

Children's Guide

An information guide for children and young people aged between 11 - 18



Contents

About the National Fostering Agency	P.1
Social Workers & Supervising Social Worker	P.2
Care Plans & Reviews	P.2
Contact	P.2
Consultation & Participation	P.3
Activities & Holidays	P.4
Overnight Stays	P.4
Bedrooms & Personal Belongings	P.5
Rules & What if I do Something Wrong?	P.5
Allowances	P.5
Education	P.6
Health	P.6
Bullying	P.7
Child Protection & Safeguarding	P.9
Independence	P.10
Making a Complaint	P.11
Useful Contacts	P.11
Have Your Say	P.12
Don't Forget!	P.15

About the National Fostering Agency

The National Fostering Agency (NFA) is a fostering agency that has been working for over fifteen years to provide safe and caring homes for children and young people who are unable to live at home. The NFA operates in England, Wales and Scotland.

The NFA understands that every child and young person is different and we do our best to find the right family for you. This process is called 'matching'.

Your foster carers are supported by NFA's experienced and qualified staff; who are called supervising social workers. Supervising social workers will support your foster carer and they will also work closely with your social worker.

You can ask your foster carer, supervising social worker and your social worker any questions that you want, they are there to help you.

The NFA wanted to produce a children's guide to fostering. Many of you were asked what you thought the children's guide should contain and we thank you for your input and help in preparing the guide. We hope you like it.

Social Workers & Supervising Social Workers

Your social worker works with you, ensuring that your needs are met. The supervising social worker works with the foster family giving guidance and support. Everyone works together to help ensure that you get the best possible care.



Care Plans & Reviews

Your local authority and your social worker who are involved in looking after you, have to write down what they will do to help you. How they will support your health, education, hobbies and they will help you maintain contact with family and friends. This is called a care plan.

At regular intervals your care plan will be reviewed this may be referred to as a statutory review. The care plan and the review are about you and it is important that you put your point of view across and ask whatever questions you need to.

Contact

What is Contact?

You will hear social workers use the word contact, it means keeping in touch with members of your family. The Children Act 1989 stresses the importance of sustaining contact and it encourages all contact plans to lead towards eventually returning home, if it is appropriate and safe. It can be good to see people who know you well and are important to you.



Contact can include significant people from outside of your family e.g. a teacher, school friends. It is important for you to maintain these types of links within your community.

Your social worker is the one who plans contact, talk to your social worker and to your foster carer about special people that you want to see and speak to, also tell them if there are some people you don't want to see, and say why.

A local authority may in some cases decide that contact is not in the best interests of the child e.g., there may be a risk to the child's wellbeing. To stop contact the local authority must apply for a contact order or an emergency protection order.

Types of Contact

Different types of contact include:

- Face to face visits.
- Overnight stays.
- Outings or events.
- Telephone calls.

- Exchanging of photos, videos, emails or letters.
- Text messaging.

Sometimes circumstances make it difficult to have contact with members of your family, for example if you are an unaccompanied minor, again speak with your social worker as they may be working with agencies such as the Red Cross who will try to trace family members.

Consultation & Participation

The content of the children's guide is based on the results of national consultations and consultations with children and young people looked after in NFA placements. You will be asked to complete 'have your say' brief questionnaire at the time of your foster carer's annual review.

Please use all opportunities to give us your feedback:

- Statutory meetings.
- Meetings with the supervising social worker.
- Forums and events for children and young people.

If you would further like to be involved we are seeking a looked after young person to be on the editorial board of the NFA publication Teenlines, speak to the supervising social worker for more information.



Let's Hear It From You!

The NFA would love to hear from you about your own dreams and aspirations! You may be a very good swimmer and dream of representing your Country in national competitions. You may be a talented musician with a desire to perform. Tell us the best way for us to help you achieve your aspirations and goals.

Let us know - email your dreams and aspirations to ledington@nfa.co.uk



Activities and Holidays

National Fostering Agency foster carers will fully encourage and support you to take up general leisure activities within and outside of the home. If you have any interests or hobbies eg, football, swimming, dancing, photography, going out with friends, or going to the cinema; these will all be actively encouraged. If you want to be given the opportunity to try out new activities, make sure you tell your foster carer and they will do their best to support you.

