

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair and black-rimmed glasses, smiling warmly. She is wearing a blue denim shirt. In the foreground, a young girl with dark hair and bangs is looking intently at something off-camera to the right. She is wearing a purple top. The background is a solid magenta color with a large, curved, lighter magenta shape behind the text.

Private Fostering

A Guide for Carers

If you are caring for someone else's child who is under 16 (or 18 if the young person has a disability), for more than 28 days and you are not a close family member, you are a private foster carer. It is not private fostering if the child is living with a grandparent, aunt or uncle or adult brother or sister, or if the carer has Parental Responsibility, a Residence Order or a Special Guardianship Order.

Some examples of private fostering are:

- Children living with a friend's family because of difficulties at home
- Teenagers living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Children living with a parent's unmarried partner when the parent leaves the home (for example is imprisoned)
- Host families looking after children while they attend a language school
- Children sent to this country for education or health care by parents living abroad
- Children staying with a distant relative when their parents go abroad for an extended visit (i.e. a great aunt/uncle or great grandparent, cousin)

What must I do if I care for someone else's child?

Ideally you must tell your local authority at least six weeks before the arrangement begins, or within 48 hours if it is an emergency.

It is an offence not to notify the local authority.

When you agree to look after the child or young person you must make sure that you get information about the child or young person from their parent, including information on health, school, eating preferences and interests, religious and cultural background.

What will the local authority do?

As a private foster carer you will have contact with a social worker from Children's Services.

A social worker will want to talk to you about the child or young person's needs and how you are meeting them. They will also want to see the child or young person on their own to seek their views on what help they might need. The child or young person will continue to have a social worker while they are privately fostered, and they will visit the child or young person every six weeks (or every 12 weeks if the child lives with you longer than a year).

A social worker will also visit to undertake an assessment of you and whether you can provide a safe place for the child or young person you are caring for and meet their needs. They will want to meet all members of your household and get their views about the child or young person living with you.

A report will be written which will focus on the child or young person and their needs and will include your household. You will get a copy of the notes and be able to add your comments.





The Assessment of your household

You will be asked to complete forms so that the following checks can be made:

- Worcestershire Children First records;
- DBS (Police check) to be completed by everyone over 18 in the household. If you or a member of your household have offences or are known to the police this will not automatically stop you from being a private foster carer but you should tell the social worker about this at the earliest opportunity so that this can be discussed with you;
- Health form that is sent to your GP for comments;
- Declaration of Suitability to be completed by everyone over 16 in the household.

The social worker can help you complete these forms.

What happens about financial help?

Private fostering is a private arrangement between you and the child's parent, the person with Parental Responsibility or the school or agency if you are a host family. Financial arrangements should be made with them. You may be able to claim social security benefits such as Child Benefit, Tax Credits and Income Support. Child Benefit can be applied for using Form CH2. This is available at www.hmrc.gov.uk or 0845 302 1444. Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit can be applied for using Form TC600. This is available by phoning 0845 300 3900. Contact your local Benefits Agency Office who will be able to advise you. In some cases there may be financial help from the local authority if a child is assessed to be in need. Talk to the child's social worker about this.

What other help is available while I am privately fostering?

A social worker will visit every 6 weeks in the first year once the assessment is completed, if you need further advice or support please contact the allocated social worker.

All the universal services available to children in your area will also be available to children who are privately fostered and it is important that the child living with you is registered with a GP and a dentist and is attending school.

Who should know that I am privately fostering?

Please let the child's school know that you are privately fostering. If you rent your home, you should inform your landlord or housing association. If you have household insurance, you should let the insurance company know.

What happens after the assessment is completed?

When the checks and reports have been completed, a senior manager will agree the arrangement. You will get a letter to let you know that the arrangement has been agreed. You will also get a form asking you to let a social worker know if there are certain changes, for example if the privately fostered child leaves your home permanently or if another adult moves into your home. It is important that this information is given to the local authority.





What can I do if I'm not happy about the service from Children's Services?

If you want to contact someone about the children's social care service you are receiving, or make a referral please contact the Family Front Door service on **01905 822666**.

Sometimes things go wrong and we need to know so that we can get it right in the future. If this has happened please contact the Consumer Relations Officer, Children, Families and Communities.

Consumer Relations Officer, Children, Families and Communities

Worcestershire County Council, Consumer Relations,
County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester, WR5 2NP

Telephone: **01905 844096**



Useful Contacts

Worcestershire Children First Family Front Door Team

Can advise on many aspects of caring for children.

Telephone 01905 822666

Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5.00pm

Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm

For assistance out of office hours (weekdays and all day at weekends and bank holidays) please contact 01905 768020.

E Safety

Advice on keeping children and young people safe while using the internet

www.wes.networcs.net

Children's Centres

Provide information, advice and courses.

Details of your local centre are available from the **Family Information Service** (shown above) or

www.worcestershire.gov.uk/childrenscentres

Drug and Alcohol Services

Information and advice. SPACE for young people Freephone: 0800 169 6064

www.talktofrank.com

Pathways to Recovery for carers and young people

Tel: 0808 178 3295

Legal Advice

The Children's Legal Centre can provide free advice www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Tel: 0800 020 008



You can contact us in the following ways:

If you need to notify Worcestershire Children First that you are currently acting as a private foster carer or planning to do so, please contact us by calling our Family Front Door on **01905 822666**

If you have any concerns about a child or young person living in Worcestershire and feel that they may be in need of protection or safeguarding contact the Family Front Door from 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am to 4.30pm on Friday. Telephone: 01905 822666

For assistance out of office hours (weekdays and all day at weekends and bank holidays): Telephone: 01905 768020

