



A Child's Guide to Fostering

For primary school aged children.



What does it mean to be in care?

You are not living in your usual family at the moment. You have come to live with a new family and they are called your foster family.

The most important thing about living with your fostering family is that you feel safe. That's why we have written this leaflet to help you understand about living in foster care.

You may like an adult to read it with you. We may be able to let you have the booklet in other languages or in Makaton if that helps, so please ask.



Foster care is living with a foster family when you can't live with your usual family.

It is a place where the adults, called foster carers, will care for you and keep you safe. Foster families are all different, some with two grown-ups, some with one, some with other children, and some with none. Some have pets, while others may live on a farm with bigger animals. So as you can see they are all different.

I wonder how you would describe the family you are living with.

The foster carers have been specially chosen to make sure they are kind and caring and that you are well looked after while you're with them.



Who are all the adults looking after me?

Who are the foster carers?

The foster carers make sure you have enough food to eat, clean clothes to wear, somewhere warm and cosy to sleep, hugs if you want them and space if you want to be quiet, games to play and adults to talk to. After listening to you, the foster carer makes the day to day decisions in the foster home about your routines and activities. They do all this to make sure they keep you safe.

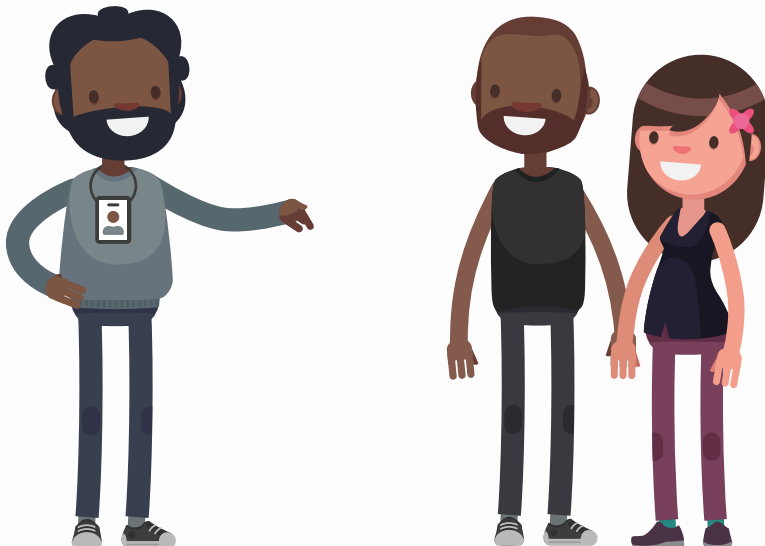
Who is the social worker?

All children who live with foster carers, have a social worker. This adult understands your family background and knows what you have been through. They will spend time with you, get to know you more. They will talk to you about why you are living in foster carer and how long you might be there. After talking to you and your parents, they will make the bigger decisions about your life. They will write this down in what is called your Care Plan.

Your social worker will talk with you about how it all works and go through the practical stuff with you. They will talk about things like your school, and times with your family and friends.

Who is the supervising social worker?

Your foster carers also have a social worker who visits and has meetings with them. This might happen when you are out at school or when you are all together. They help the foster carers understand what you need. They also check that the foster carers look after you safely and with kindness. This social worker is called the supervising social worker.



Who is the independent reviewing officer?

The independent reviewing officer is often called the IRO. They have written a really good leaflet about what they do, please ask your foster carer for it if you have not seen it yet. Their job is to make sure the foster carers are caring for you well and that there are good plans for you. They do this by having a meeting called a **“Review Meeting”**. Your social worker and your foster carers, along with your birth family and your teachers will want to share what they think. Your IRO will want to talk with you and learn about what you think and feel.

Who is the advocate?

An advocate is another adult, who can come and see you. They are there just for you and can speak for you if you don't feel able to, especially if you feel shy or worried to say out loud about what you want or think. You can tell them if you are not happy about something and they will work hard to help those caring for you to understand how you feel.

It is easy to get an advocate, just ask your social worker or foster carer to ring ☎ **0800 389 1571** or email ✉ **yourvoice@reconstruct.co.uk**

Who is the independent visitor?

Not all children have an independent visitor. The other adults will decide with you, if you will have one. If you do, this is an adult who will visit you and take you out to do extra things that you like to do.

That's a lot of people –
it's all so different to what I am used to.

Yes it must feel very different for you.

You might have lots of questions about living with this foster family. You might have some favourite foods or toys you would like, or there may be things you don't like. It may be that you need a light on at night, or you need extra help with washing your hair. It is good to be able to talk to your foster carer about anything so that you can feel more settled.

The rules of the house are there to keep you safe, and sometimes it's hard to follow them but your foster carers will understand that this is new for you and will help you. They know that there are times when you may be angry, sad or quiet or loud and they will never smack you or call you names, or stop you from seeing your family. They will always be there to help you feel calm again.

What about my Identity?



Your Identity is about you being “**you**”. It is important that you continue to celebrate your culture and feel proud of who you are. We want to make sure that you are able follow the habits which are familiar and important to you. This may be about attending a place of worship, praying, studying a holy book, celebrating festivals, eating, or not eating certain food or wearing particular clothes.

Although your foster carers may not share your culture, they will help you keep your beliefs and culture

The language you were brought up to speak is important. If you have difficulties with English, we will make sure someone interprets what is said so that you can understand it.

What about my family and friends?

It is very important that you are able to keep in touch and see your family and friends, because we know that this can help you feel more settled.

Your social worker will talk with you about when you will see your family. This will not happen at your home, it may be in a park or a community centre. Why not tell your social worker if you have any ideas about how to make it work? An extra grown up will also be there for your family time to make sure everyone is safe and can have a fun time together.

Usually the only time this doesn't happen is if the Courts or your social worker don't think that it is safe for you. You may not want to see your family, or there may be other reasons why you cannot see them. You can talk to your social worker about this too.

It is great to have friends and to stay in touch. Tell your foster carer about the friends who are important to you and they may be able to arrange for you to meet up.

What about my school?



Everyone will try really hard to make sure that you keep going to your usual school and your foster carers will take you and pick you up. Your teacher will know that you have moved to foster care and they will understand that you have a lot going on and things are different for you at the moment. They will be really happy to hear about your foster home if you want to talk about it. Don't worry, your teacher will make sure that your foster carers know what you need for school, what uniform or PE kit, special books, and snacks you need.

There are meetings called PEP meetings that happen in school. PEP stands for Personal Educational Plan. This meeting happens because your school is so important and the grown-ups all want to make sure that you have everything you need to do as well as you can.

Some children like to tell their friends that they are in foster care and some don't. You can if you want to as it is your news to share, and not for your friends to talk about unless you want to.

What if I feel poorly?

Everyone feels poorly sometimes. It may be that snuggling up with a blanket and a movie is enough to make you feel better. Sometimes when we have worries, we can feel poorly too. Your fosters are there to help you when you feel like this.

Every child is different, and we will know all about you to make sure that we care for you just as you need. About twice a year, you will have health assessment with a doctor. This is to make sure you are growing healthily.

If you have an accident, or need to see a doctor or nurse, your foster carer will take you, and will let your social worker know.



What if I feel poorly?

Your foster carers will also take you to check your teeth at the dentist and your eyesight at the optician and you might want to tell your social worker all about it. As you get older your body will change. Your foster carer will talk with you about that when the time is right.

Of course it is really important to do everything to stay well so your foster carer will show you how to eat a healthy diet, get plenty of fresh air and exercise to feel good, and to get enough sleep.



What if I am worried about something?

You might have lots of things going through your mind and things may not feel right for you. It is so important that you talk to somebody and we hope that you feel able to talk with your foster carer, teacher or social worker.

We will listen to you and do our best to understand how you are feeling. If you don't think the person you chose understood what you meant, there are other people you can talk to.

The next step is to talk to an advocate.

Ask your foster carer or social worker to help you ring ☎ **0800 389 1571** (freephone)
or email ✉ **yourvoice@reconstruct.co.uk**

After meeting an advocate, if you still think people haven't understood you, you can use South Gloucestershire's complaint system. You can make a complaint to South Gloucestershire Council by calling ☎ **01454 865924**
or email ✉ **CAHFeedback@southglos.gov.uk**

We're committed to listening to you and will always try to help solve any problems

If you still aren't happy or think the people above have not helped you, you can contact The Children's Commissioner for England ☎ **0800 528 0731**
Ofsted email ✉ enquiries.gov.uk@ofsted



The Fostering Service

This children's guide has been written for you by the fostering team with the help of children in care. We have a big document called "**The Statement of Purpose**" which lists everything we do to make sure children like you have the best experience of foster care.



