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### Final Message

Private fostering is everyone's business.

Spotting it early and acting on it can make a real difference to a child's life. Let's stay curious, informed, and proactive.

Further information:

<https://www.boltonsafeguardingchildren.org.uk/private-fostering>



## 7 Minute Briefing: Private Fostering Arrangements



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### What is Private Fostering?

Private fostering is when a child under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not a parent or close relative for **28 days or more**, under a private arrangement not made by the local authority. The period a child is cared for by the private foster carer should be continuous but can include the occasional short break. The local authority in which the private foster carer lives must be notified of the arrangement.

**Close relatives include:** Grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles and step-parents. **It does NOT include:** Family friends, cousins, Great-aunts/uncles etc.

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### Ongoing Help and Support

If the arrangement is deemed suitable:

- The social worker must **visit within set timescales**.
- Support should be offered to both the carer and the child and everyone should continue to seek assurance that the PFA is in the best interests of the child.
- All organisation should continue to provide input on the child's needs, especially in education, health, or emotional wellbeing and help the child has access to appropriate services and support.

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### Why It Matters

Private fostering arrangements (PFA) are often hidden and unregulated, which can leave children vulnerable. Local authorities have a **legal duty** to assess and monitor these arrangements to ensure the child's safety and well-being.

Professionals have a **statutory duty to notify** the local authority if they become aware of a private fostering arrangement and encourage parents and carers to notify the Local Authority.

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### The Role of the Local Authority

Once notified the local authority must:

- **Allocate a social worker** and undertake enquiries to confirm this is a PFA.
- **Seek the views of the child** ideally alone unless inappropriate due to age or understanding.
- **Assess the suitability** of the carer, household, and accommodation.
- **Conduct statutory checks** on the proposed carers (DBS, health, etc.).
- **Determine the suitability** of the arrangement.

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### What to do if you identify a possible PFA

If you suspect or know of a private fostering arrangement:

- **Ask questions** sensitively: Who does the child live with? Why?
- **Notify the local authority**—in Bolton, contact the Integrated Front Door.
- **Record and share concerns** appropriately.
- **Raise awareness** within your teams and networks.
- **Contribute** to any further assessments or interventions

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### Risks and Safeguarding Concerns

While the majority of Private Fostering Arrangements may be beneficial for children, sometimes children in private fostering may face:

- Neglect or abuse due to lack of oversight.
- Isolation from services and support.
- Risks of trafficking or exploitation.
- Unmet emotional or educational needs.