Young People's Guide to Fostering

Updated 2014 by
Middlesbrough Fostering Service
The Pledge

The councillors on the corporate parenting board and other adults involved in your service worked with children and young people to agree the Pledge. The aim of the Pledge is to make sure that plans for your care include the things that are important to you.

The Pledge States

We will try very hard to make sure that you live with people who care about you and care for you

This booklet tells you about living with a foster family. It aims to help you to understand what being fostered means.

It will tell you

- What being fostered means?
- Why children are fostered
- Who goes into foster care?
- About the fostering service
- What does the fostering service do?
- Who will be the right foster family for me?
- Going to live with a foster family
- Keeping in touch with family and friends
- What happens next?
- People to talk to
- Your rights
- Who can help with your rights?
- Useful Contacts

If you do not understand anything, ask your social worker or foster carer to explain.

Your social worker is the person who has been helping you and your family before you came into foster care.

The Pledge says:

“We will explain what words mean and things that you do not understand.”
What being fostered means
Being in foster care means going to stay with another family when you cannot live with your parents for some reason.

Sometimes this is called “going into care” or being “looked after”.

Even though you may be with a foster family for only a short time, they will treat you as if you are part of their family.

Sometimes children are fostered by people they know - relatives or friends of the family.

Please remember that your own family still love you - they just can’t look after you at the moment.

What children are fostered
Every child and young person is different; everyone has their own story.

It is important that you live in a family who will take care of you as you are growing up. There are lots of reasons why some children need to live with a foster family:

- Maybe your parents cannot look after you because they are ill
- Maybe you are not being cared for properly
- Maybe someone has hurt you.
- A court has asked us to care for you
- You may have asked us for help

Sometimes children live with a foster family while we are finding out if there is anyone else who could help - someone in your family or someone who knows you well. Or we could be giving your parents time to make things all right, so you can go home.
Who goes into foster care

Many children live in foster care. They are all different - some of them are babies and some are older.

You may know other children who live in foster care because you have met them at school or they are your neighbours.

Some children live with foster families for just a few months, while others stay for the whole of their childhood.

There are over 57,000 children and young people living with foster families today.

Foster to Famous

These are some famous people who have been in foster care.

Marilyn Munroe
Movie Star

Snoop Dogg
Rap Singer

Kriss Akabusi
Athlete

Neil Morrissey
Actor

Seal
Pop Star

Tracy Beaker
Fictional Character

Kerry Katona
Celebrity

Harry Potter
Fictional Character
About the Fostering Service

The Fostering Service is part of the Well Being Care & Learning in Middlesbrough Council. It is made up of a lot of people who all work together to make sure that you are kept safe and looked after in the best way possible.

Chief Executive - Mike Robinson
Looks after the whole department.

Assistant Director - Neil Pocklington
Looks after safeguarding, children looked after & preventative services.

Service Manager - Jane Wilson
Looks after children living away from home and children with disabilities.

Family Placement Manager - Lynn Woodhouse
Looks after the fostering and adoption services.

Development Officer - Carole Tonner
Helps foster carers by arranging training and keeping them up to date with changes. Tries to make sure the fostering and adoption services do the best they can for you.

These are the people you are likely to see the most.

Supervising Social Worker
Looks after your foster carer - helping them to look after you as best they can.

Support Worker
Helps foster carers if they need a break or have appointments.

Foster Carer
The person or family that looks after you every day.
**What does the Fostering Service do?**

The Fostering Service finds trains and supports foster carers:
- They are very careful about who is allowed to be a foster carer.
- They give them training to help them be good foster carers.
- They give them practical help when they need it.

Most important, the Fostering Service tries to make sure that children live with people that they will get on with.

**Who will be the right foster family for me?**

If it is best for you to leave home quickly, you might be placed with a foster family for a few days until another foster family is found for you.

Your foster carers are there to help you. You should always feel safe and well cared for while you are living with your foster family.

The Fostering Service and your Social Worker will do their best to find a family that they think you will like and where you will settle down well. This is very important if you need to stay with a foster family for a longer time. They will try and find a foster family near where you live, if it is o.k. to do that.

The fostering panel is a group of adults that meet to decide whether people who want to be foster carers can do it properly. They also help to match a child with the right foster family.

