

How do I find out more?

You can make a referral to the Private Fostering Team via the Children and Families HUB by following this link www.essexeffectivesupport.org.uk and by selecting Request Support.

You can also contact The Children and Families Hub on **0345 603 7627**

You can also download the **Essex Private fostering App** for more information on playstore. Search for Essex Private Fostering App

Reporting safeguarding concerns

Where there are immediate concerns about the safety or welfare of a child or young person:

Telephone: **0345 603 7627**

In the event that a situation is urgent and cannot wait until the next working day:

Monday to Thursday 5.30pm - 9am

Friday and bank holidays 4.30pm – 9am

Telephone: **0345 606 1212**



This information is issued by:
Essex County Council
Essex Social Care Academy

Contact us:
www.essexeffectivesupport.org.uk
www.essex.gov.uk/privatefostering
0345 603 7627

Sign up to Keep Me Posted email updates:
essex.gov.uk/keepmeposted

 [Essex_CC](https://twitter.com/Essex_CC)
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The information contained in this document can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.

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Private Fostering



An explanation of Private Fostering for care professionals

What is Private Fostering?

When a child/young person under 16 (18 if disabled) lives with someone who is not a close relative for more than 28 days, this is called 'Private Fostering'. The law considers a close relative to be a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or step-parent.

It is a legal requirement for parents and private foster carers to notify the Local Authority when a private fostering arrangement is made. This needs to happen at least 6 weeks before the arrangement is due to start, or if the child/young person arrives suddenly, no more than 48 hours after he or she has arrived.

Private Fostering is a private arrangement that is made between the parent and the private foster carer. Private foster carers are not Local Authority Foster Carers and the children/young people within the arrangements are not Looked After Children.

The following are examples of Private Fostering Arrangements:

- A young person living with the family of a boyfriend, girlfriend or a friend.
- A child or young person living with an extended family member, for example a Great Aunt or Cousin.
- A child or young person living with a family friend, perhaps as a result of parental separation, arguments at home or because their parents are overseas or working away.
- Children/young people who are in this country as part of an educational exchange programme and will be staying with a host family for a period longer than 28 days.

What are the duties of the Local Authority?

Once the Local Authority is made aware of a private fostering arrangement, a member of the Private Fostering Team will visit the arrangement within seven days.

Formal checks with the police and other agencies are made to ensure that the child is safeguarded and that the private foster carers are able to provide a reasonable standard of care.

An assessment is completed to consider the child/young person's needs and the private foster carer's ability to meet them. If the arrangement continues, we undertake regular visits to the home to offer advice and support and ensure the arrangement continues to be suitable.

What is my responsibility?

Private Fostering Arrangements are frequently under reported, potentially placing this often vulnerable group of children and young people at risk. Partner agencies have a responsibility to notify Essex County Council immediately if they become aware of any Private Fostering arrangement and are not satisfied that the Local Authority have been, or will be, notified of the arrangement.

We may contact you and other agencies requesting information about the child and/or the private foster carers. A prompt response can help us to make decisions about the suitability of the arrangement quickly, and ensure the child's safety.

If at any time you become concerned about anything affecting the Private Fostering Arrangement, please contact us immediately.

Who holds Parental Responsibility?

The private foster carer becomes responsible for providing the day to day care of the child. However, the child's parent remains legally responsible for the child.

We ask parents and private foster carers to share information and agree practicalities around the day to day care of the child/young person. This includes details such as how long the arrangement will last, who will keep in touch with the child's school, who can give consent over medical matters, how the child/young person will be provided for financially, agreeing what support the child/young person's parents will provide and deciding how contact can be supported.

How can a Private Fostering Arrangement be ended?

The Private Foster Carer or the parent can end the arrangement at any time. The Local Authority need to be informed within 48 hours of an arrangement ending.

If the Local Authority find the arrangement unsuitable for the child either during the assessment period of afterwards, we will request that the parent makes alternative arrangements for the care of their child.

