

# Living with Foster Carers

*A Guide For*

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Every child or young person has the right to live in a safe home. If this is not happening for you – it can be for reasons like illness of a family member, lots of arguments in your home, or someone in your house hurting or mistreating you – we, the local authority, have a legal responsibility to protect you.

As soon as we find out that you are not safe, we will nominate a social worker to look after you, and we may have to start looking for a new place you can move to. The **social worker**'s mission is to keep you safe; they are also trustworthy so you can go to them every time you are worried about something.

If there is someone in your family such as an aunt, uncle or another relative who can safely care for you, your



social worker can arrange for you to live with them.

Sometimes this is not possible and you may have

to live with a **foster parent**.

If you have siblings, we will do our best to help you stay together. If this does not happen, we will make sure you see them regularly.



This can be a difficult time for you and your family, but everyone around you is doing their best to care for you. We created this

guide to help you understand what is happening with you and your family, and how we can support you. If you want to know more about your circumstances, please speak to your social worker.

Next, you will find a list of buzzwords from social care. At the end of the guide, you can find a list of useful contacts – names, phone numbers and/or email addresses more people that can help you besides your social worker and foster parents.

## Buzz words

**Local authority** – the council which looks after the area where you live. The local authority is responsible for the area it manages and the wellbeing of its residents, adults and children.

*Foster care/fostering* – when you go and live with someone who is not your parent. This can be short or long-term.

**Foster carer** – the person who is assessed by the local authority to look after children who cannot live with their parents. Foster carers receive training before they start caring for children and young people.

**Placement Plan Meeting** – A meeting that takes place at the beginning of period you will be spending in foster care. The purpose is to discuss what you like and what you may need to feel happy and content, the rules in your carer's home, your previous routines.

**Care Plan** – a document which highlights your needs and how your carers can help meet those needs while you are living with them.

**Fostering allowance** – Money that your foster parent receives from us so they can look after you.

*Social Worker* – a person whose role is to help you while you are living away from your birth family.

**Supervising Social Worker** – this person is the social worker of the foster carer. Their job is to make sure that your foster parents look after you properly, following the care plan.

**Contact** – This is when you visit your family and friends.

**Contact services** – A service that makes contact possible.

**Looked After Child (LAC) Review** – a meeting which takes place every 6 months, which everyone involved in looking after you attends. The purpose of the meeting is to make sure that your foster carer sticks to your care plan, that they look after you the best they can.

**Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)** – A person who does not work for the local authority but attends and chairs all LAC Review meetings. Your

social worker will tell you the name and contact details of your IRO.

**Long-term fostering** – this is when you stay with your foster family until you turn 18 or are ready to live on your own. Sometimes, this can continue after you have turned 18; you and your foster carers will make this decision together.



### **What will happen to my family?**

Whilst you are living with your foster family, arrangements will be made for you to have **contact** with your family, friends,

brothers and sisters. Your social worker will speak to you about this, as there may be reasons why you cannot see them on your own. Your foster carer and Social Worker need to know when these visits happen, so that they can monitor them carefully. These visits will be set up by your social worker and may involve the contact services.



## What are foster parents like?

Foster parents are all different. Some may be single, others may have a partner and children, some have pets, others don't, but generally, they are loving and kind, friendly, open-minded and inclusive. They will do their best to make you feel welcome and comfortable in your new home.



They are good listeners so when you feel ready, you can talk to them about different stuff. They are flexible and do not mind hearing about things that bother you.



Once you become used to your new home and the people in it, you will be more comfortable to discover more about their personality.

We do a lot of work to pick foster carers that are right for you. We will

look for someone who matches your ethnicity, culture and religion (if it is the case). Ideally, we will try to find somebody who lives close to your school, college and friends so it is easy for you to travel. If you have a disability then we will do our best to find a foster parent that has the skills to look after you.

### **Will it be like living at home?**

After you have moved into your foster family's home, we will meet with you, your social worker and your foster carer during the first five days for the **Placement Plan Meeting**.



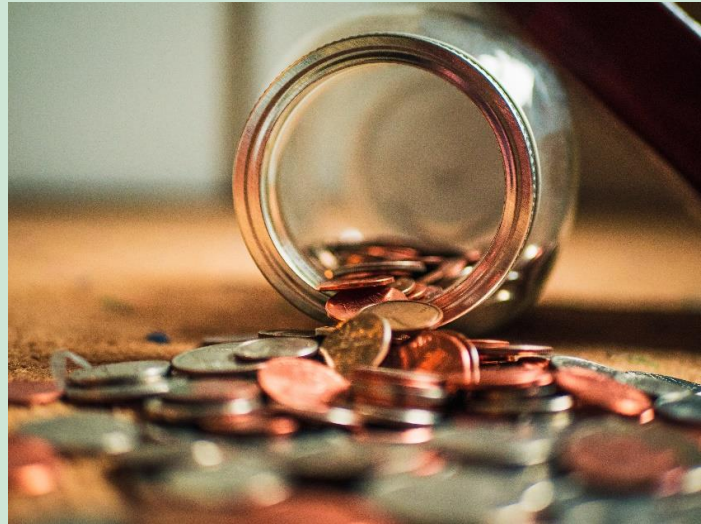
This meeting will look at the routines you would have had at home, for example: seeing your friends and what time you

come home, your mealtimes and what time you go to bed.



You will also talk about the house rules in the new place or other things your foster parent may want you to do like keeping your bedroom neat and tidy.

Another thing you will discuss is money. Your foster parents receive a **fostering allowance** to look after you. This includes pocket



money, money for your hair and skin, money to go to the cinema or do any hobbies you may have.

### **How long will I be with my foster family?**

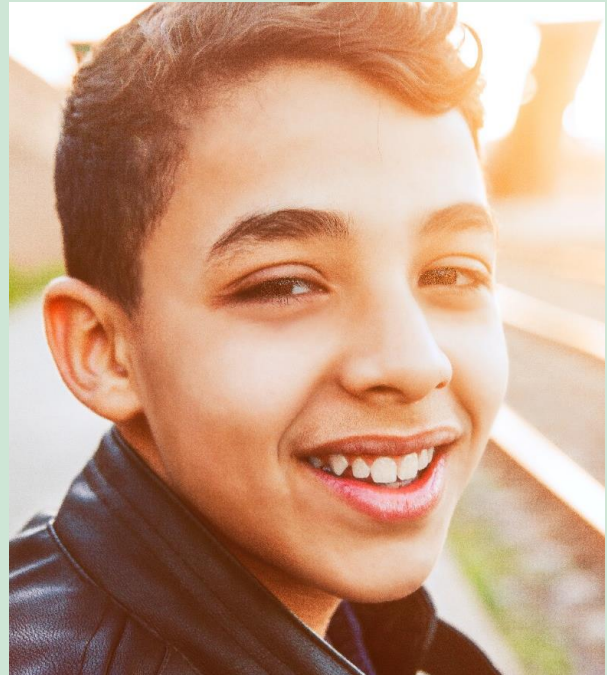
This depends on the situation at your family home and if your parents are ready to welcome you back and take care of you.

If you cannot return to your family, you will have to stay with your foster parents for a longer time. This is known as **long-term fostering**.

## **What will happen while I am living with my foster family?**

Your social worker will visit you every four to six weeks to see how you are. If you want to see them sooner, you can talk to them to arrange this.

Every six months you will have a Looked After Child (LAC) Review.



## **How do you, social services, make sure that I am well?**

Every six months there will be a meeting with you, your social worker, your foster carer, their social worker, and the Independent Reviewing Officer. This is called a **Looked After Child (LAC) Review Meeting** and it is led by the Independent Reviewing Officer.

The IRO is an independent professional who does not work for us, the local authority. Their role is to speak to all the people involved in your

care and make sure they look after you properly, which is also the purpose of the meeting.

Before the LAC review, the IRO will talk to you in private to find out what you think about how the others are treating you. You need to be very honest with them because they are able to help you if something is not right.

The IRO will make clear recommendations about your care plan, which could be to return home or to remain with your foster family.

### **What can I do if I am not happy with my foster family?**

You can talk to your social worker at any time about how you feel in your foster home. Your Social Worker and foster carer will do their best to sort out any problems you may have.

You can also tell this to your IRO when you meet with him/her. You have the right to make a formal complaint if you are not happy.

### **How do I complain?**



You can make a complaint through your Social Worker, review officer, schoolteacher or anyone else with whom you feel comfortable. You or the person you choose to help you will send us your complaint. You will get an answer from us in no more than 14 days.

## **Can I speak to the Independent Reviewing Officer?**

Yes, you can do this at the LAC Review meeting. You can also get in touch with them outside the meeting.

Other people you could speak to are...

### **Advocacy services**

If you want someone to help you, you can request an advocate to act on your behalf. The advocate is an independent person that does not work for Brent Council. They will attend any meetings with you and speak on your behalf, and advise you.

If you want to arrange for an advocate to help you, you can ask your social worker, teacher, a friend, your foster carer, or someone else you trust to help you.

We are now at the end of this guide. We hope you found it useful. Remember, if there is anything else that you want to know, you can always speak to your social worker or foster carers

## **Whom do I complain to?**

Here are the contact details of the people/organisations to which you can complain:

**Complaints Team** Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, HA9 0FJ | 020 8937 2176 | [complaints.service@brent.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.service@brent.gov.uk)

These are professionals trained to deal with complaints from young people or adults in Brent. After you have sent them a complaint via email, they will let you know how long it is before they have a response.

## **Ofsted**

Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD

0300 123 1231

[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Ofsted stands for Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They are responsible for inspecting schools but also check if children in the UK receive support when and where they need it.

### **The Independent Reviewing Officer**

(Your social worker will tell you their name and will share their contact details)

Name:

Phone/email:

### **Anne Longfield**

### **Children's Commissioner**

Sancutary Buildings Great Smith Street

Westminster | London SW1P 3BT

[help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk) |

0800 528 0731

The Children's Commissioner is promoting and protecting the rights of children in the UK.



They will be able to help you if something is not right in your foster home.

## **Childline | NSPCC**

Weston House 42 Curtain Road London

EC2A 3NH 0800 1111

[www.nspcc.org](http://www.nspcc.org)

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/childline/>

NSPCC stands for National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. It is a charity campaigning and working to protect children in the UK.

Here's a list of useful resources for you:

<https://www.kooth.com/> - an online mental wellbeing community.

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/> - free support and advice for children and young people in care.