

All About Fostering and What to Expect

A Book for Children who Foster



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Welcome to Nottinghamshire Fostering Service

This book is for children and young people whose parents are thinking of becoming foster carers. You will have been given this book to help you get to know about fostering and what it will mean for you, if your parents do foster.

Fostering involves a whole family, not just parents. Many families foster and every fostering family's experience is different. If your family fosters, it is important that you know what is going on and who is coming to stay. You should always ask questions if you are unsure about anything.

For some children, they may be fostering someone within their family, so the child will be known to them but had not perhaps lived with them before.

This book explains what fostering will involve and some of the changes that may happen. It will try to answer the questions that sons and daughters of foster carers often ask.

It is important to remember that if you are uncomfortable or unhappy about anything at all, you should talk to an adult who will listen to you.

If you would like further information or help, then please ask.



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What is Fostering?

Fostering is when a family looks after a child or young person who is unable to live with their own parents. This might be for a few days, a few months or perhaps a number of years.

There are many different types of fostering. For example, some families look after children with disabilities, or may choose to care for children in a particular age group. Some families look after someone within their family or are a friend known to the child. Other families offer 'Support Care', this means a foster child coming to stay for short periods of time, but regularly – for example, one weekend a month.

Sometimes more than one child might come to stay at the same time. They might not be related, but sometimes brothers and sisters are fostered together. What would it feel like if more than one child or young person came to stay? Talk to your parents or supervising social worker about this.

You may have some ideas about the type of fostering that might work best for your family, so talk to them about this. For example, if you would prefer your family to do a particular type of fostering, discuss it with them. Or, if you prefer not to foster a child who is older than you, talk to your parents about this.

You may hear different ways to describe foster children, such as, 'children in care' or 'looked after children'. If talking about older children – you may hear them called 'young people in care' or 'looked after young people'. When they come to stay with a foster family, they are just called by their name, like you.



Why do Children and Young People Come into Foster Care?

There are lots of different reasons that children can become fostered. Some children and young people may need somewhere to stay for a short time if, for example, a parent is ill and there is nowhere else for them to go. Some children or young people may have trouble getting on with their own family. Others come into foster care because their own parents have not looked after them properly and some may have been hurt in the past. They need to be with a family, where they can be looked after and safe and there are foster families who can do this.

Moving to a foster family can be scary for children. Imagine how you might feel if you had to move away from your family and live with strangers.

Sometimes fostered children go back to their own families, if everyone involved thinks that it is safe, and they will be looked after. Other fostered children or young people may move on to live with another foster family. Whilst some children or young people may move to be adopted and have a 'forever family'.



Why Do People Foster?

There are lots of different reasons why people foster children. Usually they want to help children who are going through a difficult time. Many foster carers and their families say they find it very rewarding to give a child(ren) a home when they need it, and to give the support they need.



What Will Fostering Mean for Me?

When someone new comes to live with you it has a huge impact on your life. Your parent/s will be responsible for the child(ren) that come to stay. But your life will change too, as you will be involved in helping a child(ren) feel comfortable in your home. Fostering is something that the whole family are involved in.

As part of a fostering family, you can make a real difference to a fostered child. At times, when you find things difficult, try to remember that the fostered children are living away from their own homes, and the people that they know. This can be tough for them. If you are friendly and welcoming it can help them feel more comfortable in your family and able to talk about how they feel.

If your family are fostering, you will get to meet lots of new people. It can be fun to have other people in the house. Hopefully you will find fostering a good experience if your family do this.

What Happens if My Family Decides to Foster?

Before a family is 'approved' to foster, they go through a period of preparation, they learn about fostering and some changes that will be needed in your family and your home. Your parent(s) will go through what is known as an 'assessment' with a supervising social worker. This is to check that fostering is right for you all. Sometimes it is not the right time for some families to foster or there may not be enough space at home. Supervising social workers must make sure that any child that comes to live with you, will be well looked after, safe and that fostering is right for your family. They will also speak to you about what you think about fostering and answer any questions that you may have.



Preparing to Foster

Take some time and try and think about who's in your family, who does what, what activities you enjoy and what makes you happy. Also, have a think about what is ok to do and what's not. Who do you talk to when your happy or upset? Are you able to speak about how you feel?

