



Children's guide to being in foster care

giving
local
children
roots



Nottinghamshire
County Council

Reasons for being in foster care

There are lots of different reasons that children are fostered. Sometimes, parents and family members are not able to give you all the things that you need to help you to grow up safely and healthily, or it could be that your parents cannot look after you because they are unwell.

Sometimes you might hear that you are 'looked after'. This means that the local authority (Nottinghamshire County Council) is making sure that you are well and safe whilst you are not able to live with your parents or carers.

Your social worker will be able to talk to you about the reasons that you are in foster care, because these reasons will be different for everyone.



Being in foster care

If you are unable to live with your parents or carers, you may need to be looked after by another family. Some children may already know their foster carer before they go to live with them. They may be one of your family or a friend. Other children will go to foster carers they do not know. You may feel worried about that, but your foster carer will help you feel at home by finding out about you and what things make you happy. These foster families are chosen by your social worker to look after you. Every fostering family is different. Your social worker will give you a welcome book, which tells you about your foster family, so that you can see who lives in the foster family and know a bit about them.



Foster carers will look after you if you are ill, make sure you go to school or nursery, help you keep in touch with important people in your life, whilst also making sure you feel safe and well.

At Nottinghamshire County Council, we help foster carers look after you. Foster carers have their own social worker (called a supervising social worker) who you will also get to meet. They will meet with your foster carers regularly to support them to look after you in the best way possible, alongside your social worker.



All about me



It's very important to us that your foster carer gets to know all about you, including your likes and dislikes, so that they can look after you in a way which makes you happy.

My name is _____

I am _____ years old



I like



I don't like

What does my social worker do?



You will have your own social worker and they will stay in touch with you. You can also phone them or email them. You can also phone them or email them if you have any worries. Your social worker, alongside others, is there to help you and make sure you are being looked after well.

My social worker's name is:

Phone

Email

Your social worker will explain to you what is happening and what is going to happen in the future. They will visit you regularly and will listen to you, look at supporting contact between you and people who are important to you; where it is safe to do so.

You can also contact your social worker via an app called Mind of My Own. This app is a great way to put down your thoughts and send them to those who need to hear from you. Your social worker will help you to download it for your phone or computer.



What is going to happen next?



Your social worker will write a care plan, this is to work out what is best for you and what will happen next. A special meeting will be held to discuss your plan, and you'll be able to share your own views too. Everyone who is important to you and working with you or your foster carers, will be invited to the meeting, you can even go yourself if you want too.

The person in charge of the meeting, is called the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) You can talk to them between your meetings if you want to.



My independent reviewing officer's name is:

Phone

Email



Your rights



You have the right to be safe and well cared for by your foster carers.

You have a right to be spoken to and listened to about what is happening to you. This does not mean that you will always get what you want, but that your views will be taken seriously. You will always be told about any decisions made and given reasons for these.

If your care plan is being decided by a judge, then you will have your own solicitor and another social worker called a guardian, as well as your own your social worker. This is to make sure that your views are listened to within court proceedings. These decisions may not always be what you want, as the judge must think very carefully about what is safe for you and best for your future. Any decisions will always be shared with you.

You may want an advocate; this is someone who does not work for the council. An advocate can visit you, to support you to get your views across, for example in a meeting or to make a complaint about how you are being cared for. If you feel that you would benefit from an advocate, ask your social worker.



What if you are unhappy or have any worries?



If you have any worries or are unhappy, then your foster carer and social worker can listen to these and try to help you the best that they can. Sometimes, these worries may be about something in your foster home, like the food you are given, or it could be that you are treated differently, which makes you feel upset or sad. Your foster carer is not allowed to hurt you, nor is anyone else.

There are lots of ways you can tell us of your worries, you can let us know through our Mind of My Own app (your social worker will help you download this) and you will be able to send any issues or worries to them, the Independent Reviewing Officer, or the supervising social worker.



If you are still unhappy, then you can make a complaint by visiting www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/contact-and-complaints and filling in the online complaints form.

There are also other agencies that you can share any issues or worries with

OFSTED

Ofsted is a government organisation that makes sure the council is doing all it can to make sure that you are looked after properly. Sometimes, Ofsted staff will visit and speak to social workers, managers, foster carers or others who are involved in making sure you are well cared for.

Ofsted likes to hear from children and young people, as your views are very important. You can contact Ofsted if you would like to, using the details below.

Address:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Childline

Childline has a website that you can look at which has lots of useful information on. You can also talk to someone online or on the telephone if you have any worries or concerns.

Telephone: 0800 1111

Website: www.childline.org.uk



Children's Commissioner

There is a Children's Commissioner who promotes and protects rights of children and young people.

The website gives you the opportunity to ask your own questions as well as look at information you might find useful.

The commissioner's 'help at hand' service offers free support and advice. It has a helpline for children in care:

Telephone: 0800 528 0731

Website: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Email: help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

It's important to us that you feel safe and are well cared for. We want you to achieve the best that you can, so that can reach your full potential.

We make sure that every child and care leaver:

- is safe and feels safe
- experiences good physical, emotional and mental health & wellbeing
- fulfils their potential
- makes a positive contribution to their communities
- is supported as they become an adult
- finds a good job and is able to be financially independent



We hope that you feel happy and safe during your time in our care and welcome any feedback. Remember, if you are worried about anything, or if you want to have a say about what is happening to you, then you can always use the Mind of My Own App or talk to a trusted adult around you.

In Nottinghamshire, we also have our Children in Care Council (CICC), which is called 'NO LABELS'. The groups meet to talk about life in care. Their input helps shape the work we do too.

The Children in Care Council (CiCC) is made up of three sub-groups who meet six times a year in Mansfield.

- Junior sub group: for those aged 8 to 12
- Senior sub group: for those aged 13 to 17
- Care leavers sub group: for those aged 18 to 25

If you would like to join one of the CICC sub groups or get further details about how to get to the meetings, then please contact 01623 624179. Alternatively, you can find out more about 'NO LABELS' by asking your social worker for further information.





Contact details: