



**Brighter
Futures for
Children**

Private Fostering

A guide for children

Important information about your rights and the support available to you while you live away from your family in a private foster home.



Hello,

You're probably reading this because you're in private foster care or are about to go into private foster care. We, at Brighter Futures for Children, have put together this guide to help you with some of the questions you may have and what to expect.

Q1. What is private fostering?

If you are under 16 years old (or under 18 years old if you have a disability) and your parent(s) or the person who you usually live with have arranged for you to stay with someone who is not related to you for more than 28 days, you are living in private foster care.

For example, you are in private foster care if you live with a neighbour, a family friend or someone your mum or dad pay to look after you.

You are not in private foster care if you live with/are looked after by a family member. This could be a grandparent, an uncle or aunt, a brother or sister, half relatives, step-relatives and people who are related to you by marriage.



Q2. What are the people called that look after me?

The people who look after you are called private foster carers. The law says that your parent(s) and your private foster carer(s) must tell us about your private fostering arrangement. The law also says that, once we have been told about you living in private foster care we, Brighter Futures for Children, must check on you regularly to make sure that you are safe and that your private foster carer(s) are looking after you properly.

Towards the end of this booklet, you'll find a page to write down the contact details of your allocated social worker. You can contact them at any time.

Q3. Why are children privately fostered?

Children live away from their families in private foster care for a variety of reasons. For example:

- your mum and/or dad are ill or they have to be away for a while so they can't look after you
- your parents came to this country to study or work but couldn't find somewhere for everyone in your family to live together
- your parents live abroad but have sent you to this country to go to school or college or for special medical reasons
- you are having problems at home and are not getting on with your family
- for other reasons not mentioned here.



Q4. What should my private foster carer do for me?

Your private foster carer is responsible for your day-to-day care. This means they should:



Give you regular meals (like breakfast, lunch and supper).

Make sure you have a comfortable bed of your own and that you get enough sleep.



Make sure you are clean (regular baths/ showers) and that you have warm, clean clothes appropriate to your activities and age.



Make sure you are able to keep in touch with your family and friends who are important to you.



Help you stay healthy and make sure you have any medical help you need if you are ill or injured.

When you start to live with your private foster carer(s), they may need to register you with a new doctor and dentist to make sure you have any medicine or vaccinations you need.

Make sure you go to school and do your homework.



Make sure you have a chance to make friends and to enjoy sports and hobbies that you like.



Make sure you clean your teeth and visit a dentist regularly.



Your health is very important so before you move to live with your private foster carer(s), your parent(s) should tell them about your health and your health history.

Q5. Can my private foster carer make big changes to my life?

No - unless your parents agree. Even though you live with a private foster carer your parents must still make all the important decisions about your life. However, your foster carer may make day-to-day decisions about your routines and activities.

If you are not sure about any changes your private foster carer may want to make, you can speak to your social worker.

Q6. Can I keep in touch with my family?

Yes - it is important that you stay in touch with your family. You can stay in contact with your parents and other relatives through visits, phone calls, letters, emails, texts or social media and they must check to make sure you are being well looked after.

Your private foster carer(s) must also help you to stay in touch with any other relatives and friends.

Q7. Can I still follow my faith/religion/culture and family customs?

Yes - your private foster carer must respect the things that are important to you and your family. They should also help you learn about your culture and meet people from your community who speak your language. If English is not your first language, your private foster carer should support you to have contact with people who speak your language of birth (however it may be up to your parents to identify who these people should be).

Q8. Do I have to go to school?

If you are under 16 years old you must go to school - this is the law. Your private foster carer(s) MUST make sure that you go to school every day unless you are too ill to do so.

When you start living with your private foster carer(s) you

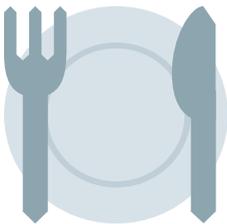
may need to go to a new school near to your new home, but your parents must agree to this change.

If you find it hard to settle into your new school you should tell your teacher - they will understand and support you.

If you are aged between 16-18 years old, you must be in education.



Q9. Can my private foster carer make me do jobs around the house?



