



Is your child living with someone else?

Information for parents about private foster care

If your child is living with someone else on a full time basis and is not living with a relative* or someone who has parental responsibility, he or she may be considered to be privately fostered. The Children Act 1989 and Private Arrangements for Fostering Regulations 2005 protect privately fostered children.

* A child or children living with one of the following would not be seen as being privately fostered. A grandparent, sister, uncle, aunt. They could be full or half relation, and could be related by marriage or civil partnership. This would not include great aunt or great uncle or someone co-habiting with the child's parent.

Private foster care occurs when a child under 16 (or 18 if disabled) is cared for, and provided with accommodation, by an adult who is not a relative, and for 28 days or more, by private arrangement between parent and carer.

Some of the situations that could involve you in a private fostering arrangement are:

- Children whose parents have had to go away for a period of time and neighbours or friends of the family have been asked to look after them.
- Children who face difficulties within their own families because of illness, separation or family breakdown and may for a period of time stay with a friend or neighbour, or friend of the family.
- Children sent to this country for education or health care by parents living overseas.
- Children whose parents come to this country to study or to find work and for many reasons need to ask someone else to look after their child.

The need to notify Dorset County Council Children's Services

If you choose to enter into an arrangement with a carer it remains your responsibility to ensure that the proposed private fostering placement is suitable and in the best interests of your child. You remain the person with parental responsibility for your child and you should continue to be involved in all decisions concerning the care of your child.

It is therefore very important that you remain in frequent contact with your child and their carer.

It is a legal requirement that you tell Dorset County Council Children's Services at least **six weeks** before the arrangement begins, unless the arrangement is made in an emergency in which case the notification must be made within **48 hours**. Should your child already be in such an arrangement then you must give notification as soon as you know about this requirement.

You should also notify us when your child leaves giving details of the person they are moving on to.

Failure to notify Dorset County Council of a private fostering arrangement is an offence.

What is in your child's best interests?

It is in everyone's interest, especially your child, that the person who is to care for your child has as much information as possible about him or her including their health, eating preferences, school, hobbies, religion and ethnic or cultural backgrounds. This will help the carer to understand your child and take better care of them.

The carer should also be encouraged to register your child with a local G.P. and if of school age they should be registered and attend an appropriate local school.

What Dorset County Council will do

We will visit your child and the private foster carer as well as contacting you. An assessment will be completed to ensure that your child is safe and will be cared for in a suitable environment.

We will continue to make regular visits to your child. These visits will continue throughout your child's stay. This will include the offer of advice and support to you and the foster carer.

Financial arrangements and information

The carer may be able to claim tax credits and/or social security benefits such as Child Benefits and possibly Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance, if they receive Child Benefit.

Your social security benefits may be affected if your child is not living with you.

How you can notify us or contact us for further information?

Contact details are different according to where you live in Dorset or where your child is living. A list of contact numbers is given at the back of the leaflet.

Things to remember

- Notify Dorset County Council Children Services about the arrangement for your child.
- Provide all the necessary information to the carer about your child.
- Stay in contact with your child and take part in decisions about your child.
- Make sure that your child is registered with a local G.P. and if of school age, they attend a local school.

We acknowledge the information made available by the Department of Education and Skills in the making of this leaflet.

Contacts

Dorchester

Acland Road
Dorchester DT1 1SH
Tel: 01305 251414
Fax: 01305 251034
Minicom: 01305 251596
dorchestersocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Bridport

The Grove, Rax Lane
Bridport DT6 3JL
Tel: 01308 422234
Fax: 01308 427421
Minicom: 01308 426062
bridportsocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk

North Dorset

Bath Road
Sturminster Newton
DT10 1DR
Tel: 01258 472652
Fax: 01258 473161
Minicom: 01258 474091
northdorsetsocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Weymouth and Portland

Jubilee Retail Park
Jubilee Close
Weymouth DT4 7BG
Tel: 01305 760139
Fax: 01305 774622
Minicom: 01305 208010
weymouthsocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Contacts

Purbeck

19 Bonnets Lane
Wareham BH20 4HB
Tel: 01929 553456
Fax: 01929 556319
Minicom: 01929 557071
purbecksocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Ferndown

Penny's Walk
Ferndown BH22 9JY
Tel: 01202 877445
Fax: 01202 876604
Minicom: 01202 868262
ferndownsocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Christchurch

Loring Road
Christchurch BH23 2GZ
Tel: 01202 474106
Fax: 01202 478081
Minicom: 01202 495568
christchurchsocialcare@dorsetcc.gov.uk

All leaflets can be made available in audio tape, large print and Braille, or alternative languages on request.

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Dorset County Council



Improving the quality of life for people in Dorset, now and for the future

