



London Borough
of Hounslow

Children's Guide to Fostering



Welcome to your guide to fostering

We are the Fostering Service and we work hard to make sure that the foster carers who are looking after you are able to meet your needs and give you all the support you need so that they can help you reach your full potential.

What is fostering?

Fostering is where children who are not able to live with their own family, go to live with foster carers. Fostering can be for a very short time or sometimes for much longer. It depends on each child's situation.

This booklet tells you all about being in care in Hounslow and the support you should get from people who are responsible for looking after you. It will help you to know what you should expect from people who are caring for you and what you can do if you feel they are not meeting your needs.

Your social worker and foster carer will go through this booklet with you and will be able to answer any questions you may have.



Who does what?

Foster Carers

Foster carers are people who look after and keep children safe. They are chosen very carefully because they are good at looking after children.

Foster carers are regularly checked by the Fostering Service to make sure they are suitable to continue fostering children.

Your social worker

You will have your own social worker who will support you during your time in care. You will be able to talk to your social worker and tell them what you think about being fostered and you will also be able to tell them what you would like to happen to you whilst you are in care. Your social worker will act as your representative and will be able to discuss your care plan with you, your family, your foster carer and other professionals.

Your foster carer's social worker

All Hounslow foster carers have their own supervising social worker who regularly visits them. It is the supervising social worker's job to guide and support your foster carer so that they can look after you properly.

Your Independent Review Officer

This person is responsible for making sure that all your needs are being met and that all the people involved in caring for you are doing the best for you. They will meet with you from time to time to talk to you and make sure things are going well for you.

Who decides who can foster?

Foster carers are ordinary people who care about children and young people and want to look after and help them.

Not everybody can become a foster carer. Before someone becomes a foster carer they have to prove to the Fostering Service that they can care for children, respect them, be fair to them and keep them safe.

Becoming a foster carer is not easy. It takes about six months before someone can be approved as a foster carer. During this time they have to attend a training course and have a social worker meet with them and their family to gather a lot of information to make sure that they are the right kind of people to look after you.

All foster carers have to have a health check to make sure they are in good health and a police check to make sure they are suitable people to look after children.

When all of the checks and reports are completed an appointment is made for the foster carer applicant to attend the fostering panel. The members of the fostering panel, include social workers, a foster carer, a young person who was once in care, and other people with knowledge and experience of health and education; the fostering panel then makes a recommendation about whether a person is suitable to be a foster carer and then the Director of Children's Safeguarding and Specialist Services makes the final decision whether to approve the person to become a foster carer.

After a person is approved as a foster carer, they have a social worker appointed to help them with advice and training so that they are able to care for children and keep them safe. Every month or so a meeting is held to make sure that the foster carer is doing a good job and that they are suitable to continue fostering.



What can I expect from my foster carer?

Your foster carer will do lots of things to make sure that you feel comfortable, secure and happy in their care.

They have to:

- Treat you as an individual and care for you in a way that respects your background such as your ethnicity, religion and culture
- Respect you as an individual and care for you in order to meet your health and educational needs
- Work closely with you, your family and others who are important to you
- Work closely with your social worker, teachers, doctor and other professionals that want to keep you safe and help you develop successfully
- Help you with any problems you may have
- Listen to your wishes and feelings and help you to express them
- Help to keep you safe from harm and abuse
- Keep information about you confidential
- Attend regular training and develop their skills and knowledge in order to be good foster carers
- Attend meetings with you, your family and other professionals to ensure you get the support and care you need

It is important to remember that everyone has to work closely together to make sure that you are well cared for while you are in care. Lots of professionals will need to talk to each other so that they can agree what the best plan is for you but you will always be asked what you think should be in your care plan and anything that you would like changed.

Your foster carer will make sure you have:

- A bedroom of your own or that you can share with your brother or sister
- Your own bed
- Space to put your personal belongings
- Space to store your clothes
- Toiletries such as shampoo, body lotion, soap etc
- Space where you can meet your social worker or any other professional visiting you
- Pocket money according to what is agreed in your Placement Planning Meeting
- The opportunity to celebrate your birthday and religious events
- Someone to listen to you
- Someone who is interested and able to help and advise you
- Help to stay in contact with your friends and family
- Help with your education
- Help to make sure you stay healthy and safe
- Opportunities to enjoy hobbies and leisure activities



What if I'm not happy?

If you feel something is wrong with your foster placement or if there is someone who is not treating you properly, you must tell your social worker or someone you trust.

