Children and Young People's Guide to Foster Care

Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format.

fostering@durham.gov.uk
03000 269 291
Who’s Who?

There are lots of workers who are responsible to make sure that you are okay and they are part of something called a care team. This means they will work together and listen to your views about how you are cared for and any worries that you may have.

**Your social worker**
Every child who is fostered has their own social worker.
Your social worker is:

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Your social worker’s telephone number is:

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**Your fostering social worker**
Every foster carer has their own social worker.
Your fostering social worker’s name is:

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Your fostering social worker’s telephone number is:

..............................................................

If there is anyone else you can keep their details below:
Name:

..............................................................

Telephone number:

..............................................................
Hello and Welcome!

We hope this booklet will help to answer some of your questions about living in foster care.

There are many children who are fostered and for lots of different reasons can’t live at home with their family. During this time they may live with a foster carer who will take care of them.

We hope this guide explains to you what you can expect whilst you are fostered by Durham County Council and what you can do if you’re not happy.

After reading this guide if you still have questions, you can ask your social worker or your foster carer’s social worker for help.

You can get in touch with the Fostering Service by emailing fostering@durham.gov.uk or by calling 03000 269 291.
Who will be looking after me?

Foster families are all different. You may be living with a single carer or with a couple...there may be other children living in the home, who could be foster carers' own children or other children who are fostered ...or the foster carers may have a pet, like a dog or a cat.

We have taken great care to make sure that your foster carers can look after you and help you to feel safe. Their fostering social worker made lots of checks to make sure they are okay to look after you.

Your foster carers will see their fostering social worker quite often to make sure they have any help and advice they need to look after you. You should meet the fostering social worker when they come to visit.

Every year your foster carers are reviewed to make sure they are caring for you properly. You will also be asked your views on living with your carers and it is really important that you can take part in this.

Your foster carers will help you and keep you safe and give you opportunities to do your best.

If you would like to know more about the Fostering Service you can ask for a copy of the 'Statement of Purpose'.
Living Together

At first, it may feel strange living with a different family. Your foster carers know this and will do everything possible to help you to settle in.

You can help by letting them know of your likes and dislikes.

For example, there might be certain foods that you don’t like, or you might not like the bedroom light switched off.

Everyone is different

All families have different ways they do things, these may be called the house rules. These may be different from those you have had before and your foster carer will explain these to you.

Your foster carer will make sure you have a place to keep all of your things safe.

As you get to know your foster carers you should feel able to talk to them about any worries or problems you have.

However, if you are worried about anything and don’t feel you can tell your foster carers you should talk to your social worker, who will help you sort it out.
My Plan

When you go and live with foster carers your social worker will talk to you about why you are living there and how long you will be staying. This will be written in more detail in your Care Plan.

Your Care Plan will be looked at in a meeting which is called a Looked After Review by someone called an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). Your IRO will make sure you have your say about what you want to happen and will talk to you about how you can give your views.

How can I contact my IRO?
IRO Name: ............................................................................................................................................
Tel: ............................................................................................................................................................
Email: ......................................................................................................................................................

There is also a website which explains the IRO in more detail
www.durham.gov.uk/IRO
Feeling Safe

Foster carers have to make sure that you feel safe so they will have some rules in their home about what you can and cannot do. This is called a Safe Care Policy which your foster carer will share with you. Sometimes you may forget the rules and your foster carer will talk to you about this. Your foster carer will never smack or hit you, call you names, or stop you from seeing your family.

Expect to be treated with respect!

Pocket money

When you are living with your foster carers you will get pocket money every week. The amount you get will depend on how old you are.

Using the Phone

We want you to be able to keep in touch with your family and friends, but it’s important that this is done in a safe way. Your foster carer and social worker will talk to you about this.

Remember we always want you to feel safe and not frightened in your foster home, if you don’t feel safe you should talk to someone about this to help you sort it out.
Seeing your friends and family

Most children who are fostered will still see their family and this will need to be arranged by your social worker. They will let you know when and where this is going to happen, and how often.

Usually, the only time this doesn't happen is if your social worker or court think it wouldn’t be safe for you. Sometimes you may not want to see your family or there may be other reasons, and your social worker should talk to you about these.

We know that your friends are important to you and you should also be able to keep in touch with them too.
Bullying

Bullying is upsetting, whether it is name calling or somebody is hurting you and it is not acceptable. Foster carers know that sometimes bullying can happen when children live together or when they are at school.

If you do feel you are being bullied let your foster carer or social worker know and they will be able to help you.

You could also talk to a teacher or an adult at school, some schools also have anti bullying schemes and other pupils you can talk to called Peer mentors.
Learning - School/College

Your social worker and foster carer will make sure that arrangements are made for you to get to school every day.

If you are having any problems at school you should let your foster carer and social worker know so that they can help to sort them out.

Your foster carer can help with homework and make sure that you have everything you need for school.

If you get letters from school it is important you give them to your foster carer so that they know about school trips or activities you might like to do.
Helping you look after yourself

Your foster carers will help you make sure that you know how to stay healthy and feel good!

Our foster carers will register you with a doctor and a dentist. They will also arrange any other appointments that you might need. They will also go with you to the appointments, if you want them to.

Your foster carer may help you to do things like helping you learn how to brush your teeth properly. If you are older, they can show you how to cook healthy meals and wash your clothes.

These things make most of us feel better about ourselves.
Memories

All foster carers will help you make sense of your life and keep your memories safe. This could be in a book which records what has happened to you in your life or a memory box where you can keep special things important to you.

This can be a fun activity you can do together to help remember things you have done when you have been living with your carers. This can include memorabilia, tickets from places you have visited, photographs, school reports and other things that are important to you.
Interests

We are all different and all enjoy doing different things.

It is important that your foster carers know what you like doing.

You might enjoy sport, playing games, music, church or temple, or going to special clubs.

Whatever you usually do, or new things you would like to try, talk it through with your foster carer or social worker.

If you don’t tell them, they won’t know what you like to do.

Also, we give you and your foster family a Freedom Card so that you can visit lots of places and do different activities.
Our Promises to You

Durham County Council has made the following promises to children and young people in care.

We promise:

1. To treat you with respect and as an individual.

2. To help find you the best available home, where you feel safe, cared about and treated well for as long as needed.

3. To help you stay in touch with family and friends, like other young people not in care, where it is safe and appropriate (for example, sleepovers at your friend’s homes).

4. To take what you say seriously by listening to you and trying to act on what you say.

5. That you will have a social worker who will get to know you well and who will keep in contact and listen to what you say.

6. To really listen to things you would like to change about the care system to make your daily life better where there are problems (where it is appropriate to do so).

7. To work in an open and honest way and share any information or changes with you.

8. To involve you in any decisions, plans and changes that affect you and your future, and your future social worker, Independent Reviewing Officer and carers will make sure that this happens.

9. To make sure we offer you the opportunities, guidance and support needed in placement, in education and all other areas of life.

10. To help you be the best that you possibly can at school, college, training and employment.

11. To give you all the support and help you need to make a success of moving on from care to adult life.

12. To work together and support you during every transition in your life, while you are looked after, for example, during placement moves, when you are leaving care and similar situations.
Just Keep talking...

What if nobody listens?

You have rights like everyone else. You have a right to be listened to and your thoughts and feelings taken seriously. If there is something upsetting you, you should talk to your foster carers to see if they can sort it out.

If you are still unhappy that people are not listening to you or ignoring what you have to say, then you should tell someone you trust and ask them to help you to complain. This could be your social worker.

If you would like to speak to someone outside of the Fostering Service, there are plenty of people for you to get in touch with on the Helpful Information Page.
Helpful Information

You may find these organisations helpful, to find out more about your rights, raise concerns or making sure your views are listened to.

To find out about your rights and get help in making sure your views are heard:

**Investing in Children**
Supports children and young people across safeguarding and specialist services to have a voice, be listened to and see change happen.
Tel: 0191 372 9200 Email: info@investinginchildren.net

**Children in Care Council**
A group for looked after children and young people to be actively involved in shaping the care they receive in County Durham.
Tel: 0191 372 9200 Email: info@investinginchildren.net

**Who Cares Trust**
An independent voice for children in care.
Tel: 0207 251 3117 Web: www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk

**National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)**
Listen to your problems and try to help
Tel: 0808 808 1001 Web www.nyas.net

**Childline**
If you are worried about something big or small, you can talk to someone confidentially.
Tel: 0800 111 Web: www.childline.org.uk

**To raise issues about your future care plan:**
**Independent reviewing Officer**
Ensuring your views are understood and taken into account.
Tel: 03000 268 296

**To raise issues with a fostering inspector:**
**The Children’s Commissioner for England**
Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT
Tel: 0207 783 8330 Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk
Web: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

**Ofsted**
Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
Tel: 03000 123 1231 Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Complaints

What to do if you need to complain.

If you are not happy about the way you are being looked after, or feel you are not getting the help you need, you have the right to complain.

You can ask your foster carers or social worker to sort things out, or you can ask the fostering social worker who visits your foster carer to help you.

You can also contact the Children and Adults Services complaints team by emailing cascomplaints@durham.gov.uk or by calling 03000 268 422. This will go straight to the Director of Children and Adults services, and will be dealt with by someone who has nothing to do with your foster home. All complaints are taken seriously and treated in confidence.
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