

Children Who Foster



A Handbook for Sons & Daughters of Fostering Families



Foster Careline



<https://vimeo.com/5riverschildcare/sonsanddaughters>

A Note From the Writer



Hi, I'm Aaliah, and I am the daughter of a family that fosters. If you are reading this book, then your parents are thinking about becoming foster carers.

This book has been given to you to help you to understand what fostering is and what it will mean to you.

Fostering involves the whole family. Lots of families foster and fostering is different for everyone. You must know what is going on and who is coming to stay at your house.

I have written this book (with help from staff and other young people) to explain what fostering will involve and some of the changes you may face. It will try to answer any questions that you may have and help you deal with any issues.

For me personally, fostering has been a roller-coaster. As a big family of 8 (2 sisters, 3 brothers, a sister in law and my parents), fostering meant that our family size would increase. Having a big family means you are never bored, or at least, not very often.

There is always someone to talk to, to have a laugh with and to enjoy company with. Not only this, fostering helps you build on your own self-esteem and makes you more confident as you meet new people, and it allows you to build on your people skills. As well as working on your self-esteem, it helps a child that you foster to become confident, resilient and a few years down the line, independent.

We as sons and daughters of fostering families get together once a year to talk about how things are going, have some fun and share our experiences and ideas of how to improve things with the board of directors.

This group also made a film about our experiences to give you a better idea of how things really are. you can find this film here -



<https://vimeo.com/5riverschildcare/sonsanddaughters>

About Fostering

What is Fostering?

Fostering is where a family looks after a child or young person when they are unable to live with their parent.

Why are some children Fostered?

There are many reasons why some children go into foster care, but it will always be because it's in their best interest. For some of them, it may only be for a short time and others for longer. It could be because their parent is ill, or away, it might be because they are not getting along with their family very well. Children come into fostering because they have not been cared for properly.

Will they see their family again?

Every child is different. While some children go back to live with their families again, others may be fostered for all their childhood, be adopted or go to live in a residential children's home.

The aim is, where possible, to keep families connected. Some children might move with their brothers or sisters, but sadly, some get separated for various reasons. Whatever happens, we will always try to make sure there is contact between siblings.

When children are allowed to see their parents', adults working with them may need to supervise the child or young person to make sure they are safe, and nothing is upsetting them. Some may not be able to see their parents for a time or some never again. All these issues are difficult for children, and it can be a subject that they might find difficult to talk about.

Most children joining a fostering family will probably be sad and frightened. Having to leave their family will be very difficult. It most likely will affect their behaviour, and they will all show their sadness in different ways. How you respond to them and make them feel welcome will make a massive difference to how they settle down.





How long will the foster children stay?

How long a child stays with your family will depend on the circumstances or that child or children. The aim of the Children's Act is to protect children from harm but also where possible to try to keep children with their families. This is not always possible.

Some children might come and stay with you 'short term' this can be anything from one or two days up to a year.

Others will come and stay 'long term' - this will vary but will usually mean several years or until they are able to leave home and become independent.

Other children could come and stay with your family on 'respite'. This is usually for a very short time - a weekend, one or two weeks.

Respite can give another family a break while someone is sick or on a holiday or to attend an event where they cannot take the child.

Your family will decide what type of placement they would like to have whether they offer long term, short term or respite.

The organisation will aim to give your family what it requests but sometimes if a child is desperate for a family and your family is a match for that child - they may ask your family to consider this child.

As you can imagine a child might move in and they might really fit in with your family so it might be that child stays with your family long term if everyone agrees.



Sadly sometimes some placements don't work out and we have to end the placement and try to find another suitable home for the child. This is a very difficult decision to make and one that the family, you and everyone involved with that child need to decide together.

You can find another book written by a daughter of a fostering family called 'Forever Families'. This book talks about the struggle of a daughter to accept and get used to sharing a her home with a new foster child. The book also tells you about the journey of accepting the foster child and hows it's changed her life for the better.

Find it here on:

https://issuu.com/fiveriverschildcare/docs/forever_family

Do I have a role to play?

