



**Brighter
Futures for
Children**

Private Fostering

A guide for children

Important information about your rights and the support available to you while you live away from your family in a private foster home.



Hello,

You're probably reading this because you're living in, or you are about to go to live in private foster care. We, at Brighter Futures for Children, have put together this guide to help you with some of the questions you may have and to let you know what to expect.

What is private fostering?

If a child is under 16 years old (or under 18 years old if they have a disability) and their parent(s) or the person or people who usually lives with them have arranged for the child to stay with someone who is not related to them for more than 28 days, the child is living in private foster care.

For example, a child is in private foster care if they live with a neighbour, a family friend or someone their mum or dad pays to look after them.

A child is **not** in private foster care if they live with/are looked after by a close family member. This could be a grandparent, an uncle or aunt, a brother or sister, half relatives, step-relatives and people who are related to them by marriage.



What are the people called who look after me?

The people who look after you are called private foster carers. The law says that your parent(s) and your private foster carer(s) must tell us about your private fostering arrangement. The law also says that, once we have been told about you living in private foster care we, Brighter Futures for Children, must check on you regularly to make sure that you are safe and that your private foster carer(s) are looking after you properly.

Towards the end of this booklet, you'll find a page to write down the contact details of your allocated social worker. You can contact them at any time.

Why am I being privately fostered?

A child might need to live away from their family in private foster care for a variety of reasons. For example:

- A child's mum and/or dad are ill or they have to be away for a while so they can't look after them
- A child's parents may have come to this country to study or work but couldn't find somewhere for everyone in their family to live together



- A child's parents may live abroad but have sent the child to this country to go to school or college, or for special medical reasons
- A child is having problems at home and are not getting on with their family
- For other reasons not mentioned here.

What should my private foster carer do for me?

Your private foster carer is responsible for your day-to-day care. This means they should:



Give you regular meals (like breakfast, lunch and supper).

Make sure you have a comfortable bed of your own and that you get enough sleep.



Make sure you are clean (regular baths/ showers) and that you have warm, clean clothes appropriate to your activities and age.



Make sure you are able to keep in touch with your family and friends who are important to you.



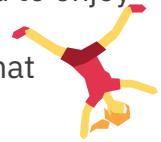
Help you stay healthy and make sure you have any medical help you need if you are ill or injured.

When you start to live with your private foster carer(s), they may need to register you with a new doctor and dentist to make sure you have any medicine or vaccinations you need.

Make sure you go to school and do your homework.



Make sure you have a chance to make friends and to enjoy sports and hobbies that you like.



Make sure you clean your teeth and visit a dentist regularly.



Your health and education are very important so before you move to live with your private foster carer(s), your parent(s) should tell them about your health and your health history, and about your experiences of education and if you need extra support in school.

Can my private foster carer make big changes to my life?

No - not unless the child's parents agree. Even though a child lives with a private foster carer their parents must still make all the important decisions about their life. However, a child's foster carer may make day-to-day decisions about routines and activities. Ideally, parent(s) and private foster carer(s) will be able to keep in regular contact, but this is sadly not always possible

If a child is not sure about any changes their private foster carer(s) may want to make, they can speak to their social worker.

Can I keep in touch with my family?

Yes - it is important that a child stays in touch with their family. They can stay in contact with parents and other relatives through visits, phone calls, letters, emails, texts or social media. A child's parent(s) or guardian(s) must also check to make sure they are being well looked after.

A child's private foster carer(s) must also help them to stay in touch with any other relatives and friends.

Can I still follow my faith/religion/culture and family customs?

Yes - a child's private foster carer must respect the things that are important to the child and their family. They should also help the child learn about their culture and meet people from their community who speak the same language. If English is not the first language, the private foster carer should support the child to have contact with people who speak their language of birth (however it may be up to the parent(s) to identify who these people should be).

Do I have to go to school?

If a child is under 16 years old they must go to school - this is the law. Their private foster carer(s) **must** make sure that they go to school every school day unless the child is too ill to do so.



When they start living with a private foster carer(s) a child may need to go to a new school near to their new home, but their parent(s) must agree to this change.

If they find it hard to settle into the new school the child should tell a teacher - they will understand and support them.

If a child is aged between 16-18 years old, they must still be in some form of education or training.

Can my private foster carer make me do jobs around the house?



Yes - but only small chores. In most families children and young people help with small domestic chores around the home like washing dishes, setting the table for meals, putting clothes in the washing machine or keeping their bedroom clean and tidy.

If a child doesn't think it's fair what they are being asked to do, they can speak to their social worker.

Will I be kept safe and respected?

Yes. No child should be bullied or abused either by other children or by adults. If they are bullied or hurt either at school or at home they should tell a trusted adult.

If private foster carer(s) or any member of their family makes a child do anything they don't want to do or anything that makes them feel uncomfortable they should tell their social worker or an adult they trust.

What if I need to talk to a social worker in between visits?

If a child has questions, is worried about anything or they just want to talk, they can contact their social worker anytime - they don't have to wait for their next visit as we want to make sure that everything is okay and we can support them at any given time.

A child's social worker must check on them regularly to make sure they are safe and being looked after properly.



Their social worker will visit the child in their first week. They will talk to them to find out how they feel and if there is anything they are worried or unhappy about or want to change.

If they want, a child can talk to their social worker on their own about anything. It's important to them to keep the child safe and happy.

Their social worker must come to see them every six weeks for the first year. After this they may visit less often.

What if I am not happy with my private foster carer?

If a child is unhappy or if the social worker thinks that they aren't being looked after properly, we will make sure that something is done about it.

Contacting your social worker:

Your contact at
Brighter Futures for
Children is:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Sometimes it can be easier to talk to someone you see every day – like your teacher at school or someone else you trust.

Other people to contact are:

Name

Telephone number

Other organisations and people who can help

Reconstruct

Reconstruct is an organisation that works with children and young people to help them to improve their lives. They provide independent visiting, advocacy and participation.

Freephone: 0800 389 1571

E: yourvoice@reconstruct.co.uk

W: www.reconstruct.co.uk/children-and-young-peoples-pages/

There are also a number of national organisations who can give you support and advice:

childline

A 24-hour helpline for children who are in trouble or at risk of being hurt or abused. Call free on 0800 1111 or visit their website www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC

(National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) - If you are having a bad time at home, or being bullied at school, or are worried or scared about something call free on 0808 800 5000 or visit their website www.nspcc.org.uk



Help at Hand is the Children's Commissioner's advice service for children in care, living away from home or receiving social care services, call 0800 528 0731 or visit:

www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/



Contacting us

If you are being privately fostered or think you are being privately fostered, and need to speak to Brighter Futures for Children, you can contact us through one of the below options:

Call us:

0118 937 4451

Email us:

FamilyandFriends.Referral@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

Visit our website

www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org/

Or you can scan the QR code to go to our web page.



Information about private fostering can be made available in other languages or in a non-written format on request. We can also help with a translation service.

For more information please contact the Family and Friends team, in our Adoption & Permanence Service on **0118 937 4451**.



We hope that this guide has answered most of
your questions

If you have any unanswered questions you can contact
Brighter Futures for Children by calling

0118 937 4451

or by email:

FamilyandFriends.Referral@brighterfuturesforchildren.org



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