



Children and
Young People's
Guide to
Foster Care

Aged 8-11

Hello and welcome!

The fact that you've been given this guide means you are now living, or are about to live, away from your family.

You're bound to be feeling a bit confused about what's happening in your life.

You have probably got quite a few questions. This guide will give you the answers to some of them and there is lots of other information about who can help you.

"There are about 40,000 children and young people in foster care in England today!"

Fostering is much more common than you might think. There are around 275 children and young people who are fostered in Reading. Many famous people have been fostered, including:

Pierce Brosnan

A famous actor, especially known for playing 007 James Bond and starring in Mamma Mia.

Neil Morrissey

Another famous actor, especially known for comedy and as the voice of Bob the Builder.

Pandora Christie

A Heart FM and Kiss FM radio presenter who also does her own beauty blogs.

Kriss Akabusi

An athlete who won several Olympic medals in the 400m hurdles. He's known for his loud laugh!

Eddie Murphy

Famous American actor who starred in the films The Nutty Professor, Dr Doolittle, Beverly Hills Cop and was the voice of 'Donkey' in the Shrek films.

What is foster care?

Foster care is when you live with a different family to your own, arranged by a social worker. Sometimes this can be with a friend or relative, but most often it is with a family you do not know.

How do children and young people become fostered?

Every child and young person is unique and will have a different story about how and why they came into care.

Here are some of the reasons:

- There is not an adult to look after you
- You have asked for help
- The Court has asked for you to be looked after
- Your family needs time to sort things out for you to return home.

Whatever your story, while you are living with a foster family, your foster carers will help and support you.

You will have your own social worker who will arrange for you to meet your foster carers.

Who are foster carers?

They may:

- Be single, married or in a partnership
- Have other foster children or children of their own
- Be from different backgrounds.

Foster carers are approved to look after children and young people by Brighter Futures for Children's Independent Fostering Agency.

Your social worker will visit you regularly to make sure that everything is working out and you are settled in with your foster family.

**“Every foster family is different
and unique too”**

Key facts about foster carers:

- They have been checked to make sure they can provide good care and help you make the most out of your life
- They have to be trained and have their own supervising social workers to support them
- Some foster carers look after children and young people for a short time while things are sorted out at home
- Some foster carers have children and young people living with them until they're old enough to leave home
- All foster carers get money so they can look after you properly. This will include your pocket money and money to buy you clothing and pay for outings.

Foster carers are there to:

- Listen to your story and try to understand and support your needs whatever they might be, like your culture and religion
- Work with your social worker to help you keep in touch with people who are important to you
- Do their very best to encourage and support you to achieve at school or in other activities that are important to you
- Be involved with the day to day decisions about your care, like having friends around or arranging sleepovers
- Look after you and provide a comfortable home where you can feel happy and safe.

What happens when you move in?

The fostering team will work very hard to find you a foster carer who is best able to care for you. Of course, whoever this is, you will feel strange at first, so do give yourself some time to settle in.

Your foster carer knows that when you arrive you may be feeling nervous or excited or even a bit sad or angry. They will try to help you feel at home as quickly as possible. They will show you around the house, introduce you to their family, explain about family routines and meals and ask you what sorts of things you are used to.

You will want to take your own clothes and any belongings which are special to you. If you haven't been able to do this, we'll make sure you have new ones. You may have your own room, or maybe part of a room that you share. But you will always have a space that

is yours alone, where you can keep your personal belongings safe and have time to yourself. While you are living in a foster family, you will be treated the same as the other children and young people living in the family.

Will I have to change schools?

Your social worker will try to make arrangements so that you can continue going to the same school. If it is in your best interests to change schools, your social worker and foster carer will help you choose a new one.

Will I have contact with my family?

Your foster carer and social worker will do their best to ensure that, where possible, you keep in contact with your family.

When will I see my social worker?

There will be regular visits from your social worker to get to know you and help with any problems. You can also call them and ask them to visit you or ask your foster carer to contact them and arrange a visit.

What is going to happen to me next?

Within four weeks of being fostered there will be a meeting, called a review, to look at how you are and to make sure things are happening as planned, for example contact with your family.

This meeting will be chaired by an independent reviewing officer – often called an IRO. You will be told who your IRO is and how you can contact them.

Your social worker will talk to you about who needs to come to your review and help with your care plan. This might include your parents and your teacher.

We have a Safe Care Policy and you should always feel safe and well cared for by your foster family.

Your views will be important in the review and the IRO will want to know what you think about being in foster care.

Your rights

The views of children and young people are very important to all of us at Brighter Futures for Children. We listen to what children and young people have said about being in care and have made a promise about what you can expect. You will find details of our promise on pages 12 and 13.

"Your views count"

The Brighter Promise

1. We promise only to share information about you with people who need it in order to look after you properly.
2. You will have a named social worker and you will know how to contact them. They will keep in touch with you.
3. We will involve you in all the decisions that affect your life.
4. We promise that you will have a care plan that is up-to-date and meets your needs.
5. We promise we will find a home that meets your needs.
6. We promise we will help you where possible to stay in touch with your family, friends and any other people who are important to you.

7. We promise to help you to do the best you possibly can at school and in your education.

8. We promise to care about your health and encourage you to be healthy.

9. We promise to work with you to give you all the help and support you need to make a success of moving on from care to adult life.

10. We promise we will work hard to sort out any problems or worries you have.



“If you don't feel happy,
speak to someone who can
help”

If you do not feel happy with the care you are receiving in your foster family and do not feel your foster carer is helping you, then you should speak to your social worker or with the IRO.

You could also speak to someone from an independent company called Reconstruct.



They are there to make sure you understand what is happening in your life. They will help you find the right person to support you. If you want to make a complaint about your care, they will help you.

Their details are on page 17.

Important names & contact details

My social worker is:

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Telephone/mobile number:

.....

Email address:

.....

My independent reviewing officer is:

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Telephone/mobile number:

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Email address:

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Mind of My Own 'One' app - If you have a smartphone, you can also download this app and contact your social worker through it to tell them whatever you want to.



Support Groups

If you are in foster care, you can join one of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) groups:



This is a group of young people in care who meet monthly to make sure that they have a voice and are listened to about things that matter. It's fun with lots of things to get involved in.



A fun group that meet monthly to take part in activities like trampolining, football, pizza nights, cinema.

To join in or find out more, speak to your social worker or contact the Children in Care Council's participation officer:

T: 07843642528

E: cicc@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

W: www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org/young-peoples-zone/

More 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:

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

NSPCC

If you are 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

The logo for the Children's Commissioner, featuring the word "Children's" in a multi-colored font (blue, orange, green, red) above the word "COMMISSIONER" in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.

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: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/



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www.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 Fostering Team at 0118 937 3740 or foster@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

This booklet, or any 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.

Brighter Futures for Children's Independent Fostering Agency, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU

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