

## When do you need to tell the Council?

### As the parent:

- At least **2 weeks** before the child goes to live with the new carers except
- In an emergency, when you should tell social work services within 7 days of the emergency leading to the child going to live with carers.
- You will need to give the social work services information in writing about where the child is placed and other details requested by social work services.
- If the child is already with a private foster carer and this arrangement is not known to the Council, then you should notify the Council straight away.
- Notifications need to be in writing.

### As a carer:

- You need to tell the social work services at least two weeks before the child comes to live with you.
- If the child is placed in an emergency then you need to let the social work services know within one week of the child coming to stay with you.
- You need to put these notifications in writing. If the child leaves your home or dies then you need to advise the social work services preferably as soon as possible, and no longer than 48 hours.

## Why is this necessary?

Privately fostered children need to be protected from possible harm and need to be looked after as well as if they were with approved foster carers. Social Work Services must check that private foster carers are suitable people to do the job. This means that they must:-

- carry out checks, with the carer's permission, with people such as the Police, local authority, General Practitioner and referees who know them well.
- check that the accommodation is safe and suitable.

If the carer refuses to allow these checks to be made the social worker will want to discuss this with the parent of the child and look at whether other arrangements may be needed for the care of the child.

A social worker will be asked to visit regularly to see the child and try to make sure that the carer receives any necessary help. They will also keep in touch with the parents to offer help and advice. This is because the child's parents continue to be responsible for them. The parents of the child are responsible for giving the carer finances to cover the costs of caring for the child.

Social Work Services can also help the parent and carer to make clear arrangements for decisions about things like medical treatment, education and contact with family members.

## What will happen next as a carer?

When you have been in touch with Social Work Services then a social worker will contact you to explain what needs to happen and to arrange a visit and to take up the references outlined above.

## How to contact Social Work Services –

Social Work Centre offices in West Lothian are:

**Livingston** - Social Work Centre  
Cheviot House  
Owen Square  
Livingston  
EH54 6PW

Tel: 01506 777777

**Broxburn** - Strathbrock Partnership Centre  
189a West Main Street  
Broxburn  
EH52 5LH

Tel: 01506 775666

**Bathgate** - Bathgate Social Work Centre  
69 Whitburn Road  
Bathgate  
West Lothian

Tel: 01506 776700



**West Lothian  
Council**

# PRIVATE FOSTER CARE

## YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

## Private Foster Care

### What is it?

Private fostering refers to arrangements made for a child under school leaving age to be cared for by an adult, who is not a relative (aunt, uncle, brother, sister or grandparent) for a period of more than 28 days, **whether or not payment is involved**. This does not include children who are being looked after by the local authority.

### Does this happen often?

Yes. There are probably over 10,000 children in the UK who are currently being privately fostered. Very often circumstances can arise where a birth parent feels that it would be best for them to make an arrangement for their child to be cared for (usually temporarily) by someone who is not a relative. For example, when a couple separates or divorces, or where a single parent takes up employment away from home or abroad. There are also children who come from abroad, for instance, to study and who are cared for by others whilst their birth parents remain overseas. Sometimes students from abroad look for private foster carers so that they can pursue their studies in the UK.

### ARE YOU...

- Asking someone else to look after your child for more than 28 days or
- Thinking of looking after someone else's child or are presently doing so for more than 28 days and
- You are not closely related to the child? (not a grandparent, aunt, uncle, sister or brother or legal guardian of the child).

### IF SO -

You are making a Private Foster Care Arrangement whether or not payment is involved. The Foster Children (Scotland) Act 1984 requires you to tell your local council. You can do this by telephoning your local Social Work Services and discussing your situation with a social worker from a Children and Families Team in the area where the carer lives. On many occasions parents and foster carers do not know about these requirements to notify the Council, but should be encouraged to get in touch as soon as possible.

### If you are a Parent, you must tell us if ...

- Your child is below school leaving age
- She/he is going to stay with the carer for more than 28 days and

- The carer is not a close relative and/or does not have parental responsibility from the Court.

### You need not tell us if ...

- your child will be away from you for less than 28 days
- you will be living in the same premises as the child and carer
- your child is in a residential home, boarding school or hospital
- your child has been placed with approved foster carers or adopters by a local council
- your child has been placed under a supervision requirement from a Children's Hearing.

### If you are the Carer, you must tell us if ...

- you are looking after someone else's child, or planning to, and
- you are not a close relative (grandparent, aunt, uncle, sister or brother of the child) or
- do not have parental responsibility and
- the child has been/will be with you for more than 28 days and it is intended that the child will continue to stay with you after the 28 day period.

### but you do not have to tell us if ...

- the child is placed with you by a local council or
- if there is a parent, adult relative or guardian living in the same house.

If these circumstances apply then there is no need to notify social work services.

There are quite complicated rules, but you can phone social work services to check with them if you are required to notify them formally.

### Who else needs to tell social work services?

- Anyone who is looking after someone else's child (not closely related to them) as a private foster carer.
- Anyone else who was involved in making the arrangements.
- The other parent or anyone else who has been given parental responsibility by the Court, who knows about the arrangement.