Do you know of someone, or are you caring for a child under 16* who is living away from their parents?

(*or under 18 for a young person with a disability)

If the answer is Yes, this is called private fostering and you should read on.

What is Private Fostering?

- When a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if they have a disability) is living away from their parents with someone who is not an immediate blood relative for 28 days or more
- When a child is living with someone from their extended family such as a cousins, great grandparents, great aunts or uncles or parents cousins
- When a child is living with a family friend
- When a child is living with a step-parent who was not married to their parent

There may be many reasons why children and young people are living away from home or their parents have arranged for someone else to care for them.

These include:

- Family or relationship breakdown
- They have moved in with a friend or the family of their boyfriend or girlfriend
- Parents working overseas
- Parental illness/or following the death of a parent
- Children being sent to the UK for education purposes whilst their parents remain overseas
- Foreign language students placed with host families

What the law says?

The law requires parents and carers to notify Hertfordshire County Council of any private fostering arrangements where the child or young person is living away from their parents and home for more than 28 days. Unfortunately many people are not aware of this and therefore do not notify the council even though the law requires them to do so.

What the council will do?

- A social worker will visit the home and speak to the carer and members of the household within seven days
- A social worker will speak to the child or young person and will contact their parents (where possible)
- We will provide information about private fostering and provide details of support and advice available to carers, children/young people and parents
- Private foster carers will have to give us information about the child/young
- person, themselves and other members of the household
- We will assess the private fostering arrangement to ensure the child/young person is being well looked after, is safe, healthy, and happy living in the arrangement
- A social worker will visit regularly to make sure the child or young person remains well cared for and to offer advice and support as needed

What you need to do?

If you are a parent or private foster carer, you must:

- Tell us about the arrangement at least six weeks before the arrangement begins, or in an emergency within 48 hours
- You must tell us straight away if the child or young person is already living with you and you have not told us
- We need to know information about the child or young person, where they are living and who they are living with
- You must tell us if the child or young person moves and where they have moved to

If you know of a child or young person who is not living with their parents, or you need help and advice about private fostering arrangements, please contact our customer service centre on **0300 123 4043.**