

An information guide for  
children and young people  
aged 11 to 18 years



## Young Person's Guide

Aged 11 to 18



Read this  
booklet to  
find the right  
help for you!

# **Welcome to your new foster family and to National Fostering Agency**

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

**This guide is yours to keep.**

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



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## My details

Name:

Address:

Age/Birthday:

My School:

My Careers Advisor:

My Foster Carers:

My Children's Rights Officer:

Emergency Contact:



## Who are NFA and what do they do?

NFA have lots of foster carers in England and Wales. They look after children and young people just like you, to make sure you are happy and safe.

Your Local Authority social worker will still visit you at your new foster home and will speak to your foster carer and NFA social worker to make sure you are okay.

### How can I contact NFA?

If you want to write, call, find us on our website or e-mail us, this is how...

**Post:**

2450 Regents Court,  
The Crescent,  
Birmingham Business Park,  
Solihull  
B37 7YE

**T: 0121 788 0477**

**M: 07917 276 764**

**Email:**

**MidlandsAdmin@nfa.co.uk**

**Website:**

**www.nfa.co.uk**

## NFA Supervising Social Worker

An NFA social worker is someone that looks after the foster carers and makes sure that they are looking after you and that you are okay.

**They will talk to you and YOUR social worker. If you have any problems you can ask to speak to them.**

## Your Social Worker

Your social worker is someone that has been specially trained to work with children 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.**

NFA have to keep information about all the young people who live with their foster carers to make sure they are looked after properly. If you want to see any of the information we hold about you, ask your foster carer, social worker, or contact NFA by telephone on 0121 788 0477 or email [MidlandsAdmin@nfa.co.uk](mailto:MidlandsAdmin@nfa.co.uk)

Your social worker will also have information about you, and you can ask to see these files as well. You are also allowed to write notes in your file if you want to – ask your social worker about this.

### Meetings & Reviews

Throughout your stay with your foster carers, regular meetings are held by Children's Services, (which they have to do by law). Your social worker will arrange these meetings about and for you.

Your parents, social worker, teacher and foster family will be some of the people who may be invited to attend these meetings - as well as anyone else you would like to invite. You can also attend yourself if you wish. These meetings and reviews are to check that things are going okay and to plan for your future. You do not have to go to them if you don't want to - but it is important that the people who do go to these meetings understand and know what YOU want. Speak to your social worker about attending these meetings or having your views heard at the meetings.

Whilst being 'looked after' there are also other types of meetings that discuss things like your school, health, diet and religion. These are held to make sure you are settled in your foster home and they will discuss how long you will live with your foster carers. Your social worker will talk to you and explain a bit more about these meetings. You can also ask any questions about them at any time.



## Being Looked After by Children's Services

You may hear people use the term 'looked after' when they are talking about you. All this means is that Children's Services are looking after you whilst you are unable to live at home, and they are involved in the decisions about your future. Whilst you are being 'looked after' by Children's Services, your social worker will keep in contact by visiting and telephoning your family regularly.



## Contact with your family

In most cases, all young people will be encouraged and helped to see their families as often as possible, but sometimes there may be reasons why this is not possible and these reasons should be explained to you.

**Discuss with your social worker about contact with your family and how you will see and talk to them.**



## Where you live

### House Rules and Safer Caring

Every fostering household has what's known as a Safer Caring Policy which may also detail household rules. These could include getting up times, bed times, meal times, playing with pets, and going out/coming in times.

Ask your foster carer and/or social worker to explain to you about their household and Safer Caring rules.

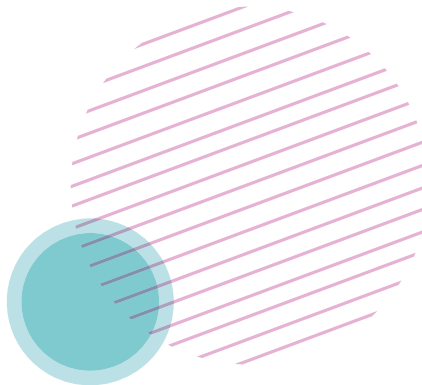
### Bedrooms

Everyone has a right to space and privacy and as such you will have your own bedroom whilst you are staying with your foster carers.

