



A young person's guide to fostering aged 12 and over

Things you need to know about being fostered

There are over 50,000 children and young people in foster care today in England!

Why?

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

- A court is deciding what should happen or has asked us to care for you
- Or, there is not an adult to look after you
- Or, you may have asked us to help
- Sometimes young people 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 about your background
- That may be - your religion, ethnic origin, language, culture (for example things about your diet and family traditions). 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 wishes with you.

Your foster care is individual to you and you should always feel safe and well cared for while you are with your foster family

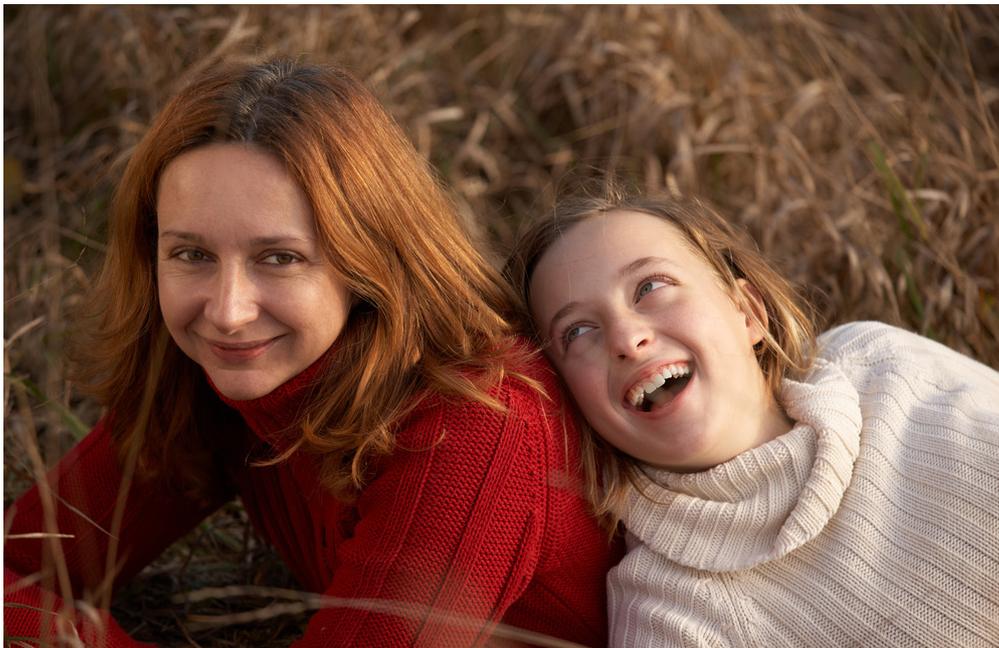
To make sure this happens the government uses “Ofsted, The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills”. People who work for Ofsted know a lot about how children should be cared for.

At regular intervals they come and inspect Kent’s Fostering Service (the part of social services which organises foster care) to make sure that all the foster carers and staff who work for them understand children’s needs. They make sure that the standards of care are high, and that Kent’s Fostering Service has the right people working for it.

To contact Ofsted see the back cover

To see that everyone understands what they are trying to do, Kent’s Fostering Service has a “**statement of purpose**” which is where all things they are trying to achieve are written down.

Here is a summary of the “statement of purpose” for the Fostering Service. If you want to see the full statement ask your foster carer or social worker or telephone **Upfront on 01622 690977** or email on **upfront@ylf.org.uk** (more about Upfront on the back cover).



“The main aim of Kent County Council’s fostering service is to provide stable and first-rate foster care for children of all ages. The fostering service aims to provide a service where children are valued, supported and encouraged to grow and develop as individuals.”



My rights:

- To be protected from harm
- To be able to express my wishes and feelings in the knowledge that my concerns will be taken into account
- Information about my family and other important people in my life and contact with them or a clear explanation of why it is not possible
- To be told clearly what I can do and what I am not allowed to do
- Not to be discriminated against for any reason
- To have stable and nurturing care
- To live with foster carers who have a similar background to me
- For any needs arising from a disability, or my racial, religious, sexuality and cultural needs, to be accepted and supported
- Health care that meets my needs, including emotional and mental health needs
- Support for my education
- Opportunities to develop my skills and interests
- Encouragement to participate in making decisions and plans for my future
- To be prepared for my life as an adult with the necessary help available to me while I do this
- To know how to make a complaint and if things go wrong who can help me
- To be provided with access to a solicitor if I want legal advice 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 decisions for your future

A **care plan** is about setting out what is 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 young people who are looked after. 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 which will be chaired by your independent reviewing officer (IRO). You will be told who your IRO is and how to contact them. So that your feelings can be considered carefully at the review it is important that you attend. Ask someone you can trust to speak for you. If you like, you can write down your views for your independent reviewing officer or social worker to say at the review.

If you attend you can get support and advice from any of these people or from **Upfront**.

Attending your review

Put a tick in the box to show whether you think the statement is true or false

		TRUE	FALSE
1	You should be involved in deciding where and when the meeting takes place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	The review must be held on Social Services premises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Your social worker decides who may come to the meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	You can have an interpreter, or someone to speak on your behalf	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	You should know before the meeting what will be talked about at the review	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	You may talk it over with someone you trust before the meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Your wishes should be taken into account and you should be listened to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	You can ask for someone who is there to leave for part of the meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	You can have facilities provided if you have a disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	You can take notes in the meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	You should understand the decisions made and get a written copy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Notes of the meeting will be sent to those present	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Answers
1 True, 2 False - The Review can take place in any place such as your school, foster home, parent's, as long as this is suitable and agreed by everyone, 3 False - Taking into account your views, your social worker and your IRO will decide who should attend your review, 4 True, 5 True, 6 True, 7 True, 8 True, 9 True, 10 True, 11 True, 12 True

If you are not happy with the way things are being handled while you are in foster care then you have the right to complain to:

Your social worker or their boss. If you are still not happy you can speak to their boss! If you have a complaint you can get a leaflet from your social worker or Upfront that is acting as your advocate.

You will be entitled to have an independent person involved in looking at your complaint. They can be contacted at:

**Action for Children Independent Complaints and Representation Service, 39-48 Marsham Street, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1HH
Freephone 0800 413688**

Upfront is an organisation set up to support young people looked after by Kent. It is not part of social services but can speak to them on your behalf and help you have your voice heard. There are regular meetings in all parts of Kent where you can meet

up with the Upfront team and other young people in care. If you are unable to come to a group, than an Upfront worker will be happy to come and see you. Upfront also produces a magazine called SHOUT! three times a year, that has lots of news, jokes and stories from young people in it. If you don't get this magazine then please let Upfront know. Upfront are only a phone call away on **01622 690977** or email: upfront@yif.org.uk.

There are other people who can help and advise you. Young people who are not having regular contact with their families can have an independent visitor who is someone from outside social services and your family who can come and see you. **For more information see www.kvis.org.uk or ask your social worker.**

The Children's Rights Director of Ofsted is there to listen to young people in care, and can give advice if you need it. See back page for contact details.



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Useful contact numbers:

Your social worker

telephone

email

Independent Reviewing Officers:

East Kent 01227 598509

West Kent 01732 525392

Office of the Children's Rights Director
OfSTED, 33 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6SE

0800 528 0731

www.rights4me.org

Who Cares? Linkline
(freephone for young people in care)

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