The Fostering Service try to make sure your foster family has a similar background to you. If this is not possible, then they are given help to understand things. That might be speaking your language, understanding your religion, and important things about your diet and family traditions. We will get you an interpreter, if you need one.
**Going to live with a foster family**

Your social worker will take you to your foster carer’s home, so you can meet everybody who lives there. They will make sure that you bring your belongings and favourite things. When you move in, your foster carers will show you around and show you your bedroom. They will make you feel welcome.

The Fostering Service makes an agreement with your foster carer, which gives them lots of written information to help them look after you. We tell them about your likes and dislikes, your bedtime routine, the food you eat, the clubs you go to, what you like to watch on TV and even the amount of pocket money you get! We’ll also tell them all about your health and any medicines you need, so you can stay safe and healthy.

Your foster family will have rules about a number of things – watching TV, staying up late, doing school work and many other things. They will talk to you about what these rules are and you will learn them slowly as you live there and become part of the foster family. They will also have routines such as who goes in the bathroom first and when it is time for tea.

If you are not happy with the foster family, talk to your social worker about this. It is very important that you tell them how you feel so that they can do something about it.

Your social worker will try very hard to make sure that you can stay at the same school. If it isn’t possible, they will find another school for you.

If you have a hobby or go to an activity group or club, tell your social worker about it as you might be able to go on attending.
Keeping in Touch with Family and Friends

The word that social workers use when fostered children keep in touch with their families is “contact”. For most children, it is good to have contact with important members of their family. For a few, it may not be possible or it may be upsetting and may not even be what you want. Your social worker will help you sort out your feelings about seeing your family, and who it is good for you to see.

The social worker will explain to your foster family about this and they will help you to keep in “contact” with your family and other people who are important to you - if everyone agrees. If you have a sister or brother and they also have to move into foster care, your social worker will try to place you together in the same foster family. If this is not possible, your social worker will make sure you keep in touch with each other.

What Happens Next

All of the time that you are in foster care, no matter how long, your social worker will visit you to make sure you are happy and well.

After you have been in foster care for four weeks, your foster carer and your social worker will hold a review meeting with other people whose job it is to make sure you are safe and well.

You have an Independent Reviewing Officer who will listen to your views and make sure that you are involved in your review meeting. They will speak to you separately from anyone else if you want them to so that you can say what you think.

You can write down your views in a booklet called, “It’s Your Review”. If you can’t go to your review or don’t want to go to the meeting, your social worker or your Independent Reviewing Officer will pass on your views. You will have regular review meetings as long as you are with your foster carer.

Foster carers also have their own review every year to see if they are still suitable to be foster carers. You, your family and your social worker will be asked what you think about your foster carers. This will help to make sure foster carers are doing a good job.
YOUR RIGHTS

➢ To be protected from harm

➢ To be listened to

➢ To express your wishes and feelings

➢ To be helped to keep in touch with people who are important to you - if this can’t happen your social worker will explain why

➢ To be told clearly what I can do and what I am not allowed to

➢ To be treated well and equally for who I am

➢ To feel secure

➢ To follow my religion I have been used to

➢ To follow any customs because of my race and culture

➢ To have health care that meets my needs including emotional needs

➢ Support for my school work

➢ Help to develop interests I enjoy

➢ To be helped to complain or compliment if things go wrong or right and for someone to represent me

➢ To be helped to see a solicitor about my care order, or any other legal order affecting me - such as contact with certain people in my life
What is a fostering panel?
A fostering panel is a group of adults that meet to decide whether people who want to be foster carers can do it properly.
A fostering panel will help to match a child with the right foster family.

What happens in court?
Social workers might need to go to court to discuss plans that are being made for you. A court is a place where a judge can make a decision about where you live and whether or not you should be “looked after” by Middlesbrough Well Being, Care and Learning.

If you want to find out more about how a court works, there is a little booklet called What Happens in Court?. Ask your social worker to get you a copy.

What is a children’s guardian?
A children’s guardian is someone who finds out what you think and feel and makes sure that your feelings and wishes are told to the court.

What is a care plan?
A care plan is a plan made about how you should be cared for and what the plan for your future should be.

It is important to attend your Review Meetings because, after all, they are all about YOU. And you need to be there to tell the adults who are making plans and decisions for you, how you feel and what you think.
What happens next?
A placement meeting is one where you, your foster carer, your social worker and your parents meet to decide how you will be looked after day to day.

At the placement meeting, many things about you will be shared – the food you like, any medicines you have to take, who you will see from your family and when (this is called “contact” with family members), your school, and so on.

Your social worker will write all this down on a special form so that people looking after you know about you. If you are old enough your social worker will give you a copy. At this meeting you should say what you like and what you don’t like.

Your Review Meeting
It is a chance to talk about you and the plans that are being made for you while you are being looked after by your foster carers and to see how you are getting on.

The person in charge of the meeting is called the Independent Reviewing Officer who will be from the Well Being, Care and Learning

They will make sure that everybody, especially you, has a chance to say what you think and feel and that everyone listens to you.

Decisions will made be, whether or not you will see family members and how often this will be. They will also look at how you are getting on in school and whether you need any extra help.

The Independent Reviewing Officer will write down everything that is decided and this will be on a special form called a “Review Care Plan”. You can ask your social worker for a copy of your care plan.

Your life story
Your foster carer or social worker will help you with your life story.

This could be a book, your own special book, about you, your family, what has happened to you and all the important things about you.

You can include drawings, photographs, and write about anyone and anything that you want to remember.

You keep this book because it is about you and will help you understand why things happened and why you were unable to stay with your parents.
People to talk to...

If you are unsure about anything and need someone to ask, there are lot of people who are there to help you:

- Your Foster Carer
- Your Social Worker
- Your Independent Reviewing Officer
- An Independent Advocate
- Your Teacher

Your family and friends

Who can help with your rights?

If...
- you are not happy with the care you get
- nobody listens to you
- you are not happy with things people do for you
- you need more help

You can talk to.........
NYAS helps children and young people to say what they think and feel. They can speak up for you, if you want them to.

They can help you to have your say when decisions are made about your life. Contact them on:

0808 808 1001

www.nyas.net

e-mail to help@nyas.net

or you can contact the

Children’s Complaints Officer

01642 728416 Mon to Thurs 8.30 - 5.00pm, Fri 8.30 - 4.30pm

Email – voiceyourviews@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Text – 07624 802273
This is what happens when you make a complaint

You will get a letter to say who will help. You should get this letter 3 working days after we hear from you.

A Manager (a boss) will talk to you to about what’s wrong. They will try to sort things out as quickly as they can - within 10 days.

If that doesn’t work, the Children’s Complaints Officer will tell you what you can do next.

There is also

the Children’s Rights Director, Roger Morgan, who looks out for children who live away from home. Contact him on: 0800 528 0731

Or visit the web site: www.rights4me.org.uk

Ofsted - the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills. Ofsted checks up on how well the Fostering Service does its job. When Ofsted inspects the service, an Inspector might ask to talk to you and to other children.

If you are unhappy about the Fostering Service, you can contact ……
the Chief Inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw, on:

0300 123 1231 Mon to Fri 8.00-6.45pm (except Bank Holidays)
www.ofsted.gov.uk or e-mail enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

or write to: Ofsted
National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Useful Contacts</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Your Social worker</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Telephone number</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Reviewing Officer</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Telephone number</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Foster Carer’s Social Worker</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Telephone number</strong></td>
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Other Useful Telephone Numbers

If you have any worries you can ring any of the numbers below:

Service Manager Jane Wilson
Office (01642 201941)
Mobile (07901009556)

Family Placement Manager Lynn Woodhouse
Office (01642 201960)
Mobile (07584 204781)

Fostering Assistant Manager Sue Mansell
Office (01642 201993)
Mobile (07876137653)

Other organisations that can help

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<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Free phone</th>
<th>Website</th>
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<tr>
<td>Childline</td>
<td>Free phone 0800 1111</td>
<td><a href="http://www.childline.org.uk">www.childline.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children's Legal Centre</td>
<td>Child Law Advice line 08088 020 008</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lawstuff.org.uk">www.lawstuff.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Who Cares? Trust</td>
<td>Monday, Wednesday &amp; Thursday 3.30pm-6pm 020 7251 3117</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk">www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk</a> <a href="mailto:mailbox@thewhocarestrust.org.uk">mailbox@thewhocarestrust.org.uk</a></td>
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Children’s Commissioner

The Children’s Commissioner for England, Maggie Atkinson, makes sure that adults in charge listen to your views

The Office of the Children’s Commissioner
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT
Tel: 020 7783 8330
Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk