

Young People's Guide to Fostering



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Welcome

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The fact that you've been given this booklet means that you are now living or are about to be living away from your family. That can be confusing and upsetting, and you may have lots of questions.

We hope this booklet answers some of those questions. There are different people involved that can point you in the right direction if it doesn't, so please ask. Remember, there are no silly questions!

”

What is foster care?

Fostering is more common than you think. Did you know that there are about 60,000 children and young people in care in this country at any one time? Some famous faces that have spent time in foster care

- **Steve Jobs** – Boss of Apple (was there a world before iPhones and iPads?)
- **Jamie Foxx** – American actor
- **Nicky Campbell** – Journalist who presents Long Lost Family with Davina McCall
- **Marilyn Monroe** – Icon!
- **Cher** – Singer and Actor
- **Nelson Mandela** – Nobel Peace Prize Winner and anti-Apartheid leader

Fostering or foster care is when a child or young person like you is being looked after by a person or people who are not part of their birth family. People sometimes talk about coming into care or being looked after which also means living in foster care.

All kinds of people become foster carers: single people, couples, young, old, heterosexual or gay, people from different ethnic origins, cultures, religions and backgrounds. There is no such thing as a “typical” foster carer – just as there is no such thing as a typical fostered child or young person. Your foster carer may have their children or other family members who still live at home.

Foster care provides you with a safe, settled, and comfortable environment for as long as you need it. This may be days, weeks, months, or years. Every child or young person’s plan will be different.

There will be a team of people to support you on your journey in foster care. Let's look at some of the words you'll hear often:

Contact

Staying in touch with your family and friends is important and we will work with you to make sure it stays safe and comfortable for you.

Social worker

Your social worker works for the local authority where your family lives. They are there to help you and listen to what you are thinking and feeling. You will work closely with them to plan for your future.

Supervising social worker

Supervising social workers work for Quality Foster Care and their job is to support foster carers in their role looking after you.

Care plan

Your social worker will put together a plan that aims to meet your needs whilst you are in foster care. Different people are involved in making this plan, including you!

Placement plan

This is part of your care plan and explains about what you need from your foster carers day-to-day. This meeting will usually take place within the first five days of you living with the carers.

Reviews

These are meetings that take place every few months and they are chaired by an IRO or Independent Reviewing Officer. Review meetings look at how you're getting on in foster care, whether your plan should change or stay the same, and if it's happening within timescales set when your plan was made. It's YOUR meeting and you can decide where it should be held and who gets invited. The IRO will always want to hear your views and will meet with you on your own too.

Annual reviews

Quality Foster Care have to review their foster homes at least once a year to make sure that their foster carers provide the best possible care to you and other children or young people in their care. You will be asked your view of living with your foster carer.

Quality Foster Care

We work with local authorities to find suitable foster carers for children and young people who cannot live with their own families. We do a lot of checks and spend a lot of time getting to know the people who foster for this agency. We need to make sure they can provide you with a safe, happy, and healthy home environment.

Your foster carers...

- are specially trained to look after children and young people who cannot live with their own families.
- will offer you a safe, caring place to live in and make sure you have a comfortable, warm, and clean bedroom.
- will offer you family life in a way that works for you.
- will support you to stay in touch with your family and friends (also called *contact*)
- will encourage you to live a healthy, active lifestyle and support you with any treatment for health issues.
- will help and support you in school and college.
- will encourage and support you with your cultural or religious needs (remember, we said we are all different!)
- will encourage you to pursue your interests and talents.
- will support you as you grow and mature, and help you to learn new skills to take care of yourself.
- will help you feel valued, respected, and listened to as an individual.
- will work in partnership with your social worker and other team members to ensure that your plan is right for you.
- will have house rules that apply to you and everyone else in their home; how much television you can watch, what time you get up or go to bed, helping you stay safe online – to name only a few.
- will help you have fun!

Contact

We understand that you may want to know when you can next see or speak to your family and friends. This will be discussed at your Placement Planning meeting and always at your Review.

Sometimes there can be an adult or two at your contact with your family. They make sure that everything goes well and that you feel comfortable during contact. This is called supervised contact.

As you grow up, you and your family's contact may change. It's important to keep talking to your foster carers and social worker to make sure they understand what you'd like to see happen.



Talk about it

It is important to us to know what you are **thinking and feeling** so that we can all **work together** to make the **best plan** for you.

You may be feeling upset, sad, angry, or confused about what has been happening with you and your family. You may feel happy too – as you've found somewhere where people are keeping you safe and helping you to be the person you want to be.

Talking about your thoughts and feelings can be difficult, but it's always helpful and useful. Find someone you can trust, like your foster carer, social worker, teacher, or IRO. Staff at Quality Foster Care are also available if you choose to speak to us.



If you feel like no-one is listening...

Their job is to make sure that your local authority, social worker, Quality Foster Care and your foster carers do what the law says they should. They chair your reviews, so will get to know you and be happy to talk to you if you need to.

Make a complaint

You have the right to make a complaint if you feel strongly about something and you feel that no-one has listened to you. Fill out the form at the end of this booklet and send it to us.

This will go to the manager, Louise Geddes (see photo) who must reply to you with a fair answer. It may be that things need to be explained to you better but sometimes we get it wrong too. If we have got it wrong, you need to let us know. You will never get in trouble for making complaints, it is your right.



Call an advocate

Advocates will support you to make a complaint and speak to us if you don't want to, so that we know why and when you are unhappy or frustrated. The number for your Advocacy Service (Coram or NYAS) can be found on the Useful contacts page.

If you're being bullied

If someone is picking on you, making fun of you, calling you names, starting fights with you, stealing from you, spreading nasty rumours about you, or making you feel threatened or intimidated, it is called bullying.

You would have heard a lot about it at school or college, where it happens to lots of children and young people. You can be bullied by someone over the phone or on the internet. If you're being made to feel bad about who you are and where you come from, being in care, your sexuality, your faith, or any other reason – PLEASE speak to someone you trust about it.

There are other people that can help too:

- Phone **ChildLine** on 0800 1111 or go to their website: www.childline.org.uk



**WORRIED?
YOU CAN TALK TO US**

**Call Childline on 0800 1111
or visit childline.org.uk/kids**

Whatever your worry,
you can talk to us. It's free,
you don't have to tell us
your name, and you can
chat about anything.

childline
ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME

Childline is a service provided by the NSPCC: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children NSPCC 2021. Registered charity England and Wales 238401, Scotland SC037717 and Jersey 348. Illustration by Shutterstock. 20211120 NSPCC

Becoming independent

If you are a teenager your foster carers will help you to develop the knowledge and skills you will need for when you leave their care. This is so you are prepared for living independently and taking care of yourself as an adult. We have a booklet to help you with this.

When you turn 18 you're no longer in foster care. You may be able to remain with your carers for a lot longer through Staying Put. Your social worker and foster carers will talk to you about this between your 16th and 18th birthday.

There are many things your foster carers can help you with:

- finding and moving into new accommodation
- managing your household with things such as paying the bills, buying and cooking food, cleaning, keeping your home safe and secure, and understanding insurance and arrangements for phones and services
- applying for apprenticeships, college, or university
- applying for work or preparing for job interviews
- looking after yourself such as your health and relationships
- managing your money
- using local transport, applying for travel cards, or helping you learn to drive.

Useful contacts



There are lots of people who are there to listen if you are unsure, worried, or upset about what's happening in your life:

- **ChildLine** on 0800 1111 or www.childline.org.uk
- **Frank** on 0300 123 6600 or text 82 333; also www.talktofrank.com
- **Samaritans** on 08457 909090 or www.samaritans.org

For advocates:

- **NYAS** on 08080 808 1001 or www.nyas.net
- **Coram Voice** on 0808 800 5792 or www.coramvoice.org.uk

Ofsted

- Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
- Tel: 0300 123 1231
- Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The Office of The Children's Commissioner

Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT

- Tel: 020 7783 8330
- Website: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk
- Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Your notes

You can use this space to write anything you like

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Complaint form

Your name

Date

Foster Carer

I would like to make a complaint about: -

Continue on separate sheet of paper if you need to and send to:

Complaints Manager, Quality Foster Care Ltd, 1st Floor, Communication House, 134-146 High Road, Benfleet, Essex, SS7 5LD
Tel: 01268 795597 | Email: admin@qualityfostercare.com