



quality foster care
because quality matters

Children's Guide to Fostering



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Welcome

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At Quality Foster Care, we understand that being in foster care isn't always easy and it can be confusing. We hope this book will help to answer some of your questions. If there is anything in the book you don't understand, your foster family will help. Don't be embarrassed to ask. Remember, there is no such thing as a silly question!

”

What is foster care?

Some children or teenagers live with foster families when they cannot live with their own families for one reason or another. This may be because it was not safe for them, their family were having some problems and needed time to sort it out, or because their parent/s may have been ill.

You may hear people talking about coming into care. That's when you start living with your foster family. Foster carers are the grown-ups in the family. They are people who have been carefully chosen to look after children, often in very upsetting circumstances. They may or may not live with other adults and they may have their own children still living at home.

You may be the only fostered child in your foster family, or you may live there with other children who are also fostered. Sometimes, you may live there with your brother or sister too.

You may stay with your foster family for a few days, weeks, months or years. However long you stay, your foster family will take good care of you and treat you as a special member of their family.



What does it all mean?

Contact

This is when you meet up with, speak to, or write to your family and friends. We know that your family is really important to you.

Social worker

Your social worker works for the local authority (the area that you are from). They are there to help you and listen to your wishes and feelings. They will work with different people to make sure you stay safe, happy and healthy. These different people form a team and your family will be part of the team.

Supervising social worker

Supervising social workers work for Quality Foster Care and their job is to support your foster family to take good care of you.

Registered Manager

The Manager is the person that looks after the whole team and makes sure that everyone is doing the best they can for you. You can always speak to the Manager if you are unhappy about anything. Just call us: 01268 795597.

Care plan

Your social worker will write up a plan for you whilst you are living in foster care. This plan explains what needs to happen for you to stay safe, happy and healthy.

Placement plan

This is part of your care plan and explains about what you need from your foster family day-to-day. This meeting usually takes place within five days of you moving in with your foster family

Reviews

These are meetings that take place to agree what the plan for your future should be. These are YOUR meetings and it is important that you take part in it one way or another. People from the team around you are invited to come to this meeting too. The person in charge of this meeting is called the IRO or Independent Reviewing Officer.

Annual reviews

Your foster carer has reviews too. It looks at their work over the past year. You will be asked about what you think by your social worker.

Quality Foster Care

We find foster carers for children and teenagers who need somewhere to live. The people who started QFC grew up in a family who fostered. QFC work hard to make sure we choose people who are really good at looking after children and teenagers. We arrange training and support for them whilst they are looking after you.

Your foster family

Whoever you live with while in foster care will have been carefully chosen to look after a child or teenager who cannot live with their own family.

You can be sure of...

- being treated fairly and with respect
- being provided with a safe, nice home with a warm, clean and comfortable bedroom with room for your belongings (or stuff as we like to call it!)
- being allowed time and space on your own with your social worker when they visit you
- having someone on hand to listen to your wishes and feelings
- being supported to stay in touch with family and friends
- having some help and support with staying healthy, attending school and doing homework, and celebrating your religion.
- there being basic house rules about how much television or electronics you're allowed every day, bedtimes, tidying up after playing and other things that you can decide together. That's for everyone in the household.
- people around you who are there to help you through the difficult times when you're sad, angry, or upset BUT also to have fun with!

Activities and fun

You should be able to continue with the same interests you had at home and also find new ones. These could be things like youth clubs, karate, photography, swimming, dancing, going out with friends, or going to the cinema. Some of those things you may be able to do with your family during contact.

You may be able to go on holidays, weekends away or day trips with your foster family or friends. Whatever you would like to do will be discussed between you and all the people supporting you.

Staying in touch

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 planning meeting and always at your review.

Usually there are one or two adults at your contact with your family - this is called supervised contact. They make sure that everything goes well and that you feel comfortable during contact.

You may see your family at what is called a contact suite, or you may go out to do some fun activities, as we mentioned on the previous page.



Your wishes and feelings matter to us

It is really 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.

Keeping feelings inside can make things harder, so please speak to someone you trust when you're feeling angry, upset, confused, worried, and of course happy!

Sometimes the people who support you make decisions that you may not be so happy with. They will always explain the reasons for those decisions. The same will happen in your foster home – it's not always easy living with people you don't know, but they would really like to hear what you're thinking about it.

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

If you are not happy in your home you should always speak with your foster carers and your social worker. If you have done that and still feel unhappy there are a few things you can do.

You can:

Speak to your Reviewing Officer

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. You can always ask to see or speak to them.



Make a complaint

You can make a complaint if you feel really 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 Claudia Macovei (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

An advocate is somebody you can talk to that will help you make a complaint. It is their job to make sure you get heard and respected. Advocates are on your side and can come out and see you if you wish. The number for your Advocacy Service (Coram or NYAS) can be found on the “Useful contacts” page.

“Make a NO!se about bullying”

It’s really important that you talk to someone you trust if you are being bullied. It happens to lots of children – at school, on the internet or even by phone. No-one wants to see you upset or sad about being hurt by what others say and do. So please speak to your teacher, foster carer, social worker, or Supervising Social Worker.

If someone is picking on you, calling you names, sending you nasty messages, getting you into trouble, starting a fight with you, or stealing things or money from you – it is called bullying. If someone is nasty to you because you are in care, please tell us 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**

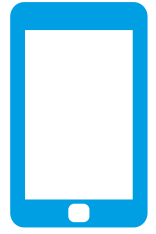
**Call Childline on 0800 1111
or visit childline.org.uk/kids**

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 254601, Scotland 503772) and charity 104 (Australia) by Childline Australia 00221220 (NSPCC)

Useful contacts



Childline

This is a free 24 hour helpline for children and teenagers in the UK. Childline is confidential which means they won't tell anybody unless you are at risk of harm. Even then they won't tell everyone, only the people who really need to know.

- 0800 1111
- www.childline.org.uk

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
- General helpline: 0300 123 1231
- Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The Office of The Children's Commissioner

- Dame Rachel de Souza, The Office of The Children's Commissioner, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT
- Tel: 020 7783 8330
- www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk
- info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

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