

# A child and young person's guide to Private Fostering



## What is private fostering?

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Sometimes children or young people go to stay with someone who is not a close relative. If you are likely to stay in this person's home for 28 days or longer, legally this is called private fostering. The person who is looking after you is a private foster carer, Children's Services must be told because it is their job to make sure that children are looked after safely.

## Why are children privately fostered?

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There are many reasons why you might not live with your family:

- You are a teenager and there are lots of rows at home so you go to stay with your friend's family until the problems can be sorted out.
- Your mum or dad is ill and cannot look after you so you go and stay with a neighbour or family friend.
- Your parents might need to move away for work but do not want to disrupt your school and may ask someone else to look after you
- You may have come to the UK from
- another country to go to school and your parents may have arranged for you to stay with someone else
- You may have come to the UK from another country to learn English (or other languages) and are staying with a family in this country

## Is private fostering the same as foster care?

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No, they are different. When you are privately fostered, social workers don't arrange where you live but they do have to make sure it is safe for you. Foster care is different and arranged by social workers when children can't live at home, and this is called being Looked After (previously called being in care).

## Anna's story

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Anna is 15 and doesn't get on with her mum's new boyfriend. Anna thinks that she is expected to baby-sit her younger brother and sister too much but her mum thinks she is lazy. It leads to lots of rows so Anna spends more and more time with her friend Gemma and Gemma's family. After a big row at home, Anna asks Gemma's mum if she can stay at their house. Anna's mum thinks that this is a good idea and tells Children's Services that Anna will be staying with Gemma's family for a while. Gemma's family is now privately fostering Anna so Children's Services have to visit to make sure that Anna is safe.

## Toby's story

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Toby is 13 and lives with his dad. His mother left home when Toby was young and he doesn't have any contact with her. Toby's dad has to go into hospital for several weeks and Toby's nan lives miles away. Toby wants to carry on going to school with his mates so Toby's dad asks his cousin if they will look after Toby. This family are now private foster carers so they let Children's Services know and a social worker visits to make sure that Toby is being looked after properly.



## Lucy's story

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Lucy is 14 and lives with her mum, step dad and siblings. Her mum and step dad are splitting up and so her mum leaves the family home and Lucy and the siblings. Her mum and step dad never got married so Lucy's dad isn't her birth father but treats her like his own. Lucy wants to stay in the family home with her family so her dad has to legally privately foster her.

## Rashida's story

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Rashida is 5 and was born in Nigeria. Rashida's mum died so Rashida's dad decided it would be best for her to come to England to live with 'Auntie' Hilda who she had never met before. Her dad brought her to England and returned home a week later. 'Auntie' Hilda became Rashida's private foster carer and was responsible for looking after her. Rashida found it strange at first because she felt sad and only spoke a little English. 'Auntie' Hilda arranged for a new school and, with the support of the private fostering social worker, helped Rashida to settle into her new home and school.

## Callum's story

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Callum is 13 and had a difficult time at home because his mum drank a lot of alcohol and would get angry with him. This scared Callum and he would often go to his friend Stephen's house. Callum did not have any contact with his dad and didn't want to live with his mum any more. Stephen's mum, Susan, said that Callum could live with them and Callum's mum agreed to this. Callum is now more settled at school and is doing well but still gets angry with his mum when she lets him down with visits. He is able to talk to Susan and the social worker about this and they have helped him to find ways to manage his feelings.

## Jacob & Carly's story

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Jacob (15) and Carly (9) are brother and sister. They live with their Dad Bob who is a soldier and often has to work away from home for four to six months at a time. Jacob and Carly's mum left when they were younger and she now lives in another country with a new family and they have not seen her for 5 years. When Bob has to be away working, Jacob and Carly go to stay with Peter and his wife Rebecca until their Dad returns. Peter is Bob's cousin and he and his wife are Jacob and Carly's Private Foster Carers. They are responsible for looking after them whilst their dad is away. The Private fostering social worker visits to make sure everything is going okay whilst their Dad is working away from home.



## What will my private foster carers do for me?

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The people you live with should look after you like their own child.

This includes:

- Giving you regular meals
- Making sure you have a bed of your own and clean clothes
- Making sure you go to school
- Making sure you go to the doctor or hospital if you are ill
- Making sure you go to a dentist for regular checks
- Helping you to enjoy sports and hobbies
- Helping you to stay in touch with your family
- Helping you to follow any religion or customs that are important to you

## What will my family do for me?

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Your family are still legally responsible for you and should stay in contact with you. They have to give permission for certain things to happen:

- Changing school
- Going on holiday
- Having serious medical treatment
- Moving to another family

## Who else needs to know that you are being privately fostered?

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Not everyone needs to know.

Your school and class teacher need to know and your doctor and health visitor, and sometimes other professionals. You might want to tell your close friends, but that is up to you. Legally Children's Services have to be told about every child or young person who is privately fostered and every child or young person will have their own social worker.

## Some things private foster carers must not do

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Your private foster carers must not do any of the following without your parents agreeing to it:

- move you to live with another family
- change your name
- arrange for you to be married
- prevent you from contacting your family
- move you to live permanently abroad.



## How often will you get to see your social worker?

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Your social worker will visit you within a week of knowing that you are being privately fostered. They will then visit you a minimum of every six weeks during the first year you are living with your private foster carers.

After a year of living with your private foster carers the social worker may not visit as often. But you can still ask to see your social worker if you have anything you want to talk to them about.

## Who is responsible for you?

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However long you stay with your private foster carer your parents are still responsible for you. Your parents have to tell the local council that they are arranging for someone else to look after you, and they must check regularly that you are being well looked after.

## Who do you speak to if you are unhappy with your private foster carers?

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If something is worrying or upsetting you, you can always ask to see your social worker. If you don't want to speak to them, you could always talk to your teacher or the school nurse or counsellor. There are some telephone numbers of organisations that might be helpful to you at the back of this leaflet.

## When do you go back to live with your parents?

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This will be sorted out between your parents and your private foster carers.



## School

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The law says that every child under the age of 16 must go to school and so your private foster carer must make sure you go to school every day. You may not always feel like going to school, especially if you are sad and missing your home, family and friends, but going to school is very important. If you find some subjects difficult or have any problems or worries about your lessons, you should talk to a teacher, or someone you trust. You could also tell your private foster carers or the social worker as they may be able to help or get you the help you need.

## Health

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Your health is important and everyone should help you to look after it. Your parents should tell your private foster carers if:

- You have any health problems
- You need any medicines, vaccinations or treatment
- You have any allergies which give you a bad reaction to something such as nuts, bee stings or hayfever

Your private foster carers should ensure:

- You are registered with a doctor, dentist and opticians
- You have any medicines or vaccines you need
- You receive treatment when you need it
- You eat healthily

## Bullying

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If you are being called nasty names or are being hurt or frightened by other people, this is wrong and there are people who can help you such as your teacher, the school nurse, your private foster carer, your social worker or a health visitor. There are also organisations such as Childline and Pupiline which have websites and helplines for children who are worried about being bullied.

## Racism

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Sometimes children are bullied or made fun of because of the colour of their skin, the language they speak, their religion, the clothes they wear or the food they eat. If this happens you could do the same as suggested above. You should also do this if someone in your private foster home makes you eat something or do something which is against your religion or stops you praying or going to your place of worship ie mosque, church, synagogue or temple

## What can I do if I'm not happy about the service from Children's Services?

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We work very hard to give you a good service, but sometimes you might not think we have got it right. We need to hear from you so that we can get it right in the future. Ask your social worker for the Derbyshire Children's Services "Compliments, Comments and Complaints" leaflet. If you would prefer to talk to someone who is separate from Children's Services, you can talk to Ofsted. Ofsted's job is to check that Children's Services are doing their job properly. When they do an inspection, they ask privately fostered children and young people what they think about the service they are getting. If you want to, you can contact them at any time. Ofsted, 3rd Floor, Royal Exchange Building, St. Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7LA Tel: 08456 40 40 40

## Talk to us and we will try to make it right

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In Derbyshire we also have a service to help you to understand what your rights are.

