



A YOUNG
PERSON'S
GUIDE TO

FOSTER CARE

Aged 12-15

WHO'S WHO?

Lots of our workers are responsible in making sure that you are okay. They are part of something called children's services. This means we will work together and listen to your views about how you are cared for and any worries that you may have.

Your social worker is:

.....
Your social worker's phone number is:

.....
Email address:

.....

Your foster carer's supervising social worker is:

.....
Your foster carer's supervising social worker's phone number is:

.....
Email address:

.....

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

Name:
.....

Phone number:
.....

Email address:
.....

.....

HELLO AND WELCOME!

We hope this guide will help to answer some of the questions you may have about being cared for by a foster family.

There are many children who are fostered. In Reading there are more than 200 but in England there are more than 40,000. There are lots of different reasons some children and young people 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 while you are being cared for by one of the Brighter Futures for Children Independent Fostering Agency's foster families.

You will find out how you can meet other young people in care, join in with lots of activities and have fun as well as what you can do if you're not happy.

If you still have questions after reading this guide, you can ask your social worker or your foster carer's supervising social worker for help.



WHO WILL BE LOOKING AFTER ME?

Foster families, which are also called foster carers, 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 your foster carers' own children or other children who are fostered. 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 supervising social worker made lots of checks to make sure they are okay to look after you.

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

Your foster carers are reviewed frequently 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 take part in this and tell us what's important to you.

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

If you would like to know more about Brighter Futures for Children's Independent Fostering Agency, you can ask for a copy of our 'Statement of Purpose'.

LIVING TOGETHER

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

Please feel free to let them know what your likes and dislikes are. 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

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 comfortable, you can tell your foster carers or talk to your social worker, who will help you sort it out.

MY CARE PLAN/JOURNEY IN FOSTER CARE

When you start living with foster carers, your social worker will talk to you about why you are living there and how long you will be staying for. 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 *Child 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.

This review takes place around four weeks from the time you first started living with your foster family.

Your independent reviewing officer is:

.....
Your IRO's phone number is:

.....
Email address:

.....
The Brighter Futures for Children website has a lot more detail on what you can expect while you're in care and answers many of the most common questions asked.

www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org/young-peoples-zone

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 Safer Care Agreement which your foster carer will complete with you. It will be tailored to your needs.

Sometimes you may forget the rules and your foster carer will talk to you about this. Your foster carer should never hurt you and they should always keep you safe.

Expect to be treated with respect!

POCKET MONEY

When you are living with your foster carers you are entitled to pocket money every week.

The amount you get will depend on how old you are.

SEEING YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY

We would like you to be able to keep in touch with your family and friends, and most children who are fostered do, but it's important that this is done in a safe way.

Your foster carer and social worker will talk to you about this. 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 wish to see your family or there may be other reasons why you might not want to. Remember that we always want you to feel safe and not have any worries while being cared for by a foster family. Your social worker will talk to you about this, if it happens.

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

If you have any questions or worries, you can talk to your foster carer, your social worker, your IRO or an independent adult we can put you in touch with. The details on how to contact all these people are in this guide.



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 have any worries about bullying, let your foster carer or social worker know and they will be able to help you. They have a guidance booklet on how to deal with bullying.

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 - YOUR SCHOOL OR COLLEGE

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

If you are having any problems at school or college, 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 your learning.

If you get letters from school or college, it is important you give them to your foster carer so that they know about educational trips or activities you might like to do.



HELPING YOU LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

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

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

Your foster carer will do things with you, like taking you to activities you enjoy.

If you are older, they can show you how to cook healthy meals and how to wash your clothes.

MEMORIES

Your 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 that are important to you.

This might be a fun activity you can do together to help remember things you have done while living with your carers.

The memory book could include memorabilia, tickets from places you have visited, photographs, school reports and other things that are important to you.

All of these things can also be included in a special book so that you have memories and also key information about the whole of your life.

It's important, especially for children and young people who can't return home, to have these memories and information about the whole of their lives.

You may have a **'life journey book'** or you may just have a memory box of all the things you did while you were in care. It will depend on how long you're in care.

Everyone who comes into care is different and everyone's story is different. That's why it's important to know - and own - your story and to have something that's special 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 your foster family money so that you can visit lots of places and do different activities.



SUPPORT GROUPS

If you are in foster care, you can join the Children in Care Council (CiCC) group in your area. This is a group of young people in care who meet regularly to have fun and talk about things that matter to them.

To join in or find out more, speak to your social worker or you can contact the CiCC participation officer at Brighter Futures for Children on the details below.

Call or text: 07885 822491

Email: cicc@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

Brighter Futures for Children has a fantastic Young People's Zone on it's website where you can find out what's going on in Reading and how you can get support. You can ask your foster carer to help you access this.

www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org/young-peoples-zone



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 or your foster carer's supervising social worker.

If you would like to speak to someone outside of the independent fostering agency, there are plenty of people for you to get in touch with on the 'useful contacts' page.

USEFUL CONTACTS



Reconstruct

Reconstruct is an organisation that works with children and young people to help them to improve their lives. They provide independent visiting, advocacy and participation.

Freephone: 0800 389 1571

E: yourvoice@reconstruct.co.uk

W: www.reconstruct.co.uk/children-and-young-peoples-pages

There are also a number of national organisations who can give you support and advice:

The logo for Childline, featuring the word "childline" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font inside a white rounded rectangle.

childline

A 24-hour helpline for children who are in trouble or at risk of being hurt or abused. Call free on 0800 1111 or visit their website www.childline.org.uk

The logo for NSPCC, featuring the letters "NSPCC" in a bold, green, sans-serif font inside a white rounded rectangle.

NSPCC

If you're having a bad time at home, you're worried about bullying at school, or you are worried or scared about something else, call free on 0808 800 5000 or visit their website www.nspcc.org.uk

coram

Helps young people in care have their voice heard. Call free on 0808 800 5792, email help@coramvoice.org.uk or visit their website www.coramvoice.org.uk



Help at Hand is the Children's Commissioner's advice service for children in care, living away from home or receiving social care services, call 0800 528 0731 or visit their website www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand

COMPLAINTS

What do you 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 supervising social worker who visits your foster carer to help you.

You can also contact Reconstruct. This will be dealt with by someone who has nothing to do with your foster home. All complaints are taken seriously and are treated in confidence.



If you're not happy with the way that Brighter Futures for Children are working with you, you can tell Ofsted. enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

We hope that this guide has answered most of your questions.

If you have any unanswered questions you can contact Brighter Futures for Children's IFA at 0118 937 3740 or foster@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

This booklet, or information about us, can be made available in other languages or in a non-written format on request. We can also help with a translation service.



Brighter Futures for Children is a not-for-profit company, wholly owned by, but independent of, Reading Borough Council.

We deliver children's services (including fostering), early help, education and SEND services in Reading.

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