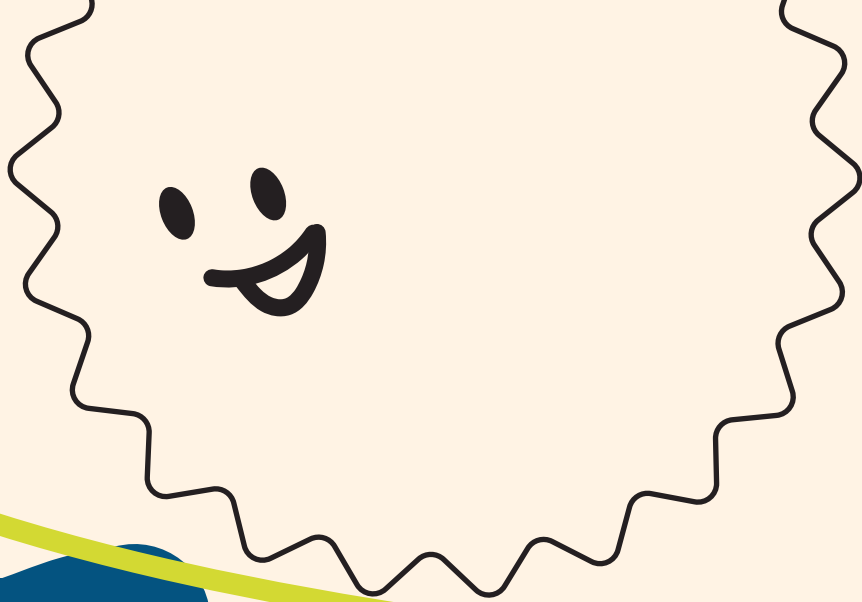




Your guide to foster care





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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](#)



Maya's foster care story



Hi there! My name is Maya the owl, and I want to tell you about something that happened to me—something I was really nervous about at first.

I went to live with another family.

It's called "foster care." Maybe you're going into foster care too. I will tell you my story so you know what to expect.



Remember, you can read my story any time and ask your Foster Carer if you have any questions. There's lots of important information in here, so **keep this booklet safe.**

Meeting my foster family

When we arrived at my foster home, I felt nervous. But then I saw two smiling faces waiting at the door.

“Hi, Maya! We’re so happy you’re here!”
It was Charlie and Alex, my new Foster Carers.

Charlie knelt down and said, “We want you to feel safe and happy here, Maya. If there’s anything you need, or anything you’re worried about, just let us know”.

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 nursery, preschool or school.
- Help you stay in touch with people you care about.
- Listen to your worries and help you to be as happy as possible.





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.

You can ask someone to show you how to scan this!

Settling in



My Support Worker, Mr Ben, dropped me at my Foster Carer's home. Before he left, he told me that if I'm ever worried or confused, I can tell him, and he'll help me. He said sharing my feelings is important, and he's always ready to listen.





Activity

The Five Rivers Family

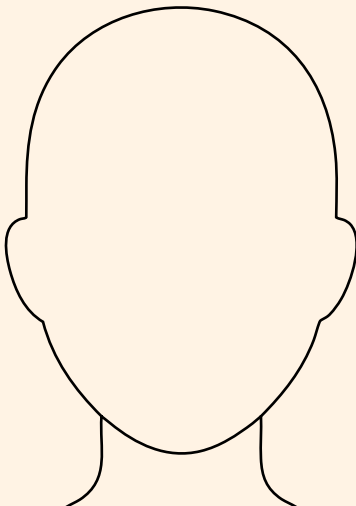
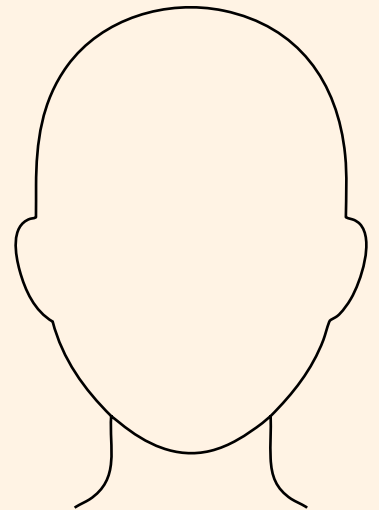
Charlie and Alex are part of the Five Rivers Family. Your Foster Carers are also part of the Five Rivers Family. The Five Rivers Family is made up of a team of special people who find homes for children who need a safe place to stay.

