



Facts 4 U 2 : I'm going to be fostered - What does it mean? A young person's guide to the fostering service (for over 11s)

This fact sheet can be made available in other languages or formats on request by contacting 0161 770 6666. For further information please see our detailed fact sheet - **Information for all.**

What is fostering?

Fostering is a way of looking after young people who cannot live at home. Fostering is when young people are looked after by people called foster carers, whilst problems at home are being sorted out. This is called a family placement.

Who are foster carers?

Foster carers are people who look after young people in their own homes when they are unable to live with their own families. Foster carers are ordinary people who care about young people and want to help make sure young people are safe.

Not all foster carers are the same. Some are single people and others are married or live with their partner. Some foster carers have children of their own; others have never had children. We will always try to find a family who you will feel most comfortable with and who can meet your needs. All our foster carers have been 'checked out' to make sure that they can offer you a safe place to stay.

What do foster carers do?

Your foster carer's job is to look after you until you are able to return to live with a member of your family or until other long-term plans are made.

You will be able to talk to your foster carer about how you are feeling. They will understand how upsetting it can be living away from your family.

How long will I be fostered for?

Some young people stay in foster care for a very short time - for a few weeks or so to give enough time to sort out problems at home or to find somewhere suitable for them to live. Others may need to stay longer - for a few months or maybe a few years. Your social worker will be able to give you some idea of how long you will be fostered for.

Your social worker and others will be working hard to get you home as soon as possible, but only if they know that it will be safe to do so.

Some young people are put in a permanent placement. This is somewhere you can live until you are old enough to leave home or go away to college – usually when you are about 18 years old. Permanent placements are usually with foster carers and a decision will not be made for you to live with them permanently until people are sure that you cannot return home and that you like the foster carers and will be happy living there. Whilst you are living with your foster carer you will continue to see your social worker regularly and have regular meetings about your needs.

Does my foster carer know all about me?

The social worker will only tell your foster carers the really important information about you and your family. If you are worried about this, talk to your social worker. They are there to help you.

When will I be able to go home?

Sometimes families have asked us to look after young people while they sort out their problems. If you are one of these young people, you can return home as soon as your parents are able to care for you.

For other young people, it will have been Social Services' decision to look after them. If you are one of these young people, Social Services will need to ask the court to help them decide if it is safe for you to return at home.

Why can't I go home?

Some families have problems, which prevent them from looking after their children. This can be very upsetting and hard to understand. Please talk with your foster carer about how you feel and they will help to make sure that everyone involved in your care knows this too.

Sometimes the court and Social Services agree that young people cannot return home if it is not safe.

Will I be able to see my family?

When you come into care your social worker will talk to you about seeing your family. It is important that you keep in touch with your family and your friends too.

How often you see them and where you see them will depend on the reason you are being looked after.

Did I do something wrong?

No. Young people are never to blame for the things adults do even if they think they have been naughty or badly behaved. All families suffer from stress at some time, and unfortunately your family needs some time to sort this out.

Do I have to change school?

Social Services will try to make sure that you can carry on at your own school, if this is what you want, so that you can see your friends and carry on with activities that you enjoy.

Your foster carer will take you to school, but at times you may go by bus or taxi. If you are not happy with any of these arrangements you must tell your social worker.

When will I see my social worker?

Every child in foster care has someone from Social Services they see regularly and can contact if they need to. This could be a social worker, support worker or fostering link worker. You should see your social worker at least once a month. If you want to see your social worker, talk to your foster carer who will phone your social worker for you. You should also keep your social worker's telephone number in a safe place so that you can phone them directly if you want to talk in private.

What is a family placement worker?

Your foster carer will have a social worker called a family placement worker. They will talk with the foster carer about you and help them to provide the best care for you. They are there to support your foster carer to support you.

What is going to happen to me?

We aim to help you to return to your family as soon as possible, as long as you are safe. Social workers will talk to you regularly to keep you informed of what is happening.

Within four weeks of being fostered there will be a meeting called a review to look at how you are.

You will be asked for your views and invited and encouraged to attend. If you find it hard to talk with lots of adults in a room, you can either talk to someone called a reviewing officer on your own before the review, or you can ask for an independent advocate to be there with you to help put your views across.

The review is held to make sure that your care plan is working and to make any changes to it in order to help you overcome any difficulties you may be having. They will invite people such as your teacher, health visitor, parents etc, to say what they think about your care, but more important of all, they want to know what you think too. You can ask your social worker for an independent advocate or you can contact them directly.

What is an independent advocate?

An independent advocate is someone with a lot of experience of working with young people and listening to their views. They are able to talk to young people about their views and wishes and will listen to any worries that you might have about being fostered.

An independent advocate will ensure that your voice is heard in meetings between all the adults when your contact with your birth family is being talked about. Having met you and listened to what you have to say, your independent advocate will seek your permission to pass on your views and wishes to the other people involved in making decisions about contact. Your independent advocate will be able to talk to you after the meeting has taken place to make sure that you are clear about the decisions made. You will be able to share your feelings about the decisions.

If you would like an independent advocate these organisations can find one for you.

Voice of the Child in Care

Freephone 0808 800 5792

Email: help@vcc-uk.org

National Youth Advocacy Service

Freephone: 0800 616 101

Telephone: 0151 649 8700

Email: help@nyas.net

Children's Legal Centre

Telephone: 01206 873 820

Email: clc@essex.ac.uk

Spurgeons

Telephone: 0161 621 9325

What if you are not happy?

If you do not feel happy at your foster home, then it is important that you tell your social worker or another adult you trust.

If you are not happy with the service we are providing to you, you have a right to say so and can make a complaint.

If you are not happy you should first speak to your social worker. If you feel uncomfortable doing this or if you feel your query has not been dealt with satisfactorily you can contact the Children's Rights Officer. They will help you to sort things out and can offer other help and advice. You can ring the Children's Rights Officer on 0161 621 9325. Alternatively you can contact the Complaints and Representation Officer on 0161 770 1129. They will look into your complaint and let you know what has been done to sort it out within 10 days. You can also email them at cypf.complaints@oldham.gov.uk

The Complaints and Representation Officer only speaks English however if you wish we can arrange to visit you with an interpreter.

If you are not happy, you can also contact the National Care Standards Commission

National Care Standards Commission

11th Floor, West Point

501 Chester Road

Old Trafford

Manchester

M16 9HU

Tel: 0161 880 2300

Fax: 0161 880 2350

Email: enquiries.ashton@csci.gsi.gov.uk

How can I contact the Fostering Service?

The Fostering Service

Unit 10, Whitney Court

Southlink Business Park

Oldham

OL4 1DB

Tel: 0161 770 6600

Fax: 0161 770 6682

Email: socs.family.placement@oldham.gov.uk

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