



TEA-BREAK GUIDE



What is Private Fostering?

Private fostering is when children and young people under the age of 16 years or under 18 if they are disabled, are cared for on a full time basis by a person who is not their parent, who does not have parental responsibility or who is not a "close relative" **for 28 days or more**. Close relatives are defined as:

- grandparents
- brothers and sisters
- uncles and aunts, or
- step-parents (if married to the partner or in civil partnership)

There are many circumstances in which an unmarried partner becomes the carer for a child. **A parent's unmarried partner is not a step-parent in this context**. It is a common misunderstanding and parents/carers are often unaware of the legal requirements to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement.

Who should notify the Children's Service of a private fostering arrangement and when?

Any parent proposing to have their child looked after by someone other than a close relative for more than 28 days, or a carer who is proposing to look after someone else's child, must notify the Children and Families Service **at least 6 weeks before the arrangement is due to begin**.

What if the arrangement is less than 6 weeks away or is already in place?

Where a private fostering arrangement is either intended to start in less than 6 weeks, is in existence, or an emergency arrangement has been put in place, the **carer or parent should tell the Children and Families Service within 48 hours**.

Where should notice of a private fostering arrangement be made to?

The parents/carers should notify **the MASH on 0300 126 1000**.

Under the Private Fostering Arrangements (2005), professionals who come into contact with children, for example teachers, religious leaders, health care staff are under a duty to inform the Children's Service about any private fostering arrangements they are made aware of. To make a notification of a private fostering arrangement professionals should notify **MASH on 0300 126 1000**.

What if a child is being accommodated by a school?

If it is intended for a child to remain in a residential setting outside of term time for more than 14 days this becomes a private fostering arrangement and the parent/carers must give written notice stating the estimated number of children, **not less than 2 weeks before the arrangements begin**.

Is there a limit on the number of foster children?

In cases where a person is privately fostering, or proposes to foster privately **more than three children who are not siblings at any one time, then that person needs an exemption from the local authority**.

If a private foster carer exceeds the usual fostering limit or, where exempted, privately fosters a child not named in the exemption and in so doing exceeds the usual fostering limit they shall be considered to be running a children's home. **Any person who is considered to be running a children's home without being registered may be found to be guilty of an offence**.

Further Information:

NCC Website <http://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/adoption-fostering/fostering/Pages/private-fostering.aspx>

NSCB Website <http://www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk/health-professionals/taking-action/private-fostering/>