This is called an Advocacy Service. An advocate is someone with a lot of experience of working with children and young people and listening to their views.

They can make sure that your views are heard when decisions are made about your care.

You can contact an advocate for lots of different reasons. For example, about:

- seeing your family
- where you live
- feeling safe
- education

You can speak to an advocate by:

**Email:** [childrens.rights@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:childrens.rights@derbyshire.gov.uk) or **Tel:** 01629 532029

**Or, write to:** Children's Rights and Participation Team, Room 287, County Hall, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 3AG

You can ask an adult to contact an advocate for you

## What if I want to make a complaint?

Sometimes, complaints are the only way to make sure things are dealt with properly. You have a right make a complaint if you are unhappy with anything that affects you and your plans for your future You can make a complaint by contacting:

[cs.feedback@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:cs.feedback@derbyshire.gov.uk)

You can ask an adult to help you with your complaint and you have the right to an advocate to help you with this. Your social worker, the Supervising Social Worker, your foster carer or the Independent Reviewing Officer are some of the people who also can help with the complaint. You can talk to them in private if you want.

Derbyshire has a project underway to further help young people to communicate their wishes and needs digitally by accessing an App called MOMO (Mind of My Own). This is a great way to put down your thoughts and send them to those people who need to hear from you. You can scan the QR code to go to the website.

([www.mindofmyown.org.uk](http://www.mindofmyown.org.uk))



## Who else can I talk to?

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### **Childline**

Free 24-hour helpline for children and young people in the UK.

**Tel:** 0800 11 11 [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### **The Mix**

Essential support for under 25s **Tel:** 0808 808 4994

[www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

### **Youth Access**

Get connected with the right support services and organisations in your area. For anyone aged 11-25. [www.youthaccess.org.uk](http://www.youthaccess.org.uk)

### **FRANK**

Confidential information and advice about drugs and substance abuse, whether it's for you or someone else. **Tel:** 0800 7766 00 (24 hours, won't show up on your phone bill) [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

### **Winston's Wish**

A free service of support for bereaved children and families.

Freephone Helpline: 08088 020 021 **Email:** [ask@winstonswish.org](mailto:ask@winstonswish.org)

### **Coram's Children's Legal Centre Lawstuff**

LawStuff gives free legal information to children and young people

**Tel:** 0300 330 5480 [www.lawstuff.org.uk](http://www.lawstuff.org.uk)

### **NSPCC**

Specialises in child protection and the prevention of cruelty to children. **Tel:** 0800 1111 (children and young people helpline)

**Email:** [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

[nspcc.org.uk](http://nspcc.org.uk)

### **UK Safer Internet Centre**

Online safety tips and advice to help young people stay safe online

[www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk)

## The Help at Hand Service within the Office of the Children's Commissioner

This is run by the government. This service can help you understand your rights and can talk to the local authority by writing and speaking to those who are responsible for your care (your social worker and their managers)

**Email:** [help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](mailto:help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk) or

**Tel:** 0800 5280731. You can also complete a form by following the following link: Contact - Help at Hand ([childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk))

**NSPCC** 0808 800 5000 or [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

**Bullying UK** at [www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)

**LGBT+ - Derbyshire** will help any young person who is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender or anyone who is having issues with their sexual orientation or gender identity. At <https://www.derbyshirelgbt.org.uk/>



## About me:

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### Education

School:

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Address:

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Website:

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Tel: Health

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### Doctor's name:

Address:

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Tel:

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**Dentist's name:**

Address:

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Tel:

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**Parent's contact information**

Parent's name:

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Address:

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Email:

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Tel:

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## Social worker details

Name:

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Team:

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Tel:

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Remember if you need to speak to someone you can contact your social worker. You will need to explain what it is that you need to talk about. If your social worker is not available and you need to speak to them urgently there will be someone else from their team that you can talk to. There are also other people you can contact for help and advice such as a teacher or school nurse.



**About me** - lets talk about you.

## Notes



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