



My guide for when my family are fostering

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Welcome to fostering

You've been given this booklet because your family have started their fostering journey, or are already fostering. You are an important part of this journey too. In this booklet, you'll find lots of information about being part of a family that fosters. This includes things like what fostering involves, some of the changes that may happen when you foster, and how we can help you. Of course, every family is different, and we may not have covered everything. So if you have any questions or would like to know more, please speak to your trusted adult or your family social worker. One last thing, if you ever feel unhappy or uncomfortable with anything to do with fostering, it's really important that you speak to an adult. Don't worry or be afraid to ask for help, you're an important part of the foster family, and we want to make sure you're happy too. We hope you enjoy reading this booklet!





About Fostering

What is fostering?

Fostering is when a family takes care of somebody who's not able to live with their birth family. This could be for a few nights, weeks, months, or even years. We hope you can look forward to making enjoyable memories that will include children living with you and perhaps share some of the things that you enjoy doing too. Some children will still have times when they go and visit members of their family. This is usually called 'family time' and the foster parents are responsible for taking children to and from this safely. Although you won't go with the child it is sometimes nice to be on a car journey.

Why might children come to live with you?

Sometimes it's not possible for children to live at home because those who were caring for them are struggling and people are worried they may not be safe. There are lots of reasons that can cause a family to be having some difficulties:

- They're not able to provide food, clean clothing and a nice warm home.
- They may have a serious problem with alcohol or drugs.
- They may have treated their child unkindly, maybe even hurt them.
- They may not have been able to keep them safe from others at home.
- They may have a serious physical or mental illness.
- They may have died and have no other family members to take care of their child.

Types of Fostering

Children who come to live with you may be any age – from babies and toddlers to children and teenagers. They come from all different backgrounds including different ethnic backgrounds and religions.

Read about the main types of foster care below...

- **Short-term:** A child will live with you for a little while up to two years.
- **Long-term:** A child will live with you for more than two years. Often until their 18th birthday, sometimes a little longer.
- **Respite:** A child will stay with you for a few nights or weeks but then return home to their foster family.
- **Emergency:** A child will arrive at short notice and stay for a night or two, sometimes a little longer. Often, this happens late at night after they've needed to leave an unsafe situation at home.
- **Parent and child:** A parent and their child will live with you for a number of weeks. This is usually a baby but can also be a toddler or young child.

You may also care for a child with a disability or an asylum-seeking child who has arrived in the UK without a parent to care for them. As a foster family, you'll choose the type of fostering you do.






What am I most looking forward to about fostering?

What do I feel nervous about?



Welcoming others into your home

The adults in your home will do most of the day-to-day tasks involved in caring for a child, like cooking, helping with homework and taking them to places. However, you will still have a big role to play – and this can be really exciting.



Some of the main ways that you can help a child is to:

- Show them their new surroundings and your family routines.
- Help them feel safe with you and the adults in your home
- Spend time together - play games, watch movies, and share your hobbies and interests.

Try to always be kind, patient and forgiving - remember children are away from their family and that can be quite hard. Over time, your friendship will hopefully grow and you'll make lots of special memories together. They may even start to feel like your brother or sister. Of course, you may argue at times but your parents will help to resolve any issues. Being a foster family can be an amazing thing, though sometimes it may also be challenging. If you're finding things tough, always speak to your trusted adults or your family social worker – your happiness is important too.








Before a child comes to live with you, your family will receive lots of information about them. This is called a 'referral'. It includes things like a child's age, gender and background. You can also ask questions about the child and your family social worker will try to find out for you. Once your family has all the information, you'll decide together whether you want to be considered to care for the child. Sometimes, the local authority will choose your family, and they'll start making arrangements for the child to live with you. Other times, they'll choose another foster family because it might be better for the child – for example, they may live closer to the child's family or school. This can feel a little disappointing, but it's about what's best for the child.

Coming into foster care can be frightening for children. Everything is different, and they don't know when they'll be able to return home. They may feel sad, worried or angry when they arrive at your house. Some children may want to be around you, others may prefer to be by themselves and need some space to work through a complicated time for them. It's really important that you treat every child with patience and kindness. You may also find it a little overwhelming at first, and feel lots of different emotions however, always speak to your adults about how you feel so they're able to support you.



