

This seems like a lot of fuss. What's in it for me?

Although students under the age of 16 have additional care needs because of their age there is also a lot more support available for them, and for you as their carer.

- ✓ Younger children are required to be within the home at a reasonable time. This eliminates a lot of the concerns associated with older children or young adults who are more likely to assert their independence and may not return until late at night.
- ✓ The School and the Social Worker are available for you to seek advice from if you have any concerns about the child or their behaviour.
- ✓ The School and Social Worker will be able to help if any difficulties do arise.
- ✓ Younger children are generally familiar with a family environment and are more likely to mix well within family settings in comparison to young adults.
- ✓ The Social Worker can help you if you have any concerns about the school, about the child's Guardian, the child's friends or other people within the community.
- ✓ The responsibility for the child is more equally shared when a Social Worker is involved and issues of concern should be picked up quicker and hopefully addressed before they escalate.
- ✓ If you are uncertain about caring for a student under the age of 16 guidance on issues such as average bedtimes, internet usage, health problems and family contact can be offered by both the school and the Social Worker.
- ✓ Younger children generally have a fuller and more structured timetable so it is much easier to know where they are and when they will be returning after school.

What happens if I decide to privately foster?

- ✓ On a day to day basis you will be providing the same care as you would to any child in your home in terms of cooking, cleaning and general support.
- ✓ A Social Worker from Oxfordshire County Council will come out to visit you within 7 days of the child's arrival.
- ✓ The Social Worker will visit the child every 6 weeks for the 1st year and every 12 weeks thereafter to check on the child's safety and welfare until the child reaches the age of 16 or they return home (whichever happens first).
- ✓ The Social Worker will see the child alone at every visit or they will arrange to see the child at school to give them a chance to talk openly.

If you become a regular Private Foster Carer you will get to know the Private Fostering Social Worker. Police checks only need updating once every 3 years and you will soon appreciate that the Social Worker is there to support you and to protect the child NOT to interfere in your daily life or to criticise you.

Good Private Foster Carers for international students are appreciated and valued by both language schools and by Oxfordshire County Council as well as by the children themselves and their families. As such we will all work together to try to offer you a level of support which is suitable for you and your family.

If you would like further information about Private Fostering please feel free to contact the Private Fostering Team directly for an informal discussion:

Tel: 01865 323126

Email: private.fostering@oxfordshire.gov.uk



Thinking about

Private Fostering?

Information for Most Families



What is private fostering?

Private Fostering is when you are caring for a child who is under the age of 16 (or under 18 if the child is disabled).

The child must be someone who you are not closely related to and they need to be staying with you for more than 28 days.

If you are working as a host family for younger international students you may find that you are also classed as Private Foster Carers.

What does this mean for me?

Firstly you have a legal duty to notify the local authority that you are privately fostering a child*. Don't assume someone else will do it.

Failure to do so is an offence**

Our role is to ensure that the child is safe and being well cared for. We will need to see where the child is sleeping and we will need to know how things like mealtimes and leisure times work within your household. We also need to do police checks (DBS checks) on every member of your household over the age of 16 and we will need to write to your GP.

Are there any restrictions?

You cannot Privately Foster more than 3 children under the age of 16. If you intend to do this then you will need to contact Ofsted and enquire about the registration requirements for Children's Homes.

**The Children (Private arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005*

***The Children Act 1989 part IX, Section 70.*

Why does the Social Worker need to check up on us?

We know that children who live away from their families are vulnerable. The Social Worker is involved as a completely independent person who will be checking to see that the child is being looked after not only in your home but also within their educational setting, within the community and amongst their friends.

Do Privately Fostered students need to be looked after differently from other students?

No. We expect carers to look after Privately Fostered children in the same way as they would any child within their household.

- ✓ We expect carers to know where the child is at all times and who with.
- ✓ We expect carers to have contact numbers for the child and also any friends or family members who the child goes to visit or spend a lot of time with.
- ✓ We expect carers to have age appropriate curfews and to notify the school if the child is not adhering to these.
- ✓ If the child plans to stay with family in different parts of the country at weekends and during holiday periods this must be arranged in advance with permission being given by parents and full contact details given to the carer.

- ✓ We expect carers to ensure that the child is not doing anything illegal including drinking alcohol, taking drugs, accessing inappropriate material (via any form of media), or having underage sex. If the carer has any concerns about the activities of a child in their care they can get support with this and should, in the first instance, contact the Guardian and the child's School.
- ✓ We expect Privately Fostered students to be included in family mealtimes and with weekend activities. This includes providing the same food for all members of the household (diet permitting).
- ✓ It is important that you inform us of any changes to your own household. This includes:
 - ✓ When the child moves out
 - ✓ If anyone (of any age) moves into or out of your home
 - ✓ If you move the child to a different room within your home
 - ✓ If you are going on holiday and you plan to make temporary alternative arrangements for the child
 - ✓ If your employment/ working hours change
 - ✓ Anything else that you think may be relevant
- ✓ If the child goes missing we expect carers to make attempts to contact the child and contact all persons involved with the child. Where appropriate we expect carers to contact the Police to report the child missing.

Where the child has a Guardian this process should be very straightforward. If there is not a Guardian for the child then the carer can liaise via the child's school or contact the Social Worker.