



A Young Person's Guide to Foster Care



Welcome to Family Fostering

This booklet is yours to keep and we hope you find it helpful. It has lots of information that you might need while you are in foster care. If you need any help reading or understanding it please let us know.



Hi, I'm Debi Atkin. I'm the Registered Manager



Hello, I'm Teresa Morgan. I'm the Service Manager and Children's Rights Officer.



Hi, I'm Tracy Price. I'm a Supervising Social Worker

Useful Names and Numbers

My Foster Carer:

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My Social Worker:

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My Foster Carer's Supervising Social Worker:

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My IRO:

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My Advocate:

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We would love to hear from you if you have any suggestions as to how we can improve this booklet or any aspect of the service we provide.



Hello I'm Chantelle Lacey. I'm a Supervising Social Worker



Hi, I'm Krista McAllister. I'm the Office Manager.



Hello I'm Lauren Hollands. I'm an Administrative Assistant.



What is Foster Care?

Over 64,000 children and young people live with foster carers in the UK. There are lots of reasons why young people may not be able to live with their own family. When this happens they usually move to foster care to make sure they are looked after and kept safe. Whatever the reason for you being in foster care, it is not your fault and not because of anything you have done.

Can I see my family?

We understand how important your family is to you. Your social worker will speak with you about when you can see your family and how often. Tell them who you want to see so they can try and make sure this happens. Sometimes contact with your family has to be supervised, this is to ensure everyone is kept safe.

What is a foster family?

Foster carers may be single, married or in a relationship. They may or may not have their own children and may come from many different backgrounds, faiths and cultures. Foster carers are carefully selected and trained to help ensure they provide very good care and keep children safe. They do all the things

Other Useful numbers

[CoramVoice](#) - Lots of advice, help and support for young people in care. They can take up your complaints too.

320 City Road, London EC1V 2NZ

0808 800 5792 (free phone) www.coramvoice.org.uk

[ChildLine](#)

24 hour helpline for children in distress.

0800 1111 (free phone)

www.childline.org.uk

[The Children's Commissioner for England](#) - Advice and help for Children in care or living away from home

Sanctuary Buildings

20 Great Smith Street

London SW1P 3BT

020 7783 8330 / www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Alternatively you can speak to someone independent to your Foster Carer, Social Worker or Family Fostering.

Ofsted are there to help you share your views and if necessary make a complaint, in confidence if need be. It is your right to contact Ofsted who oversee all Fostering Providers and follow up all complaints.

Ofsted

(Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills)

Piccadilly Gate,

Store Street,

Manchester

M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

www.ofsted.gov.uk

that parents should do, such as making sure you eat healthily, setting rules and helping with things like going to school and attending health checks.

What will my Foster Family expect from me?

Every family has rules for example, not hurting anyone in the home including pets, bedtimes and coming home times, what programmes/games/DVD's you may or may not be able to watch. Some of these will be discussed with you before you move in and your social worker and foster carers will want your opinions on rules and consequences as there may be room for negotiation.

What about what I want?

Your wishes and feelings are very important and should always be taken into consideration. Your social worker should regularly ask how you are feeling and what you need and we will too. Family Fostering is a service for children and young people and aims to provide the best care and support for all the children and young people it cares for. If you have any ideas as to how we can do better please let us know.

How will I be looked after in my foster home?

There are certain ways you should be treated no matter what. You have the right:

- to be safe, secure and protected
- to be listened to and treated fairly and equally
- to information/advice, healthcare and education
- to enjoy your religion and culture
- to help you with any disability you have

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You might find it helpful to write down your foster carers rules

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Speak to your foster carer or social worker if you feel any rules are unfair or if your rights are not being upheld.

What if I have a problem or I am unhappy?

Moving into a new and different family is not easy and we want to make sure you are in a safe, caring and happy home. We want to know if you have any problems at all, whether you are worried about something in your foster home or if you are not happy at school or have worries about your birth family. If you have any concerns or difficulties it is usually best to first speak with your Foster Carer or Social Worker. If you feel unable to do this or have tried and the issue has not been resolved you can contact the Children's Officer at Family Fostering to make a complaint.

The Children's Officer for Family Fostering is:

Teresa Morgan

The Marlowe Innovation Centre

Marlowe Way

Ramsgate, Kent. CT12 6FA

Tel: 01843 598647

Email: teresa.morgan@familyfostering.org

You can also email family fostering at:

speakup@familyfostering.org

What about activities and holidays?

Your foster carer will encourage you to continue with hobbies and activities that you are interested in or encourage you to try new ones. Family Fostering will also provide activities for you to join in. We encourage all foster families to have a holiday every year with the young people in their care. Where this is not possible we will look to provide you with the opportunity to join a supervised activity holiday with other young people.

Will I have to share a bedroom?

No, you should have your own room and privacy. You may be able to share a bedroom if you are with a brother or a sister.

Can I stay over with friends?

Overnight stays with your family have to be agreed in advance with your social worker. If you are invited to stay overnight at a friend's house, you will also need permission, so talk to your foster carers as soon as you can. If they are happy with the arrangements for this and believe you will be safe, they can usually give you permission. If they are not sure, they will have to ask your social worker to decide.

Who decides what will happen?

When you move in with your foster family a meeting is held to make sure all of your needs are fully considered. Your social worker, foster care and supervising social worker will attend and it is important you attend the meeting too. It includes things like what time you have to be home by/go to bed and who makes decisions about overnight stays, school trips and having your hair cut.

Further meetings are held to check how things are going. These are called 'Reviews.' Your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) will lead these meetings and will want to meet with you to find out how you are doing. It is really important that you share your views. The IRO's job is to check that your plan is being followed and to make recommendations if things need to change. If everything is okay, reviews take place after 3 months and then every 6 months.

If you choose not to go to your review, your social worker or IRO will see you or send you a booklet to get your views. You can telephone your IRO if you have any questions or concerns about anything. Ask your social worker for your IRO's telephone number.

What does my social worker do?

Your social worker is specially trained to work with young people. It is their job to make sure you are kept safe and are well cared for. They should visit you regularly and talk to you on your own about what is happening in your life. It is really important that you tell them if there is anything worrying you.

What does the supervising social worker do?

Every foster family has their own social worker and they are called supervising social workers. They are specially trained and work for Family Fostering. It is their job to make sure your foster family is looking after you properly and that both you and your foster family has the support needed. They will visit your foster family at least once a month and will talk to you from time to time to make sure you are happy and well cared for.

What about school?

Your social worker will try to work out if it is best for you to stay at your current school or move to a new school. School is very important for young people as it is the place where important relationships are made with friends and teachers. Make sure you let your social worker and foster carer know how you feel about school. Your form teacher will know that you are in foster care, but it is up to you if you want to tell anyone else.

You will have a personal educational plan (PEP) which identifies your strengths and weakness in school and identifies what support will help you achieve your full potential. If you have any problems or difficulties please tell your teacher, social worker or foster carer.

Bullying

Bullying is not just being hit; it's being called names, people saying horrible things to you or people taking things from you. It can happen at school, when you are out with your friends, online or through your mobile phone. If something is not right or you think someone is trying to hurt you or make you feel scared and frightened, please tell somebody you can trust. This could be a friend, a teacher, your social worker or your foster carer. If you feel you can't do this, you can always contact us or use the links at the back of this booklet to help you.

What about pocket money?

You will get pocket money every week while you are in foster care. The amount you get depends on your age. You may get a separate amount for clothes, depending on how old and responsible you are. Sometimes, if you are working or have other income of your own, your pocket money is put into savings for you. Family Fostering also saves £20 per month for you. This money is for when you reach adulthood.