

PRIVATE FOSTERING

Private fostering occurs when a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) is provided with care and accommodation by a person who is not a parent, person with parental responsibility for them or a relative in their own home. A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for and accommodating them has done so for less than 28 days and does not intend to do so for longer. ([Working Together 2018, page 13](#))



The law and private fostering

- Children's Social Care have a legal duty to check whether or not the arrangement is suitable.
- The child is not a looked after under this arrangement, and Parental Responsibility (PR) remains with the parents.
- Private foster carers must give Children's Social Care at least 6 weeks' written notice of their intention to foster a child privately. If they are already caring for a child who is privately fostered, they must notify Children's Social Care immediately—see contact details below.

Invisible children

- There is a duty on the local authority to promote public awareness of private fostering, and to ensure that the public and other professionals are aware of the notification requirements when they become aware of a possible private fostering arrangement.
- The number of private fostering arrangements across Britain is not known, as local authorities are not aware of all of them.
- It is reported that poor regulation of private fostering is leaving hundreds of children vulnerable to abuse.

Private fostering in Somerset

"Private fostering arrangements are not being identified and action to raise awareness of the need to notify children's services of such arrangements is underdeveloped." [Ofsted Inspection of services for children in Somerset, 2015](#)

If you become aware of private fostering arrangements please contact Children's Social Care:

Email: childrens@somerset.gov.uk

Phone: 0300 123 2224 (please select option 1)



PTO for a *quick guide to private fostering*, produced by Cheshire West LSCB.

Private fostering Quick Guide

