

Safeguarding Newsletter

15th October 2018

Private Fostering

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (without the involvement of a local authority (or a private sector agency) for the care of a child under the age of 16 years (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative, in their own home, with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more. (*Close family relative is defined as a 'grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt' and includes half-siblings and step-parents; it does not include great-aunts or uncles, great grandparents or cousins.)



The local authority should be notified of the arrangement, at least six weeks before it starts, and not to do so is a criminal offence.

Once the local authority has been notified, children's services have a duty to visit and speak to the child, the parent and the foster carer; and everyone in the foster carers' household. Children's services will then undertake a range of suitability checks including DBS checks on everyone in the household over the age of 16.

Why are children in private foster care?

Most frequently, young people are in private foster care for the following reasons:

- children from other countries sent to live in the UK with extended family
- host families for language schools
- parental ill-health
- where parents who have moved away, but the child stays behind (eg. to stay at the same school to finish exams)
- teenagers living separately from their own family
- children brought from outside the UK with a view to adoption
- children at independent boarding schools who do not return home for holidays and are placed with host families

Are children in private foster care defined as 'Children Looked After'?

No. The term Children 'Looked After' means children who are looked after by the local authority. Privately fostered children are outside the care of the local authority.

Schools should not therefore code children in private foster care as 'CLA'.

Should schools be told about a private fostering arrangement?

There is no duty for schools to be given information about a child who is privately fostered by the family, carer or the local authority. There is however a duty on schools to inform children's services where they become aware of such an arrangement.

Further information can be found here: <https://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/private-fostering/>

