

Derbyshire Children's Services

A young person's guide to foster care in Derbyshire

Things you need to know about being fostered

This is a booklet which should be completed by the Young Person with the help of their foster carer(s) and/or social worker

With thanks to First Generation who provided advice during a consultation on this document (which took place 29.06.2023)



Things You Need to Know About Being Fostered

This booklet is to help you find out what fostering means – about the people you will be staying with, and the people who are there to help you.

This booklet is yours to keep and use whenever you want to find something out.

My Name:

I am years old.

My foster carer(s) are called:

My Social Worker is:

I can phone, text or email my Social Worker on:

My foster carer's Social Worker is called:

I can phone, text or email them on:

My Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is called:

I can phone, text or email my IRO on:

What do we do?

Our aim is to ensure you are well cared for and that the best opportunities are open to you. This means that we want you to be healthy and safe. It also means that we listen to you and your wishes and feelings. These are important in making plans for your future.

What is Fostering?

When a child cannot live with their own family, they can move into a foster home where they will be safe. Children live with foster carers for all sorts of reasons, but it's not because of anything you have done. Foster carers are special people who have been carefully chosen to look after children. Foster carers do all the things parents do, such as setting rules and helping you with things like going to school and making sure you eat the right food. Your foster carer will get to know you and help you do the things you like, and if you want something that is very important to you, they will do their best to help you. Let them know what you like to do and they will make sure you can get to do all the things you enjoy.



What do Social Workers do?

Their job is to make sure you are looked after properly and make sure you are happy. Your social worker will visit you to check that you are OK. They will ask you how things are going and tell you about any plans that affect you. They will cover things like where you will go to school, who will take you to the doctors if you are ill and how often you will see your family. Your social worker will ask you how you feel about the plans being made for you. Your social worker will also work with your family to try and make it possible for you to return home. If it is not possible for you to go home, they will explain to you all the reasons why not.

The Supervising Social Worker

Your foster carers have their own social worker to help them in their fostering role. This person is called a supervising social worker (SSW). It is likely that you will see the SSW quite often because they will visit your foster carer regularly to discuss how looking after you is going. The SSW may briefly talk to you to ask how you are and how you feel the placement is going.

The Independent Reviewing Officer

Another important person is the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). They are also a social worker. They will chair a meeting called a Review. This meeting is where plans are made to make sure you are looked after well. You can talk to them in private and they will listen to what you want for your future.

What happens in the Review?

This is a regular meeting where all the important grown-ups in your life will get together and make a care plan with you. This includes everything that is important to you such as:

- When and how you will see your family and friends - we will do our best to make sure that you stay in touch with the people who matter most to you
- How long you will stay with your foster family
- Doing well in school and enjoying activities that you like doing
- Staying safe
- Being healthy
- Having fun

Before the review, you will be asked what you think and what your views are. You may be asked to write this down or to tell your social worker. You will have a chance to say what you think at these meetings and can talk to the Independent Reviewing Officer before the review.

If you don't feel you can go along, please make sure you give your views to the social worker so that they can let everyone know how you are feeling. If you cannot go home your social worker will discuss with you and your parents where you can live. This may be relatives or other carers.

Plans for Leaving Care

If you are 16 or older arrangements will be made for what happens to you when you are 18. This involves a Pathway Plan that includes the Care Plan which sets out all of the arrangements to ensure that you make a successful move from care to independent living or to an Adult Service when you turn 18.

Staying Put

We can support young people who wish to remain with their former carer up to age 21 under the staying put arrangement if they are not ready to move. If everyone is in agreement this is something that can be agreed for you. This will be discussed before your 17th birthday.

In some cases, where a young person is in education, support from foster carers can be up to the age of 25.



Questions about Living with my Foster Family

Living in a family means that you have to share things and respect each other. You will get lots of help with all the important bits of your life. In the next box there are some of the questions you might ask. You can add your own questions to this in the box for notes on the next page. Your foster carer can also help add any rules that help everyone get along and keep you safe and healthy.

Can I see my family and friends?

How can I have contact with family and friends?

What about school or college?

How do I stay healthy?

Will I have my own room?

What activities/clubs can I do?

Am I allowed a pet?

Am I allowed a sleepover?

Do I get pocket money and how much?

What time do I have to go to bed?

What times are mealtimes?

Can I help myself to food?

Can I eat my favourite foods?

When and how can I use the internet?

Can I use a mobile?

My Notes

What if I am worried about anything or not happy with my care?

If you have problems you can talk to your foster carers, your social worker, the Supervising Social Worker or speak to other people, like your Independent Reviewing Officer, or another adult (such as a teacher).

Talk to us and we will try to make it right

In Derbyshire we also have a service to help you to understand what your rights are. This is called an Advocacy Service. An advocate is someone with a lot of experience of working with children and young people and listening to their views. They can make sure that your views are heard when decisions are made about your care.

You can contact an advocate for lots of different reasons.

For example, about:

- seeing your family
- where you live
- feeling safe
- education – we will try to make sure that you can stay at your own school, so that you can see your friends and carry on with activities that you enjoy.

You can speak to an advocate by: -

Email: childrens.rights@derbyshire.gov.uk or **Tel:** 01629 532029

Or, write to:

Children's Rights and Participation Team,
Room 287, County Hall, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 3AG

You can ask an adult to contact an advocate for you.

What if I want to make a complaint?

Sometimes, complaints are the only way to make sure things are dealt with properly. You have a right to make a complaint if you are unhappy with anything that affects you and your plans for your future. You can make a complaint by contacting:
cs.feedback@derbyshire.gov.uk

You can ask an adult to help you with your complaint and you have a right to have an advocate help you with this. Your social worker, the Supervising Social Worker, your foster carer or the Independent Reviewing Officer are some of the people who also can help with the complaint. You can talk to them in private if you want.

Derbyshire has a project underway to further help young people to communicate their wishes and needs digitally by accessing an App called MOMO (Mind of My Own). This is a great way to put down your thoughts and send them to those people who need to hear from you. You can scan the QR code to go to the website. (www.mindofmyown.org.uk)



Who else can I talk to if I need help?

If you want to talk to somebody who is completely separate from fostering or your own social worker, there are lots of other people who may be able to help. Call one of these contact numbers below or alternatively email or visit the website.

OfSTED

You could contact 'Ofsted'. They are an organisation set up to monitor and inspect all children's services in the country. If you continue to be unhappy about the service you have a right to contact them by writing to them at:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street Manchester M1 2WD
Alternatively, you can call them on **0303 123 1231**, or send them an email to enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The Help at Hand Service within the Office of the Children's Commissioner

This is run by the government. This service can help you understand your rights and can talk to the local authority by writing and speaking to those who are responsible for your care (your social worker and their managers).

Email: help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk or

Tel: **0800 5280731**. You can also complete a form by following the following link: Contact - Help at Hand (childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

NSPCC 0808 800 5000 or www.nspcc.org.uk

Childline 0800 1111 or www.childline.org.uk

Bullying UK at www.bullying.co.uk

LGBT+ - Derbyshire will help any young person who is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender or anyone who is having issues with their sexual orientation or gender identity.

At <https://www.derbyshirelgbt.org.uk/>

Independent visitors for Children in Care - If you're a child or young person in care or leaving care you can ask for an independent visitor. (An independent visitor is an adult volunteer who befriends and develops a long-term friendship with you).

Email: childrens.rights@derbyshire.gov.uk



Support in reading this document

The social worker for the young person can arrange for this booklet to be available in a different format (e.g., Braille, large print, Makaton etc.) or another language or a way that can be understood.

There is a project underway with Alfreton Park Special School and supported by Derbyshire Participation & Childrens Rights Officer to translate this booklet into Widgit symbols. This will support young people with communication, language or learning disabilities. This will be completed in Autumn 2023.

Social workers can seek advice on how best to communicate with a young person that has difficulty with spoken or written English by contacting: -

John Cowings

Tel: 01629 538304 or **email:** john.cowings@derbyshire.gov.uk

Advice is also available to social workers through this link: -

<https://staff.derbyshire.gov.uk/equality-and-diversity/translating-and-interpreting/translating-and-interpreting.aspx>

Further support for young people

A booklet titled “coming into care” is available if you would like more information by using the following link:

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/social-health/children-and-families/children-we-look-after/support/support-for-children-in-our-care.aspx>