You may go on holidays, weekends or day trips, maybe with your family, friends or carers. This will be discussed between you, your family, your carers and your social worker.



Overnight Stays

Children and young people of all ages get invited to 'sleep over's' at friend's houses. An overnight stay consists of being away from placement for 24 hours or more. Children's services have a responsibility to make sure that you will be safe. If you want to stay at a friend's house:

- Tell your foster carer, they will want some information about the friend and will probably need to speak with friend's parents, and these are usual measures.
- Your social worker will have to know where you are staying and check that the friend's family are safe.
- Remember the decision on an overnight stay must be made by your social worker, who will want to consult with you and your foster carer.

If you know that sleepovers are likely, raise the subject at your placement agreement meeting, so that any arrangements can be made.



Bedrooms and Personal Belongings

Whilst living in your foster carer's house, you will be given your own bedroom if possible. This is a place where you'll be able to spend some quiet time where you can relax or do some work. It is your own space where you can keep all of your personal belongings. If you have anything of value (eg, jewellery, savings book) you need to let your foster carer know, so it can be kept safe.

Your foster carers may need to go into your room from time to time but they will always knock first. Remember that you should never go into someone else's room without permission.



Rules and What if I do Something Wrong?

All family homes have their own rules and these might be a bit different to what you are used to. You won't be able to do anything you want because your foster carers have made a promise to keep you safe. Rules are there to make the family home run as smoothly as possible, allowing you to keep safe whilst getting enough rest and nutrition you need to develop physically and healthily. Having rules doesn't mean your foster carers don't want you to have fun, because they do. They just want to keep you safe as well.

If you break one of the rules, it may be necessary for your foster carers to use some form of consequence. This may take the form of grounding, telling off, the stopping of leisure activities or additional household chores.

Allowances

Whilst living in foster care you are entitled to weekly pocket money. The amount will be agreed at your placement agreement meeting between you, your foster carer and social worker. The National Fostering Agency recommend the following amounts:

Age	11 - 12	13 - 14	15 - 16	17 - 18
£ Per Week	£5/£6	£7/£8	£9/£10	£12

You are also entitled to a clothing allowance. You can discuss this with your foster carer and agree on a reasonable amount.



Education

The National Fostering Agency greatly values education and believes that children and young people in foster placements should be fully supported and given every opportunity to reach their full educational potential.

You have a responsibility to make sure that you go to school every day, if there are reasons why you do not want to go to school, speak with your foster carer and social worker, they will help where they can, but all children and young people between the age of 5 and 16 must be in education.



Personal Education Plans

These include educational targets, what you enjoy, what you are good at and areas that you would like to improve; you should have a personal education plan. If you have special needs you will have a statement which also makes plans for your educational future.

Your foster carers will support you in your education, they will ensure that you have what you need and a quiet place to study, they will attend meetings at school and speak with your teacher. Many schools have a home-school agreement and carers and parents will have a copy of this and help when it is appropriate.

Further Education

You may wish to stay on at school (year 12 and 13, or six form colleges) you may be interested in applying for a place at university or college, your foster carer, social worker and school can help you consider the options and make the appropriate applications. It is important that you get a good education and the opportunity for a career you will enjoy.

Health

It is important that you know how to look after your health. For example eating good food, and taking part in physical activities and other things that you enjoy. Your foster carer will make sure that you are registered with a doctor, and a dentist. At the stage of your placement agreement meeting a health record will be completed, this is to help ensure that your health needs are met. Your foster carers will encourage you to take any medication or treatment you need; this will include wearing glasses or contact lenses, if you need them.



To stay physically, mentally and sexually healthy it helps if you get advice, where appropriate, about matters such as drugs, alcohol, smoking and sex. The NFA publication Teenlines features regular articles and if you need specific information do ask your foster carer, or your social worker.

Bullying

Children sometimes bully others because:

- They don't know it's wrong.
- They are copying older siblings or other people in the family whom they admire.
- They haven't learnt other ways of mixing with their school friends/peers.
- Their friends encourage them to bully.
- They are going through a difficult time and are acting out aggressive feelings.
- They may be jealous.

