



Your guide to foster care





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Note to the person supporting the child to access this guide: We understand that every child's ability is different, and therefore have a full suite of guides to suit most ages and abilities. If you have a child with communication challenges and you cannot see a guide that fits their needs, please contact your local manager and they will arrange specialist communications to help.

Please note: there is also a video version of this guide available [here](#)



Welcome

When young people like you come into foster care, they often have a lot of questions. This guide will help to answer some of these questions and let you know what to expect.

Your Foster Carer can help you read this booklet and answer any questions you might have. There is lots of important information in here that you might want to go back to, so keep this booklet safe.

Your Foster Carers are here to help you. They will:

- Give you a safe and caring home
- Get to know you
- Smile, laugh and play games with you
- Help you with school
- Help you stay in touch with people you care about
- Listen to your worries and help you to be as happy as possible.

The Five Rivers Family

Your Foster Carers are part of the Five Rivers Family.

The Five Rivers Family is made up of a team of people who you will see regularly. If you have any questions or worries, you can speak to any of them.



Friendly faces

My Social Worker

Their name is



.....

Their phone number and email address are

.....

.....

This person will see you regularly. You can tell them how things are going and how you're feeling.

My Fostering Support Worker

Their name is



.....

Their phone number and email address are

.....

.....

This person is here to listen to you, have fun with you, and tell you about fun activities you might like to join in with.



My Foster Carer's Supervising Social Worker

Their name is



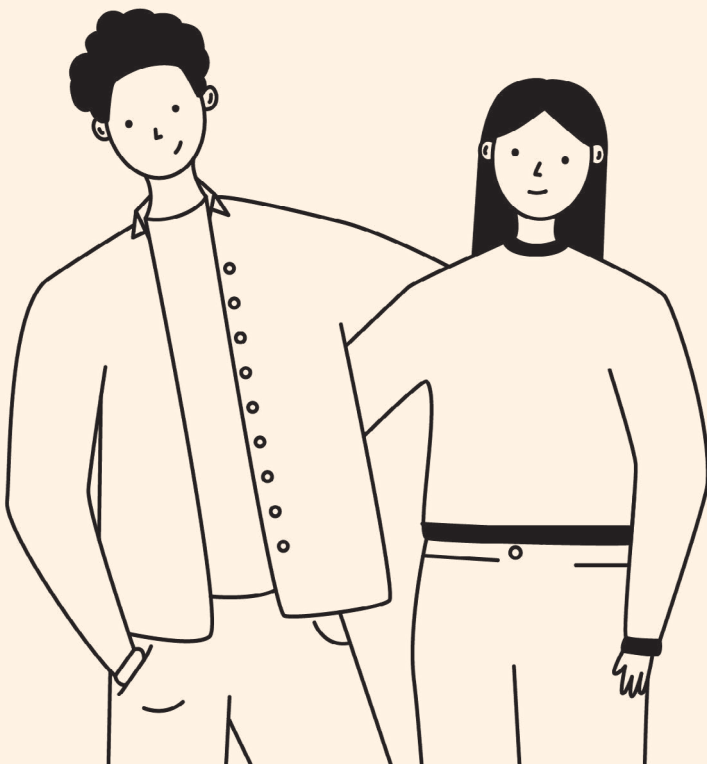
.....

Their phone number and email address are

.....

.....

This person makes sure your Foster Carers are doing a good job of looking after you.





Our pledge

We know that being in foster care can be a bit scary at first. We want you to know that we are here to help you.

We will...

- Keep you safe and care for you well
- Help you attend a school that meets your needs
- Help you to be healthy and enjoy life
- Listen to you if you have any worries about your care
- Support your future
- Make sure you know your Children's Rights (special rules that make sure you are safe, happy, and cared for).

[Click here](#) or scan the QR code for more information.



We are the Five Rivers Family, and we are here for you.



All about you

It's important for you and your Foster Carer to get to know each other. Tell your Foster Carer everything you want them to know about you. You could mention...

- Your age
- Things you enjoy doing
- Foods you like or don't like
- Places you like to go or places you want to avoid
- Your religion or beliefs (if you would like to go to a church, mosque, synagogue, or any other place to practice your faith, let us know).

Once you've finished telling your Foster Carer all these important things, they will tell you about themselves!

You can use the space below to make notes.

All about me



All about my Foster Carer

Will I be able to do whatever I want?

All family homes have boundaries to make sure that everyone is kept safe and can live alongside each other. Sometimes these are known as house rules.

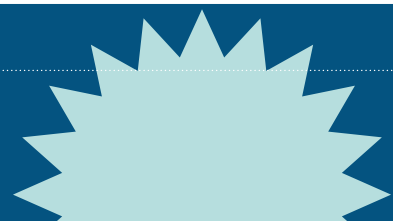
The boundaries or house rules in your Foster Carer's home may be different from those you are used to. Your Foster Carer will explain these to you and can help you understand the reasons they are in place. As it is part of your Foster Carer's role to keep you safe, they may not always let you do everything you would like.

Some examples of boundaries or house rules you may be expected to follow are:

- Show respect to everyone.
- Respect other people's property.
- Help clean shared areas, such as the living room or kitchen.

You can use the space below for notes to help make sure the boundaries or house rules are clear and understood from the start.

