If you think you may already be a private foster carer, or your child is being privately fostered, then you have a legal duty to inform Wakefield Council by contacting **Social Care Direct** on **0345 8 503 503**.

The Council should be informed six weeks before the arrangement is due to start.

Notification to Wakefield Council is a necessity as it is important the welfare of these children is safeguarded.

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Private Fostering

Have you arranged for your child to be cared for by a friend or an adult who is not a parent, close relative or approved foster carer?

Is the child being cared for aged up to 16 (or 18 for a child with a disability)?

Will the arrangement last for a period of 28 days or more?

Have you agreed to care for someone else's child?

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wakefieldcouncil working for you

What is private fostering?

Private fostering is different from the care of children provided by the Council.
For example:

- Private Fostering requires parents to exercise full parental responsibility and they are responsible for making the arrangement with the prospective carer.
- The Council does not approve or register private foster carers but acts in a supervisory, regulatory and advisory role.

Private fostering is where a child or young person up to the age of 16 (or 18 for a child with a disability) lives with an adult who is **not** a parent, close relative or approved foster carer. This could last for 28 days or more under a private arrangement (i.e. not made by the Council or voluntary organisation with an approved foster carer).

In relation to private fostering, the law defines a close relative as a grandparent, brother, sister, aunt and uncle. This also includes step-parents and half brothers and sisters.

Therefore, **private foster carers** may be a child's cousin, great aunt/uncle, family friend, neighbour or even someone unknown to the family.

Examples of private foster care

- Teenagers who move in to live with their girlfriend/boyfriend's family, or because they can no longer live with their own family.
- Children who stay with a cousin or neighbour while a parent is in hospital or divorcing.
- Children living elsewhere because their parents work unsociable hours and are unable to use childminders, nurseries or after school clubs.
- Children who have been sent from abroad for education and health care needs.

Legal responsibility to notify the Council?

By law, you **must inform Wakefield Council** about any private fostering arrangement in Wakefield. Whilst it is a criminal offence to fail to notify the Council, we realise some parents/private foster carers do not know they have to notify us and it is not our intention to take them down a legal route if it can be avoided. Schools are also obliged to inform the Council of such information when they become aware of it whether or not the parent/carer has notified the Council.

What do parents need to do?

If you think you will be making a private fostering arrangement in the near future, or have already made one you should:

- Contact Wakefield Council (Social Care Direct on 0845 8 503 503). You should tell the Council six weeks before the arrangement is due to start.
- Make appropriate arrangements and be satisfied someone will be a suitable carer for your child. This includes making any financial arrangements, providing the carer with information about your child's health needs, discussing the child's education arrangements, etc. **It is not the responsibility of the Council.**

What if I am, or going to be, a private foster carer?

If you are, or are going to be, a private foster carer, you should be advised that private foster carers do not receive any allowances from the Council. You should:

- Tell the Council immediately if you already have a child living with you.
- Tell the Council at least six weeks before that the child is coming to live with you, if you know this.
- Tell the Council if there has been any change in circumstances, including the end of the arrangement.
- Be prepared to undergo an assessment that will include a Criminal Records Bureau check on all relevant household family members.
- Allow regular visits to your home by a social worker

If a child comes to stay with you in an emergency, and you are not a relative as defined by the law, you should contact Social Care Direct so you can receive advice about your situation.

Why does the Council have to be notified?

Children and young people who are not in the direct charge of their parents and are privately fostered by families or individuals can be vulnerable to abuse and neglect if they remain hidden. It is important to Wakefield Council the welfare of these children is safeguarded against, and by law the Council has to make initial checks of prospective carers, inspect living accommodation and if appropriate, speak to the child alone.

In the first year of the placement, the Council will visit every six weeks, then every three months afterwards, to check that the child is safe and their needs are being met.

If you think you may already be a private foster carer, or your child is being privately fostered, then you have a legal duty to inform the Council by contacting Social Care Direct. They will advise you on what will happen next.

Social Care Direct
Telephone: 0345 8 503 503.
Fax: 01924 303455
Minicom: 01924 303450 (type talk welcome)
Email: social_care_direct@wakefield.gov.uk

Lines are open 24 hours, 7 days a week.

CoramBAAF
Coram Campus
41 Brunswick Square
London
WC1N 1AZ
Phone: 020 7520 0300
corambaaf.org.uk/contact

If you would like this information in another format or language, please contact the Fostering Service on 01924 302195.