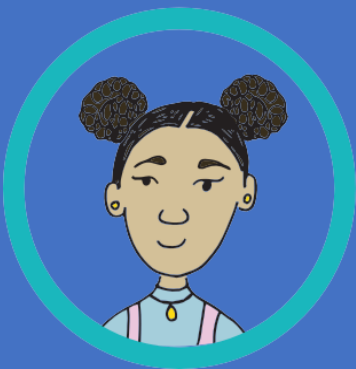




If there is anything you don't understand, speak to your Foster Family



We hope this booklet answers your questions about being in Foster Care



This book is about

What is foster care?

When children can't live with their own family, they can stay with foster families. Your foster family will look after you and help you stay safe.

Every foster family is different. Some foster carers are married and some are not. Some carers have their own children, and some have family pets as well.



Your foster family has been specially chosen for you. They will welcome you into their home and look after you.

Children come into foster care for different reasons, sometimes only for a few weeks and sometimes for a number of years or until they have grown up. Being in foster care can feel strange at first, but it does get better.

Who are Fostering Connections?

Fostering Connections are a Independent Fostering Agency. We find foster families for children when they can't live at home.

Children come to us for different reasons and we will try to help you to understand the reasons why you can't live with your family at the moment.

We support your foster family and make sure that they are looking after you well. You will meet us when we visit your foster family, and we are always happy to hear from you.



What can I expect from my Foster Family?

Moving to a new home, with new people, can be difficult but your foster carers will help you feel at home by finding out about you and the things that you like and don't like.

Your foster family will:

- Encourage you to say what you think and feel, and what you would like to happen.
- Look after you and help you look after yourself.
- Keep you safe and teach you how to keep yourself safe when you are away from home.
- Let you choose your own clothes, and buy the clothes you need.
- Help you to decorate and personalise your bedroom.
- Give you a healthy diet and guide you to making good lifestyle choices





Make sure that you have somewhere safe to keep your belongings.



Help you do well at school and make sure you can join in with school activities.



Make sure that you can join clubs and groups if you want, and help you make new friends.



Take you on holiday.



Support you in practicing your religion.

Give you pocket money, help you learn to save and eventually to open a bank account and manage your own money.

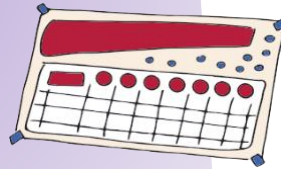


What will my Foster Family expect of me?

Every family has rules about what children can and can't do. The rules are usually about making sure that everyone gets on well together, and about keeping you safe.

These are some things that your foster family might have rules about:

- What time you should go to bed.
- When you can watch TV or go on the internet.
- When you should do your homework.
- Keeping your bedroom tidy and helping with housework.
- What time you should be home in the evening.
- Having good manners and not swearing.



Your foster family will talk to you about the rules and you will learn them as you settle in and become part of the family.

Your foster family are happy for you to ask about anything you are not sure about.



If you think the rules are not fair talk to your foster family, social worker, or someone from Fostering Connections. We want to know how you feel so that we can help sort out any problems.



Things My Foster Carers Can Not Do



They cannot hit you or physically punish you

They cannot stop your meals.

They cannot stop you contacting your social worker.

They cannot stop you seeing your family when this has already been arranged.

They cannot stop you asking anyone else for help.

MY RIGHTS

To be listened to and treated fairly. You might not get everything you want, but if something is not possible then your social worker should explain why.

To be helped with any problems.



- To be safe and protected from harm.
- To be prepared for adult life.
 - To a healthy diet, sports and exercise.
- To have an education.
 - To socialise and have friends.
- To have help with health problems and disabilities.
 - To enjoy your religion and culture.

If you do not speak English, you will have the help of a translator for meetings.

What My Social Worker Does

Your social worker is there to help you.

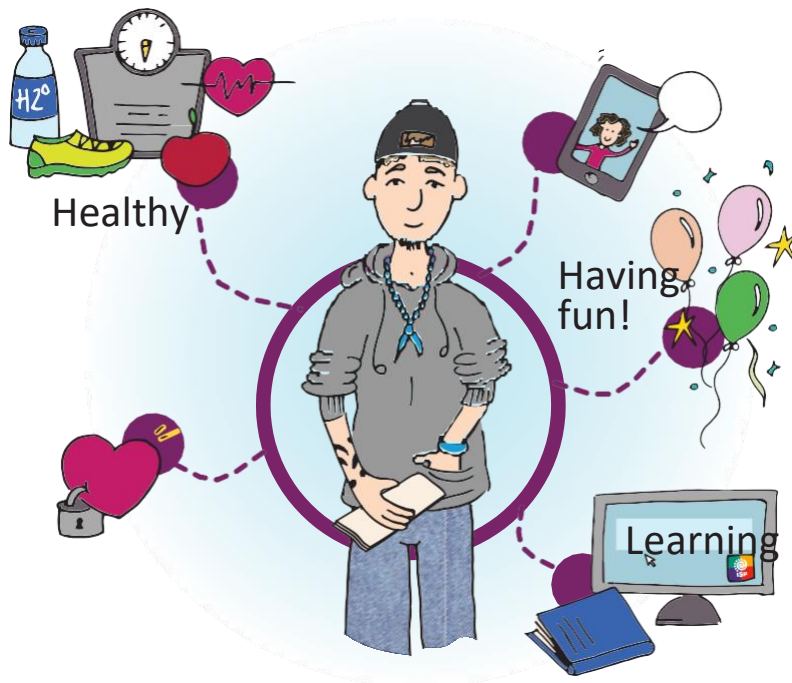
Part of your social worker's job is to find you a foster family who can give you what you need, and where they think you will fit in well. Your social worker will try their best to find you a family that shares similar interests with you, and who shares or understands your culture and religion.