Boundaries or house rules



Going to school

Some children who go into foster care can stay at their usual school. For other children, they must move to a school closer to their new house. Your Social Worker and Foster Carer will talk to you about this. If there is anything you are worried about, don't forget to share this with them.

Their name is



.....

Their phone number and email address are

.....

.....

Asking for help

School should be a happy place where you can make friends and enjoy learning. If you ever feel unhappy or like someone isn't being nice to you, you can tell a teacher, your Foster Carer, or your Social Worker. There are lots of people around you who want to help.



Dealing with problems and worries

Everyone has worries about moving to a new place. If you tell us about your worries, we will try to help.

Here are some of the things that other children have asked about:

- What if I don't like their rules?
- Will I have to move again?
- What if I don't like my Social Worker?

Your Foster Carer will welcome these sorts of questions. But if you would rather talk to someone else, you can speak to the other people involved in your care (see pages 4-5).

If you are not happy about something

Most problems can be solved by simply talking to your Foster Carer. If this doesn't feel right or doesn't work for you, you can speak to anyone else involved in your care. This could be your Social Worker, Support Worker (see pages 4 - 6) or Independent Reviewing Officer (details in your Care Plan).

If you have spoken to all these people and it hasn't helped, you can contact Ofsted or the Children's Rights Director (you can find their contact details on page 12).

[Click here](#) or scan the QR code for more details on submitting a complaint can be found in our Complaints Procedure.





Making your voice heard

It is important that we listen to your thoughts, feelings and wishes when there are decisions being made about your care. The word we use to describe this is 'Participation'. We value your participation because it helps us to provide the best possible care for you, and other people like you, who are living in care.

Here are some ways we encourage you to share your thoughts about your care:

- Talking to the people involved in your care and contributing to your care plan.
- Attending Participation events, such as celebrations or days out with others who are in care.
- Getting involved with our Youth Council (a Council made up of young people who collect the thoughts of every person in our care).
- Giving you chances to tell us how well you think we take care of you.
- Letting you know who you can contact in case of any problems or worries (pages 4-5) and who to tell if your children's rights are not being met (page 12).
- Helping you find an Independent Advocate. This is someone outside the Five Rivers family who you can trust. They will make sure you are treated well, your opinions are heard, and you get the support you need while you're in care. Speak to your Social Worker if you need an Independent Advocate.
- Helping you find an Independent Visitor. If you'd like someone to talk to, spend time with, or help you feel supported as you grow up, an Independent Visitor might be right for you. Read more at [childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)
- Helping you access a non-instructional advocacy service if you are a child with additional needs, [click here](#).

[Click here](#) or scan the QR code to refer to our **Your Voice, Your Say** booklet for more information.



Participation events

We hold regular participation events and activities which you are welcome to attend if you would like. These events give you the chance to have fun, learn, and get to know other young people in care.

[Click here](#) or scan the QR code to find out more.



Independence skills

It is your Foster Carer's job to make sure you are prepared for the next stage in your life. We want you to feel confident that you have the skills you need.

Your Foster Carer will help you learn about:

- Managing your money, setting up bank accounts and paying bills.
- Healthy eating, shopping for food and cooking.
- Personal health, first aid, avoiding illnesses, and food preparation.
- Housing options and DIY.
- Education, training or work.

If you have any worries about this, or if there is something you want to learn more about, speak to your Foster Carer or any of the other people involved in your care (see pages 4-5).

Five Rivers Futures

If you are aged 18-25 when you leave our care, you can get help from Five Rivers Futures.

If you need any advice, for example with housing, employment, or education, Five Rivers Futures can help. In certain circumstances, you can also apply for a grant (some money to help you pay for specific things like a kettle, toaster or maybe a washing machine).

Useful contacts

Become

The Become Care Advice Line is a friendly helpline for children in care and care leavers. Call or email for help, support, advice, guidance – or just to get in touch with someone to listen to you.

Tel: 0800 023 2033 (Monday-Friday, 10am-5pm).

Email: advice@becomecharity.org.uk

Childline

A free 24-hour helpline for children and young people in the UK. The helpline is confidential, which means that they won't share any information unless you want them to, or you are in danger.

Tel: 0800 1111

Web: www.childline.org.uk

Ofsted

Ofsted are the people who inspect all fostering services to make sure that we are looking after children properly. If you think we are not doing our best for you, they will listen and try to help.

Tel: 0300 123 1231

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Children's Commissioner for England

The Children's Commissioner makes sure children in care are heard and looked after properly. They also make sure you know your rights, like the right to an Independent Visitor, and check that care systems work well for you.

Tel: 0800 528 0731 (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm).

Email: help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Web: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand

Five Rivers Futures

Once you leave care, if you need any guidance, for example with housing, employment, or education, we can help. In certain circumstances, you can also apply for a grant (a small amount of money from £10 - £500).

Tel: 01722 516091

Email: futures@five-rivers.org

Your Independent Reviewing Officer

If you want to speak to your IRO about any aspect of the care you receive, you can make contact using the details in your Care Plan.

Useful documents and links

Click the links below or scan the QR codes



[How we use your personal data](#)



[How to submit a complaint](#)



[Hear more stories about the care experience](#)



[Our online Children & Young People's Zone](#)



[A video guide to fostering by children in foster care](#)

Notes

