
Yvonne: Hi, I'm Yvonne Archer, this is '6 Minute English' – and Callum's here to help me today! Hello Callum.

Callum: Hello Yvonne.

Yvonne: Recently, BAAF – the British Association for Adoption and Fostering held a Private Fostering Awareness Week here in the UK. And BAAF wanted to help us all understand what 'private fostering' is. But before we find out, Callum - are you ready for today's big question?

Callum: Oh yes!

Yvonne: Good! The world's very first Child Protection Agency was created in 1894 in the United States. What inspired it? Was it work to...

- a) stop child labour
- b) prevent cruelty to animals - OR
- c) educate all children

Callum: Ummm – I going... I think it's b) – I think it was inspired by preventing cruelty to animals.

Yvonne: Interesting – and we'll find out whether you're right or wrong later on! Now Callum, we need you to help us with some language. We know that 'adoption' is when someone takes a child home with them permanently and the child is legally theirs. So, the adopted child has new parents and a new family. But what's 'fostering', Callum?

Callum: 'Fostering' is different from adoption because although it's also an official arrangement, it's temporary. 'Foster parents' only take a 'foster child' to live with them for a period of time, but they don't become the child's legal parents.

Yvonne: Thanks, Callum. Now Moira Keen is the Team Manager of a Private Fostering Team in Tower Hamlets, East London. So I asked her to explain the difference between 'fostering' and 'private fostering'. As we listen, try to find out who Moira says makes a fostering arrangement.

MOIRA KEEN

The difference between fostering and private fostering is that, fostering is an arrangement that's made by the local authority when they've sought the care of a child through a care order or through another sort of order.

Yvonne: Who makes a fostering arrangement, Callum?

Callum: The local authority – the local government makes fostering arrangements if they have what Moira calls 'a care order'. And 'a care order' is legal permission, usually from the courts, to take the child to live with and be cared for by foster parents, temporarily.

Yvonne: As Moira explains further, try to find out who looks after a child or a young person in a private fostering arrangement...

MOIRA KEEN

Private fostering is an arrangement that's made by the child's parents or person having guardianship - or care of the child, to be looked after by somebody who's not a close family member.

Yvonne: So the child's own birth parents or guardians, rather than the local authority, arranges who the child will stay with. But can the child stay with any responsible adult?

Callum: Actually, no. In a private fostering arrangement, the child stays with and is looked after by someone who's not a close family member.

Yvonne: That's right – so an aunt, an uncle, a grandparent or an older brother or sister can't become private foster carers because they are close family members.

Okay, here are few more facts on private fostering: if a child under sixteen - or under eighteen years old if they're living with a disability, stays with someone who isn't a close family member for 28 days or more, the local authority must be told by law.

Callum: Wow! So it's a criminal offence – you're actually breaking the law if you don't notify the local authority of any private fostering arrangements you know about.

Yvonne: Yes - and here's why they need to know:

MOIRA KEEN

A local authority needs to be able to assess the child's need and to assess the carer's capacity to meet those needs to ensure the children are safe and that they're well looked after.

Callum: Ah - of course. The local authorities need to make sure that children are safe and find out how well the carers are able to look after them. They need to 'assess' or find out about the carer's 'capacity' – their ability - to be good carers.

Yvonne: And understandably, most experts agree that the best place for children is at home with their own parents and families. But sadly, some children are really far away from home for various reasons. Here's Moira again:

MOIRA KEEN

My advice to parents who are living overseas, looking to send their children to live in a private fostering arrangement in the UK is that these arrangements are not supported financially by the local authority and should only be a matter of last resort.

Yvonne: And if the local authorities haven't been informed of a private arrangement, then they can't contact the children's parents if things aren't going well; a very upsetting situation for everyone concerned.

Callum: Definitely upsetting, yes.

Yvonne: Well, it's time now for the answer to today's question. Callum, the world's very first Child Protection Agency was created in 1894 in the United States. What inspired it?

Callum: Well, I thought it was protecting animals - that was the inspiration for protecting children. Was I right?

Yvonne: You were absolutely right!

Callum: Oh yes! And I didn't know that – it was just an intelligent guess.

Yvonne: It really was! Well, that's all for today's '6 Minute English' – [Join us again]

C/Y: Goodbye!