Your views are important to the Fostering Service and the service is there for you. It is important that we listen to what you would like to happen and, where it is possible, help provide this for you. It is extremely important that you are able to express your views and that they are listened too. You can talk to your foster carer and your social worker about what you like, things you don't like and if you think that there is anything else that could be done to make things better for you.

Here are some other people you may wish to contact besides your social worker:

Fostering Team Manager

Address: **Fostering Team, London Borough of Hounslow, Civic Centre , Lampton Road, Hounslow TW3 4DN**

Email: **fostering.duty@hounslow.gov.uk**

Telephone: **0208 583 3426**

Participation Service - The participation service, is a place where children and young people in care are able to get involved in changing the care system. They run activities to help you meet other children and young people in care (and have fun) and have your own place to talk about your rights and things you might be worried about (this is in Isleworth). The Participation Service have a monthly children in care council where children have fun and make a difference to how young people are looked after in Hounslow. The participation officer runs all of these activities and can help you understand your rights and what should be happening while you are being fostered.

Address: **Participation Service**

The Spot - 78 St John's Road, Isleworth TW7 6RU

Telephone - **020 8583 2316, 020 8583 2317, 07432 594 042**

Ofsted - Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They are the inspectors who make sure that the Fostering Service provides safe and fair care to children and young people. Ofsted want to be sure that you are being well cared for.

Address: **Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD**

Telephone: **0300 123 1231**

Email: **enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk** | Web: **www.ofsted.gov.uk**

Coram Voice - They are there to listen to you and support you. They may also be able to attend any meetings with you, if you would like them to.

Address: **Gregory House, Coram Campus, 49 Mecklenburgh Square, London WC1N 2QA**

Telephone: **0808 800 5792**

Email: **help@coramvoice.org.uk**

Web: **www.coramvoice.org.uk**

Other useful contacts

Childline: 0800 1111 / www.childline.org.uk

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

0808 808 1001 / help@nyas.net

Web: **www.nyas.net**

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

Email: **help@nspcc.org.uk**

Web: **www.nspcc.org.uk**



Your questions answered

In foster care can I attend the same school or do I have to change?

Wherever possible you should continue to attend the same school that you were attending before you came into foster care. The Fostering Service team will do its very best to find you a foster carer near to your school.

Can I still see my family?

Yes if it is right and safe for you. You and your social worker can decide how often and where you should see your family. We will always try to find you a foster family close to your own family so that you can have contact with them.

Can my family visit me at my foster carer's house?

Again, you will be able to discuss this with your social worker. If this is what you want and it is ok with everybody else, such as your foster family, your social worker and your parents then you can see your family at your foster home. However, if somebody feels that this may not be the best thing for you then arrangements will be made for you to see your family somewhere else, for example at one of the Children's Services contact centres.

How many times will I have to move to new foster carers?

You should not have to move foster placements unnecessarily and the Fostering Service will do their best to avoid you having to change your placement, unless it is necessary for you to do so.

Will I be treated the same way or differently to my foster carers own children?

When someone is approved as a foster carer they sign an agreement saying that they will treat their foster child in the same way as they would one of their own children. If you feel you are not being treated fairly you should tell your social worker, or another trusted person. On page 6 you will find the details of people you may wish to contact if you are not happy about your placement.

How will I know how much pocket money I am entitled to?

You will get to pocket money and the amount you receive will be agreed between you, your foster carer and your social worker. You are also entitled to a clothing allowance and the amount of this will be according to how old you are.

When you are placed with your foster carer, a meeting is held to talk about all the day to day arrangements which need to be made for your care, e.g. your bed times, contact times with your family and friends, your pocket money allowance, clothes allowance and your personal needs allowance. You should be able to attend this meeting but if that's not possible your social worker and foster carer will tell you the amounts of money you are entitled to.

There are lots of meetings taking place that are about me but what are they all for?

The main meetings that will take place to discuss your care are:

Placement Planning Meeting - this meeting is held within five days of you moving into your foster placement. It will discuss all of the important day to day care arrangements for you within your foster home such as the household rules, contact with your family and friends, coming in times, homework times, your health and medical appointments and so on.

Children in Care Reviews - these meetings are held to see what the best plan is for you for the future. The meeting may decide that the best plan is for you to return home to your family or if this is not possible, for you to remain in care with foster carers. You will be asked to say what you think about any plans that are being made for you and if possible you will be able to attend your review with your social worker.

Foster Carers Annual Review - your foster carer will have an important meeting with their supervising social worker and a chair person every year to look at how well they have done their job over the year. Your foster carers' supervising social worker will ask you for your views for this meeting. The meeting is held to make sure foster carers are doing their job properly.

Disruptions Meeting - this meeting is usually held when you and your foster family are experiencing difficulties with one another. Hopefully at the end of this meeting things can be sorted out but if not, we may need to find you a new foster placement.

Did you know?

- The Children Act and the Fostering Regulations say how children and young people should be treated when they are in care.
- The law says that children and young people must be treated fairly and kept safe from harm and abuse. It also says that children and young people must be treated in a way that is best for them and that we must listen to the wishes and feelings of the children who are in our care.
- Hounslow Fostering Service must make sure that it obeys the law and meets all of your needs. Ofsted inspectors check the services provided to children and young people to make sure that Hounslow is looking after children and young people properly and keeping them safe.
- Your social worker must visit you regularly to see how things are going for you.
- Your foster carers' social worker must visit your foster home regularly to make sure you are being cared for properly.



What does the Fostering Service have to do for you?

The Statement of Purpose is a document which states what the Fostering Service is expected to do and how it will do it. You can have a copy of this if you would like. You can call the Fostering Service direct on **020 8583 3425** or ask your social worker to get you a copy. Your foster carer should have a copy of this so you can also share this with them.

Here is a summary of what the 'Statement of Purpose' says the Fostering Service has to do:

- Hounslow Fostering Service aims to provide a safe and secure family environment for children and young people, who for whatever reason need to live away from their own family.
- Hounslow Fostering Service promises to work with you, your family and other professionals in way that is fair and aims to provide a positive experience for you.
- Hounslow Fostering Service is committed to helping you maintain contact with your family, relatives, friends and other important people in your life.

Hounslow Fostering Service will:

- Support and encourage you to achieve your full potential.
- Listen to you and take into account your wishes and feelings.
- Encourage and wherever possible help you to keep in contact with your family.
- Support and help you to remain at the same school or college wherever possible.
- Try to help you and your brothers and sisters, if you have any, to live together or maintain regular contact with each other.
- Not move you from a placement unless it is best for you to move.
- Provide you with the care that meets your individual needs such as your racial, cultural, religious, dietary, health, educational and any other specific needs you may have.

A young person shares their experience of being in care...

How did you feel when you first into care?

When I first came into foster care I was nervous, shy, upset and confused.

What did your foster carer say or do to make you feel more at home?

My carer gave me my own private space (my bedroom). She found out what sort of foods and drink I liked. She gave me one to one time and helped me with my homework. She also let me choose my own clothes.

What activities have been provided for children and young people in care which you have enjoyed?

I see the Participations Manager nearly every week. She runs sessions for all the children and young people in care to meet up. She runs projects like the film club, YoYo club, narrow boat trips and lots more. I've also been away with Pathways, the social work team for young people, on a trip to Wales with other young people in care.

Was it easy for you to make friends with other foster children?

It depends on the people. Most of the time, it's easy for me to make new friends but I've only had one time when this girl had a problem with me. I think that we were both too different. I've got loads of friends in care.

What support has your foster carer given to you?

My foster carer is very understanding, always being there when I need someone to talk to and give me advice. She has also supported me in my review meetings and with my school work.

What would you say to a child who is coming into care to make them feel less scared?

It's going to be ok and there are other children and young people in care as well. I've been through the care system myself and it does eventually get better once you have settled in and when you get to know your carer. There are so many activities and opportunities for children and young people to meet up with each other and talk and play together.

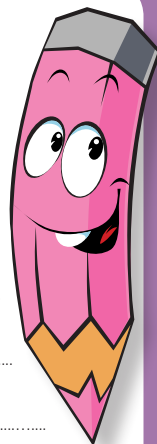
There is the Participations Manager at Da Spot and she is on our side. Her job is to help you get your voice heard and the advocacy service is there to do that too.

Would you like to know more?

Your social worker and foster carer will be able to tell you more about all the things mentioned in this booklet or answer any questions that you may have.



My Notes



My Social Worker's name is

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Their contact details are

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My Foster Carers name is

Their contact details are

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My Foster Carer's Social Worker's name is.....

Their contact details are

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Other important people:

Name Tel No:

Name Tel No:

Name Tel No:

Name Tel No:

Name Tel No:

Name Tel No:

Fostering Services Team
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