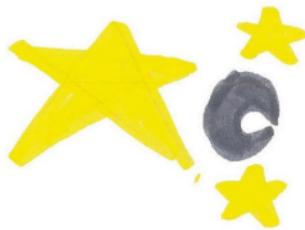


Children's Guide

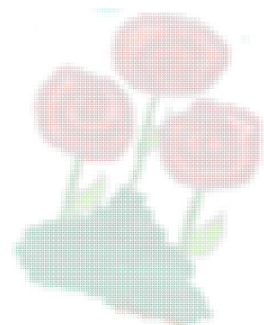




This Guide has been written to help you understand what fostering is about.

It also has information about your rights.

Please ask if you have questions.



CHILDREN'S GUIDE

Contents

About you	3
What is Fostering?	4
Who is everyone and what do they do?	5-8
Who are AFA and what do we do?	9
People I care about	10
Who can I speak to if I'm unhappy?	11
What else do I need to know?	12
We want to know what you think.	13
Information and important contacts	14-15



About You

This page is for you to tell us all about you!

We have made a space for things you like and things you don't like.

Things I like



Things I don't like



What is Fostering?

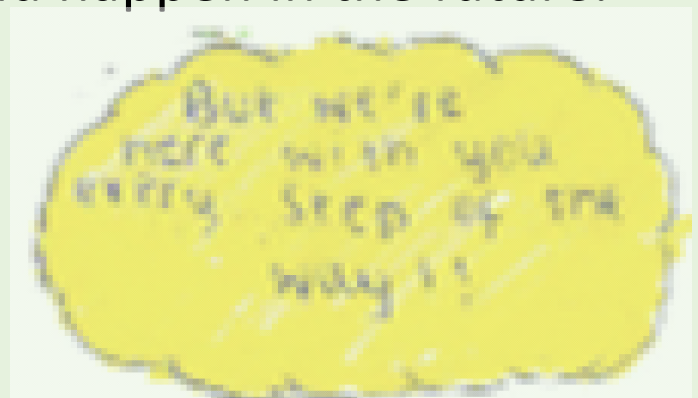
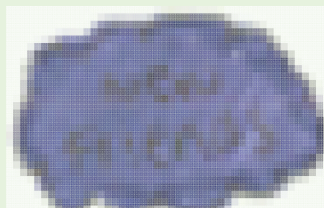
Being in foster care means living with another family because you cannot, at this time, be with the family you were born into.

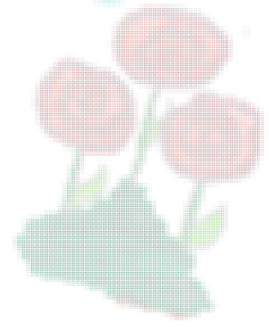
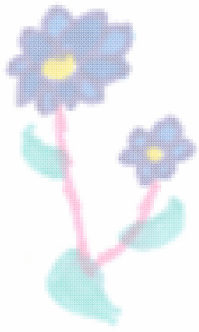
Sometimes this is called “Going into care”, “Being Looked After” or “Being Fostered” and is different from going to stay with your friends or relatives.

There can be many reasons why you are in foster care. Sometimes, families find it hard to give children all the things they need to help them feel happy and safe even though they love them very much. Remember, it’s not your fault and you are not to blame, people just want you to be safe and happy.

Your foster family will look after you as part of their family and give you all the things you need.

You may already know how long you will be in foster care for but many children don’t. Your Social Worker will be working with your birth family to try to help things get better and to think about what should happen in the future.





WHO IS EVERYONE AND WHAT DO THEY DO?



Your Foster Parents

Foster Parents look after children who cannot live with the family they were born into.

They are specially taught to do this and your Foster Parents are “approved” by AFA.

Your Foster Parents will make sure you are safe and happy, have food to eat and a warm, comfortable bedroom.

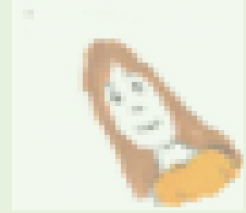
They will help you with school and to do the things you enjoy. They will help you keep in contact with people who are important to you. They will be there for you if you are sad or worried.

