

A guide for young people (13+)

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.

Understanding fostering

As part of a fostering family, you play an important part in the family network that shapes the experience of children and young people in foster care. Your perspective and maturity can make a real difference.

What does fostering involve?

Fostering means your family provides a safe, stable home for a child or young person who can't live with their birth family. This could be due to neglect, illness, family breakdown, or unsafe situations. Your family's job is to help them feel secure, support their emotional needs, and offer a routine while plans for their future are made.

The assessment process

Before fostering starts, your parent(s) will go through an assessment with social workers. It might feel intrusive, but it's about making sure your family can provide the right environment for someone who needs care.

**"Sienna willingly donated a significant amount of her clothing to support an emergency placement."
(foster carer)**



What to expect when someone joins your family

Sometimes you'll know in advance who's coming; other times, it's short notice. Plans can change, and a foster child might stay for days, months, or longer. Flexibility and patience are key.

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Contact with birth families

Foster children often keep in touch with their birth families if it's safe and in their best interest. Your family may help support these visits or calls, but safety always comes first.

How many foster children could our family look after at once?

The number of foster children your family might care for at any one time depends on your family's situation and what social workers feel is best. Some families foster just one child, while others might support two or more. Every family and situation are different, so it's about what works for your household and what's in the best interest of the children involved.



**"One of the best things about being part of a fostering family is that I get to meet lots of different people and visit many places."
Oliver (child of a foster carer)**

Getting along (or not)

You might not click with every foster child. That's normal. Respect, patience, and kindness go a long way. If things are tough, talk to your parent(s) or a social worker.

Sharing space and belongings

You may need to share your space or things, but your boundaries matter too. It's important to communicate openly about what you're comfortable with.

Handling sensitive information

If a fostered child or young person confides in you, listen and be supportive. But if they share something serious, like being unsafe, don't promise secrecy. Encourage them to talk to a trusted adult, and if you're worried, speak up yourself. You can be a supportive friend, but you don't have to carry everything by yourself.

School, friends and privacy

If a child or young person who is fostered by your family comes to your school or college, or your friends visit your home and meet them, you might be asked questions about them, such as why they are staying with your family. It's okay to say you can't talk about it. Or speak to your parent(s) and social worker about what you could say.

If you find out that a fostered child is being bullied, or is bullying someone else, the best thing to do is tell a trusted adult. Don't try to handle it alone or talk about it online.



"Leah played a key role in promoting social inclusion by introducing them her friendship group."
(foster carer)



Moving on

How long will they stay?

There's no set timeline. Some foster children stay briefly, others may be with your family for months or longer. Their next step could be returning home, moving to another foster family, or another care arrangement.

Staying in touch after they leave

Your family helps ensure the child transitions smoothly to their next home. Sometimes you might see them again. It depends on what is best for the child and their family. You can talk to your parents or the social worker about whether visits or contact after they leave are possible.

Support for you

Fostering can be challenging and emotional. If you feel upset, stressed, or confused, talk to someone you trust, your parent(s), a relative, a teacher, or a social worker. Looking after yourself is just as important as caring for others.

A social worker visits your family periodically to check everything's going okay. Their job is to support your family through fostering. If something is bothering you, you can talk to them about it.

Source/service	What they offer	How to access
Council fostering team	Advice and support	Ask the fostering team
Supervising social worker	One-to-one advice and guidance	Contact directly
Peer support/online groups	Connect with others in fostering families	Ask the fostering team
The Fostering Network	Info, blogs, events, peer stories	Website, events, social media
CoramBAAF	Publications and advice	Website, publications
Barnardo's	Support for young people	Website, publications
Childline	Confidential support	Website, telephone



Key terms you'll hear

Some useful definitions: When your family starts fostering, you might hear some words and phrases from Social Workers and even your parents that don't sound very clear. If there's anything you don't understand just ask.



Allegation:

A claim that someone has been treated badly; social workers must investigate.



Birth family:

The child's biological relatives.



Placement:

Where the foster child is living. The placement can be with your family.



Respite

Short breaks for foster carers or families.



Care plan

The official plan for a child's care and future.



Disclosure:

When a foster child shares something serious or personal.



Reviews

Regular meetings to check progress.



Social Worker

The professional supporting children and families.



Fostering service

The organisation supporting foster carers.



Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

Checks the care plan is working.

Start your fostering journey today.

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

 020 8496 3437

 hello@localcommunityfostering.co.uk

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