

A guide for adults in the household

Being Part of a Fostering Family



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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.

Understanding fostering

As an adult child of foster carers, whether you reside at home, live independently for work or study, or visit frequently, you play a meaningful role in the family network that shapes the experience of fostered children.

When a child or young person cannot remain with their birth family, their local council becomes responsible for their care. The council places them with foster carers and families who provide a safe, supportive home. Your household offers

stability, a sense of belonging, and works collaboratively with professionals to follow the child's care plan.

Fostering arrangements can vary widely. Contact with a child's birth family may be frequent or limited, and plans can also change at short notice.

You may encounter terms you haven't come across before. A glossary is included at the end of this document for your reference.

"My eldest son Eisa helped the young person to set up his new laptop, set up his passwords and created an email account for him."
(foster carer)



Your role as an adult child of a foster care

While you are not expected to act as a secondary carer, your presence and actions have a significant impact. You can:

- Model respectful behaviour, including privacy, kindness, and consistency.
- Maintain healthy boundaries; it is appropriate to have personal belongings and spaces, and to decline requests respectfully.
- Support family routines and activities by taking part.
- Seek guidance when needed; your family's supervising social worker is available to provide advice and support. Many councils offer support for children of foster carers, such as support/discussion groups, Mockingbird "constellation" activities, and other events. Enquire about what is available in your area.

Before and after a foster child arrives

Assessment and approval:

Your parent(s) will undergo comprehensive checks, training, and a home assessment to ensure any child placed with them will be safe and well supported. You will be asked for your perspective; honest feedback assists in the matching process.

Initial days:

Maintaining steady routines is beneficial. Simple things, such as a tour of the home or explaining how things work, can help a foster child settle in. Your council's Foster Carer Handbook outlines expectations regarding daily care, confidentiality, and record-keeping. Reading this document alongside the Safer Care plan for the household is advisable to understand the household's ground rules.

Information about the child or young person:

Families and fostering services typically share as much information as possible in advance of a placement, but short-notice placements may occur, and details are not always available. Be prepared for plans to evolve.

"It's normal to have questions, and you'll still get to do stuff with your family."

Oliver (child of a foster carer)



Living well together

If you live in the same household as your parents and a fostered child, these are some of the things you might need to consider.

Personal space and belongings:

Sharing is encouraged, but maintaining boundaries is equally important. Clearly define what is communal (e.g., kitchen, lounge, board games) and what is personal (e.g., bedrooms, passwords, special items). Label and store personal belongings as needed.

Social Media:

Refrain from posting any information that could identify a fostered child, such as names, schools, locations, or images. When uncertain, err on the side of caution or ask your parent(s) to be sure.

Guests and overnight stays:

Safer caring policies typically outline expectations for visitors and overnight guests. Ask to see the household's safer caring plan to make sure you're familiar with the guidelines. You can learn about Safer Caring in the Glossary at the end of this booklet.

Culture, identity, and inclusion:

Your family may welcome children whose gender, ethnicity, faith, language, neurotype, or routines differ from your own. Curiosity and respect are essential; ask polite questions, learn about preferred foods and practices, and support privacy regarding personal beliefs. Small gestures, such as providing a quiet space for prayer or learning the correct pronunciation of a name, can foster a sense of belonging.

Safeguarding

Responding to disclosures of concern

When a fostered child discloses information that suggests they may be at risk or unsafe, it is essential not to promise confidentiality. An appropriate and supportive response could be something like:

"Thank you for sharing this with me. I care about your wellbeing and want to make sure you receive the right help."

Following this, the information should be promptly communicated to an individual involved in the care of the child, such as your parent(s), the supervising social worker, or, in urgent situations, the council's out-of-hours service. This approach safeguards both the child and you.

Allegations

Allegations are claims that someone has been treated poorly or unsafely. These are always taken seriously and investigated. Safeguard yourself by maintaining appropriate boundaries and communicating any concerns promptly. Talk to your parent(s) and Supervising Social Worker. Familiarise yourself with the Foster Carer Handbook, which outlines safer caring and record-keeping expectations.

Moving on

Endings, goodbyes, and maintaining contact

Transitions will occur, which means that the fostered child or young person will likely move out of their current placement, whether to birth family, kinship carers, another foster home, or independent living. Expect a range of emotions, including pride, sadness, relief, and concern. Rituals, such as writing a card, sharing a playlist, or contributing to a family memory book (while respecting confidentiality), can be helpful. Decisions regarding future contact are made in accordance with the child's care plan; sometimes ongoing contact is possible, sometimes not. It is important to respect these decisions.

