

YOUR GUIDE TO FOSTER CARE



Young person's guide

INTRODUCTION

This guide has been written for young people who are being looked after by foster carers. It contains lots of information that you might need to know about living in foster care.

While you are living here we want you to be safe and happy.

We understand this may be a difficult time for you but your social worker should explain the reason why you are living here and your foster carer will be happy to answer any question you may have.

They are here to help and support you !

If you have any questions about anything you read in this guide, you can discuss these with your foster carer or your social worker.

This guide has been produced with the assistance of young people living in foster care in Blackpool.

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ALL ABOUT YOU

Name:

Address:

Phone No:

My foster carers:

School:

tel:

Social Worker:

tel:

Social worker's Duty telephone no:

Your Independent Reviewing Officer:

Tel:

YOUR SOCIAL WORKER

Your social worker is someone that has been specially trained to work with children and young people and their families. They will visit you regularly and keep in touch with your family and your foster carer. Your social worker is there to help YOU and YOUR family.

FOSTERING SUPPORT WORKER

A fostering support worker is someone that looks after foster carers and makes sure that they are looking after you. They will visit your foster carer on a regular basis and would be happy to speak to you if you have any worries.

INFORMATION ABOUT ME – MY FILE

Your social worker has to keep written information about you and your family, this is a way of ensuring you are being looked after properly. If you would like to have access to this information please ask your social worker.

MEETINGS AND REVIEWS

Throughout your stay with your foster carers, there will be regular meetings held to discuss how you are and to make plans for your future. It is your social workers job to arrange these meetings. Your parents, social worker, teacher and foster carers will be some of the people who may be invited to attend these meetings.

The meeting will be chaired by an Independent reviewing Officer (IRO), their job is to make sure you are being looked after properly and to listen to your wishes and feelings when making decisions about your future. You should be given the name of your IRO shortly after you start to be looked after. If you wish to contact them please call [01253 477544](tel:01253477544).

It would be great if you could attend these meetings as they are about you. However, if you do not wish to attend, you will receive a consultation form to complete which will be read out at the meeting.

Your foster carer can also pass on your wishes and views if you would like.

Your Social Worker will talk to you about attending these meetings and having your views heard.

The first meeting will be held within four weeks of moving in to your foster carers. It is held to make sure you have settled in ok and discuss plans for your future. They will also ask about your health, school, hobbies, friends, when and how often you see your family and anything else you would like to discuss.

SEEING YOUR YOUR FAMILY

In most cases, all young people will be encouraged and helped to see their families as often as possible. It is your social worker's job to make these arrangements for you and your family. Sometimes there may be reasons why this is not possible and these reasons will be explained to you. Your social worker will discuss with you about how, when and where you will see your family.

LOOKED AFTER

You may hear people use the term 'Looked After' when they are talking about you. All this means is that Blackpool Council through Children's Services are looking after you whilst you are unable to live at home. Whilst you are being 'Looked After' your social worker will keep in regular contact with you and your family by telephone and visits.

RELIGION AND CULTURE

If you would like to go to church, a mosque, a synagogue or any other place of worship to practice your faith, talk to your foster carer or social worker about arranging this. You will be able to choose clothing, hairstyles and diet to maintain your cultural identity.

WHERE YOU LIVE

Your foster carer will talk to you about the things that you like. There may be favourite meals that you would like to have or interests, clubs and organisations that you may wish to be involved in. You should also be able to carry on with any activities or interests you had before you came to live with your foster carers. Just let your foster carer know and they will do their best to arrange this for you.

When foster carers are making decisions that effect all the family, your foster carers should encourage you to take part in the decision making process.

BEDROOMS

Everyone has a right to space and privacy and your bedroom is somewhere for you to go to if you need some quiet time. People should not go into other people's bedrooms without their permission and should respect each other's privacy. We should always knock before we go in.

POCKET MONEY

You will receive pocket money from your foster carer on a weekly basis. The amount you receive depends on how old you are. It's up to you how you want to spend your pocket money. If you would like to save your money, speak to your foster carers or social worker about opening a bank account for you.

FOOD

Your foster carer will talk to you about the foods you like and dislike. They will make sure you get a healthy balanced diet. You should never be made to eat food you dislike or are allergic to and your religious dietary needs should always be respected.

It could be helpful to go shopping with your carers so you can show them the things you like.

If you are having problems that prevent you from eating, or are worried about food in other ways, there is help on offer. Talk to someone you trust so that they can support you.

USING THE TELEPHONE

You should be able to use the telephone to phone and receive calls from your family and friends as long as your social worker says its ok.

HOUSE RULES AND SAFE CARING

Every fostering home has what's known as a Safer Caring Policy which will detail the household rules. These could include getting up times, bed times, meal times, playing with pets, going out / coming in. Your foster carer will discuss this with you.

Everybody, whether you're a young person or an adult needs boundaries and when we do something wrong we need to have this explained to us so we can learn to do the 'right' thing next time. Your foster carer will discuss with you what will happen if your behaviour is unacceptable. You might for example be grounded and unable to go out and see your friends.

YOUR FOSTER CARER MUST NEVER:

- Smack you or physically hurt you.
- Call you or people you care about names.
- Stop you from seeing your parents as a punishment.
- Stop you from having sleep, food, drink or withhold Medication.
- Take all your pocket money (but you may have to pay part of it if, for example, you're paying for something that you have broken).

HEALTH

When you come to live with your foster carer you will if possible remain with your own doctor and dentist. If you do not have a dentist and /or a doctor your foster carer will arrange one for you. They will also make an appointment for you to have an eye test, just to check everything is ok. Once a year you will be asked to go for a Health Assessment, your foster carer and social worker will support you in attending but will also respect your privacy as you get older and may wish to attend alone. If you feel uncomfortable in any way about being accompanied for appointments by your foster carer, you should talk to someone you feel you can trust, either your foster carer, social worker or maybe your teacher at school. The Health Assessment is to ensure you are fit and healthy and monitor your health needs. You will be supported by your carers if you are ill. They will know what to do and arrange for you to see a Doctor if necessary.

PERSONAL CARE

Your foster carer will provide you with personal care and bathing items. If you require other essential items, discuss this with your foster carer and they should purchase them for you. Make-up can be purchased with your pocket money.

If require specific products for hair and skin care, your foster carer will be responsible for purchasing these items for you.

Your cultural background and religion may influence what you do with your hair e.g. your religion may require you leave your hair uncut. This will always be respected. You may need to make your foster carer aware of these things so they can support you.

YOUR FEELINGS

It's important that you are able to share what makes you happy or sad and any worries that you may have. Your foster carers and social worker want to help and support you, so if there's anything you are worried about please talk to them or someone else you trust. It maybe about bullying or being hurt by someone, maybe you just need help with homework. They are there to listen and support you no matter what it is.

If you don't find it easy to talk, maybe you could write it down.

There may be times when you feel like running away because of something that is happening or because you feel unhappy.

If you did not return to your foster carers lots of people would be worried about you and you will be reported as missing.

Please telephone or text your foster carer to let them know that you are safe.

If your foster carers do not know where you are they may have to tell the police, social worker and your family.

Your foster carers would be really happy to know that you are safe and will always welcome you back. If you come back home to them then they can help you with whatever is worrying you.

**REMEMBER YOUR FEELINGS ARE
IMPORTANT TO US.**

BLACKPOOL CHILDREN'S RIGHTS SERVICE

They can help with any problems, support you through making a complaint and explain your rights. They can provide you with an Advocate. This is someone who will help you get your views across, they can attend meetings with you and speak to your social worker, foster carer, teacher if you feel unable to do so.

If you want to make a complaint, an advocate can help you to do this. They won't talk to anyone else about the things you tell them (unless you ask them to or you or someone else could be at risk if they said nothing)

CONTACT THEM FREE ON 08000856234

TALKING TO ME

You have the right to be 'consulted' about decisions that are made about you. This means people will ask you for your views and listen to what you say. It doesn't mean you will always get what you want but you will be told the reasons why.