Bullying includes:

- People calling you names.
- Making things up to get you into trouble.
- Hitting, pinching, biting, pushing and shoving.
- Taking your things.
- Damaging your property.
- Threats and intimidation.

You should:

- Tell someone: teacher, lecturer, foster carer or social worker.
- Contact an agency for advice and information (see the 'Useful Contacts' section).

Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is bullying and harassment through email, instant messaging, text messages, blogs, websites and mobile phones. It is also called electronic bullying, SMS bullying, mobile bullying, online bullying and internet bullying. Cyber bullying causes distress and is wrong! We have listed some ways to protect yourself.

If you receive a nasty **email** it is best not to reply. If they do not stop tell your foster carer, they may be able to contact the service provider. If a situation repeats itself or is serious and is worrying you, save and print off the emails. They will provide evidence in case your foster carer needs to take action.



Do not give out personal information in **chatrooms** or through any **instant messenger**. Do not respond to abusive messages - ignore them or log off. Always think about what you write and how you write it.

Do not reply to any **text** or **video messages** that are rude or nasty. The mobile service provider (eg, orange, O2) will have a number that you can call to report abusive messaging. Take a look on their website. Be careful who you give your number to and don't leave your mobile lying around.

Using the **internet** for chatrooms, forums and peer-to-peer networks can be great fun, a place to meet new and interesting people and share ideas and information. But you need to be very careful about who you chat to and what information you give out.

Remember, if you've never met the person, he or she is still a stranger, regardless of how often you've 'chatted'. If a stranger walked up to you on the street and asked you for personal details such as your address and telephone number you wouldn't give it to them. The same rules apply on the internet.

Sending text messages, emails and pictures either by mobile phone or on your computer can be a great way to keep in touch with friends. But remember, once that message, picture or email has been sent, you no longer have control over where it goes or who sees it. Images can be copied and manipulated or even posted on the internet without your permission and that confidential text message you sent could easily be forwarded to the wrong person.

Only give your mobile number to people you know and trust. Never respond to a text message from someone you don't know. Remember to always ask permission if you want to post a picture of someone else on the internet.



When registering for things on websites you may be asked to give personal information. Always check that the site is reliable and reputable before giving out any information and make sure they will not pass on or sell your information (well known sites such as the BBC are reliable). Reliable sites will always have a privacy policy which will tell you how your information will be use. This should help you decide if you want to give out your information. Most sites also have a check box at the bottom of the page asking for permission to pass on or use your personal information.

If you have any doubts at all speak to your carer who will be able to help you decide whether the site is reputable.

Child Protection & Safeguarding

Sometimes adults or other young people hurt children harm them in a physical/emotional way and this is not right. Child abuse is wrong and child protection is about preventing and stopping child abuse.

What is Child Abuse?

Physical Injury. This is where a child is beaten/punched/kicked hurt in a physical way.

Emotional Abuse. This is when a parent or carer behaves in a way that is likely to seriously affect their child's emotional development. It can range from constant rejection and denial of affection, through to continual severe criticism. Witnessing domestic violence can be considered a form of emotional abuse.

Neglect. This the persistent lack of appropriate care of children, including love, stimulation, safety, nourishment, warmth, education and medical attention.

Sexual Abuse. This is when a child or young person is pressurised, forced or tricked into taking part in any kind of sexual activity with an adult or young person. This can include kissing, touching the young person's genitals or breasts, intercourse or oral sex. Encouraging a child to look at pornographic magazines, videos or sexual acts is also sexual abuse.

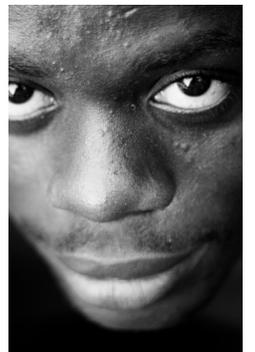
What is a Child Protection Enquiry?

Someone may tell someone at school, or a health visitor or the Social Services that they are worried about a child. A child may then become the subject of a child protection enquiry this may lead to an investigation. The Social Services have a duty to investigate.

Child Protection Conference

It is a social workers job to protect children from harm and if they feel there is concern a meeting called a child protection conference will be held to help decide what can be done to help a child this will become known as a child protection plan. Parents, teacher, social worker and all those who play a part in a child's care may contribute to the plan. You may be able to go to the meeting and should discuss this with your Social Worker.

A key aim of children's services, including local authorities and foster providers is to keep children and young people safe from harm. The law states that abusing children is wrong.



Independence

Becoming independent can be an exciting but challenging time. It is important that you get the advice and support that you need from your foster carer and social worker. You may need to make important decisions about staying on at school, or applying for jobs, or training courses. There is a service called Connexions which provides advice and guidance for all 13 to 19 year olds in England.

Your foster carer will work with you to help develop skills in:

- Managing your money, setting up bank accounts and paying bills.
- Healthy eating, shopping for food and cooking
- Personal Health, first aid, avoiding illnesses, food preparation
- Housing options, DIY, planning preparation
- Education, training, work

Talk through any needs you feel you may have. If you have any questions ask your foster carer or your social worker.

Look out for articles on preparing your CV, job interviews etc in the National Fostering Agency's publication Teenlines.



Making a Complaint

All looked after children have a right to make a complaint, if are not happy with something you can make a complaint to NFA by telephone, in writing or in person. Speak to your foster carer's supervising social worker for further details. Councils have a complaints service, ask your social worker about this service and contact details. Also remember to speak openly to the Independent Reviewing Officer.

Useful Contacts

Commissioner for England

There is a commissioner for children in England and her name is Anne Longfield, and she works to 'promote awareness of the views and interests of children'. The office of the children's commissioner.

20 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT

Tel: 0207 7838330

Website: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Child Line

This is the free 24 hour helpline for children and young people in the UK. Child Line's counselors are there to help and find ways to sort things out. Child Line is confidential - which means they won't tell anyone about your call unless you want them to talk to somebody for you, or you are in danger.

Tel: 0800 1111

Website: www.childline.org.uk

Ofsted

An organisation called Ofsted checks the work of fostering agencies in England.

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street
Manchester, M1 2WD

Tel: Tel: 0300 123 1231

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Coram Voice

Confidential advice and advocacy for children and young people in care of leaving care.

49 Mecklenburgh Square, WC1N 2QA

Tel: 0808 800 5792

Website: www.voiceyp.org

Email: info@voiceyp.org

NSPCC

If you need help or advice, or are concerned that you or another child may be at risk. The helpline is open 24 hours a day.

Tel: 0808 800 5000

Website: www.nspcc.org.uk

National Fostering Agency

If you need to contact us then our details are:

Ground Floor, 920 Birchwood Boulevard
Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 7QS

Tel: 01925 286850

Independent Review Officer write the name and contact number of your IRO below

Have Your Say



Children and young people in foster care have regular reviews. Every year your foster carers also have a review called an annual review or AFCR for short.

The supervising social worker, your social worker and your foster carers all contribute to this review. Your views are also very important to us. Listening to your views and opinions will help us ensure that your foster carers give you the best possible care. We want to hear from you, so please take some time to fill out this form.

Your Details

Name: Date:

Foster Carer's Name:

Supervising Social Worker's Name:

Enjoying Life & Achieving

What activities do you like to do?

.....
.....

How often do you get to do these activities?

Do you like school?

What's your favourite subject?

Does your foster carer encourage you to do your best?

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Health

Are you aware of the benefits of regular exercise and eating well?

Do you understand what is meant by a balanced diet?

Do you have any specific needs or worries in respect to your health?

.....
.....

Staying Safe

Do you feel safe in your foster placement?

Do you feel safe at school?

Is there anything we can do to make you feel safer?

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.....

Making a Positive Contribution

Are you given the opportunity to make your own choices? For example, clothes to buy and wear?

.....
.....

Do your foster carers help you develop practical skills for every day life?

.....
.....



Economic Wellbeing

Do you receive pocket money?

Do you have a bank account?

Are you receiving the advice you need to manage your money?

Summary

What are your foster carers like?

.....
.....

If you could change three things, what would they be?

1,

2,

3,

Thank you for taking your time to fill out this form. You are the most important person to us and we want to know that we are providing the best possible service for you. To help us do this we need to hear from you. Please write your thoughts and suggestions here:

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.....
.....