"Emily has a great (age appropriate) understanding of fostering and truly believes it to be a positive thing for us to do as a family." (foster carer)



Support for you

Fostering can be both rewarding and emotionally demanding. It is normal to feel challenged by divided attention, household rules, or difficult behaviour.



Seek support:

Request time with the supervising social worker if needed; they are available to support the entire fostering household.



Local opportunities:

Some councils offer groups or activities specifically for children of foster carers; enquire about what is available in your area.



Peer support:

Learning from the experiences of other families can be beneficial. The Fostering Network website features stories and advice from carers and their own children.

Sources of information and advice



Supervising Social Worker / Fostering team:

Primary contacts for household queries, safer caring, and support.



Council's foster carer handbook:

Outlines daily standards, confidentiality, record-keeping, complaints, and safer caring guidance.



The Fostering Network:

Offers practical guidance, blogs, and campaigns featuring the perspectives of children of foster carers.

Opportunities for greater involvement

Some adults choose to:

- Participate in extended family activities that foster connection.
- Assist with support, for example with transportation for family time/contact, if agreed in the care plan.
- Pursue approval as a back-up or foster carer in their own right. Consult the supervising social worker to understand the necessary training, checks, and boundaries. Your fostering services Foster Carer Handbook provides further details regarding roles and expectations.



FAQs

Will we always be informed of a child's full history?

While your fostering service will strive to provide your family with all the necessary information to ensure the child's care and safety, there may be instances, particularly in emergency placements, where the full personal history is not immediately available.

Who can I contact out of hours?

Request the fostering service's out-of-hours contact number and store it. The council provides a 24/7 support lines for carers.

Glossary

This glossary explains key terms you might hear in fostering.

Word	Definition
Allegation	A report or assertion that a child has experienced, or is at risk of, harm, abuse, neglect, or inappropriate conduct. Allegations must be recorded and managed in line with local safeguarding procedures.
Birth family	A child's family of origin. This typically includes the child's biological parents and siblings and may include wider relatives or significant connected persons, as identified through assessment and the care plan.
Care plan	The statutory plan prepared and maintained by the council for a child in care. It sets out the child's assessed needs, desired outcomes, placement arrangements, health and education plans, contact (family time), safeguarding measures, and the long-term permanence objective. The plan is reviewed at Looked-after reviews.
Contact / Family time	Agreed arrangements for a child to spend time or communicate with birth family or significant others, as specified in the care plan and reviewed regularly.
Delegated Authority	The decisions day-to-day that foster carers are authorised to make on behalf of the council/parental responsibility, set out in the placement plan.

Word	Definition
Disclosure	Information shared by a child about their experiences, which may include concerns about harm or risk of harm.
Fostering service	The approved fostering provider responsible for recruiting, assessing, approving, training, supervising and supporting foster carers.
IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer)	A council officer independent of the child's case management who chairs Looked-after reviews, monitors the council's performance in implementing the care plan, ensures the child's wishes and feelings are considered, and escalates concerns through a formal dispute resolution process when necessary.
LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer)	A council officer who manages and oversees responses to allegations against adults who work with or care for children.
Mockingbird constellation	A local cluster of foster families organised around a central "hub" household that provides peer support, planned and emergency sleepovers, shared activities, and informal mentoring to the surrounding "satellite" foster families.
Permanence	The long-term plan for a child's upbringing (e.g., return home, long-term fostering, special guardianship, adoption). This is designed to provide stability and security for the child.

Word	Definition
Placement	The formal arrangement for where and with whom a child in care lives (e.g., with foster carers, kinship/connected persons carers, or in residential care). Each placement must be supported by a placement plan detailing day-to-day arrangements, delegated authority and safeguarding measures.
Respite	A planned, short-term placement intended to provide a temporary break for foster carers and/or the child. Respite (also known as “short breaks”) is risk-assessed, authorised by the fostering service, and delivered within the child’s care and placement planning framework.
Reviews (Looked-after reviews)	Statutory meetings chaired by the IRO to review the child’s progress and care plan.
Safer Caring policy	Household principles and practices designed to reduce risk and safeguard everyone in the home, aligned to the fostering service’s policy and the child’s individual needs.
Social worker	A qualified practitioner responsible for statutory social work functions. The Child’s Social Worker (CSW) is responsible for assessing, planning and coordinating support to keep the child safe and promote their welfare. The Supervising Social Worker (SSW) supports, supervises and develops the foster carer(s) on behalf of the fostering service.



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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