Fostering Development Worker on 01865 323167  
or by email at: [gemma.jones@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:gemma.jones@oxfordshire.gov.uk)**

# Private Fostering: A Guide for Carers

This information has been produced for people who are privately fostering or planning to privately foster a child within Oxfordshire. Please take the time to read this document fully as it gives details of your responsibilities and our involvement with Privately Fostered children.



## **What is Private Fostering?**

If you are looking after a child who is:

- under the age of 16, or 18 if disabled
- for more than 28 days

AND that child is:

- Not your own child or a child for whom you have a legal order (Adoption, Residence Order, Special Guardianship Order)
- Not closely related to you

This is legally defined as “Private Fostering” and the child is classed as “Privately Fostered”.

## **Close relatives are:**

- Parents
- Step Parents by Marriage or Civil Partnership
- Grandparents,
- Adult brother or sister of full or half blood
- Aunt, Uncle or step parent whether of full blood, half blood or by marriage or civil partnership.

## **What happens if I am Privately Fostering a Child?**

Oxfordshire County Council has a legal duty to do the following:

- To visit the child and assess the placement within 7 days
- To see the child alone
- To complete Criminal Record checks on all members of the household over the age of 16.
- To visit the child every 6 weeks to check on their safety and welfare.

We realise it can be both challenging and rewarding to look after someone else’s child. We are also available to offer advice and support to yourselves and we can refer you to other agencies for further support if required.

## **Your responsibilities:**

As the carer of somebody else’s child you will need to make sure that their basic needs are being met (food, warmth, affection) and you will also need to ensure that they are registered with a doctor and attending school.

Whilst a child is living with you in a private fostering arrangement their parents retain parental responsibility and need to be consulted about the child’s care. The child also needs to be encouraged to maintain contact with their parents. If you have any concerns about this please discuss with the Private Fostering Social Worker.

## **Money:**

As a Private Foster Carer you do not receive any payment for this but you are entitled to claim Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits (if eligible) for the child. The child’s parents retain financial responsibility so if the child needs any additional money then we would ask you to contact their parents.

You are responsible for informing your landlord that you have another child living in your household.

## **Police Checks:**

Our role is to check that all privately fostered children within Oxfordshire are being well cared for and are living in appropriate placements. It is therefore necessary for us to have full details about any person in your household who may have been involved in any criminal activities.

When we complete the initial assessment we will ask all members of your household over 16 years of age to complete Enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks. We pay for these checks and when they are processed you will receive a copy of the Certificate of Disclosure which is valid for 3 years.

We will ask anyone who has a criminal record to let us know details of the offence(s) they have been convicted of. We will ask the person concerned to give us details of the offence(s) so that we can complete a risk assessment.

**Having a criminal record does not automatically prevent you from privately fostering but we need to complete an assessment based upon what the offence was, when it happened etc.**

Whilst we are waiting for the CRB checks to be processed we will ask all members of your household over the age of 16 to sign a "Declaration of Suitability form" which asks you a series of questions about whether you have ever had a child removed from your care or whether you have been prevented from fostering a child previously.

This procedure applies to all families who are privately fostering. We hope you will understand why such rigorous checks are necessary.

### **Ongoing Support:**

If we think that the private fostering arrangement is unsuitable we will ask the child's parents to find a suitable alternative placement for their child. If we think that some changes are needed to make it suitable for the child to stay with you we will let you know.

If we feel that the arrangement is suitable and is meeting the child's needs we will visit the child at least once every 6 weeks for the first year and once every 12 weeks after that. During this visit the Social Worker will need to see the child alone but after this time we are also available to offer advice and assistance to you in relation to the child, their legal status, behavioural issues, family dynamics etc.

You will provide a lot of information at our first visit but whilst the child is living with you we need you to inform us if anything changes within your household, including:

- If you move home (you will need to let us know your new address).
- If anyone moves into or moves out of your home.
- If any other person starts spending time a lot of time within the home (i.e. a new partner, a relative, close friend etc).
- The name and contact details for anyone who is employed or starts employment within your home whilst you are privately fostering a child.
- Any further criminal offences or police cautions received by anyone in your household.
- If a child is removed from your care or you are involved in any child protection procedures (for children who live outside of the family home as well as those within the home).
- If you become aware of any person(s) that may present a risk to your child or the child you are privately fostering.

This can all sound a bit daunting but rest assured we appreciate the role of private foster carers and are keen to support people who are providing care to somebody else's child. If you have any questions or if you would like to discuss Private Fostering further before making a commitment please contact:

**Gemma Jones, Private Fostering Development Worker on 01865 323167  
or by email at: [gemma.jones@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:gemma.jones@oxfordshire.gov.uk)**

## This seems like a lot of fuss. What's in it for me?

Although Students under the age of 16 have additional care needs because of their age they are also a lot more support available for them, and for you as their carer.

- Younger children are required to be within the home at a reasonable time. This eliminates a lot of the concerns associated with older children or young adults who are more likely to assert their independence and may not return until late at night.
- The School and the Social Worker are available for you to seek advice from if you have any concerns about the child or their behaviour.
- The School and Social Worker will be able to help if any difficulties do arise.
- Younger children are generally familiar with a family environment and are more likely to mix well within family settings in comparison to young adults.
- The Social Worker can help you if you have any concerns about the school, about the child's Guardian, the child's friends or other people within the community.
- The responsibility for the child is more equally shared when a Social Worker is involved and issues of concern should be picked up quicker and hopefully addressed before they escalate.
- If you are uncertain about caring for a student under the age of 16 guidance on issues such as average bedtimes, internet usage, health problems and family contact can be offered by both the school and the Social Worker.
- Younger children generally have a fuller and more structured timetable so it is much easier to know where they are and when they will be returning after school.

## What happens if I decide to privately foster?

- On a day to day basis you will be providing the same care as you would to any child in your home in terms of cooking, cleaning and general support.
- A Social Worker from Oxfordshire County Council will come out to visit you within 7 days of the child's arrival.
- The Social Worker will visit the child every 6 weeks for the 1<sup>st</sup> year and every 12 weeks thereafter to check on the child's safety and welfare until the child reaches the age of 16 or they return home (whichever happens first).
- The Social Worker will see the child alone at every visit or they will arrange to see the child at school to give them a chance to talk openly.

If you become a regular Private Foster Carer you will get to know the Private Fostering Social Worker. Police checks only need updating once every 3 years and you will soon appreciate that the Social Worker is there to support you and to protect the child NOT to interfere in your daily life or to criticise you.

Good Private Foster Carers for international students are appreciated and valued by both language schools and by Oxfordshire County Council as well as by the children themselves and their families. As such we will all work together to try to offer you a level of support which is suitable for you and your family.

If you would like further information about Private Fostering please feel free to contact the Private Fostering Social Worker directly for an informal discussion:

**Gemma Jones**  
**Private Fostering Social Worker**  
**Knights Court**  
**21 Between Towns Road**  
**Oxford**  
**OX4 3LX**  
**Tel: 01865 323167**  
**Email: [gemma.jones@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:gemma.jones@oxfordshire.gov.uk)**



# Thinking about Private Fostering?

## Information for Host Families



## What is private fostering?

Private Fostering is when you are caring for a child who is under the age of 16 (or under 18 if the child is disabled).

The child must be someone who you are not closely related to and they need to be staying with you for more than 28 days.

If you are working as a host family for younger international students you may find that you are also classed as Private Foster Carers.

## What does this mean for me?

Firstly you have a legal duty to notify the local authority that you are privately fostering a child\*. Failure to do so is an offence\*\*

Our role is to ensure that the child is safe and being well cared for. We will need to see where the child is sleeping and we will need to know how things like mealtimes and leisure times work within your household. We also need to do police checks (CRB checks) on every member of your household over the age of 16 and we will need to write to your GP.

\*The Children (Private arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005

\*\*The Children Act 1989 part IX, Section 70.

## Why does the Social Worker need to check up on us?

We know that children who live away from their families are vulnerable. The Social Worker is involved as a completely independent person who will be checking to see that the child is being looked after not only in your home but also within their educational setting, within the community and amongst their friends.

## Are there any restrictions?

You cannot Privately Foster more than 3 children under the age of 16. If you intend to do this then you will need to contact Ofsted and enquire about the registration requirements for Children's Homes.

## Do Privately Fostered students need to be looked after differently from other students?

No. We expect carers to look after Privately Fostered children in the same way as they would any child within their household.

- We expect carers to know where the child is at all times and who with.
- We expect carers to have contact numbers for the child and also any friends or family members who the child goes to visit or spend a lot of time with.

- If the child plans to stay with family in different parts of the country at weekends and during holiday periods this must be arranged in advance with permission being given by parents and full contact details given to the carer.
- We expect carers to ensure that the child is not doing anything illegal including drinking alcohol, taking drugs, accessing inappropriate material (via any form of media), or having underage sex. If the carer has any concerns about the activities of a child in their care they can get support with this and should, in the first instance, contact the Guardian and the child's School.
- We expect carers to have age appropriate curfews and to notify the school if the child is not adhering to these.
- We expect Privately Fostered students to be included in family mealtimes and with weekend activities. This includes providing the same food for all members of the household (diet permitting).
- If the child goes missing we expect carers to make attempts to contact the child and contact all persons involved with the child. Where appropriate we expect carers to contact the Police to report the child missing.

Where the child has a Guardian this process should be very straightforward. If there is not a Guardian for the child then the carer can liaise via the child's school.

