

Children's guide to private fostering



what is private fostering?

Sometimes your mum and dad may need to ask someone to look after you for a while

This person may not be from your immediate family (For example your grandparent, brother, sister aunt or uncle); it may be a cousin, a neighbour or family friend. Your new carer is called a private foster carer and they will look after you while your mum and dad are away.

The law says that if you live with your private foster carer for more than 28 days, then we need to make sure you are being looked after properly.

To do this, we will ask a social worker to visit you and your carer regularly to see how things are going.



what does it mean?

When you are privately fostered your mum and dad are still your mum and dad

They are responsible for you and will make all the big decisions about you, like where you live and who will look after you.

Your mum and dad will have an agreement with your private foster carer to look after you the same way that they would. They will stay in touch with you and see you as often as they can, to make sure you are looked after properly.



why am I being privately fostered?

There are lots of reasons why children go to live with a private foster carer.

- If your mum and dad are ill, or need to go away for some time, and cannot look after you, they may ask a neighbour or a friend to look after you until they are able to take care of you again.
- If your mum and dad need to go away to work or study, and they cannot take you with them, they may ask someone to look after you until they come back.
- Your mum and dad may have sent you to live in this country so you can go to school here or perhaps get special medical treatment, so they may find a family who can look after you while you live here.
- You may fall out with your parents and leave home to live with a friend's family or with a neighbour until you can sort out your differences at home.



what will my carer do?

Your carer will look after you as you own mum and dad would

They will make sure you:

- eat regularly
- are clean and you have warm clothes to wear
- have a comfortable bed to sleep in
- go to school
- see a doctor, a dentist and an optician if you need to see one
- can follow your religion or any customs that are important to you and your family
- can stay in touch with your family
- can have a chance to make friends and spend time doing hobbies or sports you enjoy

Before you go to live with your carer, your mum and dad will talk to them about things like how much pocket money you can get, what time you should go to bed, what things you like and dislike eating and what activities you like to do.

This will help the carer to get to know you and help them to look after you better.



is there anything my carer can't do?

why will I have a social worker?

Because your mum and dad are still in charge of making big decisions about you, your carer is not allowed to:

- change your name
- change your school
- move you to another family
- take you to another part of the country
- take you to another country unless your parents agree.

At home, your mum and dad may have asked you to help around the house, for example by keeping your room tidy or setting the table for dinner.

Your carer may also ask you to do things to help, but if they want you to spend a lot of time helping, this isn't fair and you should tell your mum and dad or your social worker.



Your mum and dad and your carer have to tell us that you are living with your carer so that we can make sure you are being looked after properly. We will ask a social worker to visit you to make sure you are happy living with your carer.

Your social worker will visit you in the first week that you go to live with your carer, then they will visit you once every six weeks. Once you have lived with your carer for more than a year, your social worker will then start to visit you once every three months. You can also ask your social worker to visit you at any time if you need to speak to them.

When your social worker visits you, you can see them on your own without anyone else listening, so you can tell them if you are worried, or frightened, or if there is anything wrong. Your social worker can help you with lots of problems, including any problems you may be having at school.

The social worker will also help your carer to look after you properly. They will visit your carer once a month and talk to them about how you are being looked after and whether your carer needs any special help.

For example, your carer may need to find out more about your religion or culture so they can make sure you are able to carry on going to your church, temple or mosque or celebrate special festivals.

will I go to school?

Every child has to go to school and your carer must make sure that you go to school every day

Your mum and dad will talk to your carer about which school you will go to and your social worker will also make sure that your carer takes you to school every day.

If you need to change schools when you go to live with your carer, your mum and dad, your carer and your social worker will make sure that you have a place at a school near your carer's home. You might find it hard to settle and make new friends at your new school to begin with, but you can talk to your teacher, your carer or your social worker about any worries.

what about my health?

Your carer has to make sure that you are registered with a doctor and a dentist, and take you to see them when you need treatment or check-ups. If you need to see an optician, your carer will arrange this too.

Before you go to live with your carer, your mum and dad will talk to your carer about any health problems you have, like allergies or if you need to take any medicines. This is so your carer can make sure you get the right treatment.

Normally, your mum and dad need to give doctors permission to treat you, but they will arrange for your carer to give this permission.

what if I feel homesick

At first, you may find it hard to get used to living with your carer and their family, and you may miss your mum and dad

If you are homesick, you can talk to your carer or your social worker. It is best to tell people if you are not happy because they may be able to change things so you feel more at home.

Your mum and dad will talk to your carer about keeping in touch with you when they are away. They may telephone, or write to you or visit you occasionally. You can find out from your carer how and when your mum and dad will contact you, so you have something to look forward to.

You can talk to your carer about your culture and where you come from; they may be able to cook your favourite food, or take you to festivals you are familiar with that will make you feel less homesick.

The best way to settle in with your carer and not miss your mum and dad too much is to keep busy. If you play sports, or have any special hobbies, tell your carer all about them. Then they can make sure you are able to spend time doing what you enjoy most.



who can I talk to if I feel sad?

You can talk to your carer or your social worker, or maybe your teacher at school. You can also talk to your friends.

Write the name of your carer, your social worker and your teacher in here:

my carer is:

I live at:

my telephone number is:

my social worker is:

my teacher is:



If you are unhappy and feel you have no-one to talk to about things, you can call these numbers:

Childline:	0800 1111
Children's Legal Centre:	0845 120 3747
NSPCC:	0800 800 5000

If you have a complaint about the service you get from the Council, please phone us on freephone 0800 893 561 and ask for a copy of the children's guide to making a complaint.

If you want to talk with other children who live with a private foster carer, you can phone the **participation officer** on **020 7974 1850**

Private fostering service

Camden Council
Children, schools and families
Safeguarding and social care
Crowndale Centre
218 Eversholt Street
London NW1 1BD
email: yvonne.cochrane@camden.gov.uk
Phone: 020 7974 6417
Fax: 020 7974 6799
camden.gov.uk

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