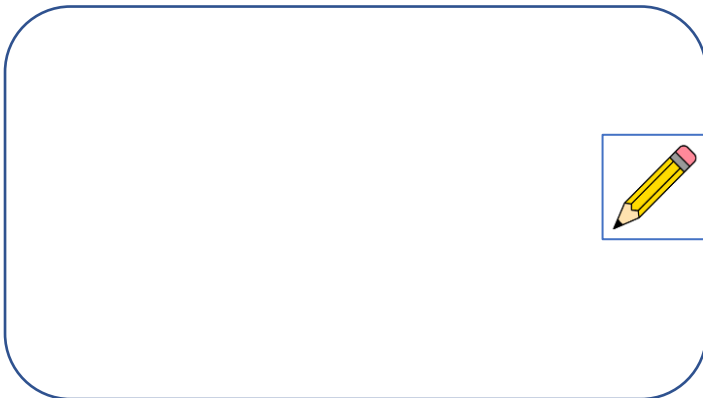
Write down or draw what comes to your mind and you can talk about this with your family.




My Family?



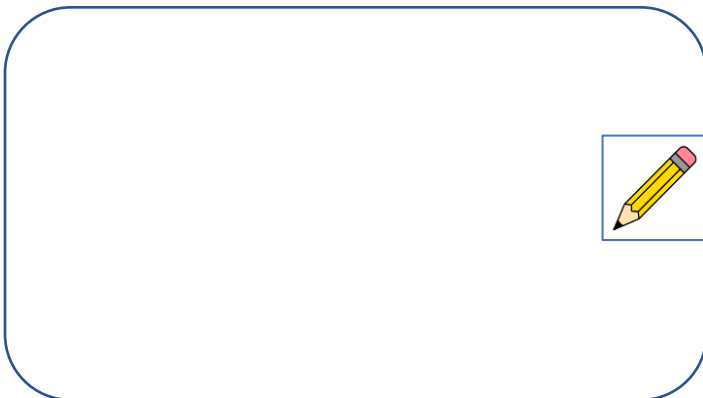
What makes me happy?



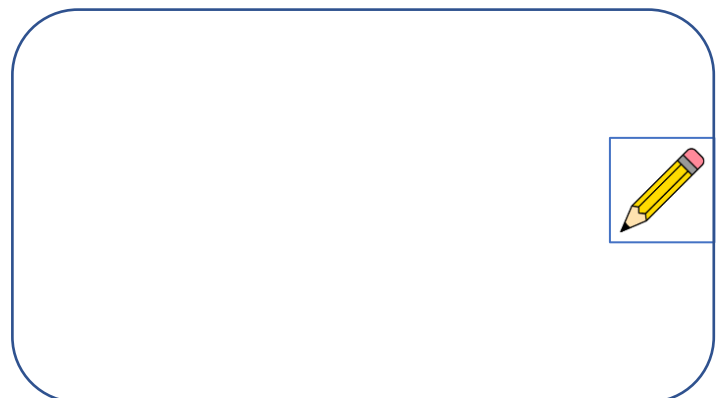
Activities I enjoy?



Rules we have at home?



How I show my feelings?



Who helps me when I am worried or sad?

When a fostered child comes to live with you there will be some changes in the home from what you are used too. In terms of changes, there may be some you will be happy with and some you will not be happy with at first. Changes will be discussed with you all as a family, so you have an idea of what to expect when a fostered child comes to live with you. **Your family will have a supervising social worker to answer any questions, you or your family have, throughout your fostering journey.**

What Will We Know Before They Come?

Your supervising social worker will be able to tell you lots of information about a fostered child before they come to stay with you. Your parents will also be able to share information with you too. Sometimes this is not always possible because they will need to come with very little notice and little time for you to prepare. Remember things that have plans don't always turn out the way we would like it to.

For some children their family may be fostering someone known to them, so they may know some or lots of information about the child(ren) coming to stay.

There are different types of stays, it could be short term or long term. As we said before, plans can change, a fostered child that is staying short term could stay longer and a fostered child staying longer could stay for a shorter period than originally said. If there's any changes for any reason your parents will talk to you and explain all they can. As part of a fostering family you will be involved as everyone else is.

Sharing



Sharing is going to be one of the biggest things to consider when a fostered child comes. You will be asked to share your home, your toys, which they may break, or take without you knowing. To avoid this, you can ask your parents to help you think of a safe place to keep anything precious.

You will also be asked to share your home, your parents and possibly your friends. You may find this hard to begin with. You may also feel that a fostered child has more time with your parents, this happens because they need to help them settle into a new home with new people, which can feel strange for them at first. This may make you feel left out, speak with your parent(s) and tell them how you feel. They still care about you, love you and will want you to feel better in every way.

