Are you involved in arranging for a child to live with someone who is not a close relative?

Is someone else’s child living with you?

Is your child living with someone else?

If so, this could be a private fostering arrangement... and we need to know about it.

The law says we need to make sure privately fostered children are properly looked after.
What is private fostering?

- When a child under 16 (or 18 if they have a disability) is cared for by someone who is not a close relative for 28 days or more.
- When a child lives with someone from their extended family such as a great aunt or great uncle or their parents’ cousins.
- When a child lives with a friend of the family or of the child, or another adult that the child doesn’t know, but who is willing to foster privately.
- It is not private fostering when a child is living with a close relative such as a grandparent, brother, sister or step parent.

Common examples of private fostering arrangements

- Children sent to this country for education or health care by parents who live overseas.
- A teenager living with a friend’s family because they don’t get on with their own family.
- Children living with a friend’s family because their parents’ study or work involves unsociable hours, which make it difficult to use ordinary day care or after-school care.
- Children staying with another family because their parents have separated or divorced.
- A child from overseas staying with a host family while attending a language school, or overseas students at boarding school who stay with a host family during the holidays.

If you think any of these arrangements apply to you, or you’re not sure please phone Customer First:

0808 800 4005

If you are a private foster carer:

- You must tell us at least six weeks before a child comes to live with you.
- You must tell us within 48 hours of the child coming to live with you, if the arrangement is made in an emergency.
- You must tell us straight away if a child is already living with you, and you haven’t told us.
- You must tell us at least 48 hours before a child leaves your care. You’ll also need to tell us where the child is going to live next.

If you are the parent of the child, or any other person involved in, or aware of, a private fostering arrangement:

- You must tell us straight away about the arrangement.

What happens next?

- A social care worker will arrange a visit and speak to the carer and members of the household in their own home within seven working days.
- A social care worker will also speak to the child and visit the parents, where possible.
- We’ll give you information about private fostering, including details of support and advice available in Suffolk for carers, children and parents.
- Private foster carers will have to give us information about the child, themselves and other members of the household.
- We’ll look at the private fostering arrangement to make sure the child is safe and is being properly cared for.
- A social care worker will visit the child regularly to offer support and make sure they remain safe and well cared for.