

Children In Need

Wiltshire County Council Department for Children & Education

Guidance Leaflet for Private Foster Carers (NB these guidelines must be read in conjunction with the Code of Practice for Carers)

Legal Requirements

The Children Act 1989 Part 1X places obligations on persons involved in Private Fostering arrangements, that is, parents and carers. It places on the department duties in respect of assessing and monitoring all such arrangements in accordance with the Private Fostering Regulations 2005.

Definition of a privately fostered child.

Any child under 16 years of age who is cared for and accommodated for more than 28 days by people who are not related to him/her is a privately fostered child. Children with disabilities continue to be considered privately fostered until they are 18.

Typical examples of private fostering arrangements are:-

- Children sent to this country for education or health purposes whose parents live overseas.
- A teenager living with a friend's family because relationships have broken down at home
- Children living with friends because their parent is incapacitated for a period longer than 28 days

If the person caring for the child is intending to do so for less than 28 days then the child is not privately fostered, but in these circumstances, if the child is under 8 years old, the person must be registered as a childminder.

If you intend accommodating an unrelated child in your home and the child has no adult relatives also living with you, you must by law inform the Department for Children and Education. This department has a statutory duty to visit and inspect your premises and to take up personal references about you and other adults within your household. It is a serious offence to conceal a private foster child from the local authority.

Private foster carers should also be aware that this law also covers certain children who have been adopted in some foreign countries. Adoption in other countries may not be recognised by British law.

If you are in any doubt as to whether a child you are looking after is privately fostered contact your local Children and Families Team. Contact numbers are at the end of this leaflet.

Obligations of Private Foster carers –

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Notification prior to placement:-

Prospective private foster carers must notify the department in writing 6 weeks before the child arrives or within 48 hours in an emergency.

Notification must specify;

1. the name, sex, date of birth, religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background of the child;
2. the name and address of the person giving notice and previous addresses within the last five years;
3. the purpose and intended duration of the placement
4. the name and address of any parent of the child and any other person who has parental responsibility for the child and (if different) of any person from whom the child was or is to be received;
5. the name and address of any person other than the person specified in (4) above, who is involved directly or indirectly in making the fostering arrangement; and
6. the intended date of the beginning of the fostering arrangement, or, as the case may be, the date on which the placement actually began.

A form **PF1** is provided for notifications and can be found on the Wiltshire County Council website under Private Fostering, or is available from your local Children and Families Team.

A private foster carer will also be asked to give details of any offence, disqualification or prohibition on them or those of any member of the household over 16 years of age. You will be asked to complete a form giving the Department permission to carry out checks with other agencies including CRB check.

Notifications once a child is placed:-

Private foster carers must notify the department;

1. Of any change of address
2. If a foster child leaves, and to supply the new address of that child if it is not a return to the natural parents
3. In the event of the death of that child
4. Of any new members of the household, or if any member of the household leaves whilst the child is in residence.

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5. Of any convictions, disqualifications or prohibitions imposed on any member of the household whilst the child is in residence.

Numbers of children:-

By law no private foster carer may care for more than 3 foster children unless granted a specific exemption by the local authority.

The role of the Department

The department has a duty to satisfy itself that the welfare of privately fostered children is being safeguarded and promoted. To do this, a social worker from the appropriate Children and Families Team will carry out an initial assessment of the child's circumstances and needs, and a member of the appropriate Fostering Team will assess the suitability of the proposed placement.

Private foster carers must be willing to allow themselves to be checked as to their suitability and be willing to have statutory checks by Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), the Child Protection Register, Primary Care Trust, Departmental records, NSPCC (and in the case of Forces personnel) SSAFA, made on themselves and other members of their household.

Once you are caring for a child you must allow periodic visits from the child's social worker to ascertain the progress of the child, and allow the child private time with that worker if age appropriate.

The local authority has a responsibility to give private foster carers advice and guidance in relation to the care of the child, and to provide appropriate training. Carers may be asked to attend courses in child protection and basic care skills.

The child will have a six monthly review of progress for which you will be asked to contribute along with all persons relevant to that child, for example, the parents, school staff.

As a carer you will be subject to annual review to ensure that you are confident and successful in your care of the child.

Contacts

If you have further questions about Private Fostering or would like advice, please contact your local Children and Families team.

The local offices are:

Amesbury Area Team

Social Services Dept
1a Mills Way
Boscombe Down Business Park
Amesbury
SP4 7RX

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Tel: 01980 664980

Bradford on Avon and Melksham Area Team

East Wing
County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
BA14 8JQ

Telephone: 01225 773500
Facsimile: 01225 773535

Chippenham Area Team

357 Hungerdown Lane
Chippenham
SN14 0UY

Telephone: 01249 444321
Facsimile: 01249 445959

Corsham and Calne Area Team

357 Hungerdown Lane
Chippenham
SN14 0UY

Telephone: 01249 444321
Facsimile: 01249 445959

Malmesbury and Wotton Bassett Area Team

The Manor House
Lime Kiln
Wootton Bassett
SN4 7HB

Telephone: 01793 853434
Facsimile: 01793 849103

Salisbury East Area Team

Social Services Department
Salt Lane
Salisbury
SP1 1DU

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Telephone: 01722 327551
Facsimile: 01722 330957

Salisbury West Area Team

Social Services Department
Salt Lane
Salisbury
SP1 1DU

Telephone: 01722 327551
Facsimile: 01722 330957

Trowbridge Area Team

East Wing
County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
BA14 8JQ

Telephone: 01225 773500
Facsimile: 01225 773535

Warminster and Westbury Area Team

Beckford Centre
6 Gipsy Lane
Warminster
BA12 9LR

Telephone: 01985 218021
Facsimile: 01985 846069