

YOUR GUIDE TO

BEING IN CARE

5 – 10 YEAR OLDS

Inside: Lots of things you will want to know about living away from home





HI THERE!

I am

I'm here to tell you what being in care means.

This booklet is yours to keep and use whenever you have a question about what is going on.

(If you have trouble reading this guide it might be best to work through it with your Social Worker or foster carer.)

THIS BOOKLET BELONGS TO:.....

I AM THIS MANY YEARS OLD: 

THINGS I LIKE:.....

.....

THINGS I DON'T LIKE:.....

.....

WHAT IS FOSTER CARE?

Being in foster care means living with someone who is not your Mum or Dad.

Foster carers are special people who look after children that cannot live at home.

It is their job to make sure that you feel at home in your foster family.

They will try to make sure you are happy and that you do all the regular things you are used to such as going to school, taking part in hobbies and visiting friends.

WHY DO I HAVE TO LIVE WITH A FOSTER FAMILY?

It may not be safe to live at home, and if there are no other family members that can look after you, you will go to live with a foster family.

There are lots of reasons why children live in foster care. Over time you will get to know your reason why by talking to your Social Worker.

Your Social Worker will help you understand your story. But the most important thing to remember is this is not happening because of something you have done. You are not at fault.

WHAT IS A SOCIAL WORKER?

They are someone who works for the Council within Children's Services. They like children and young people and it is their job to help you.

Your Social Worker is there for you and you can talk to them about anything that is upsetting or worrying you.

Your Social Worker will visit you, at least, every six weeks (but usually more than that) and check that you are happy with how you are being looked after. If you are sad about something talk to your Social Worker and they will help to try and make things better.

You or your carers can always ring your Social Worker in between these visits if you need to speak to them or want to see them more often. If they are not there leave a message and they will get back to you.

My Social Worker is called:

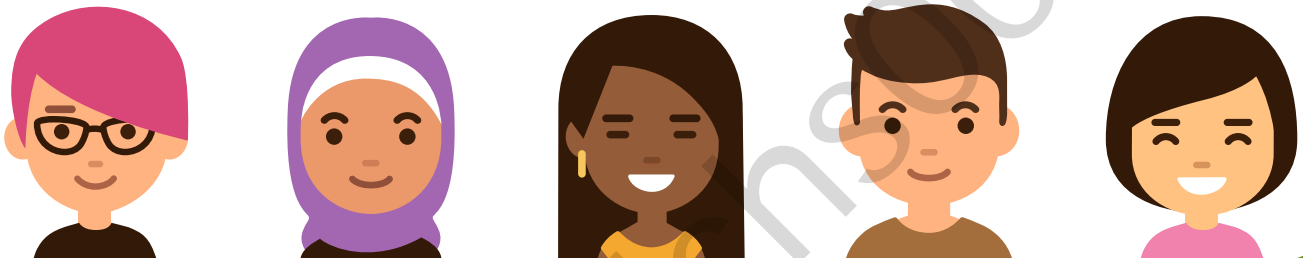
I can speak to them on:

WHAT ABOUT SEEING MY FAMILY?

Living in foster care doesn't mean that you will not get to see your friends and family. Your carers and Social Workers know how important it is to keep in touch with your Mum, Dad, brother, sisters and Grandparents.

Your Social Worker will talk to you about how often and where you would like to meet up with the people who are important to you. It could be in the local park, at your favourite soft play or anywhere else you feel comfortable.

If you are not happy with these visits you can share your thoughts with your Social Worker about changing how they happen.



WHAT ABOUT WHAT I WANT?

Your carers and Social Workers should listen to you. They will want to know what your wishes and feelings are.

By telling them how you are feeling this will help them make a care plan about how best to look after you. Sometimes children can have worries or problems which they don't think their carer or Social Worker can help with. If this happens you can speak to someone called an 'Independent Person'. There are some numbers at the end of the booklet on how to find an Independent Person and either you, your Social Worker or your carer can give them a call.



HOW WILL MY FOSTER CARERS LOOK AFTER ME?

While you are with your foster carers you should:

- Feel safe, secure and protected
- Be listened to and treated fairly and equally
- Be given information, advice, healthcare and an education
- Enjoy your religion and culture and all things that come with that such as food and prayer
- If you have a disability, you have the right to any help you need



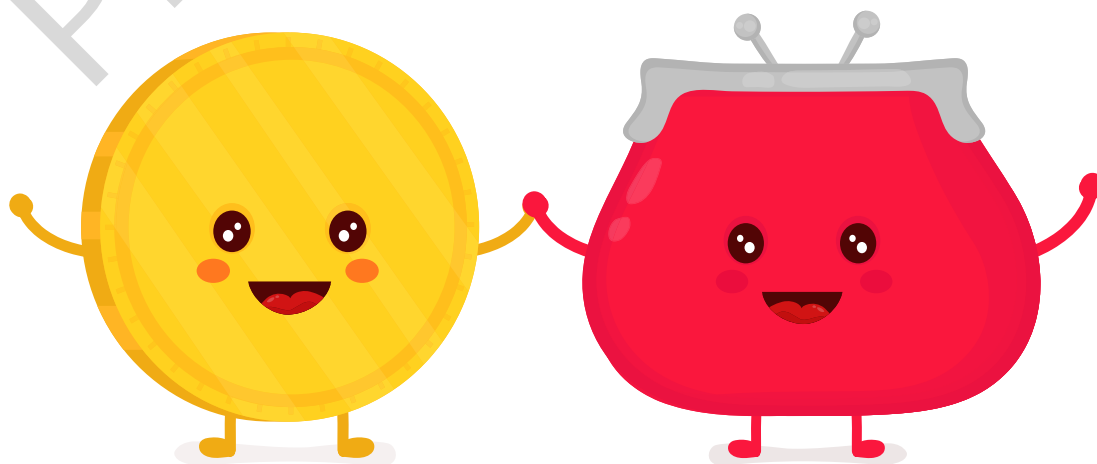
For more information on your rights you can speak to a member of the Participation Team on 01325 406810.

WILL I GET POCKET MONEY?

You will get pocket money each week which you can spend or save up to buy something nice. Your carers will also save some money for when you are older.

You will get presents on your birthday and at Christmas or other religious festivals and you might get some money instead of presents so you can choose what you would like

Your Social Worker and foster carer can tell you more about pocket money.



HOW LONG WILL I BE IN FOSTER CARE?

It is only natural that when you first come into care you might feel scared or upset or you might feel happy because it is new and exciting.

Your carers and Social Workers will do all they can to help you settle into your new foster home quickly and make sure you feel welcome and safe.

Once you have been in care for a little while you will have something called a 'review'.

This is a meeting all about YOU and how you are getting on in your foster home.

You should go to this meeting if you are able to so you can say how you are feeling and what you think will help you to do well.

The person in charge of these meeting are called Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO). You will have your own IRO and you can contact them or your Social Worker in between these meetings if you are worried about anything.

MY IRO IS CALLED:

.....

I CAN SPEAK TO THEM ON:

.....

.....

.....



WHAT ABOUT SCHOOL?

School is very important and if you are already at a school we will do our best to try and keep you at that school.

It's important because it's where you learn new subjects, grow up, make new friends and you get the chance to take part in activities after school too. We know you might sometimes find it 'boring' but it can lead to great things!

Your teachers will know that you have gone to live with a foster carer, but it is your choice if you want to tell other people. If you have any problems or are being bullied you must tell your teacher, Social Worker or foster carer.

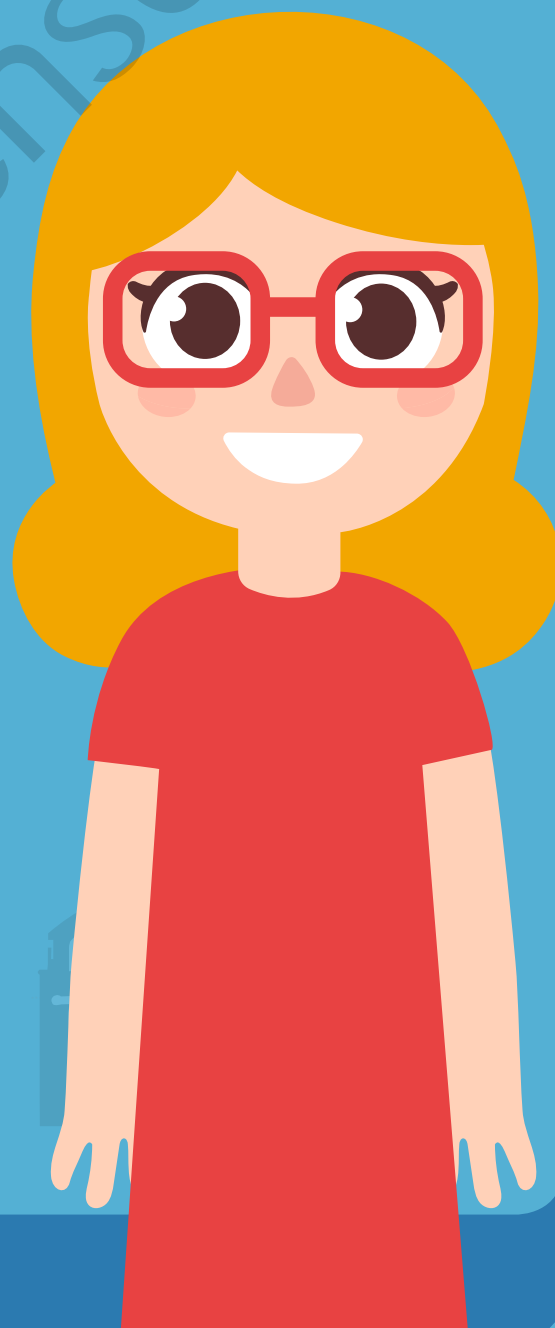
Your foster carer will help you with your homework, make sure you go to any after school activities you want to do and will attend your parent's evenings.

THIS IS YOUR LIFE

Your Social Worker and carers will help you put together a life story book once you have settled into your new home.

This will help you understand the reason for being in care and help you to feel more positive about being looked after.

It is your book or memory stick, your story and something for you to keep forever.



WHAT ARE THE RULES?

Like any home your foster carers will talk to you about how they expect you to behave.

This will involve things like looking after your room, being kind and polite to others, going to bed on time, going out and coming in as agreed, accessing the internet appropriately, seeing friends and trying hard at school.

WHAT AM I ALLOWED TO DO?

Why not talk to your carers about some of the things below to see what they think...



AM I ALLOWED A PET?



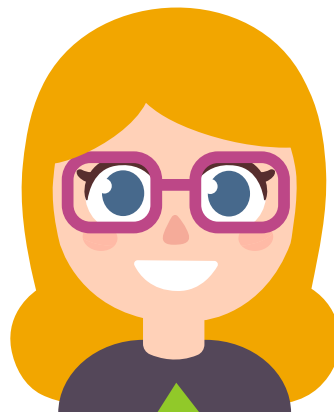
DO I GET POCKET MONEY?



WHAT TIME DO I HAVE TO GO TO BED?



WHAT TIME ARE MEAL TIMES?



CAN I HELP MYSELF TO FOOD?



WHAT ACTIVITIES/CLUBS CAN I DO?

WHAT IF I HAVE A PROBLEM OR AM UNHAPPY?

Everyone around you at this time wants you to feel happy and safe. But if you don't or have a problem with anything then talk to someone you trust like your carers or Social Workers.

The best way to solve a problem is to talk to them and be totally honest about what is happening and how you feel.

Sometimes it can be hard to tell the people you live with that you are unhappy or that you don't like something that they do. If you want to speak to someone other than your carers or Social Worker you can contact:

Darlington Borough Council Complaints Team

Here you will speak to someone who can help put things right. We will not provide you with a poorer service if you make a complaint.

Phone: (01325) 406777 / Text: 07852 715 241

Email: complaints@darlington.gov.uk

On-line form: www.darlington.gov.uk/complaints

Visit: The Town Hall, Darlington, DL1 5QT

OFSTED inspect children's residential homes and local authority fostering adoption services. You can also contact them on 0300 123 1231 or email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Or another useful numbers to keep in mind is:

ChildLine - 0800 1111 / www.childline.org.uk

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

- 0808 808 1001 / www.nyas.net / help@nyas.net

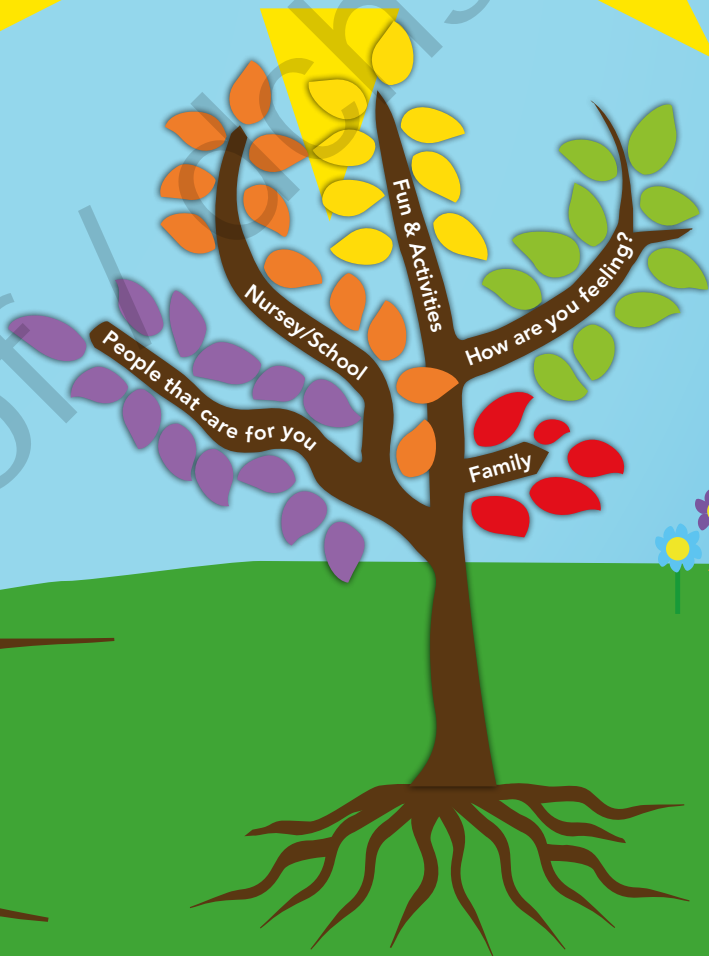
Changing Futures NE - 01429 891444 /

www.changingfuturesne.co.uk / admin@changingfuturesne.co.uk





THESES ARE
DARLINGTON'S PROMISES
TO OUR LOOKED AFTER
CHILDREN & CARE LEAVERS
TO ENSURE THEY
THRIVE!



HAVE YOUR SAY!

You are always more than welcome to speak to one of the Team's Participation Officers about ways we can improve things for children and young people in care.

Also we'd love to know what you think about this guide – what you like, which bits were boring, did it help you or how can we make it better?

One way to have your say and share your views is through Mind Of My Own. The One app is a communication tool created by Mind Of My Own which makes it easier for you to express your thoughts, experiences, good news and report any problems to your Care Team.

Ask your foster carer about downloading the app or when your Social Worker next visits ask if you can use Mind Of My Own with them to record what you are telling them.



To speak to Jo or Andy, your Participation Officers, you can call 01325 405639 or email mindofmyown@darlington.gov.uk