There are lots of friendly faces who you might recognise. Let's meet them...

My Social Worker

My name is

I will see you regularly. You can tell me how things are going and how you're feeling.



My Fostering Support Worker

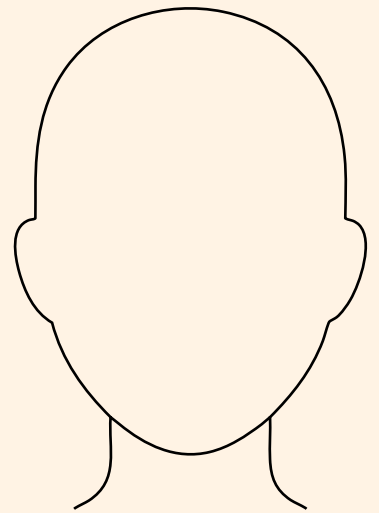
My name is

I'm 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

My name is

I make sure your Foster Carers are
doing a good job of looking after you.



Remember

Your Foster Carer can phone any of these special people.
You can ask to ring them whenever you need to talk to
someone.

Our pledge

The Five Rivers Family will:

- Keep you safe and care for you well.
- Help you attend a nursery, preschool or 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.

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



All about me

My Foster Carers took an interest in my likes and dislikes. "We want to know everything about you", said Charlie, smiling warmly.

I told them I'm a 5-year-old owl who likes to swim, dance, and eat spaghetti—but not all at once!



Activity

Time for you and your Foster Carer to get to know each other a little more. 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



Your religion or beliefs



Places you like to go, and places you would like to avoid.

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.

About me and my Foster Carer



House rules

At my foster home, there were some toys I could play with. I LOVED playing with puzzles.



One day, Charlie stood on a puzzle piece. "Yeeow! Maya, I think it's time we spoke about house rules".

We sat down together as Charlie explained the house rules. Some of the rules were:

- Help tidy up toys (so nobody steps on them!)
- Brush your teeth twice a day.
- Be kind to everyone.



Activity

Your Foster Carer will tell you about their house rules. If you don't understand something, let them know. The most important thing is that everyone understands and agrees with the house rules.

The rules made sure we all stayed safe and got along. If I didn't understand something, Charlie or Alex would explain it kindly.

Dealing with problems and worries

When I moved in with my foster carers, Charlie and Alex, I had a lot on my mind. In their living room, there were lots of picture frames filled with smiling faces.

"Who are all these people?" I asked Charlie.

"These are my children," Charlie explained. "Look—this one was taken when they were your age, but they're all grown-up now."



I told Charlie that I was nervous about meeting them. Charlie reassured me that they were very friendly and kind and that they were looking forward to meeting me.

The following week, Charlie's children came over. They weren't children at all, they looked at least 30 years old!

Charlie was right, they were friendly and kind. They even had their own children—we had so much fun playing together!

Remember

When I felt nervous about meeting new people, I told Charlie, and she was able to help.

If you have any worries or questions, tell your Foster Carer. Remember, no question is too big, too small, or too silly!

If you need to talk to someone else...

If you would rather talk to someone other than your Foster Carer, you can speak to your Social Worker, Support Worker (see pages 6 and 7) 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, the Children's Rights Director (details on page 12), or your Independent Reviewing Officer (details in your Care Plan.)



