



## TEA-BREAK GUIDE



### What is Private Fostering?

Private fostering is when children and young people under the age of 16 years or under 18 if they are disabled, are cared for on a full time basis by a person who is not their parent, who does not have parental responsibility or who is not a "close relative" **for 28 days or more**. Close relatives are defined as:

- grandparents
- brothers and sisters
- uncles and aunts, or
- step-parents (if married to the partner or in civil partnership)

There are many circumstances in which an unmarried partner becomes the carer for a child. A parent's unmarried partner is not a step-parent in this context. It is a common misunderstanding and parents/carers are often unaware of the legal requirements to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement.

### What if the arrangement is less than 6 weeks away or is already in place?

Where a private fostering arrangement is either intended to start in less than 6 weeks, is in existence, or an emergency arrangement has been put in place, the **carer or parent should tell the Children and Families Service within 48 hours**.

### Who should notify the Children's Service of a private fostering arrangement and when?

Any parent proposing to have their child looked after by someone other than a close relative for more than 28 days, or a carer who is proposing to look after someone else's child, must notify the Children and Families Service **at least 6 weeks before the arrangement is due to begin**.

### Where should notice of a private fostering arrangement be made to?

The parents/carers should notify **the MASH on 0300 126 7000**.

Under the Private Fostering Arrangements (2005), professionals who come into contact with children, for example teachers, religious leaders, health care staff are under a duty to inform the Children's Service about any private fostering arrangements they are made aware of. To make a notification of a private fostering arrangement professionals should notify **MASH on 0300 126 7000**.

### What if a child is being accommodated by a school?

If it is intended for a child to remain in a residential setting outside of term time for more than 14 days this becomes a private fostering arrangement and the parent/carers must give written notice stating the estimated number of children, **not less than 2 weeks before the arrangements begin**.

### Is there a limit on the number of foster children?

In cases where a person is privately fostering, or proposes to foster privately **more than three children who are not siblings at any one time, then that person needs an exemption from the local authority**.

If a private foster carer exceeds the usual fostering limit or, where exempted, privately fosters a child not named in the exemption and in so doing exceeds the usual fostering limit they shall be considered to be running a children's home. **Any person who is considered to be running a children's home without being registered may be found to be guilty of an offence**.

### Further Information:

NSCP Website <http://www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk/health-professionals/taking-action/private-fostering/>