Although it is your parents' job to look after the child, to provide for them physically and emotionally; a child who fosters still plays a vital role, whether that is to help comfort, be a positive role model, to be there to talk to and be friendly company. If you are friendly and welcoming, this would help them feel comfortable.

What changes would have to be made?

Having someone new to come stay at your house and being a part of your family means that some changes will need to happen. Some will be good and some you may not be happy with at first.

The most obvious change is that you will need to share your home and some of your belongings too. Sometimes, the children may take something of yours without permission and could even break something or damage it either accidentally or

intentionally, sometimes because they are upset. This can be frustrating and it is understandable that you may become angry.

What does it feel like to share your parents' time?

At first it may mean that your parents may need to spend a little more quality time with the children being fostered to ensure that they are comfortable and feel welcome. However, gradually as time goes by this will settle. At first, sharing your Mum and Dads' time may be frustrating as they may want all your parent's attention, but try and imagine how insecure they feel having been taken away from their family.

Could things become difficult in my home?

Children could come from all sorts of backgrounds such as neglect and abuse and this could influence

their behaviour. They may be upset, angry, or frustrated resulting in them having mood swings or becoming physically violent or verbally abusive to you or your parents. However, you should not get involved and you should leave it to your parents to manage. If you feel upset or angry, leave the room and go somewhere to take some privacy and time. It's good to remember that your parents are specially trained on how to manage behaviours and deal with all sorts of situations.

What should I do if things become difficult?

If things are becoming difficult, talk to your parents or supervising social worker (your family social worker). If you want we can arrange for you to talk to another professional like a support worker - or a therapist dependent on the support needed. Think about the things that you enjoy doing which can help or distract you.



How do we talk about our family fostering to our friends?

Fostering is something that you should feel proud of doing, but you need to remember that some children in your family's care would rather not talk about it. You could ask the foster child what they would prefer. Ensure that the personal things that you know about the foster child stays confidential, which means that you do not tell anyone outside the fostering family any information that you have learnt about the fostered child.

Will I get any other help?

You can ask for help whenever you like. You will have a chance to see your family social worker once a month. You will also have a chance to meet up with other young people who are also sons and daughters of fostering families to talk about things, share experiences, tell the organisation about your experiences and how they can make things better for you and other young people in the same position.

Once a year you will be invited to a celebration event. You can also attend training to help you to understand child development and why some children behave the way they do and how to take care of yourself. There is lots of support around to help - you just need to ask.

What do I do if a fostered child tells me something that is upsetting, dangerous, or has made me feel worried?

When a child builds trust with you they may share some of their stories and information. This is a privilege and means that they feel safe with you. They could tell you stuff about their past or the present and both of these things are really important to share with an adult (ideally your parents) if you feel it is important. If you are not sure it is always best to share the information anyway - just to be on the safe side.





The child might ask you not to tell and this will be difficult for you but it is essential that you tell someone if they are sharing something that sounds dangerous, unsafe or abusive.

Knowing the difference between sharing information and gossip is good.

Sharing information helps the situation - however gossip does not.

Any information that is told by a foster child, which sounds worrying or dangerous must be shared with an adult to ensure their safety. Gossip, however, serves no purpose.

Foster children may tell you things which you find upsetting and it is okay for you to talk to someone about this, to help you manage your feelings. If you are not sure how to respond to a child who tells you difficult things, sympathise with them and respond "Gosh, that must have been terrible for you" or "Is there anything that I can do to help?".

Can I keep a secret?

You must ensure that if a child who is being fostered says to you that they would like to tell you a secret, if the secret is worrying or dangerous then it must be shared with your parent.

Remember some secrets are fun - such as surprise party or a present - these secrets make you feel happy inside.

Other secrets can make you feel sad and worried inside - you will notice the difference.

If you are asked to keep a secret that makes you feel sad or worried inside, it is best you share it with your parent.



Success and moving on!

What happens when a young person moves on?

How long a foster child stays with you, or how well you get along with them, will affect how difficult it will be for them to leave your house and move on.

Moving on should be positive as it means a new beginning. However, for some, moving on may be difficult as they may have to move due to difficult circumstances. It's hard to say how moving on will feel for you, your family and the individual.

Getting ready for independence

Getting ready for the adult world is often called 'independence', but we'd rather call it 'inter-dependence'. We don't believe that when a child turns 16, 18 or 21 they need to 'go it alone'.

We believe that we need to help them to build a community, a network of people, friends, training, support, a career and skills to help them along their way. In the same way as your family will expect to stay in touch after you turn 18, go to university or the world of work, we would like children that leave our care to have enough support, friends and help around them, in times of need.

Getting ready for the adult world, is different for everybody. People will start getting ready at different times, it might start slowly at the age of 10 or 11 - doing chores around the house, making dinner or your packed lunch. All the way through a foster child's placement we will work with them to get them ready to go into the adult world.

Staying put

Some families and their foster children develop such a bond that they decide to stay after the age of 18 - this is called 'Staying Put' and it's not as intensive as fostering as they are now young adults.

Remaining close

Many foster children wish to remain in contact with their foster family and this is a very positive thing to happen. However some young people may feel the need to step away from what they see as 'The Care System' and want to become independent and begin a new life not characterised by life in care. Some may also want to go back and live with their families and this is possible by law. This sadly can sometimes mean they no longer want to remain in contact with the fostering family. Regardless of how placements end or whether foster children stay in touch, it is always

important to remember that fostering is a very positive solution for children at a difficult point in their life. Even if it may not be what they want, people are doing their best for that child. You will have had a positive effect on a child's life in many ways.

How do I know I have the right skills?

All of us are equipped with the ability to love, care for and empathise. You will know within yourself what skills and personality you have and whether you feel you can share your life and family with another child or young person.

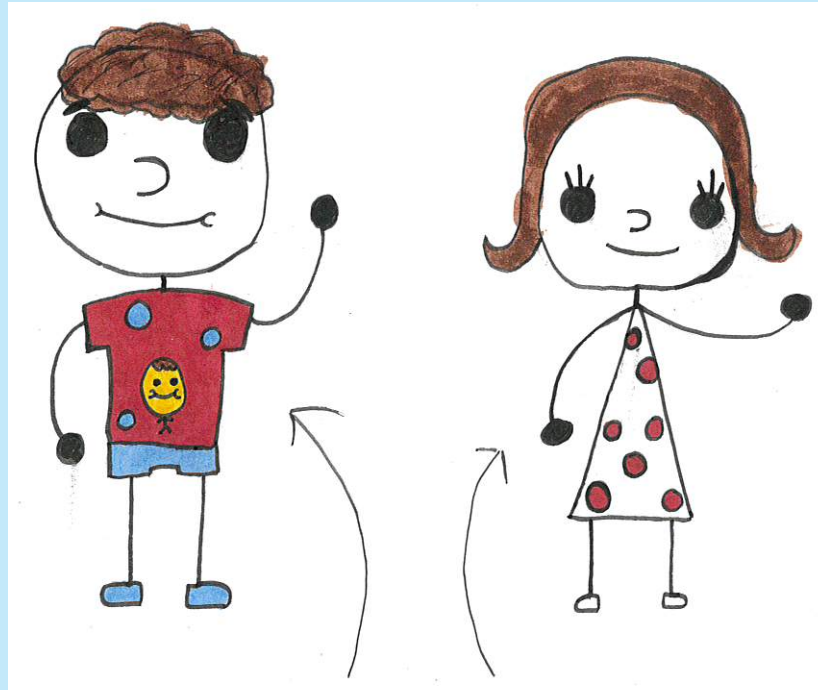
This is what foster children say they like about sons and daughters of fostering families

Kai says -

Respectful

Treat us like
part of the
family

Understanding
why we are
being fostered



Renelle says -

Kind

Helpful

Fun

Responsible

Reliable

Five Rivers, Safe Houses Fostering, Foster Careline and the Fostering Company North East, are proud to be part of the Five Rivers family of organisations.

For any more information please don't hesitate to contact us at your local office. Ask your parents for details of your local offices.

If you wish to get involved in son's and daughter's participation activities and share your views on what it's like being a son or a daughter of a fostering family, please get in touch with your Participation Lead at - Participation@five-rivers.org

This person will support you and put you in touch with your local participation champion and make sure any message or feedback gets to the right person.

