

# A guide to living with another family

For ages 11+



## What this booklet is all about

If you're a child or young person under 18 living in foster care, this booklet is for you.

You can read this booklet by yourself, with your social worker or your foster carer. It will tell you about the following things:

- ★ **What is foster care?**
- ★ **What is a foster carer?**
- ★ **What can I expect and what is expected of me?**
- ★ **Who will help and support me?**
- ★ **Contact with my family and friends**
- ★ **My rights**
- ★ **People I can share my views with**
- ★ **What to do if I am not happy**
- ★ **Moving on**
- ★ **My contacts**

We understand that living with a different family can be worrying or upsetting. This booklet will help to answer some of the questions or worries you might have about coming into foster care. However, after reading this guide if you still have questions, you can ask your social worker or your foster carer's social worker for help.



## 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 it can also be with a family you do not know. The length of time children and young people stay in foster care can vary, it might be for a short time, sometimes a little longer and some children and young people remain living in foster care until they are 18 years old. Some young people may stay living with the family post 18 years under a different arrangement referred to as staying put.



## What is a foster carer?

Foster carers are people who want to care for children and young people. They are carefully checked and trained to make sure they can look after you and help you to feel safe. 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 foster carers' own children or other children who are fostered. The foster carers may have a pet, like a dog or a cat.

Each year foster carers have to show us how they care for children, which helps us to check they are always going to provide a good level of care for you. You will be asked what you think about your foster carer to help us make that decision.

# Mockingbird

Warrington fostering service and The Fostering Network, is delivering the Mockingbird programme, which is a new exciting approach to foster care using the Mockingbird Family Model. The model helps to support relationships between young people and their foster carers and supporting placement stability.

The Mockingbird, consists of a group of foster carers called a constellation with 6 to 10 satellite fostering household and a hub home foster carer.

The hub home foster carers role is to provide guidance and support to the constellation foster carers. If you are being cared for by a satellite foster carer, the hub home carer will also provide sleepovers and short breaks, peer support and social activities for all the children and young people living within the constellation.

## Fostering Service





## Poem

**Don't be scared, no need to worry**

**You're going to be cared for,  
you're in no hurry**

You're here to have fun,  
so don't you fright

**The adventure has just begun,  
it will be alright**

**So start a new life in foster  
care, and settle down**

We'll always be there,  
so turn that frown  
the right way round

**And have the courage to make it  
right, because you are bright**

**You can make this choice,  
so we can hear your voice**

Don't be scared to live in foster care!



# What can I expect from my foster carer?

Your foster carer will make sure that you:

- ★ Are treated with respect
- ★ Have your own bed to sleep in
- ★ Have a place to keep all your belongings safe
- ★ Understand what you can and cannot do (house rules) to enable them to keep you safe
- ★ Are never hit or smacked or called names
- ★ Are supported you to see your family and friends if it is safe to do so
- ★ Have enough healthy food to eat
- ★ Have clean clothes to wear
- ★ Are looked after if you're feeling unwell and take you to see a doctor if required
- ★ Attend school or college
- ★ Attend any clubs/ activities you want to go to and that your interests are supported
- ★ Attend your place of worship
- ★ Receive pocket money, which you might choose to save

# What will my foster carer expect of me?

All families have different ways they do things. Your fostering family will be able to share with you how their family works, but you will also have an understanding of how things worked when you lived at home. By talking with your foster carer you will be able to agree what works best for you both. These may things like; what times you will return home and listening and speaking to each other respectfully.



## Who will help and support me?

It's important that everyone who is involved in your life knows what is happening and what plans you have for the future. This is called your care plan.



## Who will be part of your care plan?

### My foster carer

It is your foster carers role to care for you and support you. They will listen to you and tell others if there is something that has caused harm to you or some-one else, this is so you can receive the support you need. They will share your concerns with your social worker to keep you safe and help you to make contact with them if you need them to.

### My Social Worker

It is your social worker's role to help and support you and listen to your views. Your social worker will visit you regularly, seeing you by yourself. They will answer any questions you might have and explain what will happen next. They will also talk to you about your care plan. This is a plan that says how you will be cared for when you are not living with your family. You can write your social workers name and their telephone number on the back of this booklet so you can contact them if you need to.

### My Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

Your IRO makes sure that your care plan is right for you. They look at this plan in a meeting called a child in care review, which take place twice per year. They will meet with you before the meeting so you can tell them what you might like in your plan and how it is working for you. You can write your IRO's name and their telephone number on the back of this booklet so you can contact them if you need to.

### Warrington Fostering Service

Foster carers are allocated a supervising social worker who will visit regularly to talk to your foster carer about how having you in their family is going. They will make sure they are okay to look after you and that they are provided with any help and advice they need to look after you. You should meet the supervising social worker when they come to visit and they will ask you to share your views with them and will work together with your social worker to support you.

### School, Training and College

They will link with your social worker to help and support you with your learning. If you do not already have someone, ask your social worker to help you identify a named person at school, training or college who you can speak to if you need support.

### Health Services

All children who come to live with foster carers visit the doctor in the first few weeks, this is called a health assessment, to make sure you are well and healthy.



## When will I see my family and friends?

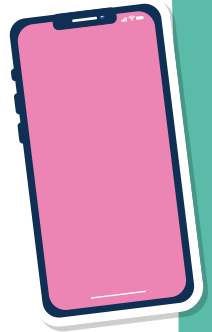
Some children and young people miss their family and friends. Your social worker will make a plan for you to see them, this is called 'family time' or 'contact'. Family time can be in person, by phone or letter. If there is someone you would like to have contact with, then let your social worker know. Usually, the only time this doesn't happen is if your social worker or court think it wouldn't be safe for you. If there is someone you wouldn't like to have contact with, make sure your social worker knows this too. They can help you to decide what will work best for everyone.

Your foster carer will support you to attend family time. You can discuss your feelings about family time with them. They will talk to your social worker to support you with this.

Your foster carer will support you to stay in contact with your friends. It is important that your foster carer knows where you are and who you are with so they can help to keep you safe.

## To use the telephone

When you are having telephone contact with family and friends it is important that this is done in a safe way. Your foster carer and social worker will talk to you about what might be expected when telephone contact is taking place.



Some people say that being in foster care is a bad thing when really it isn't. OK maybe for a little while things could be hard for you, but really it happens for a reason.

When you step into someone's home you don't know, it's scary. I know because it was for me to. But if you think of it, them people are letting you in because they want to help.

Sometimes you don't know what to do so you push people away. Look I'm not saying this is what happens all the time, but most of the time it's the truth. That person could have many problems that they don't know to deal with them, so they feel they have no-one to talk to. But you do, there is always someone there for you, no matter how, for they are. And them people who want to help, let them because they will help you feel 100 times better.

I am not saying care is a big happy fantasy, but it is something that will help you find your light.

To all kids out there good luck.



# My rights




- ★ To be kept safe
- ★ To be heard and listened to
- ★ To attend your child in care review
- ★ To receive pocket money
- ★ To know and understand why you are in foster care
- ★ To understand how to access support if you are not happy with something

## People who can help or share your views with:



- ★ Your foster carer is there to support you and listen to any concerns you may have.
- ★ You can share your views with your foster carers supervising social worker when they visit.
- ★ Your IRO will meet with you before your child in care review to obtain your views.
- ★ If you want to complain an independent person from NYAS can offer you advice and support to ensure your voice is heard when decisions are being made about you. Your social worker or foster carer can contact them for you if you would like them to.
- ★ You can talk to your social worker if you're unhappy about something or if you need additional support. Additionally, if you do not like or agree with the plans being made for you, then you should talk to your social worker and their manager about this.
- ★ You can talk to someone else you trust. This could be your teacher, youth worker or a family member.

# What if I am unhappy or something is not ok

-  Do you feel you are being treated unfairly or wrongly?
-  Is no-one listening to what you have to say?
-  Do you have an idea of how things could be done better?

## It's OK to complain or say you are not happy about...

Your carers, social workers, youth workers or teachers and you won't get into trouble! If we don't know about it, we can't help and by speaking out you might even make things better for other children and young people too!

If you decide that you want to make a formal complaint the Customer Service team will chat to you about your problem, and will help to try to make things better (see back page for contact details).

## Step 1

Tell someone you can trust about your problem and what you would like to happen to make things better. If there is no one you can tell we can get someone who can speak to you. This step is completed within 10 to 20 working days.

## Step 2

Not sorted. We will get someone to investigate the complaint. They will listen to everyone's story and report their decision to the Council. This step should be completed in 25 to 65 working days.

## Step 3

A panel of up to seven people who don't work for the Council will check over step 2 to make sure it was fair.



## Moving on

When it is time to leave foster care, we call this moving on. This can mean a lot of different things, some people go home, some people go to live with other foster carers, some with family members, some become adults and live by themselves.

Some young adults choose to stay with their foster carers after their 18th birthday, this is called staying put.

Your social worker and foster carer will support you to develop skills that will help with your independence in the future, things like cooking, washing your clothes and managing money.



## Poem

**I search for words to tell  
you how much I love you**

Although at times I may not show it

**Even though I mad  
This is because I am sad**

The little things  
They make you feel safe

**Look after you  
This helps you to stop feeling blue**

A problem shared is a problem halved

**Is something I do  
which helps me to get through**





## My Social Worker

Name

Number



## My IRO

Name

Number



### Warrington Customer Services Team

Tel: 01925 443111

Email: [fw-customerservice@warrington.gov.uk](mailto:fw-customerservice@warrington.gov.uk)

### Children in Care Council

A group for children and young people to help shape the care they receive in Warrington.

Tel: 01925 443064

Email: [haveyoursay@warrington.gov.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@warrington.gov.uk)

Web: [warrington.gov.uk/children-care-council](http://warrington.gov.uk/children-care-council)

### National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

Listen to your problems and try to help

Tel: 0808 808 1001

Web: [www.nyas.net](http://www.nyas.net)



### Childline

If you are worried about something big or small, you can talk to someone confidentially.

Tel: 0800 1111

Web: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### Ofsted

Tel: 03000 123 1231

Web: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



### Children's Commissioner

Tel: 0800 528 0731

Web: [childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand](http://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand)

### The Fostering Network

Tel: 020 7620 6400

Web: [thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/mockingbird](http://thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/mockingbird)