

What if I'm not happy, don't feel safe or have a problem?

You can talk to your social worker about your worries by calling the phone number on the back of this leaflet. They can also talk to your parent(s) and your carers to help you work things out.

Don't worry if you find it hard to talk to your social worker. The most important thing is to make sure you have someone you can talk to - like a teacher or friend.

If you don't want to talk to someone you know, there are websites and phone numbers for organisations who will listen to your worries (details below).

My social worker's name is:

He/she can be contacted on:

Any questions?

If you need to ask anything about private fostering, feel unhappy, unsafe or have a problem please contact Specialist Children's Services on:
03000 41 11 11

If you would like this leaflet in another language or format please ask your social worker.

Useful telephone numbers:

Childline - phone 0800 11 11 (freephone)

You can ring this number and talk to a counsellor who is there to listen to you and talk through your worries. This is a free 24 hour helpline for children and young people. Or contact someone through the website - www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC - phone 0808 800 5000

Call this number if you are having problems at home or at school and want to talk to someone about it.

Children's Rights Director - 0800 528 0731

Find out about your rights and how to make yourself heard, or have a look at the website for children living away from home.
www.rights4me.org

Somebody Else's Child website

www.privatefostering.org.uk

Private Fostering

A guide for children and young people



Are you under 16 and not living with your parent(s), guardian or close family?

If you are staying with someone who isn't your parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, step-parent, brother or sister for more than 28 days, you are probably being privately fostered.

Find out what this means for you.

Published by Kent County Council

How do I know if I'm privately fostered?

If you are under 16 (or under 18, if you are disabled) and your mum or dad have asked someone else to look after you for 28 days or more, this is called private fostering.

The person who looks after you is called a private foster carer.

What does this mean for me?

If you have been staying with a relative or a family friend, then your mum, dad or the person looking after you needs to get in touch with social services - part of Kent County Council. If you want to know more, you might find it useful to read these questions and their answers below.

Why does private fostering happen?

There are lots of reasons why a parent thinks it may be best for their son or daughter to live in a different family home. There are many children and young people who are cared for in this way.

It can happen when:

- ➡ a parent decides it is best to ask a friend or someone else to take care of you for a while if they, or another close relative cannot
- ➡ things have been difficult at home - it's sometimes helpful for everyone to have their own space for a while, and time to think
- ➡ a parent who lives in another country might arrange for their child to stay with friends or relatives in this country. If you are living with a family while you are here to learn English see the 'Information and advice for children and young people living with a host family' leaflet.

Can my private foster carer decide everything for me?

Not everything. They can decide what's best when it comes to most day-to-day things.

Private foster carers cannot change your name, or your school, or arrange for you to live somewhere else without your parents agreeing to this. Your mum or dad are still responsible for you, and still have to agree to medical treatment, unless they cannot be contacted quickly in an emergency, and then a doctor will decide.

Can I still see my parents and other relatives?

Your parent(s) and the private foster carers should make arrangements for you to see your family. You can also arrange to keep in touch with your parent(s) and other family and friends over the phone, by texting or by e-mail or by writing a letter. It is also important that your parent(s) keep in touch with the private foster carers to make sure you are being well cared for.

What will it be like living with private foster carers?

Private foster carers should look after you as if you were their own child.

They should:

- ➡ make sure you are well cared for and as happy as you can be
- ➡ help you to stay in touch with your parent(s) and your family through visits, phone calls, texts, e-mails or letters



- ➡ make sure you are going to school or college
- ➡ take you to the doctor or hospital if you aren't well
- ➡ give you the chance to make friends and as far as possible, enjoy the activities you like
- ➡ respect the things that are important to you, like your religion and customs.

What about social services and social workers?

The law says that the social services department (called Specialist Children's Services in Kent) must make sure that you are safe and well cared for. Social workers make sure that children and young people are being cared for properly. They will visit you at least every six weeks in the first year that you live with private foster carers. After that, visits will be every 12 weeks. They will talk to your private foster carers to see if they need any help, and to your parent(s) to make sure they know that you are alright.