

Supporting your own children

# 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.

## Introduction

Welcoming a foster child into your home is a meaningful and transformative experience, not just for you, but for your whole family. Your own children play a vital role in the fostering journey and preparing them thoughtfully can help ensure a positive experience for everyone.

This guide offers key questions and hands-on advice to help you support your child emotionally, socially, and in everyday tasks as you prepare to foster.

Use this alongside the resources designed for your child's age group to introduce fostering and support discussions, helping them gain understanding of the subject.

# Emotional readiness and understanding



## How can I explain fostering to my child?

Use age-appropriate language to explain that fostering means helping a child who needs a safe and caring home. Emphasise empathy, kindness, and the importance of making others feel welcome.

## What emotional impact might fostering have on my child?

When your family fosters a child, it can bring lots of feelings, both good and challenging, for your own child. They might feel:

- Excited about helping and making a new friend.
- Confused or unsure about the new child and how things will change.
- Jealous or left out if the foster child gets a lot of attention.
- Worried or sad if the foster child is upset, struggles, or leaves.

These feelings are normal. It's important to **talk openly** with your child, listen to how they feel, and reassure them that their feelings matter. Your support helps them adjust and feel secure while your family fosters. Regular check-ins and reassurance help them feel secure and valued.

## How do I help my child cope with jealousy or displacement?

It's normal for your child to feel jealous or like they're not as important when a foster child joins the family. You can help by:

- **Talking openly:** Let them share how they feel without judgment.
- **Reassuring them:** Remind them that your love and attention for them hasn't changed.
- **Involving them:** Give them chances to help welcome the foster child in ways that feel comfortable.
- **Keeping routines:** Maintain special time, traditions, or activities just for your child.
- **Listening to worries:** Take their concerns seriously and find solutions together.

Helping your child express their feelings and feel included can reduce jealousy and make fostering a positive experience for everyone.



# Communication and involvement

## What signs should I look for if my child is struggling?

If your child is finding it hard to adjust to fostering, you might notice things like:

- **Mood changes:** Getting sad, angry, or anxious more often.
- **Behaviour changes:** Acting out, withdrawing, or being unusually quiet.
- **Sleep or appetite changes:** Trouble sleeping, nightmares, or eating less/more than usual.
- **School changes:** Lower marks, difficulty concentrating, or avoiding school.
- **Expressing worry or frustration:** Saying things like “I don’t fit in” or “I feel left out.”

If you see any of these signs, it’s important to **talk with your child** and offer support. If concerns persist, seek support from your Supervising Social Worker or other professionals.

## Should my child be involved in the decision to foster?

Yes, involving them fosters trust and inclusion. While adults make the final decision, children should feel heard and respected.

## How can I encourage open conversations?

Encouraging your child to talk about fostering helps them feel heard and understood. You can:

- **Ask questions gently:** Use open-ended questions like, “how are you feeling about the new child in our family?”
- **Listen without judging:** Let them share their thoughts, even if they’re confusing or negative.
- **Share your own feelings:** Let them see that it’s normal to have mixed emotions.
- **Use everyday moments:** Talk during car rides, meals, or walks, sometimes informal settings make conversation easier.
- **Reassure them often:** Remind them that their feelings matter and it’s okay to be honest. Keeping conversations calm, honest, and regular helps your child feel safe to express themselves and builds trust within the family.



## What boundaries should we set around discussing fostering outside the home?

It's important to respect everyone's privacy when talking about fostering. You can help your child by:

- **Explaining confidentiality:**  
Some information about the foster child is private and shouldn't be shared with friends, classmates, or online.
- **Teaching respect:**  
Encourage your child to talk about fostering in ways that are kind and protect everyone's feelings.
- **Setting clear rules:**  
Decide together what can be shared and what should stay at home.
- **Using judgment:**  
Remind them to think before they speak, if they're unsure, it's better to ask first.
- **Modelling behaviour:**  
Show them how to respect privacy in your own conversations.

Setting boundaries helps protect the foster child, keeps relationships safe, and teaches your child responsibility and respect for others.

"If you're thinking of fostering and you have children of your own, make sure that communication with them is both open and clear." Tracy (foster carer)



## Practical adjustments



### How will fostering affect our routines and dynamics?

Expect some changes. Prepare your child in advance and involve them in planning to ease transitions.

### How do I prepare my child for sharing space or attention?

Sharing a home with a foster child can be tricky at first. You can help your child adjust by:

- **Talking about changes in advance:** Explain what might be different, like sharing space, toys, or family time.
- **Setting clear expectations:** Let them know what's fair and what rules will be in place.
- **Involving them in decisions:** Ask for their ideas on routines or ways to share space.
- **Keeping special time:** Make sure they still have moments just for them with you.
- **Acknowledging their feelings:** It's normal to feel frustrated, jealous, or nervous, let them talk about it.

By preparing your child and including them in the process, sharing attention and space can feel fairer and less stressful for everyone.

# Relationships and social impact

## What if my child doesn't get along with the foster child?

Conflict is natural. Teach respectful communication and monitor interactions. It's normal for siblings or children in the same home to sometimes clash, especially when a foster child joins the family. You can help by:

- **Staying calm:** Avoid taking sides and try to listen to both children.
- **Encouraging communication:** Help them talk about their feelings respectfully.
- **Setting boundaries:** Make rules for respectful behaviour and shared spaces.
- **Finding common ground:** Look for activities they can enjoy together.
- **Giving space if needed:** It's okay for them to have time apart to cool down.
- **Reassuring your child:** Remind them that disagreements are normal and don't mean they are unloved.



With patience, support, and clear expectations, relationships can improve over time, and both children can feel safe and respected. Seek support if needed from your Supervising Social Worker.

## How do I help my child build a healthy relationship with the foster child?

Helping your child form a positive relationship with a foster child takes time and guidance. You can support them by:

- **Modelling kindness and respect:** Children learn a lot by watching how adults treat each other.
- **Encouraging shared activities:** Find games, hobbies, or chores they can do together.
- **Celebrating small successes:** Praise moments of cooperation, kindness, or compromise.
- **Listening to feelings:** Let your child express frustration or worries without judgment.
- **Setting clear rules:** Make sure both children know the family expectations for behaviour.
- **Giving space when needed:** Relationships grow better when both children also have time for themselves.



## What if my child becomes very attached and struggles when the foster child leaves?

It's normal for your child to feel sad, worried, or even angry when a foster child leaves. To help them cope:

- **Acknowledge their feelings:** Let them know it's okay to feel upset or miss the foster child.
- **Talk about it:** Encourage them to share memories or write about their feelings.
- **Offer reassurance:** Remind them that they are still loved and important.
- **Keep routines stable:** Regular routines give a sense of security during changes.
- **Provide support:** Spend extra one-on-one time.
- **Focus on positives:** Help celebrate the good moments and the difference they made in the foster child's life.

# Support and resources



“Include them in the conversations and preparations, during the time that the child is with you, and after their foster siblings move on.” Tracy (foster carer)

## Are there support groups for children of foster carers?

Ask your fostering service about support groups, workshops, and events tailored for children of foster carers.

## What training is available to help me support my child?

Ask your fostering service about training sessions or support.

## Where else can I get advice or information?

The Fostering Network can offer further independent advice, training, and support. Ask your fostering service about membership.

# Glossary

This glossary defines some of the key terms you are likely to encounter


Word	Definition
<b>Allegation</b>	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.
<b>Birth family</b>	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.
<b>Care plan</b>	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.
<b>Contact / Family time</b>	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.
<b>Delegated Authority</b>	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
<b>Disclosure</b>	Information shared by a child about their experiences, which may include concerns about harm or risk of harm.
<b>Fostering service</b>	The approved fostering provider responsible for recruiting, assessing, approving, training, supervising and supporting foster carers.
<b>IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer)</b>	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.
<b>LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer)</b>	A council officer who manages and oversees responses to allegations against adults who work with or care for children.
<b>Mockingbird constellation</b>	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.
<b>Permanence</b>	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
<b>Placement</b>	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.
<b>Respite</b>	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.
<b>Reviews (Looked-after reviews)</b>	Statutory meetings chaired by the IRO to review the child's progress and care plan.
<b>Safer Caring policy</b>	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.
<b>Social worker</b>	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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