Generally, members of the household will knock before entering anyone's bedroom and we shouldn't touch each other's things unless we have permission. We appreciate that having your own space is important but sometimes there may be occasions where your foster carer may need to enter your bedroom i.e. to clean/tidy your room.

Sometimes there may be occasions where a foster carer may have to ask to search your bedroom, but generally this would only occur if the foster carer has concerns about your welfare or safety. They will seek your permission wherever possible before any search occurs (the foster carer will also talk to your social worker and their supervising social worker about this).

If you want to share a bedroom (with your brother or sister) then you will need to talk to your carer who will listen to you, but they will need to talk to your parents and social worker to make sure this is okay. This means you might not get an answer straight away so always try and be a little patient. Your carer will do their best to get an answer as soon as possible.







## Privacy & Confidentiality

It is really important that you can get some privacy when you need it. This might be time on your own to think or a place to sit quietly to do your homework or play your kind of music.

**It's also important that you have the right to privacy when for example, using the telephone or the bathroom.**

## Using the Telephone

You should be able to use the telephone in private especially if you need to talk to your social worker or the Children's Rights Officer.

Clearly, using the telephone can be expensive so talk to your carer about when you can and cannot use the phone.

**As long as it has been agreed by your social worker you should be able to phone and receive calls from your family.**



### **When things aren't going well**

The thing to remember is that whatever you've done nobody should ever smack, hit or hurt you. However, at NFA we believe that 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.

This might mean that for example, you might not be able to go out with your friends for a while ('grounded').

## **Your foster carer MUST NEVER:**

- Smack you or physically hurt you
- Stop you from seeing your parents because you've been naughty
  - Lock you in a room.
- Stop you from having food or drink.
  - 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)
- Humiliate you

## **Food**

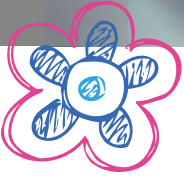
It is important that you like the food that's on offer to you so talk to your carers. They will make sure that they give you food that you like, but they will also need to give you a healthy balanced diet as well.

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 look at the different foods you might not have tried before, as well as the food 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

**REMEMBER** that you can always ring NFA about anything that bothers you.



## You have a voice

Whilst living with your foster carer you should have the opportunity to talk about the way the household is run.

There may be favourite meals that you would like to have or interests, clubs, and organisations that you may wish to be involved in. 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. It's important you voice your opinions.

You should also be able to carry on with any activities or interests you had before you came to live with your foster carers - as long as they are in the area.

## 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.

## Pocket Money

The amount of pocket money you receive from your foster carers usually depends on how old you are.

It's up to you how you want to spend or save your pocket money. If you want to save your pocket money, speak to your carers about opening your own bank or savings account.

How much pocket money will I receive each week:

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### Health

When you come to live with your carer they will register you at a Doctors, Dentists and Opticians. They will support you when you need to go for medicals, but will also respect your privacy as you get older. If you feel uncomfortable in any way about being accompanied for appointments by your carer you should talk to someone you feel you can trust either your carer, social worker or maybe your teacher at school.

Regular exercise and healthy food such as fruit, vegetables and salad are all good for you. It is important that you get a choice of food including the things that you like but remember that carers have a responsibility to make sure you get a healthy diet too. You can expect to be supported by your carers if you are ill and they will know what to do or who to ask to support you.

### Hygiene & Beauty

Your carer will provide you with any items that you need to keep yourself clean. If you require other essential items discuss this with your carer and they should purchase them for you. Make-up can be purchased with your pocket money.

You may require specific products for hair and skin care and your 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 carer aware of these things so they can support you.

## Medical Card

Your medical card is an important document with your full name, date of birth, NHS number and your doctor's details on it. You need it to get medical and dental treatment on the NHS. Your carer will look after it for you until you are 16. After this you are responsible for it so remember to keep it in a safe place.



## Running Away

There may be times when you feel like running away because of something that is happening or because you feel unhappy. It's important you talk to someone you trust about your feelings.

If you do run away, lots of people will be worried about you and your safety. Please telephone or text someone you trust to let them know that you are safe. 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, they can help you with whatever is concerning you.

**Look at p22 of this guide for useful contacts.**

## 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, social workers and legal guardians all want to help and protect you, so if there's anything e.g. bullying or being hurt by someone or maybe you need help with homework, do talk to someone. If you don't find it easy to talk, you could write it down and pass it on to someone you trust.

It is also important to talk to someone you trust (i.e. your foster carer, your social worker, a teacher etc) if someone (this can be someone you know or someone you don't really know) does something that makes you feel uncomfortable or makes you feel unsafe.



## Your education

All children and young people are legally required to attend school every day.

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 so you can have a good job when you grow up.

If you are living near to your home, you may be able to carry on going to your current school, but if you have to move further away, your foster carers and social worker will try to organise a new school as quickly as possible.

If there is any delay in a school being found or if you are excluded from school, you will be expected to complete school work and follow an educational routine at home.

If you are out of school for a long period of time, an Education Welfare Officer may work with you to help you 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.



## Your Rights

Whilst you are living with your foster family it is important for you to know that you have rights and there are certain things that your foster family should support you with. We have given some examples below to help you understand your rights.

### *You have the right to:*

- Be listened to and consulted
- Follow your chosen culture and religion
- Have contact with your family and friends  
(if safe to do so – talk to your Social Worker about this)
- Telephone your social worker if you need to
- Eat a special diet/foods that are part of your culture/religion
- See your social worker if you need to  
– and in private
- Have pocket money
- See a dentist and doctor when you need to
- Go to school and have a state education



## Your rights and who to talk to

### 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.

Look at the back of this guide for useful contacts.

### If you have a complaint or need to talk to someone...

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 leaflet on p21 of this guide so that your voice can be heard.**
- **Or you can phone on 07917 276 764**
- **Or email: [MidlandsAdmin@nfa.co.uk](mailto:MidlandsAdmin@nfa.co.uk)**

If you don’t want to talk to NFA, you can also tell your foster carer, social worker or your parents if you have any problems.

If you have a complaint, we might need to speak to the people who your complaint is about – just so we can get everyone’s views. But we will talk to you first about this.

Also, if you would like to access the support of an independent advocate, for guidance and support let us know and we will arrange this.

For other people you can complain to, besides us, e.g. Ofsted, Children’s Commissioner, have a look at your Useful Contacts sheet, which you’ll find in the back of this guide

### Children’s Rights Officer – Local Authority

The Children’s Rights Officer can help with your problems, show you how to sort out any complaints and explain your rights. Your social worker will give you information about how to contact the Children’s Rights Officer (because they also work with the local authority) from the area that you used to live in. Their advice is completely independent. The Officer won’t talk to anyone else about the things you tell them (unless you ask them to, or unless you or someone else would be in danger if they said nothing). Remember: You have the right to access a Children’s Rights Officer.

### Independent Reviewing Officers

Independent reviewing officers (usually shortened to ‘IROs’) are professionals working with children in care in addition to their social workers. Each child in care should have an IRO.





The IRO's job is to check that the local authority/council is doing what it should be doing for the child while they are in care, to go to all the child's reviews and to make sure they are done properly, to check on the child's care plan, and to make sure the local authority/council takes proper notice of the child's wishes and feelings.

If you want to speak to your Independent Reviewing Officer ask your social worker how you can contact them.

## Independent Advocate

You have the right to have an advocate. This is a person that you can talk to about issues and problems that you might have, when you feel that you are not being listened to, or you wish your views to be taken into account. Independent means they don't work directly for the company.

Your advocate will come and talk to you and can speak for you and help you take part in decisions about your life. It doesn't mean you will always get what you want but your views will be listened to.

### What does an Advocate do?

- They can listen to you
- They can advise you of your rights
- They can provide you with information so you can look at your options

## The thing to remember most of all is

You have a right to complain, a right to voice your opinions and views, and you will not get into trouble for telling the truth.



## Race, Equality and Diversity

### Religion

There are many different religions celebrated in Britain. For example, Hindu, Catholic, Muslim, Protestant, Sikh, Jehovah's Witness, Judaism and Buddhism.

**If you would like to find out more about race, equality and diversity, you could:**

- Ask your teacher
- Look up books on race and diversity in the library

## EQUAL RIGHTS NO MATTER WHAT!

**Q: What does “British” mean to you?**

**A: The word “British” simply means anyone who is born in Britain. It doesn't matter what colour.**

Race Equality means that all people; of any colour, have the right to be treated fairly and that everyone should have the same chance.

## **Bullying**

Bullying happens when people don't understand why someone is different from them. But we all have something in common, we are all human! We should treat each other how we would like to be treated and remember we are all part of the same race it doesn't matter about the colour of our skin or how we speak.

The word "customs" is used to describe how people from different countries and backgrounds do things.

It's really interesting to find out how other people live, what they believe, what they eat and what they wear.

When children come to Britain from other countries they sometimes feel frightened, uncomfortable, sad and lonely. Everything is new to them. You could make them feel better by welcoming them and making them feel happy to be here. You could play with them, talk to them, make friends and invite them to tea.

**Find out about them and tell them about you.**

## **Why does bullying exist?**

**Bullying happens when people don't understand why someone is different from them.**





## Complaints and comments

**Someone from NFA Group will contact you to talk with you about your comments or concerns and look at how we can try and sort things out.**

If you have a complaint, we might need to speak to the people who your complaint is about – so we can get everyone's views. But we will talk to you about this first.

Also, if you would like to access the support of an independent advocate, for guidance and support – let us know and we will arrange this. The thing to remember most of all is – you have the right to complain, a right to voice your opinions and views and you will not get into trouble for telling the truth.

Fill in this form and post it to **Lorraine Edington, NFA Group, Frays Court, 71 Cowley Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 2AE** who will try and get your complaint sorted within 10 working days (20 days if complex) and will keep you updated as to what's happening.

- You can also telephone on: **01895 200300**
- Or email on: **ledington@nfa.co.uk**

Besides NFA Group, you can also complain to the Children's Commissioner/ Ofsted/Care Inspectorate for England, Wales or Scotland, these teams are there to help and advise children who live away from home.

Their details are on p22 of this leaflet.





**Write your worry, complaint or comment on this page so we can try and help you:**

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My name is:

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My Foster Carer's name is:

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Today's date is:

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I would like you to contact me by... (tick one)

Letter ☐      Email ☐      Phone ☐

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Don't forget to let us have your email address or phone number so we can get in touch... write it here:

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## Who else can I contact?

- **Children's Commissioner for England – Anne Longfield**  
Telephone: 0800 528 0731  
Email: [help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)  
Website: [childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)
- **Children's Commissioner for Wales – Sally Holland**  
Telephone: 0808 801 1000  
Email: [post@childcomwales.org.uk](mailto:post@childcomwales.org.uk)  
Website: [childcomwales.org.uk](http://childcomwales.org.uk)
- **Children's Commissioner for Scotland – Bruce Adamson**  
Telephone: 0800 019 1179  
Email: [inbox@cypcs.org.uk](mailto:inbox@cypcs.org.uk)  
Website: [cypcs.org.uk](http://cypcs.org.uk)
- **Ofsted (England)**  
Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 0300 123 1231
- **Care Inspectorate (Wales)**  
Email: [cssiw@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:cssiw@wales.gsi.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 0300 7900 126
- **Care Inspectorate (Scotland)**  
Email: [enquiries@scswis.com](mailto:enquiries@scswis.com)  
Telephone: 0345 600 9527
- **Children's Advocacy Rights UK**  
Telephone: 0808 800 5792  
Email: [info@coramvoice.org.uk](mailto:info@coramvoice.org.uk)
- **Childline**  
Telephone: 0800 1111  
Website: [childline.org.uk](http://childline.org.uk)





## Notes

Use this page to write down the things you would like to discuss with your social worker or supervising social worker.





INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE

Gold  
Until 2019

National Fostering Agency | 2450 Regents Court | The Crescent | Birmingham Business Park | Solihull | B37 7YE

T 0121 788 0477 | E [info@nfa.co.uk](mailto:info@nfa.co.uk) | [www.nfa.co.uk](http://www.nfa.co.uk)