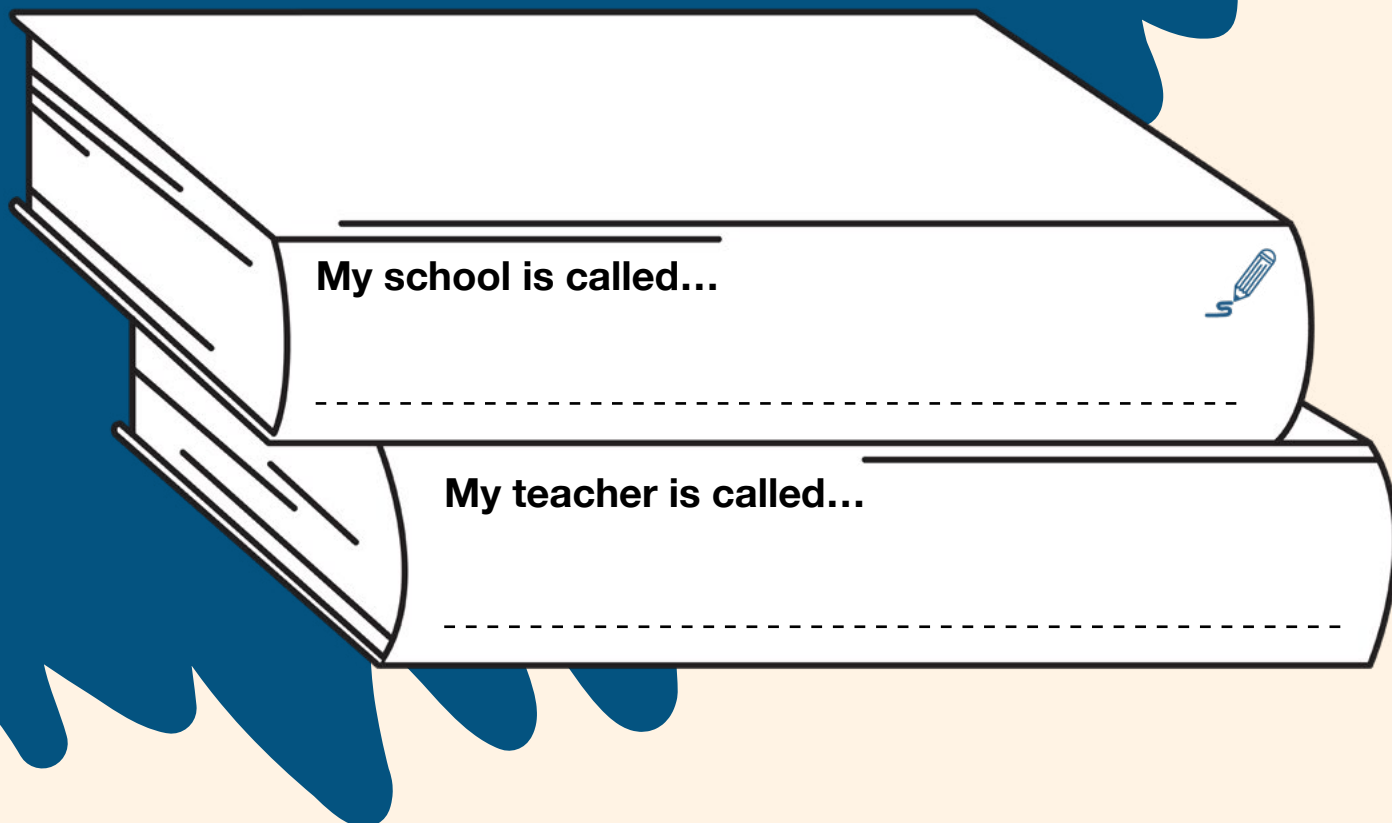
[Click here](#) or scan the QR code below to find out how to make a complaint.



You can ask someone to show you how to scan this!

Nursery, preschool or 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.



Remember

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.

Making your voice heard



Charlie says it is important that my thoughts, feelings, and wishes are listened to when decisions about my care are made.

The word Charlie uses to describe this is 'Participation'.

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

- Talking to the adults involved in your care to help make plans.
- Getting involved with the Youth Council (a group of young people who collect the thoughts of every person cared for by the Five Rivers Family).
- Giving you chances to tell us how well you think we take care of you.
- Letting you know what to do if you have any problems or worries and who to tell if your children's rights are not being met (page 6 and 7).
- Helping you find an Independent Advocate. This is someone outside your foster 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
- 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 below to read our Your Voice, Your Say booklet.



You can ask someone to show you how to scan this!



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: 08001111

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.

Web: childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Tel: 0800 528 0731

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.



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.



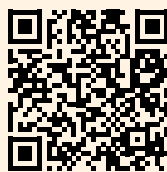
You can ask someone to show you how to scan this!

Useful videos and documents

Click the links below or scan the QR codes. If you need help with this, you can ask your Foster Carer.



[How we use your personal data](#)



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



[How to submit a complaint](#)



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



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

