

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Who looks after you?



Essential facts about Private Fostering Information and advice for Young People

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Cheshire West
and Chester

Are you living away from your parents?

Are you living with someone who isn't your parent or a close relative?

A close relative means, grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, legal guardian or other person with parental responsibility.

Are you under 16 years old or 18 if you are disabled?

Is there a likelihood you will be living there for more than 28 days?

If you have said yes to these questions then you are being cared for in a private fostering arrangement.

The law (Private Fostering Regulations 2005) says that local councils need to know about Private Fostering arrangements in their area because sometimes these arrangements can go wrong leaving children and young people unhappy and vulnerable.



What is Private Fostering?

There are many reasons why your mum, dad or guardian might need to ask someone they trust to look after you. Maybe your parents' need to go in to hospital for a long period of time, or are going to be living abroad.

The person who they ask might not be a close relative; it may be a friend of theirs or a distant relative, such as your mum's aunty or your dad's cousin.

Your mum, dad or guardian will not usually do this without a great deal of thought. It is important that your mum, dad or guardian have discussed with you why they want someone to look after you and what arrangements should be made for you in case you become ill or have trouble at school.

You don't need to worry about being looked after in a private fostering arrangement, you can enjoy it. Lots of children are living in private arrangements made by their parents or carers.

What will we do then?

It is our role and responsibility to make sure you are being cared for properly and that you get any help you may need. You will be visited by a Social Worker and initially they will want to check

- Are you happy to stay in the arrangement?
- Can you get to school and home again from where you are living now?
- Do you think the house is suitable for you to live in?
- Are your parents/carers staying in touch with you?
- Is everything being done to help you live happily and safely?
- Have your religious, cultural and medical needs been sorted out and discussed with you?

The person caring for you will also be visited by a social worker who will check they are looking after you properly and ensuring your needs are being met.

How often will my social worker come to see me?

After the initial visit the social worker must come and see you within six weeks, then again six weeks after that. During the first year you are living away from your parents/carers your social worker will come and see you every six weeks.

If you have lived in this arrangement for more than a year your social worker may not visit you as often, around every 12 weeks. They will leave you their contact numbers and you can ask to see them if you want to at any time.

Your carers will also have a social worker who will visit them every six weeks during the first year and every 12 weeks in the second year.



What will my carers do for me?

- Give you regular meals – like breakfast, dinner and tea.
- Make sure that your hair and skin are properly looked after.
- Make sure you have warm clean clothes and a bed of your own.
- Make sure you go to school so you can learn.
- Take you to the doctor or the hospital if you are sick or injured or if you need vaccinations.
- Take you to the dentist so your teeth are looked after properly.
- Make sure you have a chance to make friends and to enjoy sports and hobbies that you like.
- Help you stay in touch with your family.
- Help you follow your religion and customs that are important to you and your family.

Are there things private foster carers must not do?

The person with parental responsibility (your mum, dad or guardian) still makes any major decision about your life. You are still their child.

Private foster carers cannot

- Change your name
- Change your school
- Move you to another family
- Take you to another part of this country without asking your mum, dad or guardian's permission. They need to say "yes"
- Take you overseas to another country without asking your mum, dad or guardian's permission. They need to say "yes"
- Say yes to any serious medical treatment, your own mum, dad or guardian have to agree to this. If they cannot be contacted a doctor will make that decision.

What should you do if you are not happy?

If you are not happy you must talk to your mum, dad, guardian or social worker (your social worker will give you their contact details) OR you may find it easier to talk to someone you see every day like a class teacher or school nurse.

If you feel you cannot do any of the above you can use the **Comments, Compliments and complaints** form that has been given to you by your social worker.



You can also access

Childline

This is a special 24-hour helpline for children who are in trouble or at risk of being hurt or abused. Call free on 0800 1111 or you can find them on your computer on www.childline.org.uk

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children- NSPCC

If you are experiencing a bad time at home, or being bullied at school, or if you are worried or scared about something, you can call them free on 0808 800 5000. You can find out more about them on your computer on www.nspcc.org.uk

The private fostering process

- Your social worker will complete a Single Assessment in relation to your circumstances.
- The carer's social worker will complete a Suitability Assessment on them and their ability to undertake a caring role as requested by your parent/s .
- Both of the assessments are seen by managers who form a view as to whether it is safe for you to stay in the proposed arrangement and your needs are being met..

What if everything is ok?

You can stay living within the private fostering arrangement and we will continue to keep visiting you. When you become 16 (18 if you have a disability) you are no longer considered to be in a Private Fostering Arrangement. Your Social Worker will then complete a further assessment to see if you still require ongoing support

What if we have concerns regarding the care you are receiving?

- You go back to live with your mum, dad or guardian with help from us.
- You go to live with another relative (like your grandparent)
- An assessment is completed of your current situation and plan agreed how best to ensure your needs are met.

Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in Audio, Braille, Large Print or other formats. If you would like a copy in a different format, in another language or require a BSL interpreter, please email us at

equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Tel: 0300 123 8 123 **Textphone:** 18001 01606 867 670

email: equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

web: www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk