

A guide to fostering for young people aged 12 and over

Info about most things you need to know about being fostered with Bradford Council.



Fostering
in Bradford

Introduction

This booklet is your guide to the support you will get while you are being fostered.

Bradford Council is your corporate parent, which means that we are responsible for making sure that you are supported properly. This means that we want to make sure you have everything you need, which includes the following things:

- You have positive relationships
- Where you live is safe and you get everything you need
- You do really well in your education
- You know who you are and where you're from (your identity)
- You are listened to and involved when important decisions have to be made about your life
- You have the support you need to move into adulthood
- You have people around you who you can talk to and make sure you feel good about life
- You are fit and healthy
- You know the people who will support you in your life
- You are not alone – there are over 53,000 children and young people in foster care today in England.



Why am I in care?

Every child and young person is different and has a different story and reason they are in care



Maybe...

- a court is deciding what should happen or has asked us to care for you, or
- there is not an adult who knows you that can look after you, or
- you may have asked us to help
- sometimes, young people live with a foster family while we are finding out if there is anyone else in your family, or someone who knows you well, who could help
- or we could be trying to find out when things will be all right for you to go back home.

What is being in care?



What's a placement?

It's the word social workers use to mean where you live while you are in care.

Being in care is also called being looked after and it is when you live away from your family home because your family are not able to look after you.

We will always start by trying to find someone in your family or a family friend for you to live with. But sometimes you may live with a family you do not know or in a home where other children and young people live.

You may live away from your family for a short time, be

looked after by someone else only at weekends, or you may stay with them until you are an adult. It all depends on what is needed to make sure you are safe, happy and well cared for.

Children's Services is the part of Bradford Council that is responsible for looking after you. The fostering service is the part of Children's Services that finds foster families to look after children and young people who cannot live at home.

Where will I live?

Every foster family is different



You might live with a family member or close family friend in a family and friends placement (these are sometimes called Connected Persons or kinship carers). This might be with someone like your auntie, uncle, a grandparent or an adult who knows your family.

You may have to live with strangers. They are called foster carers. Foster carers have been specially recruited and trained to look after children who cannot live with their own families. You might live with them for a short while, like a couple of weeks or months, or for much longer until you are an adult.

There may be other young people or children being fostered with the family you will live with.

The family may have children who still live at home or have grown up and moved out.

We try to make sure your foster family has a similar background to you. If this isn't possible, then they will be helped to understand and support you. That might include understanding your religion, your diet and traditions. We will get you an interpreter if you need one.

Your foster carer will meet all your health needs and support your education.

They will help you to keep in touch with people who are important to you.

For a few children, a children's home might be a good idea for a while, but this would be discussed with you as part of your care plan.

My well-being



What happens with my education?

It may be that you stay at the school or college you already go to. If you can't stay there, then your social worker will work out which one is best for you to go to. If you don't go to school or college at the moment or haven't been for a while, you may feel a bit nervous. The person who is caring for you can help you with this. Remember it isn't just about lessons: it can be a great place to meet new friends and try new activities.

We want to make sure that you do the best you can so that you can achieve your potential. To do this we create a personal education plan which helps you and us think about your future and where you want to get to. At your school or college you will also have a designated teacher who is there to give you support to make sure you are on track with achieving your goals.



Can I see my family?

This is a very important question, but the answer is not the same for everyone. Your social worker will talk to you and your family about arrangements for you to see each other (this is called contact).

We understand that you want to know what plans are being made and will try to let you know what is happening as soon as possible.

What happens with my health?

Your health is very important and to make sure you stay healthy we have a doctor and a nurse who you will meet and will make sure your health needs are met. If you become unwell, they will make sure you are cared for so that you can recover. The doctor and nurse will also be able to give you information and advice about different areas regarding your health.



Will I have my own bedroom?

This depends on your age and circumstances; in most situations, yes, you will have your own room. Sometimes young people like to share a bedroom with their brother or sister.

What are my rights?

All children have rights



- You have the right to be safe from abuse
- You have the right to be treated fairly
- You have the right to be listened to and your wishes and feelings heard
- You have the right to go to school
- You have the right to be healthy
- You have the right to say if you are sad, angry or worried about anything
- You have the right to an advocate

Your social worker will help your foster carer to check these things happen for you. You should be given copies of these and you can discuss them with the social worker.

And you should always be able to take part in decisions about your care and your future.

Your social worker

A social worker is someone who is trained to help children and families through difficult times. Their job is to make sure you are safe, settled and well. They will explain things to you and help you to understand what is going on.

You will be given a social worker who will support you. It's your social worker's job to make sure that everything possible is being done to help you achieve your best while we care for you. They will make sure that your health needs are being met, that you go to the right school or college, and you are being encouraged to do the best you can there.



Your social worker is there to help and support you and will:

- visit you and explain to you why you are being looked after
- let you know how long you may be looked after and what your long term plans are
- they will make sure you understand what is happening and why and will help you with any problems
- visit you within the first week of moving to a new foster home or placement
- talk to you on your own
- talk about your hobbies, what you like and things you are good at and how we can help you to keep doing them
- talk about anything you're unhappy about
- tell you how to get in touch with them
- ask what you think about things
- help you take part in discussions and decisions being made about you

You should have a visit from your social worker within the first week of becoming looked after and regularly after that, depending on the plans being made for you.

What if I've got something to say?

What is a review meeting?

A review is a meeting to see how you are getting on. Your parent(s), social worker and carer(s) will also be invited to the meeting. It is a chance to talk about what has been happening and what plans are being made for you while you are being looked after.

To make sure your feelings can be considered carefully, it is important that you have the opportunity to attend your reviews. You can ask someone you trust to speak for you. If you like, you can write down your views for your independent reviewing officer or social worker to say at the review.

Your first review meeting usually happens when you have been looked after for four weeks. There will be a second review meeting after three months and then every six months after that.

What does my Independent Reviewing Officer do?

Every child and young person who is looked after must have a named Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). You will be told who your IRO is and how to contact them.

It is their job to:

- Chair your review meeting
- Check that your care plan is right for you
- Make sure you have your say about what is happening
- Make sure that everyone listens to what you have to say and considers it carefully when they are making decisions
- Make sure everyone has their say
- Check that everyone is keeping to their part of the plan
- Check that there are clear plans for your future
- Check that you know how to make a complaint
- Check that you know how to request further support
- if it is needed, such as asking for an advocate (someone who can speak on your behalf).

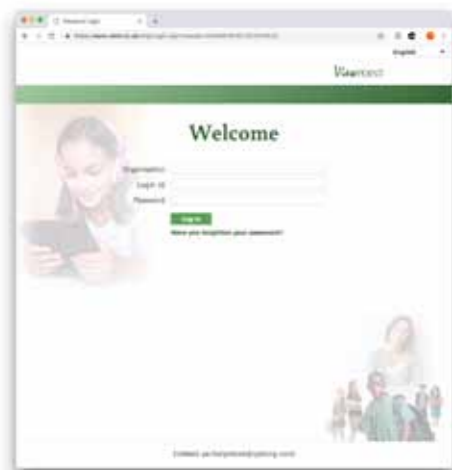
Your IRO will give you some information about them and how to contact them.

How do I get an advocate to speak for me?

You have the right to someone who is independent to tell everyone at your review what it is you want to say. NYAS will find an advocate for you.

On your side

Viewpoint



Viewpoint is one way you can tell Children's Services what you think. It is an online questionnaire that asks you about where you live, school or college, friends, your health and the things you like doing.

Go to www.vptol.co.uk

You can fill in your questionnaire from any computer with an internet connection, either in private, at school, in the library or at home with your foster carer.

Your Independent Reviewing Officer receives your answers and will use it in your review meeting to make sure that you are being listened to.

You can get your log in details from your social worker or phone 01274 438900 (duty).

It's up to you how often you do the questionnaire, but it's really important that you tell Children's Services what you think and feel about the services you are getting.

NYAS



NYAS supports children who are looked after by Bradford Council. It is independent and not part of Children's Services - they can speak on your behalf and help you make your voice heard. The service is independent, so you do not need to feel worried if you need to talk to someone about a problem that is about your foster home or a service from Bradford Council.

NYAS exists to represent your best interests, and does not offer you advice – it is your voice that counts.

You can call for free on **0808 808 1001** (from a landline or a mobile). You could also visit their website youngpeople.nyas.net or download the app and use that.

Children in Care Council



The Children in Care Council is a group of looked after children and young people and care leavers who meet regularly with social workers, service managers, local councillors and directors to represent the views of young people on the services delivered to you.

The CiCC need your help to make services better.

If you are interested in joining the Children in Care Council, talk to your social worker or foster carer.

What can I do if...

...I have a question or I'm unhappy about something?

You can ask your carers, your social worker or your Independent Reviewing Officer about anything like keeping in touch with friends and family, getting pocket money, needing to see a doctor or a dentist, or going on holiday.

If you are unhappy or scared about something, you should always tell someone. They will be able to help you sort it out. If it's about your foster carer, you could tell your social worker or a teacher. If it's about your social worker, you could tell your IRO or your foster carer or your social worker's manager.

You can complain about your social worker, foster carer or IRO if you do not think you are being listened to. You can talk to your social worker's boss or the Fostering Service manager.

You can do this on your own or you can get an independent advocate (someone who does not work for Bradford Council who will listen to you and support you) to help. Your social worker can organise this for you or you can contact NYAS yourself.

Go to youngpeople.nyas.net for more information or phone **0808 808 1001**.

The Children's Commissioner is there to listen to young people in care, and can give you advice if you need it.

They have a useful website that explains how they can help you find out about your rights. Go to childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand

You can contact **Ofsted**, an organisation that checks the work of fostering agencies on **0300 123 1231** or enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You can also make a formal complaint to Bradford Council about how you are being looked after.

Phone Bradford's complaints officer on **01274 432987**



Other useful phone numbers

Bradford Council Through Care and After Care Children's Services	01274 438900
Bradford Council's Fostering Service	01274 434444
The Children's Commissioner's Office	0800 528 0731
NYAS	0808 808 1001
ChildLine	0800 1111
NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children)	0808 800 500
Samaritans	0845 790 9090
Ofsted	0300 123 1231



The wording in this publication can be made available in other formats such as large print and Braille, audio tape or in another language. Phone 01274 434750 or email fostering@bradford.gov.uk



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METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL