



# Being in fostercare - a guide for older children

# Fostercare



Hampshire  
County Council

# Welcome to this booklet.

You will have a lot of questions about being fostered and we hope this will answer some of them

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### **What does being fostered mean?**

It means you are going to live with foster carers who will look after you as part of their family until you can go back home to live with your own parents. You may live with your foster family for a short time - or even just go at weekends - or you may stay with them until you are adult. It all depends on what is needed to make sure you are safe, happy and well cared for.

### **What is a foster carer and what does a foster carer do?**

Foster carers and their families have been specially chosen by Social Services to look after children and young people as part of their own family until the child or young person is able to go back home to live with their own parents.

*It is your Social Worker's job to find a foster family that is right for YOU!*

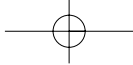
#### **Foster carers:**

- help you keep in touch with your friends and family
- make sure you feel safe and happy in their home
- sort out school with you
- look after you if you are ill
- are there for you if you have any worries.

#### **Foster carers receive an allowance from Social Services to help them look after you and they will**

- give you pocket money each week
- make sure the clothes you need are bought
- foster carers will also help you keep up, or start, hobbies or interests, like gym classes or swimming.

Foster carers will treat you with dignity and respect and will want you to do the same to them. All families have their own ways of doing things, such as what time you are expected to come in the evening, and it will take a little time to learn how your foster family does things.



Foster carers sign an agreement with Social Services in which they agree:

- not to smack a foster child
- to keep any information about you and your family private and confidential
- that if they have to tell your Social Worker about something in order to keep you or someone else safe, then you have a right to know what information is being passed on



### **Why am I being fostered?**

There are lots of reasons why children and young people can't live at home with their parents:

- sometimes their parents are ill
- sometimes parents aren't able to care for their child properly even though they want to do their best
- sometimes parents do hurtful things to their children, so Social Services and the Courts say the child can't live at home anymore.

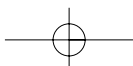
A Social Worker will always try and help parents so that a child or young person can stay at home if that's possible. If it's not, the Social Worker will arrange for a child or young person to be looked after by foster carers. It could be that parents need time to sort things out before they can have their son or daughter back to live with them.

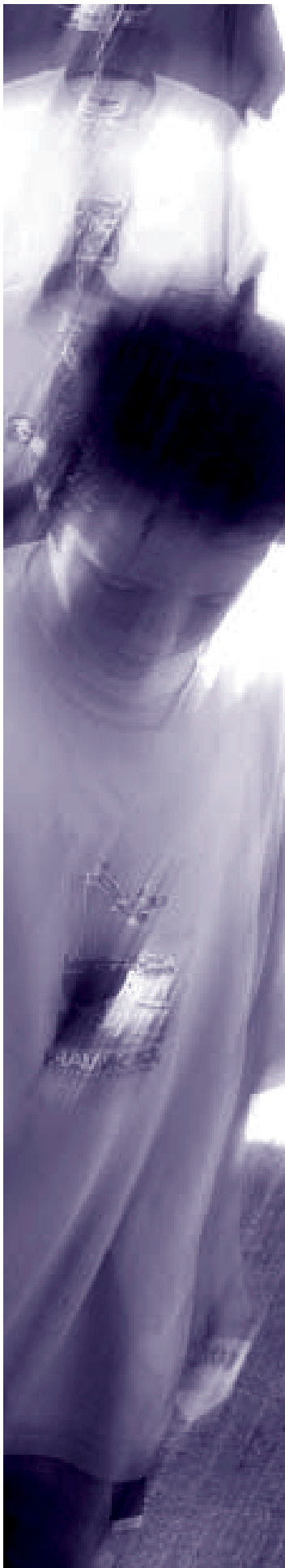
When you are living with your foster carers, you will have your own Social Worker whose job is to make sure everything is progressing well for you. Your Social Worker will tell you how to get in touch with him/her. S/he will visit you regularly when you are living with your foster carers and s/he will always see you on your own to find out how you are getting on.

### **What does a 'Care Order' mean and what is being 'Looked After'?**

If you have a Care Order, your parents and Social Services share responsibility for you. It means that the Courts have said that Social Services must make sure you are well cared for.

If you are 'Looked After' your parents have agreed with Social Services that you need to live with a foster family for the time being. Your parents still keep responsibility for you and they are involved in everything to do with your life.





Your Social Worker will talk to you about what you think about any plans that are being made for you. Your views and feelings must **always** be taken into account.

### **What happens when I move in with my foster carers?**

Going to stay with a family we don't know can be very worrying for all of us, whatever age we are. We don't know if we will get on with them or whether they will get on with us.

Usually, you will visit your foster family a few times before you go to live with them and you may even go and stay for a night or two, so when the time comes to move in you will have some idea of what it's going to be like to live there.

Your Social Worker and your foster carers will find out about all your likes and dislikes and about the things you need. For example, your favourite food, how you want to keep in touch with your friends, what you like or don't like about school, your favourite TV programmes and so on. This is so your foster carers can make you feel welcome and help you settle in.

You will also be finding out about your foster family - for example, what they do at weekends or what time they get up in the morning! You, your Social Worker and your Mum or Dad will see that you take all the things you need and use every day with you when you move in. It's also a good idea to take some special things from home - like your favourite CDs or photos to help you feel more at home.

When you live with your foster family you will have a place to keep your personal and private things.

Moving to live with a foster family can be very strange at first and it can make you feel sad, angry or confused as to why you can't live with your parents. Your foster carer and your Social Worker are there to help and for you to talk things over when you want to.

### **My foster carer comes from a different culture or follows a different religion to mine.**

All foster carers are given training and support to help them make children feel at home and this is particularly important when they may have no personal experience of looking after a child from a different culture. Foster carers will always make arrangements to adapt their lives so that you can practise your own religion, celebrate the festivals and holidays you would celebrate at home and eat the sort of food you would have had at home. In some cases different languages may be spoken and Social Services will always make arrangements to ensure that everyone can talk to each other and understand each other. Your foster carer and Social Worker should always check with you to see if there is anything more that can be done to make you feel at home and they will be glad to hear any suggestions you might make.

### **How will I keep in touch with my family when I am in foster care?**

You, (along with your Social Worker, foster carers and your parents) will make plans about when you and your Mum, Dad, brothers and sisters will see each other, as well as all those other members of your family, like grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins you would usually see if you were living at home. The plans for keeping in touch will be written down so everyone knows what they are and agrees to them.

Social Services must try and keep brothers and sisters together in foster care; sadly that isn't always possible. If you are not living with your brothers and sisters, Social Services will make sure you keep in close touch with them.

There are lots of ways of keeping in touch when you are not living in the same house including telephone calls, texting, emailing, and writing letters.

### **I moved in with my foster carers in an emergency.**

Sometimes your Social Worker will have had to arrange for you to go to your foster carers in an emergency. This can be a bit of a shock for you and it can take time to get settled and to sort out all the things - like seeing your Mum or Dad and fetching your things from home. Your Social Worker and your foster carer will help you with all this and make sure you have everything you need.



### **I'm living with a relative who is also my foster carer.**

Sometimes a member of your family, or a friend's family, can look after you when your Mum or Dad can't and they can become your foster carers.

You will still have your own Social Worker who will make sure everything is going well for you. Moving in with someone from your own family, or with a friend, does not feel so strange because you know each other already - although living everyday with someone can feel different to just visiting them!

### **Meetings about me - what are they all about?**

Meetings are for you and everybody who has responsibility for you (such as your Social Worker, Mum or Dad, foster carer, sometimes your teacher) to get together to check how things are going for you and that you are well and happy. This is also where any plans are made about what you need for the future.

You can always ask if you would like to invite someone to come along to any meeting with you.

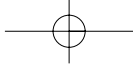
The first meetings that happen when you move to live with your foster carers will probably be:

- **a planning meeting**
- and **a placement meeting** - to make plans with you for everything that needs to happen to make sure you are well and happy for the first month you are with your foster carers and to check that everyone knows and agrees about all the regular arrangements for you - like seeing your family, going to school, dentist and doctor appointments when needed.
- After these, you will have a review at regular intervals - to make sure all is still going well for you and that the plans are on track.

All meetings will usually be held at your foster carer's house.

If you don't want to go to all of the meeting, you can go for a part - or you can write a message to the meeting. You can also ask your Social Worker or foster carer to say something for you - there are lots of ways of letting people know how you are and what you think and feel about things!

Your Social Worker will visit you regularly and must always see you on your own. This can be away from your foster home if you would prefer that.



### **Who can help me get my point of view across or will help me out if I'm having problems?**

Your Social Worker and your foster carer are there to make sure you are doing well and that you are happy, so it's important you feel you can talk to them. There may also be a teacher at school you get on really well with and you may prefer to talk to him or her about some things.

You could also contact a member of the CAT team or ask if you can have an advocate.

### **What is the CAT team?**

This stands for 'Care Action Team'. The CAT team is a group of young people who give advice and information to Social Services about what children and young people need when they are 'Looked After'. The CAT team are in a good position to do this because they have all been 'Looked After' themselves.

The CAT team are also there to help or advise you and to put your views and opinions forward to Social Services.

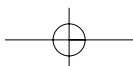
You can contact the CAT team by 'phoning Iris Gould on 01962 847215 or emailing her at [iris.gould@hants.gov.uk](mailto:iris.gould@hants.gov.uk)

### **What is an advocate?**

An advocate is a person who is independent from Social Services and who is there to stick up for **you!** Your advocate will:-

- help you get your views across
- help you make sure that your views are listened to
- check out that you understand all the plans and decisions that are being made about your life and that you are involved in making all these plans
- inform you about your rights and make sure your rights are met
- help you make choices about what is best for you
- help you sort out your problems and issues
- help you make a complaint.

To get an advocate, you can ask your foster carer or Social Worker to put you in touch with someone who can arrange this, or you can contact Irene Unwin on 01962 847256, email [irene.unwin@hants.gov.uk](mailto:irene.unwin@hants.gov.uk) and ask for an advocate.





### **What about going to school when I live with my foster carers?**

If it's possible and if it's the right thing for you then you'll stay at the same school while you're living with your foster family.

If it's best for you to change school, then your Social Worker and your foster carer will sort that out with you

and make sure you have what you need to settle in at your new school.

If you have any problems in school, your Social Worker or your foster carer, will help sort these out with you and your teachers. Every school has a teacher part of whose job it is to make sure any children who can't live with their parents for the time being are feeling settled in school and doing well. You will also have a 'Personal Education Plan' which writes down what you need to help you get on with your education and feel happy in school.

### **What about going to the doctor and dentist when I'm with foster carers?**

When you go to live with foster carers your Social Worker will ask you if you want to have a medical examination. This means you go to see your doctor who makes sure you are fit and healthy and checks that all your immunisations are up to date.

Your Social Worker and your parent/s will tell your foster carer if you are having regular medical or dental treatment and your foster carer will make sure you attend all your appointments and have any treatment that is needed.

If your foster home is a long way from your own home you may need to change doctor or dentist. Your Social Worker and foster carer will talk to you about it and your foster carer will make sure you are signed up with a doctor and dentist.

### **What happens if I feel living with my foster carers is not working out for me?**

There can be ups and downs when you are living with a foster family and it can take a little time while you all get used to living with each other.

If you think everyone HAS had time to get adjusted, but you still do not feel things are right for you in your foster home, you will need to talk to your Social Worker so that you and s/he can work out together what it is best to do to make sure you feel okay. If things really cannot be happily sorted out, then it may be that different foster carers need to be found for you.

When you are living with your foster carers you will see your Social Worker regularly and s/he will make sure you know how to contact him/her. You can ask him/her to write their name and telephone number down for you in the space at the back of this booklet.

### **What do I do if I want to make a complaint about anything that's happening to me in my life?**

When you are being fostered Social Services has a responsibility to make sure you are well cared for and that you have all the opportunities you need to develop your full potential. If you have a complaint Social Services must deal with it as quickly as possible by talking to everyone and seeing if things can be sorted out.

*If that's not possible, your complaint will be investigated.*

When you move into your foster home your Social Worker will give you a leaflet about how to make a complaint, who to make a complaint to and what happens when a complaint is investigated.

You may want to speak to someone you can trust about helping you to make a complaint, that could be, for example, your Social Worker or a teacher, your advocate or someone from the CAT team.

You are also welcome to make any comments or complaints to the Commission for Social Care Inspection or CSCI whose job it is to check that everyone who provides foster carers for children does so to the highest standard. You can find their telephone number in the 'Useful Telephone Numbers and Addresses' section.

## Useful Telephone Numbers and Addresses

	Name	Tel no	Email/website/address
Name			
Foster Carer			
Social Worker			
Support worker			
Doctor			
Dentist			
CAT team	Iris Gould	01962 847215	iris.gould@hants.gov.uk
Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)		02380 821300	4th Floor Overline House Southampton SO15 1GW
Ask for an Advocate	Irene Unwin	01962 847256	irene.unwin@hants.gov.uk
Childline		0800 111111	www.childline.org.uk
Voice for the Child in Care		<b>freephone</b> 0808 8005792	www.vcc-uk.org info@vcc-uk.org
The Who Cares? Trust		0500 564570	www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk
Children's Legal Centre		<b>Adviceline</b> 01206 873820	www.childrenslegalcentre.com
NSPCC - advice service for teenagers		<b>freephone</b> 0808 800 5000	www.there4me.com
National Youth Advocacy Service		<b>freephone</b> 0800 616 101	www.nyas.net