It is your social worker's job to make sure that you are being looked after well. They will visit you and your foster family regularly to make sure that you are safe and doing well.

Your social worker will make a 'Care Plan' for you that will explain what is happening now in your life, and what people want to happen in the future.

Your social worker will talk to you to find out what you think, how you feel and what you would like to happen. The plan will make sure that you are safe, healthy, learning, having fun and are able to keep in touch with your family while you cannot live with them.

You should be given a copy of your Care Plan.



Who decides what I can do?

Your social worker should find out what your wishes and feelings are, and take them into account when making decisions and plans for you.

If there is something that you would like to do, talk to your foster family.

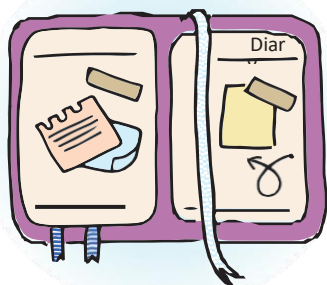
They can make some decisions, but might need to check things out with your social worker. These decisions include



Joining a Club or a Church

Changing your Hairstyle

Care Plan Reviews



Depending on your local authority, your social worker should come and see you and your foster family every 4-6 weeks. There will also be meetings called a 'review meeting'. The meeting is for you, so you should be there. Your Social Worker, foster family and people from Fostering Connections will be there and sometimes your parents, teacher or a nurse might be there too. If there is someone you don't want to be there, or someone you do, tell your social worker.

The meeting is led by your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) whose job it is to make sure that you are being well looked after – and to make sure that you have your say.

At the meeting, you will talk about how you are getting on with your foster family, how you are achieving at school, things that have gone well for you and how people can help you with any problems that you are having.

After your review you should get a written copy of the decisions that have been made.

Where and when are reviews held?



Reviews can be held anywhere, at a time and a place where you will feel comfortable.

Let your social worker know if you would like your review to be held somewhere else, or at a



**FOSTERING
CONNECTIONS**



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Do I have to go?



“ No, but it is best if you do, as the meeting is about you and decisions will be made about you and your future. If you don't want to be there, you can write down what you want to say, or talk to your social worker or IRO before the meeting to let them know what you want and how you feel.

We will work hard to make it easy for you to join in. You need to tell us if people are hard to understand. Sometimes they use words that don't make sense or just say too much. We want to know if this happens.

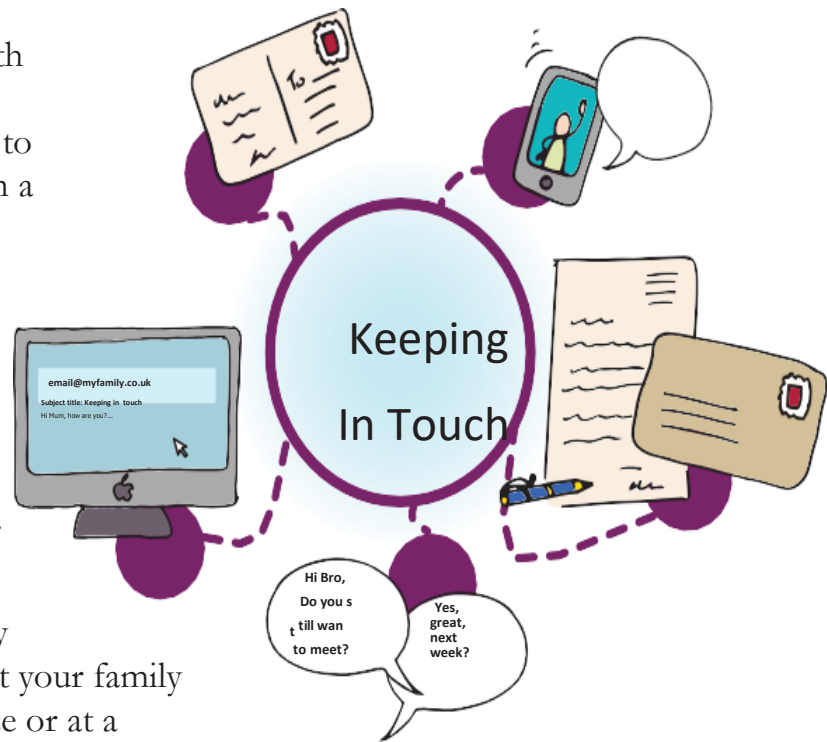
Can I see my family?

Your social worker will talk to you about keeping in touch with your family. They will talk to you about who you would like to see and how this can happen in a way that is good for you.

If you are worried, or do not want to see particular family members, talk to your foster family and social worker about this.

You can keep in touch in many different ways. You might visit your family home, meet up in a public place or at a 'Contact Centre'.

Some young people send letters or speak on the phone rather than meeting face-to-face.



What About School?

School is very important. It is where you can make friends, learn and enjoy activities that interest you. Your Social Worker and Virtual Schools will help to make sure you are happy and doing as well as you possibly can.



Your teachers will know that you are living with a foster family, but nobody else will need to know, unless you choose to tell them.

What is Therapy?

Some children in foster care have a therapist to help them when life is hard, when they need someone to talk to, or if they need help to understand changes that are happening.

"Therapy is a place and a space where people can talk. It helps you find healthy ways to express feelings.

Everyone gets confused and scared sometimes... sometimes we can't understand what's going on and sometimes we're not sure how we feel. Therapy is a safe space to share our thoughts & feelings.

The therapist is a person who has been specially trained to help and be a friend. They will respect and help you while keeping things safe for you too.

Therapy most of all is a safe and healthy place where you can be truly yourself.

Sometimes this is a little hard (like in school, learning new things) but you will almost always find ways to solve problems and smile."



I feel safe to talk here

Your social worker might ask us to arrange for you to see a Therapist at – or you could ask for this help yourself.

Getting Involved

At Fostering Connections, we are always pleased to see you, and hear what you think.

Let us know how you are feeling and what you think about us. This can help us to make Fostering Connections even better.

How Can You Do This?

- We will sometimes write to you and ask you some questions.
- You can talk to us when we come and visit you and your foster family at home.
- Come to our activities and events where you can have fun with other young people and share your views.

Having **Your** Say About the Care System

Fostering Connections will often get updates from the government about planned changes to the care system and children in Foster Care, or Care Leavers.

If you would like to share your views with us, when we have the opportunity we will share your views with them.



Contact us and let us know your views

What if I'm Unhappy?

If you are unhappy about something, sharing your problems with an adult can help to make things better. Talk to someone you trust, e.g. your foster family, social worker or someone from Fostering Connections.

Always tell someone you trust how you feel and what you think. If you are finding it hard to say what is worrying you, you could draw a picture or write it down.

How do I make a Complaint?

If you want to make a complaint about your Local Authority, let your social worker know and they will give you the complaints procedure.

Your foster family, or an advocate, can help you to make the complaint.

If you want to make a complaint about us, you can contact one of our team.

Write to:

Fostering Connections,
Warlies Park House, EN9 3SL

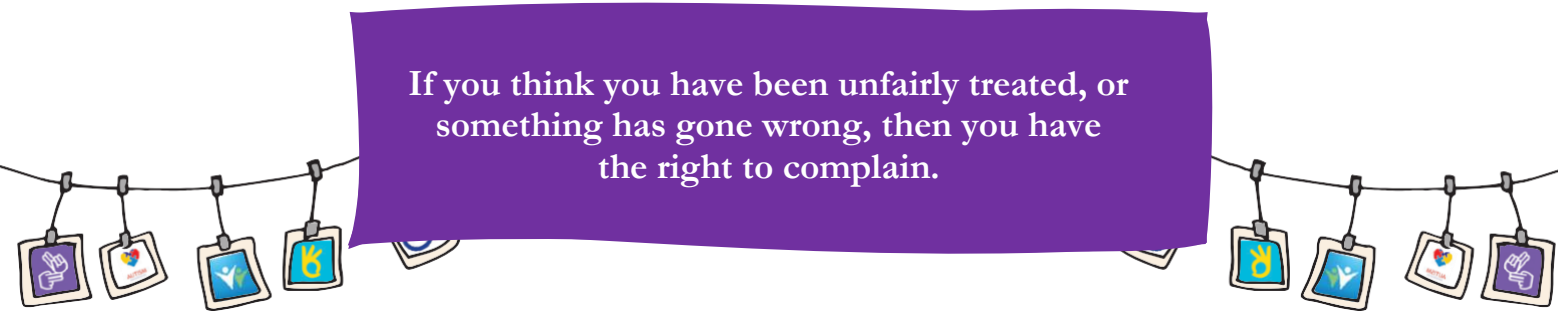
Telephone: 01992 712611

Email: Send an email to:

enquiries@fostering-connections.com

Put the word **COMPLAINT** in the email title.





If you think you have been unfairly treated, or something has gone wrong, then you have the right to complain.

Important details

Our phone number

Your social worker's phone number

Your IRO's phone number

If you are worried about something, you can contact any of the following organisations.....

Call Childline 0800 1111

The Children's Commissioner
www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand
The Children's Commissioner promotes your rights.
You can call them free on 0800 528 0731

OFSTED
www.ofsted.gov.uk
You can call OFSTED on
0300 123 1231

Coram Voice www.coramvoice.org.uk

Coram Voice helps children who live with foster families.

You can call them on 0808 800 5792