

Private Fostering



Is your child living with another family?
Are you looking after someone else's child?

0300 111 8007

Select option 1, then 4, then 3.
staffordshire.gov.uk/privatefostering

Supporting you
to make a difference

 Staffordshire
County Council

What is Private Fostering?

Private fostering is when a child or young person under 16 years old (or 18 if they have a disability) is looked after for 28 days or more by someone who is not a close relative, guardian or person with parental responsibility. Close relatives include parents, step-parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents.

It is not private fostering if the arrangement was made by a social worker at Staffordshire County Council or if the person looking after the child is an approved foster carer.

People become private foster carers for all sorts of reasons. Private foster carers can be a friend of the child's family, or be someone who is willing to care for the child of a family they do not know.

Common situations may be:

- Children and young people living apart from their families
- Children sent to this county for education and health care by their parents who live overseas
- Children whose parents work or study involves unsociable hours
- Children living with another family as a result of parental separation or divorce
- Teenagers living with a friend's family or the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Children on holiday exchange
- Children from overseas attending private/language or boarding schools and reside with host families.

Notifying Staffordshire County Council

By law Staffordshire County Council must be informed about all private fostering situations. The child's parent(s), private foster carer and anyone else involved in the arrangement i.e. guardianship agencies, school or health professionals are legally required to inform the Families First Service.

***Please contact Front Door team on: 0300 111 8007 select option 1, then 4, then 3.**

People involved in private fostering must inform Staffordshire County Council in writing within the following time scales:

the child is not yet living with the private foster carers	Six weeks beforehand
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if the child will move in with private foster carers in less than six weeks	Immediately
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if the child is already living with private foster carers.	Immediately
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What will Families First do?

We will arrange to make regular visits to see how the child has settled with you and provide you with support. We will also be able to help you with practical information and advice, as well as details about benefits that may be available to you.

Families First will work in partnership with the child, parents and private foster carer to ensure that the best possible arrangements are in place for the child. This includes:

- visiting the parent(s), the child and private foster carer
- helping to make sure that the child's holistic needs including, racial, cultural, linguistic and religious needs are being met
- Allocating a social worker to complete an assessment of the child's needs and the carers capacity to meet those needs.

What should professionals do?

Professionals should ensure that Staffordshire County Council know about all private fostering arrangements.

This includes a wide range of people who come in contact with children including teachers, religious leaders, doctors and health visitors. Professionals should also encourage the child's parent or carer to notify Families First.

You will not be breaching confidentiality by notifying children's services, but you will be helping to safeguard a child.

Why do Families First have to be involved?

The Children Act 1989 gives Families First a legal duty to safeguard the wellbeing of privately fostered children. This includes making sure that they are;

- Safe and well looked after
- Healthy
- Receiving a proper education
- Being encouraged to reach their full potential
- Keeping in touch with people who are important to them
- Living with someone who helps them value their culture and sense of identity
- Properly supported when they become independent.

Useful Contacts

Front Door team 0300 111 8007 - select option 1, then 4, then 3.

Emergency duty service (out of hours): Tel: 0345 604 2886 Social worker name and contact details;

Useful websites:

CoraamBAAF:
corambaaf.org.uk

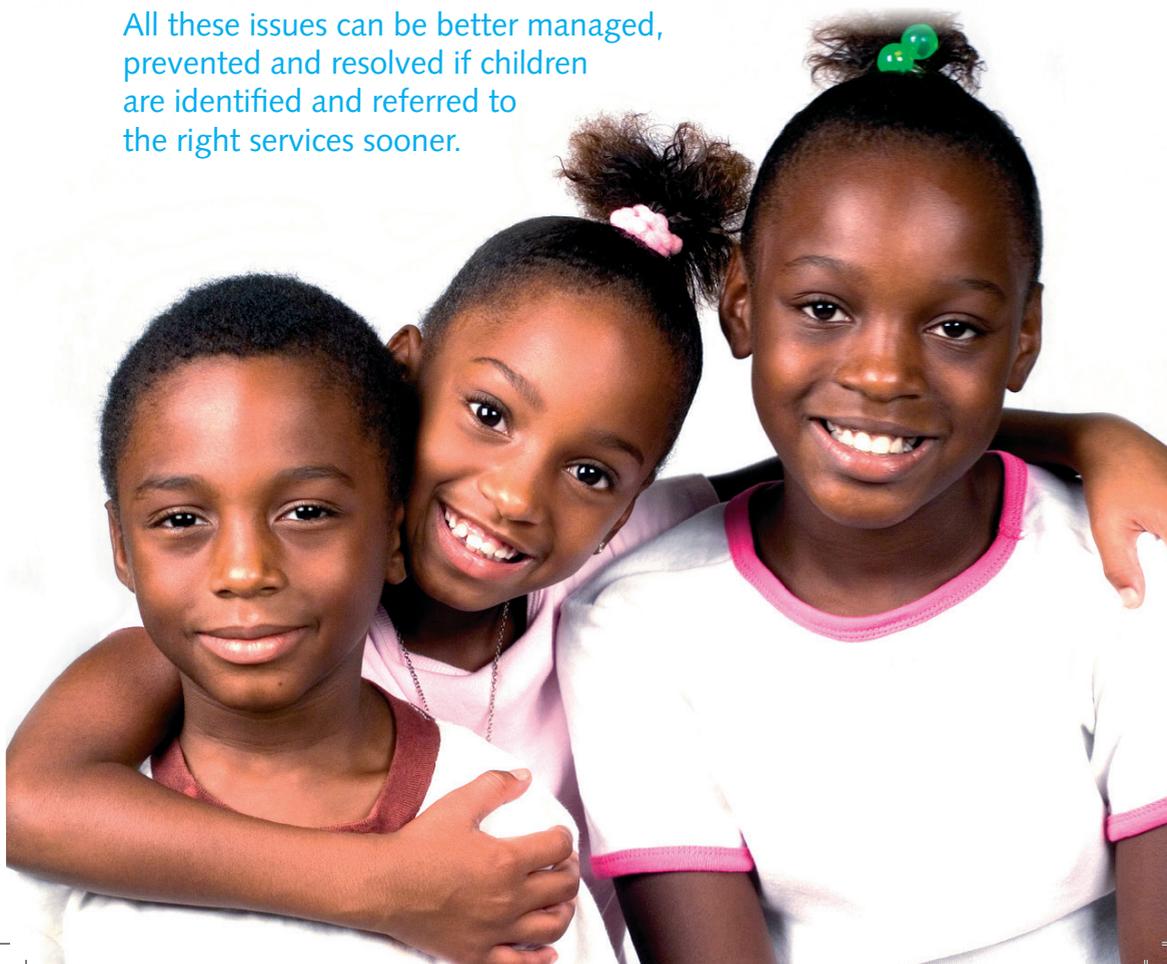
Main County Council Site:
staffordshire.gov.uk/privatefostering

Welfare concerns

The majority of children in private fostering arrangements will be happy and thrive. However, some will;

- Suffer from loss, separation and emotional distress
- Suffer abuse and exploitation
- Have no contact with their parents
- Move from carer to carer, sometimes across countries
- Have no one in the UK with legal rights to make important decisions for them
- Remain in the UK without any formal documents and without legal status or other rights such as the right to work and education.

All these issues can be better managed, prevented and resolved if children are identified and referred to the right services sooner.



What are the next steps?

To find out more about Private Fostering or to tell someone that you think a child might be privately fostered you can call:

Front Door team on:

0300 111 8007

Select option 1, then 4, then 3.

Or you can go on-line:

staffordshire.gov.uk/privatefostering

It is an offence not to notify Staffordshire County Council if you are caring for someone else's child as a Private Foster Carer.