You won't have to call your Foster Parents 'Mum' or 'Dad'. They will talk to you to find out what you are both happy with.

There may be other people living in the house with you. These people are a part of the family too.



Who is everyone and what do they do?



Your Social Worker

A Social Worker is someone who is trained to help children and families in difficult times. Their job is to make sure you are looked after, safe and happy.

Your Social Worker will visit you to make sure that you are okay. If you have any questions or worries, you should let them know. They can help and can explain things to you to help you understand what is happening.

You can draw a picture of your social worker and write their name here

Who is everyone and what do they do?



Your Independent Reviewing Officer (“IRO”)

An IRO’s main job is to make sure that your Social Worker is helping you to be safe and happy and that you are living with foster parents who are meeting your needs.

There will be meetings every few months (normally called reviews) which are all about you. At your Review, it is important that your IRO knows how you feel and what you want to happen.

You can draw a picture of your IRO and write their name here

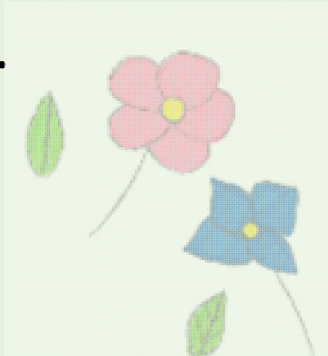
Who are AFA and what do we do?

AFA is a fostering agency. This means we help Foster Parents to look after children when they cannot live with the family they were born into.

AFA's main job is to help and teach foster parents to look after you, making sure you are safe and happy.

Your Foster Parents have their own social worker from AFA, who they call a Fostering Social Worker. Their job is to make sure your Foster Parents are looking after you properly and have all the help they need.

Fostering Social Workers will also get to know you so that they can find out if you are happy and being well cared for. Sometimes you may see them where you live as well as at other times, such as in meetings at school.



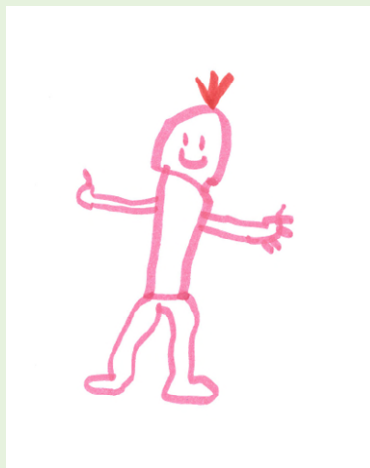
People you care about

While you are living in foster care, there will be people, perhaps family and friends, who you want to keep in touch with.

Your Social Worker will talk to you about the people that you would like to see. They will work with your family and friends, the IRO and Foster Parent to think about who it is safe for you to see. Family Time will happen if everyone agrees it is best for you. Your Social Worker and Foster Parent will help you with this.

When your Social Worker arranges for you to see your family or friends, this is known as “family time or contact”. It might be that you see them somewhere like a contact centre or perhaps in other ways such as by telephone or Facetime or by writing letters and sharing photographs.

If there is anyone that you are frightened of or don't want to see, you should tell your Social Worker, IRO or Foster Parent. They can help you with your feelings about this this.



Who can I speak to if I'm unhappy?

When you move into foster care its okay to feel muddled about leaving the family you were born into. Moving into a foster family, meeting new people and sometimes even moving to a new school can feel pretty scary.

If, once you have lived with your Foster Parents for a while, you still feel unhappy or upset about how they are looking after you, you should talk to your Social Worker, your IRO or the Foster Parent's Fostering Social Worker. They can help you sort out how you are feeling and make sure you are listened to. Your Social Worker will be making plans about you and what will happen next and it is important they know what you think.

The Children's Consultation Group at AFA have made a leaflet about what to do if you are unhappy. This is in the Welcome Box you were given when you moved in with your Foster Parents.



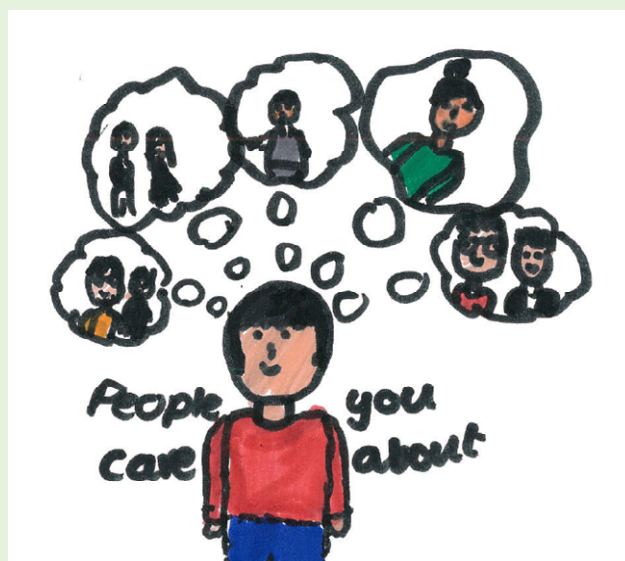
What else do I need to know? Li

Living with your Foster Parents may feel very different to where you have lived before. Every family does things differently and your foster carers will explain what is and is not okay in their home. As it is your home too, you can talk about things that you would like to happen also and if there is anything you are not sure about, just ask.

AFA and your Foster Parents will always do their best to make sure you are safe and happy and will answer any questions you have. They may also be able to give you information that will help you.

AFA's Children's Consultation Group meets during the year and your Foster Parent's Fostering Social Worker can give you more information about this.

Bullying is not ok. The Children's Consultation Group has written a leaflet about this which you will find in your Welcome Box.



We want to know what you think.

While you are in foster care, lots of different people may want to hear about what you think and how you are feeling. It is important to talk about these things but you do not need to talk to lots of people and tell them the same thing if you do not want to.

Finding someone you trust who will listen and help you say what you want is the most important thing. This may be your Social Worker, your Foster Parents, their Fostering Social Worker, someone at school or your IRO.

Sometimes children in foster care do not feel that people listen to them. If you feel like this, here are some things you can do:

- Write down or draw what you think and give this to someone you trust. They will make sure that others who need to know how you are feeling, like your Social Worker and IRO, see this.
- All children in foster care can have someone called an Advocate. This is someone who can make sure you are listened to and talk to others about what you think. There are leaflets in your Welcome Box about this.
- You can complain. If this is about AFA, you can complain to us. Information about this is in your Welcome Box. If it is about someone else, you should speak to your foster parent or your advocate who can help you.

Information and important contacts

You can contact us if you have worries or are unhappy about how you are being looked after on 01603 559255 or email info@afafostering.com

Here are some other people you can also contact:

Childline: 0800 11 11 (someone you can call to talk to if you are worried but you can't tell your carer or AFA)

NSPCC: 0800 800 5000

Coram Voice: They provide advocates and they can be contacted on 0808 7833 5792 or you can email help@coramvoice.org.uk

Who Care? Care Advice Line: They help children who are in care. Their phone number is 020 7017 8901 or go to www.thewhocaretrust.org.uk



Information and important contacts

The Children's Commission for England is in charge of making sure children are safe. The Children's Commissioner for England is Rachel DaSouza. You can call them on 0800 528 0731, email help.team@childrenscommissioners.gsi.gov.uk or look at www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

The Parliamentary Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing is a member of the Government. Claire Coutinho, MP is this person and can be contacted by email claire.coutinho.mp@parliament.uk

Ofsted are part of the government and they make sure we are doing everything that we should be to care for you. Ofsted can be contacted on their General Helpline 0300 123 1231.



THIS CHILDREN'S GUIDE WAS PRODUCED WITH THE HELP
OF THE AFA CHILDREN'S GROUPS -

TO AICHA, ALISHA, BAILEY, CERY'S, DAWSON, ECHE,
HARLEY, JAKE, KAEDEN, LILY, MARSHALL, POPPY,
REUBEN SASKIA AND ZAIYA

A HUGE THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR IDEAS AND
ARTWORK.

AFA Fostering

01603 559255 www.afakids.co.uk

Childline

0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC

0800 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk



Quality. Integrity. Respect.