



# A child and young person's guide to Private Fostering

HERTFORDSHIRE  
safeguarding**children**  
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## What is private fostering?

**Private fostering is when you are not living with your parents but are staying with a family friend or someone who is not an immediate relative for 28 days or more.**

### **There are many reasons why you might not live with your family:**

- Maybe you have had an argument and feel you need some space
- Your Mum or Dad may be ill so the may ask someone else to look after you for a while
- Your parents might need to move away for work but do not want to disrupt your school and may ask someone else to look after you
- You may have come to the UK from another country to go to school and your parents may have arranged for you to stay with someone else
- You may have come to the UK from another country to learn English (or other languages) and are staying with a family in this country

### **Is private fostering different from other types of fostering?**

Yes, in the UK, when children cannot live their own family or have problems at home, the Local Authority might find another family to look after them. This is called being in care, that is, you are in the care of the Local Authority. The social worker finds a foster family for you to live with. There are lots of rules which everyone has to follow to make sure children are safe and well looked after. When you are privately fostered it means your parents, rather than social workers choose where and with whom you live. Even if your parents have chosen your private fosters carers, they and your parents must still follow rules and laws and a social worker will have to make sure you are safe and well cared for.

### Rashida's story

Rashida is 5 and was born in Nigeria. Rashida's mum died so Rashida's dad decided it would be best for her to come to England to live with 'Auntie' Hilda who she had never met before. Her dad brought her to England and returned home a week later. 'Auntie' Hilda became Rashida's private foster carer and was responsible for looking after her. Rashida found it strange at first because she felt sad and only spoke a little English. 'Auntie' Hilda arranged for a new school and, with the support of the private fostering social worker, helped Rashida to settle into her new home and school.

### Callum's story

Callum is 13 and had a difficult time at home because his mum drank a lot of alcohol and would get angry with him. This scared Callum and he would often go to his friend Stephen's house. Callum did not have any contact with his dad and didn't want to live with his mum any more. Stephen's mum, Susan, said that Callum could live with them and Callum's mum agreed to this. Callum is now more settled at school and is doing well but still gets angry with his mum when she lets him down with visits. He is able to talk to Susan and the social worker about this and they have helped him to find ways to manage his feelings.

### Jacob & Carly's story

Jacob (15) and Carly (9) are brother and sister. They live with their Dad Bob who is a soldier and often has to work away from home for four to six months at a time. Jacob and Carly's mum left when they were younger and she now lives in another country with a new family and they have not seen her for 5 years. When Bob has to be away working, Jacob and Carly go to stay with Peter and his wife Rebecca until their Dad returns. Peter is Bob's cousin and he and his wife are Jacob and Carly's Private Foster Carers. They are responsible for looking after them whilst their dad is away. The Private fostering social worker visits to make sure everything is going okay whilst their Dad is working away from home.

## What about me?

Being privately fostered does not mean that your rights will change, you will still have the same rights as other children or young people who live with their families.

If you are unhappy about something and need to talk to someone, you do not have to wait for us to visit, you can contact us anytime on **01442 453595**.



### What do my parents or private foster parents have to do?

The law says your parents or guardians must tell the Local Authority if you are living away from home and someone else is looking after you. They should tell us at least six weeks before you move in. If you have already moved in, they must tell us immediately. When you are living away from home, your parents, are the people who are responsible for you and are the only people who can make important decisions about your life. It is important they stay in touch with you and check that you are being well looked after.

### **What is a social worker and what will they do?**

The law says that the Local Authority must make sure that every child living with private foster carers are safe, happy and well cared for. A social worker is someone who works for Hertfordshire County Council and who will make regular visits to you and your carers whilst you are living with them or until you reach the age of 16 years (or 18 if you have a disability). We want to make sure that the place where you will be living and the people who are looking after you are suitable and so we will make an assessment of the arrangements. The social worker will talk to you, the people you are staying with, your parents and will also make various checks. You can discuss with them any worries about school, family or your future.

### **What if I have a problem but do not feel able to talk to my social worker?**

Sometimes it is hard to talk about things that worry you and sometimes it is easier to talk to people you see every day, such as your class teacher. Some children find it easier to talk to their teacher or school nurse. There are also many other organisations you can talk to about something which is worrying you. You will find a list at the back of this leaflet.



## What is Private Fostering?

### School

The law says that every child under the age of 16 must go to school and so your private foster carer must make sure you go to school every day. You may not always feel like going to school, especially if you are sad and missing your home, family and friends, but going to school is very important. If you find some subjects difficult or have any problems or worries about your lessons, you should talk to a teacher, or someone you trust. You could also tell your private foster carers or the social worker as they may be able to help or get you the help you need.

### Health

Your health is important and everyone should help you to look after it. Your parents should tell your private foster carers if:

- You have any health problems
- You need any medicines, vaccinations or treatment
- You have any allergies which give you a bad reaction to something such as nuts, bee stings or hayfever

### Your private foster carers should ensure:

- You are registered with a doctor, dentist and opticians
- You have any medicines or vaccines you need
- You receive treatment when you need it
- You eat healthily



## Bullying

If you are being called nasty names or are being hurt or frightened by other people, this is wrong and there are people who can help you such as your teacher, the school nurse, your private foster carer, your social worker or a health visitor. There are also organisations such as Childline and Pupiline which have websites and helplines for children who are worried about being bullied.

## Racism

Sometimes children are bullied or made fun of because of the colour of their skin, the language they speak, their religion, the clothes they wear or the food they eat. If this happens you could do the same as suggested above.

You should also do this if someone in your private foster home makes you eat something or do something which is against your religion or stops you praying or going to your place of worship ie mosque, church, synagogue or temple.



## Useful Organisations

**Hertfordshire County Council**  
**Children's Services 0300 123 4043**

### **Childline 0800 1111**

24 hour helpline for children who are in trouble or at risk of being hurt or abused. Call free or find them on your computer at [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### **Pupiline [www.pupiline.net](http://www.pupiline.net)**

This is a website for teenagers and provides information and useful links on a range of issues including bullying

### **National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children ( NSPCC)**

If you are experiencing a bad time at home, are being bullied at school or are worried or frightened about something you can ring the NSPCC free on **0808 800500** or **text 88858** or find them on your computer at [help@nspcc.org.uk](http://help@nspcc.org.uk)

### **Herts Young Homeless (HYH)** **Mediation Services**

This is a confidential voluntary service which helps young people and their parents or carers work together to find solutions to relationship difficulties within the family or home. If you would like more information call **01707 272769**



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