

Spotlight On: Caring for somebody else's child known as Private Fostering

May 2021

The Cheshire East Council is asking people to let them know if they think a child in their community is being cared for by someone else who are not a direct relative, so they can be aware of the support and help available. The purpose of the awareness raising is to reduce the number of children in un-notified private fostering arrangements living in Cheshire East.

If a child aged 16 or under (or under 18 with disabilities) is cared for by someone other than a close family member (parent, step-parent, grandparent, sibling, aunt or uncle) for more than 28 days, then they are deemed to be in a private fostering arrangement. There are many circumstances where an unmarried partner becomes the carer for a child. A parent's unmarried partner **is not** a stepparent 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.

Private foster care can be a very positive experience, but some children may be in a vulnerable position. Private fostering is arranged between parents and the private foster carer, and legally the parent and carer must notify the local authority so they can ensure the child is being properly cared for and can provide support where needed.

Children become privately fostered for many reasons. They can include teenagers living elsewhere because of a family breakdown, cultural exchange students, a child from overseas living with a host family while attending school, or overseas students at boarding school who stay with host families during the holidays, or any child whose parents have made a private arrangement for them to be cared for by somebody else.

Cheshire East Council is particularly asking people who work with children to be aware of private fostering arrangements among the children and families they work with, and to notify the council – although everybody has a part to play.

We all have a role to play in keeping our children safe and we are asking people to let us know if they hear about a child who is privately fostered. Some people may not realise they are in a private fostering arrangement, but if they are caring for someone else's child for more than 28 days then they should inform Cheshire East Council.

To notify Cheshire East Council of a private fostering arrangement, Phone ChECS on 0300 123 5012 Option 3.

The film [Somebody Else's Child: A guide to private fostering](#) explains Private Fostering.

Additional information can be found on the Cheshire East Live Well site:

cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/care-and-support-for-children/private-fostering/private-fostering

Please share the following with parents and carers in your school's newsletter, information boards and website:

Are you caring for somebody else's child? Do you know what Private Fostering is?

If you are caring for someone else's child for **28 days** or more this is called Private Fostering. Private fostering is when a child is **under 16 years of age (or under 18 if they have a disability)** and is living and being looked after for more than 28 days by someone who is not:

- A parent
- A close relative i.e. grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or step-parent (by marriage)
- A person with parental responsibility for the child
- this does not include a child looked after by the Local Authority

There are lots of reasons why children are privately fostered including:

- Children who live with a friend's family because their parents have separated or divorced or because of arguments at home
- Teenagers who live with their girlfriend's or boyfriend's family
- Children or teenagers on holiday exchanges for more than 28 days
- Children at independent boarding schools who do not return home for holidays and live with host families
- Children sent to this country for education or for medical needs by their parents who live overseas



Many people do not know they are private foster carers as they have made informal arrangements with friends. Parents and carers are required by law to inform us if they have a private fostering arrangement in place.

To find out more check more check out the:

cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/care-and-support-for-children/private-fostering/private-fostering

Or speak to your child's class teacher or **ask for the Safeguarding Lead at Oakfield Lodge School – 01270 685626**