

A guide for young children (4–8)

Being Part of a Fostering Family



LOCAL COMMUNITY
Fostering
GREATER LONDON EAST



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The Foster Carer Advisory Group (FCAG) was consulted during the development of this booklet. The FCAG brings together experienced carers from the four partner councils to give advice, feedback, and recommendations to help shape Local Community Fostering's policies and practices.

Guide for parents

How to use this resource

This resource is designed to help children of foster carers aged 4-8 understand fostering in a gentle, age-appropriate way. It encourages empathy, emotional expression, and a sense of inclusion in the fostering journey.

1. Read together

Sit with your child and read the guide aloud. Pause after each section to check understanding.

2. Encourage questions

Let your child know it's okay to ask anything. Answer honestly in age-appropriate language. If you don't know the answer, say so and find out together.

3. Use the activities

Let's talk about moving:

Goal: Help children explore how moving feels and imagine what a foster child might experience.

Helping hands poster:

Goal: Help children understand how they can help a foster child feel welcome.

Photo album:

Goal: Help children process goodbyes and celebrate memories. Respect confidentiality—use drawings or symbols if photos aren't appropriate.



4. Talk about feelings

Use the explanations in the guide to talk about emotions, both theirs and those of foster children. Ask open-ended questions:

- “How do you feel about having another child in our home?”
- “What might be hard? What might be fun?”

Validate their feelings and reassure them that their place in the family is secure.

5. Keep the conversation going

Revisit the guide whenever a new foster child comes. Use it to help make fostering routine and ease anxiety.

6. When to seek extra support

If your child seems overwhelmed or withdrawn, talk to your Supervising Social Worker. Ask your fostering service about resources and support groups available for children of foster carers. Seek advice from the Fostering Network.

7. Books that we love

These are books that you can read with your child to help them understand fostering.

- Room in the Nest by Holly Marlow. Simple, clear guide to fostering and how it works.
- The Family Book by Todd Parr. Celebrates different kinds of families
- The Goodbye Book by Todd Parr. Talks about feelings after a loss and helps with saying goodbye.

Understanding fostering

What is fostering?

Sometimes a child can't live with their own family for a while, because their family needs some help. So, they stay with another family who takes care of them, giving them lots of kindness, food, and a warm bed, until they can go back home or find their “forever-family”. This is fostering.

Why do children need fostering?

Sometimes mums and dads find it hard to look after their children. Maybe they need some help to keep them safe. While they get that help, the children stay with a foster family who can give them kindness, food, and care. When their family is ready again, they can go back home. It's never because the child did anything wrong.

You might wonder, “Will I need foster care too?” The answer is no. Foster care is for children whose families need extra help for a while. You're already safe and cared for at home, and our family is helping others by being there for children who need it.

Activity: Instructions For parents

Let's talk about moving

Goal:

Help children understand and talk about their feelings about moving and learn how a foster child might feel too.

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Steps:

1. Warm-up discussion:

Start with a story or puppet show about a character who has to move to a new place. Ask:

- "How do you think they feel?"
 - "What would you miss if you moved away?"
 - "What could be exciting about moving?"
-

2. Create a feelings suitcase:

Give each child a paper suitcase template or invite them to draw their own. Ask them to imagine they are helping a foster child pack their feelings for a big move. Inside the suitcase, they can draw or write:

- Things the foster child might miss (like grandma's hugs, their pet, or their bedroom)
 - Things they might be curious or excited about (like making new friends or seeing a new house)
 - Feelings they might have (sad or excited etc.)
-

3. Invite children to share what's in the suitcase.

- Encourage children to think about what it's like to move somewhere new and how different feelings can come up all at once
 - Encourage empathy by asking: "What could help someone feel better if they're sad or scared?"
-

4. Wrap-up reflection:

Reinforce that all feelings are okay and that talking about them helps. End with a calming activity like drawing a "happy place" or listening to a soothing song.



Meeting for the first time

What happens when we welcome another child into our family to help them?

When our family chooses to foster, it means we are saying yes to helping another child. The child comes to live with us, they will eat with us, play with us, and sleep in our home. We share, we are kind, and we help them feel safe. They stay with us until it's time for them to go back to their family, or they go to a new home. While they are here, we care for them like part of our family.



Will they be my brothers and sisters?

If they stay for a long time it will feel like having a brother or sister. If they stay for a short time, it will feel more like someone visiting. But foster children have their own families and maybe their own brothers and sisters. You can think of them as your foster brothers or sisters.

What if I want to ask them about their mum and dad, or about their life, but they don't want to talk about it?

It's okay to have questions, but sometimes foster children don't want to talk about their family or their life, and that's alright. You can still be a kind friend and let them know you care. Everyone feels different, and it's good to give others time and space.

"My daughter has shown empathy to her foster siblings as young as 3 years old which has helped them to feel love and support." (foster carer)



Do they see their own families?

Sometimes foster children meet up with their families at a place they all know. Sometimes the children can visit their parents and brothers and sisters at home. Some foster children may see their families very often and others not very often.

Whether a child sees their family and how often is decided by grown-ups whose job is to make sure children are safe, happy, and cared for. These grown-ups think carefully about what's best for each child.

How many children will there be?

Sometimes there might be one foster child, and sometimes there might be two. It depends on how many children need a safe home and what our family can take care of. Grown-ups always make sure it's the right time and that everyone in the family is ready. You'll always be looked after, and your thoughts and feelings are important too.

Getting along



Will I have to share everything?

When a foster child comes to stay, you might share some things, like toys, games, or space, so they feel welcome. But don't worry, you will still have your own special things that are just for you. Grown-ups make sure everyone in the family feels safe and happy, and that includes you. If you ever feel unsure, it's always okay to talk to a grown-up about it.

.....

What if I don't like them?

It's okay if you don't feel sure about them at first. You might not become friends straight away, and that's alright. Just be kind and give it time, you might become friends later. You don't have to pretend to be happy if you're not. If you ever feel upset or unsure, you can always talk to a grown-up. They'll listen and help you feel better.



"It's been lovely to see my foster sister grow and thrive from being a small baby to now being a toddler." (Jemima, child of a foster carer)

Activity: Instructions For parents

Helping hands

Goal:

Help children understand fostering as caring for someone who needs a safe home.

Materials:

- Large sheet of paper or a poster board
- Colored markers, crayons, or pencils
- Paper cutouts of hands (or the child can trace their own hands)

Steps:

1. Talk about fostering:

Start with a simple explanation: "Fostering is when a child comes to live with a family to be safe and cared for while their own family gets help. We help them feel welcome, just like we help each other."

2. Hand tracing:

Have the child trace their hand on the paper several times. Each hand represents a way they can help a foster child feel welcome.

3. Decorate and label:

On each hand, they draw or write something they can do to help:

- a. Share a toy
- b. Play a game
- c. Smile and say hello
- d. Read a story together
- e. Draw and colour a picture together

4. Create a "Helping Hands" poster:

Arrange all the hands on the poster to make a colorful display. This shows how they can use their own "helping hands" to make a foster child feel safe and cared for.

5. Talk about feelings:

Ask gentle questions:

- a. "How do you think the foster child will feel when we do these things?"
- b. "How does it feel to help someone?"



Decorate these hands or trace your own on a piece of paper!

My helping hands...

People who can help me

Who can I talk to if I'm feeling sad about anything?

If you're feeling sad, it's good to talk about it. You can tell your mum or dad, or another grown-up you trust. You can also talk to your teacher, or someone at school who helps children feel better. They care about you and want to help you feel happy and safe. Even if you don't know exactly why you're sad, that's okay too, just talking can help.

"My daughter has shown empathy to her foster siblings as young as 3 years old which has helped them to feel love and support." (foster Carer)

Moving on

How long will they stay?

Foster children stay for different amounts of time. Some stay for a little while, and some stay longer. They stay until they can go back to their own family or until they have a new home.

Where will they go when they leave?

Most foster children go back to their own homes and their own mums or dads. Sometimes they go to live with their grandparents or other family. If they can't go back to their own family, they might move to live with another family.

Will I see them again after they go?

Your mum or dad will know where they have gone and if you can visit each other or meet up.

Activity: Instructions For parents

Foster Family album

Goal:

To help children celebrate and remember the foster children who have been part of your family. It encourages empathy, reflection, and a sense of connection.

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Materials:

- A small photo album or scrapbook (or paper to make one)
 - Photos of foster children (if available and appropriate)
 - Pens, crayons, stickers, glue, and decorations
 - Optional: printed templates (See next page)
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Steps:

1. Introduce the idea

Explain that this album is a special way to remember the children who have stayed with your family. Let your child know it's okay to have lots of different feelings about fostering.

2. Help find or add photos

If you have photos (and permission to use them), help your child choose one for each foster child. If not, they can draw a picture or symbol that reminds them of that child.