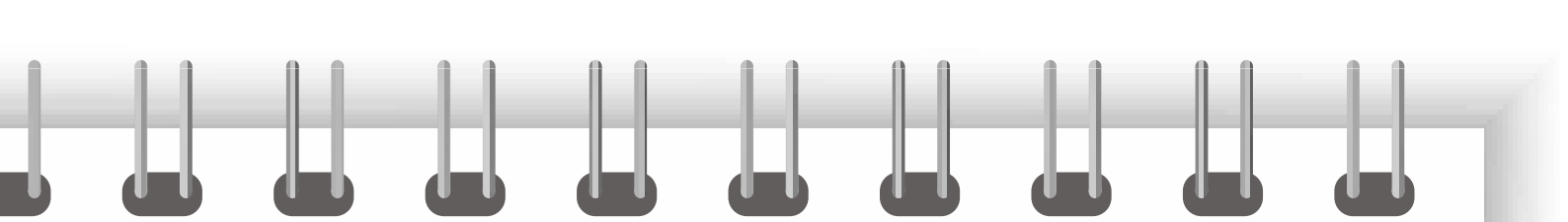


Your family may feel very different to where a child used to live and this may take a little while to get used to. There are lots of little things you can do to help children moving into your home feel comfortable:

-  Make a welcome book and include some little gifts.
-  Spend some time finding out about their favourite things such as music, hobbies or interest
-  Show them around your house.
-  Show them that it's okay to ask for things they need, like a drink or something to eat.
-  Watch their favourite movie together with some tasty snacks.

Once they're a little more settled, you could sit down as a family and talk about some of the things you like to do and see if they would like try them too.





Can you think about important information about your family and your home that a child might like to know?

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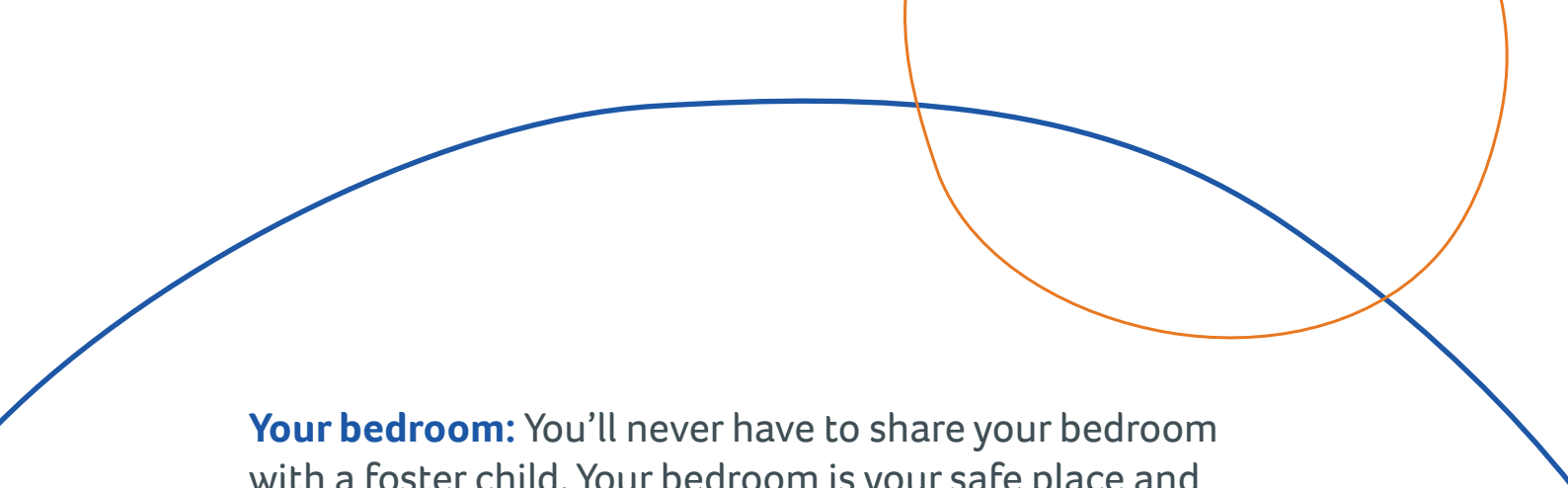
What might be different?

When you're a fostering family, there are a number of rules you'll need to follow. These rules are there to make sure everybody in the house feels safe. Some rules may be different to what you are used to and you may need some time to adjust some of these rules include:

- You must knock on bedroom and bathroom doors, and ask for permission to go in.
- Make sure you're always fully clothed in day or nightwear, with a dressing gown for extra privacy.
- Keep sharp items (razor blades, for example) in your bedroom or locked away in a safe space.

Most young people we speak to get used to them pretty quickly though. There may be other rules you need to follow, so speak to your adults about these if you're unsure.

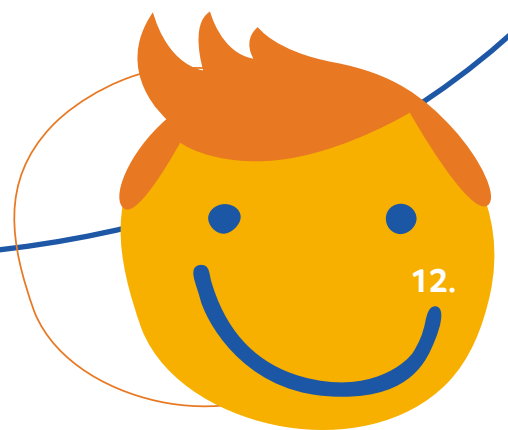
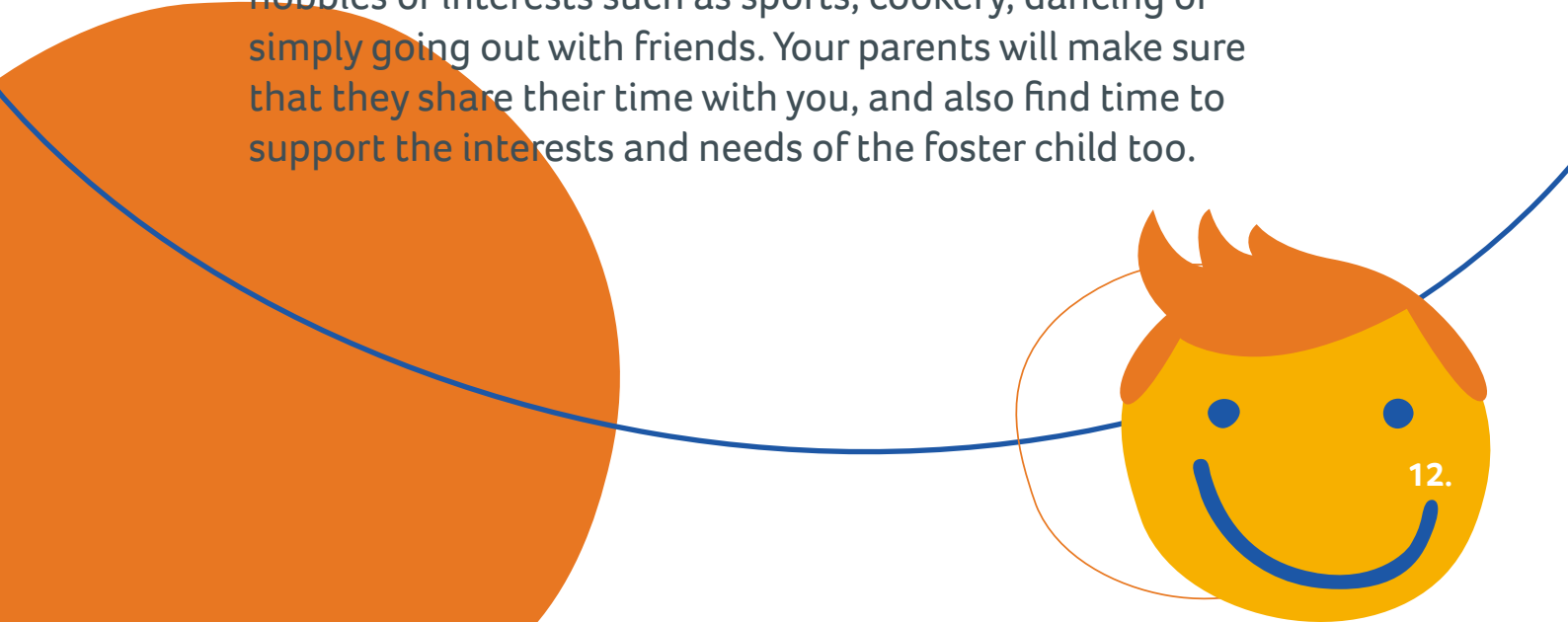




Your bedroom: You'll never have to share your bedroom with a foster child. Your bedroom is your safe place and you shouldn't feel bad if you need to shut the door. We all need a place in our homes where we can enjoy some quiet time without being disturbed. When foster children live with you, they'll always have their own bedroom. This is important because they need a private space too.

Your things: We know that your personal belongings are important to you. You have the right to ask the children living in your home to seek your permission before taking or using anything that belongs to you. At the same time, you'll need to ask permission before using a foster child's belongings too. That way, the rules are the same for everyone.

Your parents: When a child first moves into your home, your parents will have a lot to do. They will be learning about fostering themselves, and it may feel like they have less time for you. If you feel this is happening, please talk to your parents or somebody from our team. It's likely that it will only be for a very short time while your family get used to caring for another child. Things should get back to normal soon. And just like you, foster children will also have hobbies or interests such as sports, cookery, dancing or simply going out with friends. Your parents will make sure that they share their time with you, and also find time to support the interests and needs of the foster child too.



People you might meet

It can sometimes feel quite busy when your family foster as there will be different people coming to visit:

Supervising Social Worker –

You and your family will have their own social worker who is responsible for supporting your family, including children you are caring for and for making sure everybody in the house is safe

Child's Social Worker – any child living with you will have their own social worker who has a job of helping to make decisions about the child.

Independent Reviewing Officer

– Your family will have an 'IRO' who is there to meet with your supervising social worker and your family at least once a year to see how everybody is doing.

Child's Independent Reviewing Officer – they have the responsibility of meeting with the child and all of the people in their life usually a couple of times a year to make sure the child is still safe and happy.

In our agency we have a member of staff specifically to work with all of the children in fostering families... **including you!** They organise lots of exciting trips for you and your family. They also like to sometimes ask you about things that might help other children who are living in fostering families. Sometimes children coming to live with you may have extra people involved if they have some specific health needs or need extra support in other areas of their life. We will always ask you to let us know how you are finding being in a fostering family, sometimes this may be when we visit, or we may also send out a little form.



Disclosures

When a child tells you a secret they may tell you something that has happened in their past. This is called a 'disclosure'. It could be something they've done, something that has been done to them, or something they've seen. They may tell you because they feel safe talking to you, but may ask you not to tell anyone.



What to do if a child tells you a secret

1. Don't agree to keep any secrets.
2. Encourage them to speak to foster parents or their social worker.
3. If they refuse to tell an adult, ask them if they'd like you to help them speak to an adult.
4. Finally, if they still refuse to speak to an adult, let them know that you have to tell those who are caring for them as we all need to make sure that a child is safe.

By telling an adult you're helping a child to have the support they may need to be safe. You won't get in trouble, and we'll make sure you get any support you need too. You may find it very difficult to listen to some of the things a child tells you. Remember, it isn't their fault that this happened to them. Try to be supportive and kind, but also be honest and encourage them to speak to the foster parents.



When somebody leaves your family

What is 'moving on'?

A natural part of fostering is when a child leaves your home. We call this 'moving on'. Sometimes, a child may stay with you until they are 18 or older. Other times, they'll move on much sooner. This may be because they are going to live with their 'forever family' - this is called adoption. Or they may be returning home to their birth family, or going to a long-term foster family. You may have a really good friendship with the child, and so this time may be upsetting for you. Please talk to your family about how you're feeling when a child moves on so you can get any support you need.

When a child leaves there are lots of ways that you can remember the good times you had with them, some families make scrapbooks with lots of photos and special memories. You could also make a scrapbook to give to the child when they leave, that way they can look back at the memories made with you too. Sometimes, you may be able to stay in touch with a child once they move on, this might be face-to-face, by writing letters and cards, or maybe by phone or social media.



Support for you

Your happiness is just as important as any other child that's living in your home, and so we have lots of support available to you too. Your family will have a support worker who will check in with you regularly to see how you're getting on. Sometimes you may struggle with fostering or feel a little lost, angry or frustrated. These feelings are perfectly normal and our support workers can help you understand and process these emotions. Support for you can be anything from a nice long chat with your family worker to taking you out for a fun activity. We're here to support you with whatever you need.

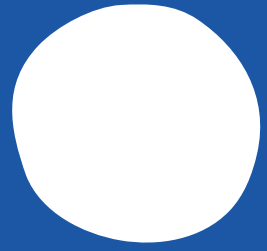




Events & Activities

Our events and activities are all inclusive in that we like everybody to come along and be a part of the day. Sometimes we go to Pantomines, Ice-Skating or Wild Life parks just to name a few; sometimes we have arts and crafts at our offices.

We also like to run some groups that give all children chance to talk about anything they really like about us or anything that they think we could do better, we hope you can also be a part of this. We would like to know of any ideas that you may have for activities and events.....



Thank you

for taking the time to read
through your booklet.
We look forward to getting to
know you and your family.

