

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS

INFORMATION GUIDE

Welcome to thefamily.

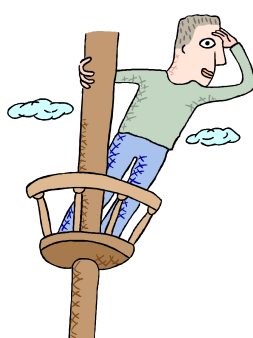
You are now living with a foster family who want to make your stay as happy as possible.

If you have just arrived, you may not know how long you will be staying; you may be feeling anxious and you probably have lots of questions.

This Information Guide gives you information about

- your carers and where you are living now
- the people involved in your care
- your rights and your responsibilities
- what to do if you have questions or worries.

The Information Guide is quite long. Don't worry about reading it all at one go as your Foster Carer can read it with you.



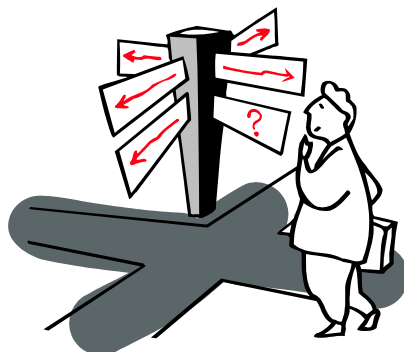
1. What is the Greenwich Fostering Service?

The Fostering Service belongs to the Royal Borough of Greenwich and it provides family placements for children of all ages who cannot stay with their parents, family or friends.

The Greenwich Fostering Service supports your foster carers so that you can be looked after to standards that are agreed by the law (the Children Act 1989) and by Regulations about fostering (the Care Standards Act 2000) & The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.

The most important thing to all of us is that you can be as safe and happy as possible with your foster family.

There are lots of reasons why children cannot live with their parents, so foster carers can look after children of different ages. Some foster carers look after children for a short time before they can move on; and others look after children until they are old enough to care for themselves.



All Royal Greenwich Foster Carers are approved by the Fostering Panel. They are approved to care for children because they have shown that they meet certain standards. Every year, they have a review of the care that they have given. The Fostering Panel or someone called 'the decision maker' has to agree to them continuing for another year. The Panel is made up of people who come from different backgrounds including social work, education, health, a councillor, fostering and someone who was fostered as a child.

The Fostering Service gives your carers money to pay for the things you need; money for your clothes, food, pocket money and other things that you may require each day.



Your foster carers have a social worker called a Supervising Social Worker (SSW) who visits and talks with everybody at home to make sure that they are doing what is best for you and for them.

The Supervising Social Worker works in an office with other fostering social workers at: -

The Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, Woolwich, SE18 6HQ. The telephone number is 020 8921 2759.

The Supervising Social Worker for your foster family is.....

And her telephone number is.020 8921.....

The manager of the Social Workers who supervise your Foster Carer is Jackie Burton. Jackie's phone number is 020 8921 2791.

You will have your own social worker who is also based in The Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, Woolwich, SE18 6HQ. It is important that you are given your Social Workers name and know how to contact them when you need to talk to them or see them.



Ofsted:

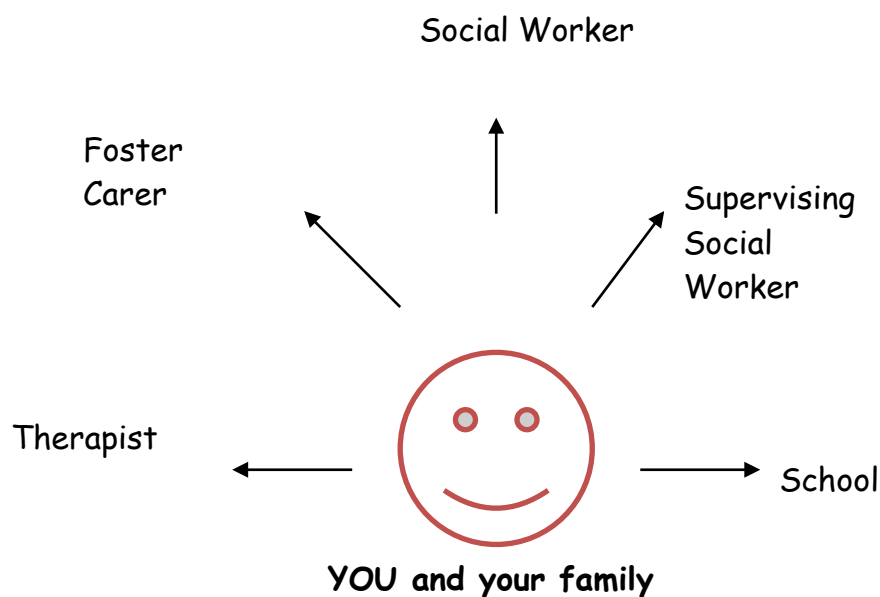
The organisation, which makes sure that Greenwich Fostering Service meets the required standards, is called Ofsted. Every few years, Fostering is visited by the local inspectors to make sure that we are doing the best we can to support your carers to do their best for you.

The inspectors may visit your foster home and ask to speak to you. They may send you a questionnaire asking about your care and invite you to talk to them.

You can contact them at any time that you feel that we are not looking after you properly. Their address and phone number are in the contacts list at the back of the Guide.

2. Important information when you first arrive

Who are the people who may be involved in working together to make your time away from home a positive experience?



SOCIAL WORKER - The main person who is responsible for making sure all the plans for you are the best ones while you are being looked after.

If you cannot speak to your social worker and need to, ask to speak to a duty social worker or, if it is really urgent, the social workers manager.

Foster Carer - Someone who looks after children when they are not able to live with their parents. They are experienced and trained to understand children & young people and they will look after you until you can either go back home or another plan is made for the future.

Supervising Social Worker - A Social Worker who visits the foster home to support your carer to do the best job of looking after you.

Health - There is a special nurse for Looked After children who can be contacted on 020 8317 8079 .

Therapist - Someone for you to talk to who might be able to help you understand some of your feelings.

Education - There is a Looked After Children Education Team (LACE) who can help to find a school place for you. There is also an Achievements Officer called Jane Farmer who can help get extra support in school Jane is on 020 8921 8118.

Advocate- If you feel that you are on your own and without support, it may help to have an advocate who can help you to share your wishes and feelings. Your Social Worker will be able to arrange an advocate for you. You can also use the Voice of the Child in Care Helpline.

Children's Guardian (or "guardian" for short)

Sometimes, when children or young people are looked after by foster carers, the courts have to make decisions about who is going to have parental responsibility for them. Children and young people do not attend court hearings themselves, so a Guardian goes to court for you and lets everyone know your wishes.

What should I expect at the start of a foster placement?

At the start of a foster placement you should expect:

- To have the reason that you have come to live with a Foster family explained to you, and the plan for your time in care discussed with you.
- To have the name of your social worker and details of how to contact them if you need to speak to them.
- To be spoken to about when you will next have some contact with important members of your family.
- A clear idea of when your social worker will visit you next or speak with you.
- To have a 'placement planning meeting' before or very soon (a few days) after you move in with the foster family. This meeting will make arrangements for how you should be cared for while you are being looked after by a Foster Carer.

If you have not already had a Placement Planning Meeting, you should have one within 5 days of being in your Foster Home. You and your parents should be involved in this with your Social Worker, Foster Carer and their Supervising Social Worker. Other people important to you may also be there.



The placement plan will make sure that there are arrangements for:

- Your schooling
- Contact with important people in your life
- Rules to make sure that you are safe
- Your health care
- Your general wellbeing and comfort
- Your future care
- To have meetings and decisions explained to you in a way are able to understand
- Making sure that your wishes and feelings can be heard
- Meeting your religious, racial, cultural and ethnic needs
- The rules of the house - helping everyone know how to live together and consider each other's views

You should receive these things:

- The Children and Young Persons Guide (this document will help you to understand what "looked after means")
- A Complaints leaflet
- A foster carer's profile



There will be other meetings later on that will be arranged by your social worker and explained by your foster carer and social worker. These meetings are called Looked After Children's Reviews and are also about the plans that need to be made about where you live, your health, education and contact.

3. Responsibilities

When you live with a Fostering family you will all need to learn to get on together and try and fit in with each other. This isn't always easy and sometimes living with different people can lead to misunderstandings and then disagreements.

Everyone living in the home, including you is responsible for respecting other people and understanding that some behaviour is not acceptable.

There are likely to be new and different rules and ways of doing things. You and your Foster Carer should be able to talk together about how the house rules will be kept, so that you will be safe and happy in the foster placement. You should be able to help write some of the rules. If you disagree with a rule, talk about it with your foster carer. If you are still unhappy, talk to your social worker.



You also need to know who to talk to if you feel worried about anything else.

If you have any worries about your care, talk to an adult who you trust. If you can't talk to a parent or your carer, you can talk with your social worker. If things don't change and you are still concerned or don't feel safe, you should speak to the Customer Care and Complaints Officer. How to do this is on the Contacts page at the back of this Guide.

4. Rights

While a foster carer is looking after you, you have the same rights as if you were living with your own family.

You have a right to:

- A good standard of food and clothing that you like
- Regular visits from your social worker and a visit at any time that you reasonably request it
- Information about the plans that are being made for you
- Know what is being said and written about you
- Be involved in decisions about your future
- Be listened to and respected
- Be protected from harm, abuse, racism, bullying and discrimination
- Help to complain about the things you are unhappy about
- Not to be treated badly or less favourably, for example, because you are of a different religion, speak a different language, have a disability or a special medical condition
- Receive suitable education and help with doing well at school
- Have the health care and guidance that you need
- Have your individual needs met, for example having special time and attention spent on finding out how you are, and trying to get help for you if you have any special or different needs



- Contact with important people from your family and friends, with permission from your social worker and if you agree. Contact may be at the Foster Carers home or elsewhere, but you should have a clear decision about this before it happens
- Privacy - having your personal private space, this includes having your belongings kept in a safe, private place. Information about you should also be kept safe and not talked about publicly with people who do not need to know.

There is a more detailed "Charter" at the end of this booklet and there are some things that are really important on the following pages.



5. Expectations of Behaviour.

Getting along with other children and adults isn't always easy but it is easier when respect is shown towards each other.

There are 4 things that should not happen and these are:

➤ Disrespectful behaviour and language

Racist, sexist, homophobic (against gay and lesbian people) or any other behaviour or language that is disrespectful and oppresses others is unacceptable. You can expect to have this explained to you but, if it carries on, there will be consequences that could involve sanctions.

➤ Violent or dangerous behaviour

Some behaviour can be dangerous for others or for you. Neither is acceptable and you will be helped to behave in ways that are not dangerous. If ways to change the behaviour cannot be found, a different place may be needed for you to live.

If you ever feel that you are at risk of being harmed, you must talk about it to somebody that you trust.



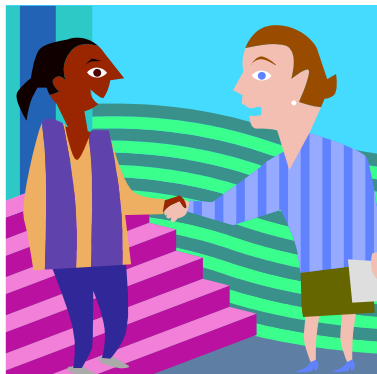
➤ Touching in the wrong way

This is about knowing that it is OK to touch and be touched but not in places that are private to you. We all need a hug sometimes and this is OK so long as you feel safe and comfortable about it.

It is important to talk about feeling safe with your foster carer and your social worker or other people who you trust.

➤ Bullying

Bullying is when somebody or a group of people try to force you to do things that you shouldn't or don't want to do. Bullying is painful. It can hurt the victim for a long time and often needs the help of an adult to stop it.



Bullying is a kind of abuse, which is not acceptable, and you should talk about it if you are worried that it is happening to you or anybody else that you know.

6. Your space.

Your bedroom is a place where you need to feel safe, have some privacy and where you can keep your possessions if you want to. You don't have to share your bedroom with anybody else but your foster carer and sometimes social workers will need to see that your room is being kept to the right standard. How this is done and how it is kept clean and tidy will be discussed with you and put in your placement agreement.

As you get older, you can take more responsibility for keeping your room safe, clean and tidy so your carer and social worker will discuss with you how.



Times for bed vary depending on your age, needs and what time you have to get up the next day. We all need enough sleep. If you are having any trouble sleeping, talk with your carer and social worker about it.

You share the other parts of the house and garden with other people who live here so you will be expected to fit in with sharing the space, the TV and other things. You will also have to take your part in helping to keep things clean and tidy and being sensible about noise and activities. There are also the neighbours to think about.

7. Money and Clothes.

Your Foster Carer will discuss pocket money and your clothing needs with you and your social worker.

Money. Your carer receives money to pay for the things you need from the Fostering Service but not all of the money is for you, as all sorts of bills must be paid.



Pocket money and other spending money for bus fares, personal care items etc. will be agreed with you and your social worker. You will be encouraged to put some money aside for savings. You may need to save for a holiday or for more expensive things that you can't afford right now. Your carer will also save some money for when you leave care and you need it to set up your own home.

Clothing. You should have enough clothes to make sure you have enough changes of clothing between washes, for different types of weather and different occasions.



If you need special or different clothes because of your religion or race, or because of a disability or special activities, these will be provided too.

8. Feeling Good about Yourself.

If your stay is going to be a happy one, we know that it is important for you to feel good about yourself. This will also make growing up and coping with life a lot easier too.

Having to move from your family and friends is difficult and, to make things feel better, you need some things to be in place for you in your foster home.

You need to have: -

- the right contact with your family and friends
- achievements in school and at home
- good health
- good, safe relationships with your carers
- an understanding of 'your life story' - where you have been and where you are going
- to be protected from harm
- knowing who to turn to for help and advice



9. Contact.

Contact with the people who are important to you will be discussed at your placement planning meeting and then regularly at your looked after review meetings. We will do our best to help with these plans to make sure they are safe and supportive for you.

Contact with your family may take place in the carer's home, at a contact centre, in your family home, on the telephone, by letter or in other ways.

The important thing is that your carer and social worker know about it.

Let your carer and social worker know if you are happy or unhappy about the arrangements.



Contact with old and new friends is important, so talk to your carer and social worker about whom you want to visit and who will come to see you in your foster home.

10. School.

It is really important that you have a place at a school and we will support you to get there and succeed there. When you first move to a new home, we always try to help you to continue to attend the same school, at least until a move to a new school can be carefully planned with you.

If you don't have a place in a school, your social worker and carer will try to find one.

If extra support in or out of school would help you to do better, there are two people who both help with education.

Sally Kelly called can help get a school place if you don't have one or get extra help in school if you need it.

Jane Farmer is the Achievement worker who can also help to get extra support to improve your chances of doing as well as possible in school. Their phone numbers are on the page of useful numbers at the back.

You will have what is called a Personal Education Plan (PEP) so that you and everybody involved knows how to get you what you need.



In the foster home, you should have space and help to do homework. The home and, especially your room, should have books and equipment that stimulate and support your schoolwork and things you are interested in.

Your carers are interested in your progress at school so please discuss it with them and your social worker. Your carers will talk with your teachers and attend parent evenings to see how you are getting on. They will help you to keep a record of your achievements at school.



There may be other after school activities that you enjoy and do well. These things can be very important so talk to your carer and social worker about them.

If you don't have any special interests, it is worth talking to people like teachers, your social worker and carer, as there may be local activities that you would find interesting.

11. Your Health.



Your health is really important and when you first come into care, we need to know as much as possible about you so that we can make sure that you will be in the best of health. Your carer will

register you with the local doctor (G.P.)

When we talk about health, we mean your physical health, emotional health and sexual health.

Physical health includes what vaccinations or illnesses you have had and how well you are now, including dental care, your eyesight and hearing.

Emotional health is about how you feel and whether things that happen leave you feeling unhappy or bad about yourself. For

example, this may be connected to your relationships with other people.

Sexual health is something that you need to consider as you get older, before you become sexually active. If you want to discuss your sexual health, you will need to talk with your social worker or carer so that they can make the arrangements for this discussion to happen. It is very important that you talk to a responsible person before you become involved in sexual relationships.

Your medical history gives us some information about your health, but you will also need to have a regular medical examination with our medical advisor.

If you have worries about this examination or about your health, talk to your carer and social worker. There is also a special nurse for Looked After Children who can be contacted on 020 8317 8079.


Your health is so important that there is a special place for it in your care plan; the placement plan, and it will always be considered at your review meetings.

You or your parents need to let your social worker and carer know

- How you feel now
- If you have had any allergies or bad reactions to medicines
- When you last saw a dentist and if your teeth and gums are O.K.
- If you have worn glasses
- If you have any trouble hearing
- If you have had any serious illnesses before
- If you have been taking any medicines



There are many things which are part of your lifestyle that can help you to be healthy. Your carer will encourage you to be healthy. This can be done by: -

- Healthy eating - having nourishing food at breakfast, lunch, evening meal and supper. If your religion or a health diet means that there are things that you should or should not eat, your carer will work this out with you. If there are things that you don't like eating, talk about it so that your carer can make mealtimes enjoyable for you.
- Taking care of your health by not using illegal drugs, smoking or drinking alcohol. All of these things can become habits or addictions, which are hard to stop. If you have already started, there are people who can help you to stop. Your social worker can advise you and there is a helpline number on the contacts page. Your carer cannot provide you with alcohol or cigarettes and cannot have illegal drugs in the foster home. 
- Personal hygiene is important to your health as well as being important to your relationships. For example, brushing your teeth and bathing often enough to kill germs keeps you healthy as well as making you good to be with.
- Getting the right amount of exercise through activities that you enjoy, balanced with sleep and rest.
- Avoiding accidents is something that we all try to do. Most accidents happen in the home and your carers have checks done each year to make their home as safe as possible. If

you do have an accident, your carer will need to write a report and let your parent/s and social worker know.

If there is a serious incident such as a fire or other emergency which means that you would need to get out of the house quickly,



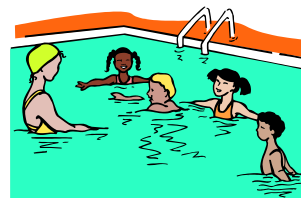
your carer will explain what you need to do and where to go for help and to be safe.

The house has smoke detectors so, if you hear one, make sure other people know about it.

These are just some of the ways of taking care of your health. Talk with your carer and social worker about it.

Children who may have a disability may also become looked after. If you have a disability, your carer needs to know how best to help you to access the things that you want and need.

Learning difficulties and other types of disability may mean that you need extra help to achieve your potential, so your carer will also be involved in working closely with other professionals to achieve this for you.



12. Good, positive relationships with your carers.

Your relationship with your carer needs to be one in which you feel safe from harm. It will need to help you to keep having contact with your family in the way agreed in your care plan.

Children who come to live with foster carers arrive for different reasons. Sometimes they will be able to go home to live with their parents and sometimes they may not.

Depending on how long you are going to stay with your carer, you will develop different kinds of relationships with members of your foster family. If you are going to live apart from your own family until you are able to make your own decisions, you may not see as much of your family as when you first came into care. If the plan is for you to return to your family, you will need to keep in close contact.



Whatever the plan is, you should always feel safe and secure with your carer. They will have experience and training in understanding how difficult this can be for you, so don't be afraid to let them know.

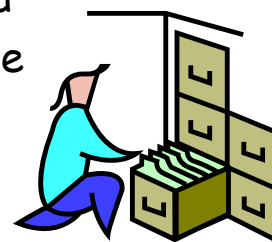
13. Where you have been and where you are going.

Seeing Your Files

Your social worker will keep written records from your past and present and also about your future plans. You can see the things written about you by asking your social worker and you are encouraged to keep your own record of the time you spend living with your carer.

There are some things that your carer must keep a written record of which will be shared with your social worker including:

- Any serious illnesses or accidents

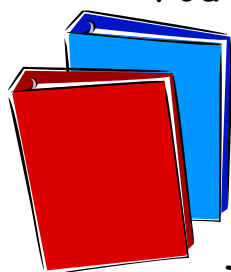


- Involvement with the police
- If you are missing
- If you are at risk of exploitation

Your carer has special forms to fill in if any of these things happen.

Other important events will be recorded either in your carer's diary or on separate recording forms. These include: -

- Important appointments
- Descriptions of how you are getting on and what other people like your teacher or family say about you
- Things that you do and say
- Anything which might harm you
- Your wishes and feelings



You are able to see what is written about you but a decision will be made whether it is in your interests at the moment or it would be better at a later time. Also, it will take into account your age and understanding.

There may be other things written on your file by other people that you may not be able to see.

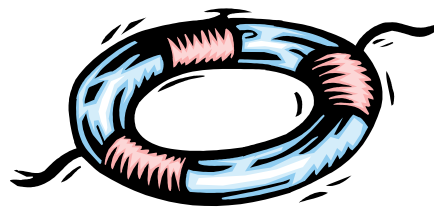
14. Staying safe from harm

There are many ways in which young people can be harmed and your carers and social worker will work together with you, your family and anybody else involved in your care to make sure that you are safe. Your carers will also help you to recognise danger and teach you how to avoid it.

You may have felt unsafe or been harmed before. Depending on how you were treated, you may or may not feel confident to talk about it. Your carer, social worker and teachers are trained to listen to you and act on the concerns that young people have.

They cannot keep secrets about harm, but they can help you to talk to the right person.

If you don't trust any of these people, there are telephone numbers the contacts page of this Guide that you can use to talk to somebody privately.



Coming home on time.

An important way to stay safe is to make sure that the adults who are responsible for you know where you are. The house rules will say when you are expected to come home. If you are not in by the agreed time and your carers cannot find you, they will have to contact:

- Your parents, if this has been agreed
- Your social worker or a duty social worker
- The police

14. Your Plans while in Care and beyond.

Your care plan is a written record so that you can see it. Other people involved in the plan that will also see it like your parent/s, your carer and social workers. A review of the plan will be made regularly. Other important people may also be invited and you will be

asked about who is coming and what your wishes and feelings are about the future. You are also asked to say what you think



about living in your foster placement.

After you become 12 years old, a social worker from the Young People's Team will become involved in supporting your plans.

When you are older and are ready to move on to independence, a social worker from the Independence Plus Team will get involved too.

15. Consulting your Wishes and Feelings.

Many decisions may have to be made about you and the adults who are responsible for your care will ask you about your ideas. Your foster carer will support you in important decisions, which will also have to be agreed by like your social worker and parents.

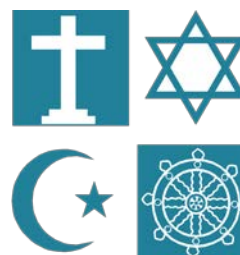
Important decisions include who you stay with and when, what school to attend, where you live and what rules are needed to keep you safe. There are lots of decisions and choices that you can make for yourself but it's best to discuss things first with a responsible adult like your carer or social worker.

Your Religion.

We value the many different ethnic, cultural and religious groups in Greenwich and we want to support you to understand and follow your

family's religious beliefs and practices. If your religion requires you to observe codes of dress, diet, prayer or other things, your carers will support you in this.

This is important because your religion is a part of your identity & heritage that tells us all who you are and where you come from



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

The National Youth Advocacy Service

0800 616 101

0151 649 8700

www.nyas.net

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline

0800 800 5000

www.nspcc.org.uk

NATIONAL DRUGS HELPLINE

0800 776 600

Children's Legal Centre

01206 873 820

www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Voice of the Child in Care

0808 800 5792

Email: info@voiceyp.org

Who Cares Trust

020 7251 3117

www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk

Greenwich Customer Care & Complaints

020 8921 2385

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