

**PRIVATE
FOSTERING**



**ARE YOU BEING LOOKED
AFTER BY SOMEBODY THAT
IS NOT YOUR PARENT OR
CLOSE RELATIVE?**



**west
sussex
county
council**

Children
first

**A GUIDE
TO WHAT
YOU NEED
TO KNOW**

Are you being looked after by somebody who is not your parent or a close relative? If yes, it's called 'private fostering' and this guide will help you understand more about what's involved and why it's the law to let West Sussex County Council know when you are being cared for in this way.



WHAT IS PRIVATE FOSTERING?

It's when your parents or legal carers make a private arrangement for you to live elsewhere away from them, without the involvement of a social worker or children's social care team, for more than 28 days.

It applies if you are under the age of 16 or under 18 if you have a disability.

It is still private fostering if the 28 days are broken up, for example, if you go home for a weekend visit.

WHO CAN BE A PRIVATE FOSTER CARER?

This is anyone you live with who is **not** your:

- mother or father
- grandparent
- step-parent
- aunt or uncle
- sister or brother
- carer with parental responsibility (legal permission to care for you)

WHO ARRANGES IT?

It's normally an arrangement which is agreed between your parents/legal carers with adults who are not your close family and do not have legal permission to care for you.

If you decide to move to live with another person or family without your parents or legal carers agreement, it's still called private fostering.



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WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES?

These could include:

- your mum or dad not being able to look after you for different reasons, for example, if they are ill, they need to travel away from home or you attend school or college that is a long way from your home.
- you may have made this decision for yourself to stay with a person or family that you know.
- the person you stay with may be part of your extended family, such as a cousin, a great aunt, great uncle or a family friend.



WHAT MUST PARENTS, LEGAL CARERS AND PRIVATE FOSTER CARERS DO?

The adults making plans for your care and the ones agreeing to look after you via a private fostering arrangement are required by law to do the following.

- Your parent or carer must tell West Sussex County Council Children's Social Services that they have made private care arrangements for you to be cared for by somebody else in West Sussex.
- Your private foster carer needs to tell us they have agreed a private care arrangement to care for somebody else's child in West Sussex.

WHAT MUST CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE WORKERS DO?

It is the law that social care workers:

- visit the address where you are staying to see you and your private foster carer;
- continue to visit you both once every 6 weeks or more if needed;
- do checks on your private foster carer and all the adults in their home and complete a report to ensure it is safe and suitable for you;



- speak to you to find out your views and experiences in private foster care, and what you want for your future;
- speak to your parent/carer to check they agree with your private foster care and how they will support your private foster carer to care for you;
- have a duty to request that some private foster care arrangements end if they are not safe or suitable and will discuss this with you, your private foster carer and parent/carer; and
- support you to report any concerns, or to make a complaint. They can arrange an advocate if you want to speak to anyone else other than the private fostering team social worker.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK YOU ARE PRIVATELY FOSTERED?

Please tell your teacher, school nurse, or adult that you trust to contact social workers at:

- Email: **WSchildrenservices@westsussex.gov.uk**
- Phone: **01403 229900**

You can also call Childline on **0800 1111** or visit their website at **www.childline.org.uk/get-support/contacting-childline**

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