Yes - but only small chores. In most families children and young people help with small domestic chores around the home like washing dishes, setting the table for meals, putting clothes in the washing machine or keeping their bedroom clean and tidy.

If you don't think it's fair what you are being asked to do, you can speak to your social worker.

Q10. Will I be kept safe and respected?

Yes. No child should be bullied or abused either by other children or by adults. If you are bullied or hurt either at school or at home you should tell an adult who you trust.

If your private foster carer(s) or any member of their family makes you do anything you don't want or makes you feel uncomfortable you should tell your social worker or an adult you trust about it.

Your social worker must check on you regularly to make sure you are safe and being looked after properly.

Your social worker will visit you in your first week. They will talk to you to find out how you feel and if there is anything you are worried or unhappy about or you want to change.

If you want you can talk to your social worker on your own about anything. It's important to them to keep you safe and happy.

Your social worker must come to see you every 6 weeks for the first year. After this they may visit you less often.



Q11. What if I need to talk to a social worker in between visits?

If you have questions or you are worried about anything or you just want to talk you can contact your social worker anytime - you don't have to wait for your next visit as we want to make sure that everything is okay and we can support you at any given time.

Q12. What if I am not happy with my private foster carer?

If you are unhappy or if the social worker thinks that you aren't being looked after properly, we will make sure that something is done about it.

Contacting your social worker:

Your contact at
Brighter Futures for
Children is:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Mind of My Own - The Mind of My Own 'One' app is a tool to help make sure opinions from all our children and young people are listened to. You can send messages to your social worker and their manager. You can tell them whatever you like. You can download this app for free onto your smartphone through the iPhone App Store or Google Play.

Sometimes it can be easier to talk to someone you see every day – like your teacher at school or someone else you trust.

Other people to contact are:

Name

Telephone number

Support groups at Brighter Futures for Children

Children in Care Council

If you're in foster care, you can join the Children in Care Council, there are a few groups that you can join:



Care2Listen - We are a group of young people in care that meet once a month to make sure that we have a voice and are listened to about things that matter to us. The group is run in a fun way, you will get to meet other young people in care, it's great for your CV, and there are opportunities to get involved in interviews, as well as winning competitions and vouchers.



Care2HaveFun - This is a fun group that meets once a month to take part in activities. We do all sorts like trampolining, football, pizza nights, cinema.

If you would like to join us or find out more about either group, speak to your social worker or contact the Children in Care Participation Officer:

T: 07843642528

E: cicc@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

W: www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org/for-young-people/

We hope that this guide has answered most of your questions.

**If you have any unanswered questions you can contact
Brighter Futures for Children at 0118 937 3740 or
foster@brighterfuturesforchildren.org**



Other organisations and people who can help

Reconstruct

Reconstruct is an organisation that works with children and young people to help them to improve their lives. They provide independent visiting, advocacy and participation.

Freephone: 0800 389 1571

E: yourvoice@reconstruct.co.uk

W: www.reconstruct.co.uk/children-and-young-peoples-pages/

There are also a number of national organisations who can give you support and advice:

childline

A 24-hour helpline for children who are in trouble or at risk of being hurt or abused. Call free on 0800 1111 or visit their website www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC

(National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) - If you are having a bad time at home, or being bullied at school, or are worried or scared about something call free on 0808 800 5000 or visit their website www.nspcc.org.uk

coram

Helps young people in care have their voice heard. Call free on 0808 800 5792, email help@coramvoice.org.uk or visit their website www.coramvoice.org.ukv



Help at Hand is the Children's Commissioner's advice service for children in care, living away from home or receiving social care services, call 0800 528 0731 or visit:

www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/



Contacting us

If you are being privately fostered or think you are being privately fostered, and need to speak to Brighter Futures for Children, you can contact us through one of the below options:

0118 937 3740

foster@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org/fostering

Information about private fostering can be made available in other languages or in a non-written format on request. We can also help with a translation service.

For information please contact the Family and Friends Team, in our Fostering Service on **0118 937 3740**.



© Brighter Futures for Children
Brighter Futures for Children
Civic Offices, Bridge Street,
Reading RG1 2LU

Registered company in England & Wales:
11293709

Brighter Futures for Children is a not-for-profit company, wholly owned by, but independent of, Reading Borough Council.