3. Encourage memory sharing

Ask your child what they remember about each child:

- A fun moment they shared
- Something kind or funny the child did
- How they felt when the child arrived or left
- If your child is too young to write, offer to write their words

4. Make it personal

Let your child decorate each page however they like—with drawings, stickers, or colors that remind them of that child.

5. Keep it going

Encourage your child to add to the album each time a new foster child comes to stay. It can become a treasured keepsake and a way to process their experiences.



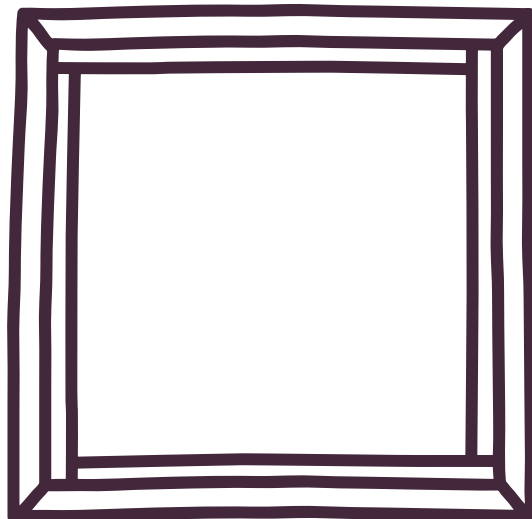
Tips for parents

- Be sensitive to your child's emotions—some memories may bring up big feelings.
- Respect confidentiality: only include photos or names if it's appropriate and allowed.

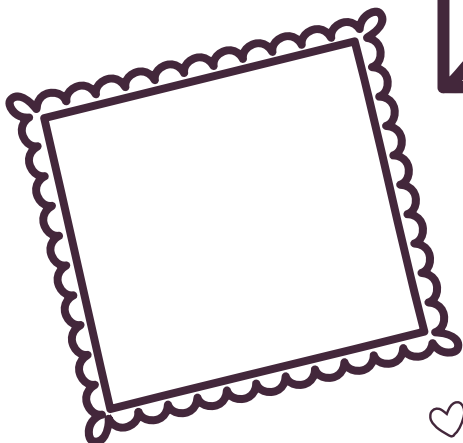
Foster child's name:



Add a photo or drawing of the foster child



Draw something nice you did together



How did you feel when they came?

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.....
.....

How did you feel when they went away?

.....
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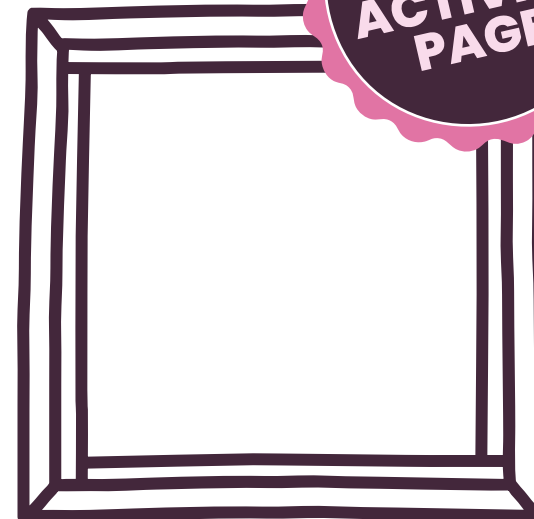
Write your feelings or do a drawing



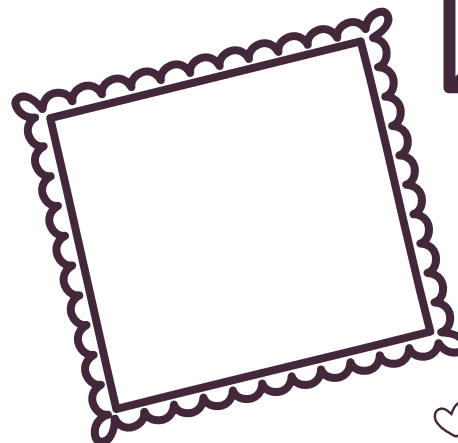
Foster child's name:



Add a photo or drawing of the foster child



Draw something nice you did together



How did you feel when they came?

.....
.....
.....

How did you feel when they went away?

.....
.....

Write your feelings or do a drawing



Start your fostering journey today.

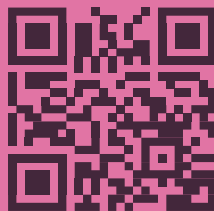
Whether you're looking for more information or you're ready to apply, we're here to help.

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