COMPLAINTS

If you are not happy with the way you are being looked after you must tell someone. You need to tell us how you feel so we can try and sort it out. If you have no one to speak to it may be easier to fill in the complaints form at the back of this guide. Just complete the form and put it in the envelope provided.

Your complaint will be dealt with quickly, thoroughly and in confidence everything you have to say will be taken seriously. The complaints system does work and we have helped other young people by listening to them and taking on board suggestions for improvement.

REMEMBER

- You have the right to be listened to and consulted with.
- If you don't tell anyone, we can't do anything about it.
- You **WILL NOT** get into trouble for telling the truth.

EDUCATION & INDEPENDENCE

All young people under the age of 16 are legally required to attend school every day. You will still be able to attend your own school unless there are very good reason that cannot do so.

If you are worried about going into school please tell your foster carer or social worker so they can help support you.

Whilst living with your foster carers, you will be involved in making plans to ensure that you receive an education. This will help to give you better opportunities in the future. Within 6 weeks of attending school after coming to live with your foster carers you will be asked to complete a PEP (personal education plan) with your teacher. This is to ensure you are happy in school and are achieving goals that have been set. This plan will be reviewed every year

If you are out of school for a long period of time, everyone will help to support you to get back into education. Your foster carers will encourage you to do homework and offer any help you might need. They will also attend consultation evenings in school and keep in regular contact with your school. If you are of school leaving age speak to your foster carer and social worker about support with further education or job opportunities.

LEAVING HOME – YOUNG, FREE AND INDEPENDENT

Just before you reach the age of 16 you will be allocated a Personal Advisor from the Leaving Care Team. Your Personal Advisor has a responsibility to work with you in devising a 'Leaving Care Plan' or 'Pathway Plan'. Your foster carer will also be involved in helping you to prepare. The plan should include education, training, work and where you want to live in the future.

This can be a scary time for anyone but the thing to remember is that there are people to help and support you. Make sure you speak to your social worker or your foster carer, so they can help you get all the information you need.

Any moves that take place should be planned over time, not just a sudden event. Any plans should be discussed with you and will usually be talked about at your review meetings.

MONEY FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION

If you are at school or in further education it will be free as it is for any person under the age of 19. The rules about getting benefits are complicated so it's important to get advice from your social worker, or Personal Advisor from the Leaving Care Team.

USEFUL CONTACTS

The inspectors who check you are looked after properly work for Ofsted.

If you are not happy about living with your foster carer or have a complaint, you can contact any of the services below and they will help you.

Right's 4 Me (ofsted)
Free phone **08005280731**
www.rights4me.org

Child line
Freephone **0800 11 11**

Or write to:

The Office of the Children's Rights Director
Ofsted
Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

Kidscope (if you
are being bullied)
tel: **08451 205204**
or cybermentors.org.uk

Customer Care Team
Tel: **477700** or e-mail them at

Social.Services@Blackpool.gov.uk

Blackpool Children's Rights Service
Free Phone **08000856324** or e-mail childrenssociety.org.uk

Your independent reviewing officer
Tel **01253 477544**

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

NAME.....

I THINK THIS GUIDE IS: (CIRCLE YOUR ANSWER)

GOOD

OK

RUBBISH

Is there anything else you would like to know?

YES / NO

If YES please write your question in the box below

Tear off the page give and give it to your foster carer or the fostering Support worker.

We will be in touch soon with an answer.



YOUNG PERSON'S COMPLAINT FORM

Name

Address.....

.....

Phone No./ Mobile.....

When Can We Contact You.....

Write your complaint here:

If you need more space to write please use the back of this form.

Please send this form (no stamp needed) in the envelope provided to
FREEPOST NWW 6785
Customer Care Team
Blackpool Council
Children, Adult & Family Services
Progress House
Clifton Road
Blackpool
FY4 4US

Or ring us on: **01253 477700**

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Or you can email us at: Social.Services@Blackpool.gov.uk