A children’s guide to fostering under the age of 12

Things you need to know about being fostered

www.kent.gov.uk/fostering
There will be over 50,000 children and young people in foster care today in England!

Every child and young person is different, and has a different story

**It could be because:**

- a court has asked us to care for you
- or there isn’t anyone who knows you well to look after you
- or you may have asked us to help
- sometimes children live with a foster family while we are finding out if there is anyone else in your family, or someone who knows you well, who could help
- or we could be trying to find out when things will be all right for you to go back home.
Every Foster family is different too!

- There may be other young people or children being fostered with the family you are living with.
- Or they may have children who have grown up, or of different ages still living at home.
- We try to make sure your foster family has a similar background to you. If this isn’t possible then they get help in understanding things. That might be speaking your language, understanding your religion, and good things about your diet and family traditions. We will get you an interpreter if you need one.
- And they will always try to understand your health needs.
- We will help you to keep in touch with people who are important to you.
- We will try to keep you going to the same school but if it's too far you will be helped to choose a new one.
- There will be regular visits from your social worker to discuss any problems, needs or wants with you.
Your foster carers are there to help you and you should always feel safe and well cared for while you are with your foster family.

There are a lot of foster families in Kent! And they look after a lot of children! When a family fosters a child they have a special social worker called a “Fostering Social Worker”. Like your own social worker they work for social services too.

It is important to a lot of people that your foster family cares for you in the best possible way. All these people work together to make sure that happens.

**Because you are the most important you are at the top!**
Your foster carer or social worker will help you fill the names in.

You!

- Your foster family
- The fostering social worker
- Their manager
- Your social worker
- Their manager
- Their manager
- Director of Families and Social Care!
- Kent County Councillors!

All of them together provide the “fostering service”

And because every child who lives with a foster family is important the government uses something called “Ofsted - The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills”

At regular intervals they come to talk to people who work for Kent’s Fostering Service.
Ofsted - The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills

All the questions they ask and all the papers they look at help them to decide if Kent is doing the best it can for children in foster care.

One of the papers the inspectors look at is called the “statement of purpose”. It is quite long! But it helps the inspectors to make sure that foster care in Kent is good.

**My Rights**

- To be protected from harm
- To be listened to
- To be helped to keep in touch with people who are important to me - if this can’t happen my 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 the same religion I have been used to
- For any customs I have followed because of my race and culture to carry on and be developed
- 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 if things go wrong 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.

Your social worker will help your foster carer to check these things happen for you by making sure that everything important is written down on a special form. You should be given copies of these and you can discuss them with the social worker.

**And you should always be able to take part in decisions about your care and your future.**
Care plans and reviews

- **A care plan is about your future**

A care plan is about setting out what needs to be done for you. It is also about what you want from the plan and what you need to do to make the plan work.

- **Reviews are meetings which social services must hold for all children who are looked after by foster carers**

Reviews are to agree your plan and make sure everyone is keeping to the care plan. Reviews are also to see whether everyone is satisfied with what is being done and to make plans for the future.

You will have regular reviews while you are in foster care.

You will have someone called an **independent reviewing officer** who is responsible for your reviews. You will be told who your independent reviewing officer is, and you can talk to them about what you want to happen.

You can attend your review. But if you don’t feel ready for this you can ask someone you trust to speak for you. If you like you can write down your views for your independent screening officer or social worker to say at the review.

**Viewpoint** is a fun way of letting everyone know what you think and what you want. You will get help from someone you trust to do this.
There are other people who can help and advise you in addition to your social worker and your foster carer

For some children who do not see their families much, it is possible to have an "independent visitor" this is someone from outside Social Services and your family who can come and see you to talk through things from time to time. If you feel you would like to find out more about this then your social worker will help.

If you want to complain an independent person from Action for Children will help you, your social worker or foster carer can contact them for you if you prefer.

In Kent “Upfront” will support children who are fostered, and can help sort out problems for you. Upfront are only a phone call away on 01622 690977 or email upfront@ylf.org.uk

The Children’s Rights Director, Ofsted is there to listen to what children in care have to say and can give advice.

If you’re not happy with our plans for you, you can talk to your social worker or their boss

If you are still not happy you can speak to their boss!
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If you are worried or have a problem these people can help:

Your foster carer

Your social worker

telephone

email

Your independent reviewing officer

telephone

Office of the Children’s Rights Director
OfSTED, 33 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6SE
0800 528 0731
www.rights4me.org

Action for Children Independent Complaints
and Representation Service

0500 564570

Voice of the Child in Care
(free advice for any child in care needing
support or wanting to make a complaint)

0808 800 5792
www.voiceyp.org

Helpline for children living away from home

0800 884444

Upfront
Robert Runcle House, 2-3, Bedford Place,
Maidstone, Kent ME16 8JB
01622 690977
upfront@ylf.org.uk

And your foster carer or social worker will help you contact them if you like