

THE
PLEDGE:
"A PROMISE
YOU HAVE
TO KEEP"

Young People's Guide to Fostering



Issued in Sept 2011 by
Middlesbrough Fostering Service



What it means for you

This booklet is for children and young people. You can read this booklet to yourself or your social worker or foster carer can read it to you. It will tell you all about living with a foster family. If you do not understand any part of this booklet ask your social worker or foster carer to explain it to you. This booklet will help you understand what fostering means for you.

What fostered means

Fostering means going to live with a foster family when you cannot live with your mum and dad. Sometimes this is called "going into care" or being "looked after". If your parents cannot look after you, a social worker will help you to be safe and well looked after with a foster family. It is important that you grow up in a family with a parent or parents who will take care of you and look after you as you are growing up. Even though you might be with a foster family for a short time, your foster family will treat you as if you are part of their family. If there are other children in that family, they will become your foster brothers and sisters. Being in foster care does not mean your parents and family do not love you.

Many children are fostered every day. Some of these are babies, some older, some fostered with their sisters and brothers, and some are fostered by people they know like relatives and friends of the family. You may know other children, who are fostered because you have met them at school, or they are your neighbours.

Every child and young person is different, and has a different story

There can be many reasons why children are fostered.

- Maybe your parents cannot look after you
- You aren't being looking after properly
- Maybe they have hurt you.
- A court has asked us to care for you
- There isn't anyone who knows you well to look after you
- You may have asked us to help

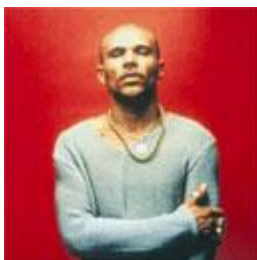
Sometimes children live with a foster family while we are finding out if there is anyone else in your family, or someone who knows you well, who could help

Or we could be trying to find out when things will be all right for you to go back home

Some children live with foster families for just a few months, while others stay for the whole of their childhood

There are over 57,000 children and young people living with foster families today

Foster to Famous



Who will be the right foster family for me?

Social workers know about the foster carers near where you live. They will decide which foster family might be best for you. If a social worker has decided that it would be best for you to leave home quickly, you might be placed with a foster family for a few days until another foster family is found for you. They will do their best to place you in a family where they think you will fit in and settle down well. This is very important if you need to stay with a foster family for a longer time.

Your foster carers are there to help you and you should always feel safe and well cared for while you are with your foster family

We will make an agreement with your foster carer, which gives them lots of written information to help them look after you. We'll tell them all about you, things like your bedtime routine, your likes and dislikes, the food you eat, the clubs you go to, what you like to watch on TV and even the amount of pocket money you get! We'll also tell them all about your health and any medicines you need, so you can stay safe and healthy.



Going to live with a foster family

A social worker will take you to your foster carer's home, where you can meet everybody who lives there. Wherever possible, the social worker will make sure that you bring your things, and will help you pack a small bag to take with you. Apart from the things you need, you can take your favourite toys, CDs, and books, as well as photographs and anything else that you feel is important to you. When you move in, your foster carers will show you around the house, and where you will sleep.

Every family has rules about what you can and cannot do. Your foster family will also have rules about a number of things - watching TV, staying up late, doing schoolwork, what time dinner is and many other things. They will tell you what these rules are and you will learn them slowly as you live there and become part of the foster family. Your foster carers will treat you as part of the family.

We try to make sure your foster family has a similar background to you. If this isn't possible then they get help in understanding things. That might be speaking your language, understanding your religion, and good things about your diet and family traditions. We will get you an interpreter if you need one.



If you are not happy with the foster family that you will be living with or are living with, talk to your social worker about this. It is very important that you tell them how you feel so that they can do something about it.

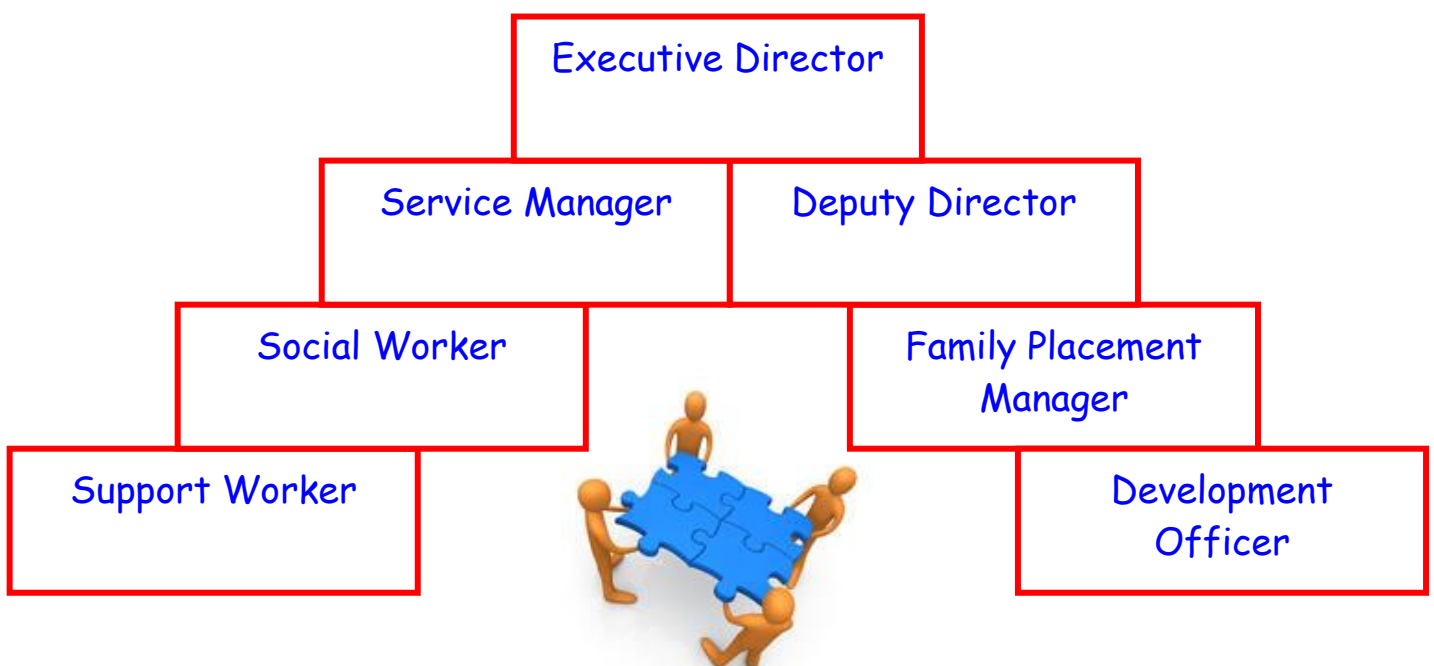


What Happen Next

All of the time that you are in foster care, no matter how long, your social worker will check that you are happy and well. After you have been in foster care for four weeks, your foster carer and your social worker will hold a special meeting with other people whose job it is to make sure you are well. This meeting is called your review and you will probably be able to go along to the meeting. If you can't or don't want to you will get a booklet where you can write down your views. If you are still with your foster carer after three months, everyone will meet again, and again after five months. Foster carers also have their own review every year to see if they are still suitable to be foster carers. You, your family and your social worker will be asked what you think of your foster carers, for this meeting.

It is important to a lot of people that your foster family cares for you in the best possible way. All these people work together to make sure that happens.

All of them together provide the "fostering service"



YOUR RIGHTS



- ➡ To be protected from harm
- ➡ To be listened to
- ➡ To be helped to keep in touch with people who are important to me - if this can't happen my social worker will explain why
- ➡ To be told clearly what I can do and what I am not allowed to
- ➡ To be treated well and equally for who I am
- ➡ To feel secure
- ➡ To follow the same religion I have been used to
- ➡ For any customs I have followed because of my race and culture to carry on and be developed
- ➡ Health care that meets my needs including emotional needs
- ➡ Support for my schoolwork
- ➡ Help to develop interests I enjoy
- ➡ To be helped to complain if things go wrong and for someone to represent me
- ➡ To be helped to see a solicitor about my care order, or any other legal order affecting me - such as contact with certain people in my life

Keeping in Touch with Family and Friends

The word that social workers use when fostered children keep in touch with their families is "contact". For most children, it is good to have contact with some members of their family. For a few, it may not be possible or it may be upsetting and may not even be what the child wants. Your social worker will help you sort out your feelings about seeing your family, and who it is good for you to see. The social worker will tell your foster family about this, and they will help you to keep in "contact" with your family if everyone agrees.

If you have a sister or brother and they also have to move from your parents, your social worker will try to place you together in the same foster family. If this is not possible, your social worker will make sure you keep in touch with each other.

If there are some special people that you want to see or telephone from time to time, you can talk to your foster carer or social worker about it. Also, if there are some people that you feel frightened of seeing and don't want to see, tell your social worker.

If you don't see your parents, there will probably be a way for them to keep in touch with you such as by telephone or by letter. This may be done through your social worker or your foster carer. You may also want to keep in touch with friends teachers and other relatives.

SCHOOL

If it is possible, your social worker will try and make sure that you can stay at the same school.

If it isn't, they will find another school for you. If you have been used to going to an activity group or club, remember to tell your social worker about it as you might be able to go on attending.



BULLYING

If you are being bullied, which means that someone else at school is picking on you, getting into fights with you, getting you into trouble, or stealing your things, tell your teacher, foster carer or social worker. Don't be scared. It is better to tell and get something done about it than to stay quiet,

GETTING TO KNOW FOSTERING FACTS

What is a fostering panel?

A fostering panel is a group of adults that meet to decide whether people who want to be foster carers can do it properly. If they think the answer is yes, they will tell Middlesbrough Council. Sometimes a fostering panel may help to match a child with the right foster family if the child needs to be fostered long term or permanently.

What happens in court?

Sometimes, not always, social workers might need to go to court about the plans that are being made for you. A court is a place where a Judge can make a decision about where you live and whether or not you should be "looked after" by Middlesbrough Social Services. In most cases, you will not have to go to court, as your social worker or a children's guardian will go for you. Remember to ask your social worker what happened in court, so that you know. If you want to find out more about how a court works, there is a little booklet called

What Happens in Court? which will tell you about it. Ask your social worker to get you a copy.

What is a care plan?

A care plan is a plan made about how you should be cared for and what the plan for your future should be. At the next review meeting, everyone will have a look at your Care Plan to make sure everything is going well for you and will check that everything that should have happened has happened. It is important to attend the Review Meetings because, after all, they are all about YOU. And you need to be there to tell the adults who are making plans and decisions for you, how you feel and what you think. Review meetings can be quite long and you may not have to stay for all of it.

What is a children's guardian?

A children's guardian is someone who finds out what you think and feel and makes sure that your feelings and wishes are told to the court.



What is a review meeting?

A review is a meeting to which you (if you are old enough), your parents, foster carers and social worker will be invited. Sometimes your teacher or health visitor may be asked to come too.

It is a chance to talk about you and the plans that are being made for you while you are being looked after by your foster carers and to see how you are getting on.

Your first review meeting will be when you have been looked after in foster care for four weeks. The next meeting will be three months from that date. Review meetings after that will take place every six months. The person in charge of the meeting is called the Chairperson who will be from the Social Services Department.

They will make sure that everybody, especially you, has a chance to say what they think and feel and that everyone listens to you. The people at the meeting - and remember, that includes YOU - will make plans for you.

They will see how you are getting on with your foster family and whether you should stay or need to move.

They will also decide how long you are going to be looked after, and whether or not you will see family members and how often this will be. They will also look at how you are getting on in school and whether you need any extra help.

The Chairperson will write down everything that is decided and this will be on a special form called a "Care Plan". You can ask your social worker for a copy of your **care plan**.

What is a placement meeting?

A placement meeting is one where you, your foster carer, your social worker and your parents meet to decide how you will be looked after day to day.

At the placement meeting, many things about you will be shared - the food you like, any medicines you have to take, who you will see from your family and when (this is called "contact" with family members), your school, and so on. Your social worker will write all this down on a special form so that people looking after you know about you. If you are old enough your social worker will give you a copy. At this meeting you should say what you like and what you don't like.



Your life story

Your foster carer or social worker will help you with your life story.

This could be a book, your own special book, about you, your family, what has happened to you and all the important things about you. You can include drawings, photographs, and write about anyone and anything that you want to remember. You keep this book because it is about you and will help you understand why things happened and why you were unable to stay with your parents.



What is an independent person?

An independent person is someone who does not work for the same Council as your social worker, and who can help you with problems you may have. If you are not happy with the way the social worker and the Council have been handling your foster placement, you can make a complaint to the Children's Rights Director if you live in England. Information on how to do this will be available from your social worker or from the independent person that we talked about above, for contact details see below.

Contact an Independent Advocate

You can get help from an independent advocate who can speak up on your behalf.

The National Youth Advocacy Service will provide you with an adult (who does not work for the Council) to help you.

You can contact the National Youth Advocacy Service by using a freephone number: 0800 616101

Send a text message to 0777 333 4555

E-mail to: help@nyas.net

Contact the Children's Rights Director for England

The Children's Rights Director is responsible for listening to the views of children who live away from home. If you wish, you have the right to complain directly to him and he will make sure your complaint is passed to the right person and taken seriously. The Children's Rights Director for England is Roger Morgan. His address is

**Office of the Children's Rights Director,
Ofsted,**

33 Kingsway, London WC2B 6SE.

Contact Roger Morgan by freephone: 0800 528 0731

visit the web site: www.rights4me.org.uk

The Complaints Officer who will help with a complaint if:

- you are not happy with the care you get
- nobody listens to you
- you are not happy with things people do for you
- you need more help

To make a complaint

The Children's Complaints Officer is based in **Vancouver House, Gurney Street, Middlesbrough, TS1 1EL**

01642 728416 Mon to Thurs 8.30 - 5.00pm, Fri 8.30 - 4.30pm

Email - voiceyourviews@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Text - **07624 802273**

This is what happens when you make a complaint.....

You will get a letter saying who will look into your complaint. You will get this letter within 3 days of us hearing from you

Who checks the work of my foster agency?

Ofsted

An organisation called Ofsted checks the work of fostering agencies in England and Wales.

Ofsted Royal Exchange Buildings

St Ann's Square

Manchester

M2 7LA

Tel: 08456 404045

Website: www.csci.org.uk

My Notes

Use this space for your social worker to give you other information that you need to have. But you can also use the space for yourself, and write down things that you need to know.

Social worker name:

Social worker telephone no:

Foster carer name:

Foster carer telephone no:

Independent Reviewing Officer

Information about you

Your social worker and other professionals who work on your behalf may collect information about you and may share it with each other to make sure you get the best care.

The Data Protection Act 1998 gives you the right to have access to the personal information gathered about you by your social worker and other people who are involved in your care.



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

If you have any worries you can ring any of the numbers below:

SAFEGUARDING SERVICES SERVICE MANAGERS

(01642) 513601

(01642) 201941

(01642) 354451

Family Placement Manager	(01642) 201960
Child Protection	(01642) 201822
First Contact	(01642) 201870
Locality 1	(01642) 513625
Locality 2	(01642) 513607
Locality 3	(01642) 513381
Locality 4	(01642) 513374
Locality 5	(01642) 513624
Locality 6	(01642) 513364
Health co-ordinator	(01642) 354118
Children with Disabilities	(01642) 579161
Looked After Children	(01642) 201942
Pathways	(01642) 354101

Other useful numbers

	Telephone Number	Email/Website/Address
Childline	Freephone 0800 111111	www.childline.org.uk
Children's Legal Centre	Advice line 01206 873820	www.childrenslegalcentre.com
The Who Cares? Trust	020 7251 3117	www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk
Voice of the Child in Care	Free phone 0808 800 5792	info@voicceyp.org
NSPCC	Free phone 0800 800 5000	www.nspcc.org.uk
Kids Helpline	1800 55 1800	www.kidshelp.com
Kidscape	08451 205 204	www.kidscape.org.uk