Rule Changes



When your parents foster a child there will be certain rules your parents will need to follow, these are set by Nottinghamshire County Council. They rules are for good reasons, although as the changes happen, they may not seem good to you at the time. For example, you may need to knock on bedroom doors to give a fostered child privacy, and only one person may be able to use the bathroom at a time. You'll have to consider another child when watching movies bearing in mind the age restrictions, some things you don't see as scary another child may. Another change is the need to put a dressing gown on when you change into your pyjama's or when you come out of the shower. This is to make everyone feel comfortable, as a fostered child may not be used to things you see as being normal, or there are things that may upset them. It will be a good idea to have a talk with your parents and supervising social worker, to see what other changes may happen before a fostered child come, so you will know what to expect.

Dealing with Things That Annoy You



What we know is that some birth children who have parents that foster children, often find behaviours of some fostered children difficult to understand at times. Some fostered children's behaviour may involve, lying, stealing, not speaking or being loud, they may be violent, disruptive, hyperactive, and at times they may break something. They may also say rude or hurtful words towards your parents that will be hard to see and hear. If so, your parents will need some time to settle them down, then, they will speak with you to explain what happened and to answer any questions you have. At the time, you may want to say something, but it will be best to let your parents manage the situation. A good thing to remember when this happens, is when a fostered child shows a behaviour you don't understand, it could be because they are upset or frustrated or it could be around something that happened to them before coming to live with your family. It will be a good idea to find a quiet place, maybe your bedroom or call someone in your family if you feel sad or confused during this time.

If at any time something is said that's hurtful to you, or a fostered child acts in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsure, always tell someone straight away. Remember everyone is different, sometimes we may get on with our friend(s), brother(s), sister(s) and sometimes we don't, but it's always important that we talk through it. This could be with your parents, family member or your supervising social worker.

Contact



Contact is when a fostered child has contact with a birth family member or a person that's close to them, such as their mum, dad, or grandparents etc. Some children will have contact often, some may have contacted a couple of times a year. It's important they can stay in touch with someone they're familiar with if they've had to live away from them.

At times having contact can be very stressful for a child for many reasons. When a fostered child's had contact, they may feel sad or upset, this will show in their behaviour when they return from seeing their loved ones. You may wonder if they will be upset every time, they see their family why do they go? Try and put yourself in their position and think about how you might feel?

School and Friends



If a child is coming to live with you, it is likely that they will stay in their school because it's a familiar place and has familiar people that support them. In some cases, they may move to the same school as you because they're of a similar age. This means they may want to spend time with you and your friends. This may be difficult at first but they're in a new school and don't know anyone. If you can help them settle in and find their way this would be very supportive of you. Think if you were in their situation, would you want them to help you find your way?

What Do I Say?



Having someone new in your school can be daunting, people may ask questions about them such as why they are staying with your family. It is best to have these conversations before the fostered child starts at your school, so everyone knows what is ok to say. Sometimes it's best to say, 'I can't talk about it because it wouldn't be fair on the fostered child' if you haven't discussed it with your parents or your supervising social worker.

Bullying



No Bullying!

If you think that a child your family is fostering is being bullied, or is bullying someone else, it is important that you tell someone. It's best not to get involved yourself, but you must speak to your parent/s or a teacher at school. There should be a teacher at your school who will know that the child is fostered and will be responsible for supporting them at school. Your parent(s) should know who the teacher is.



Shhhhhh!

Sometimes a fostered child may tell you something and ask you to keep it a secret. This might be because they are ashamed, or that they may be afraid that they, or someone else will get into trouble. Although you might want to be a really good friend, and not tell, it is very important that you tell your parents/supervising social worker or a safe adult what you have been told. You must also tell the fostered child that you cannot keep a secret or give them any promises around this.



Saying Goodbye!

A fostered child may only stay with you for a short time, they may go home to be with their own families, join a new family through adoption (sometimes referred to as a forever family) or go to live in their own place. Sometimes saying goodbye can be really sad, especially if you've become friends and you really like having them around.

It's ok to talk to your parents or supervising social worker and tell them how you're feeling, they might even be able to arrange for you to stay in touch once they have moved on.

The Lowdown - Some Words You Might Hear People Say!!



Children's Social Worker

Each fostered child has their own social worker who will support them and sometimes make decisions for them. The social worker will come to see them in your home and spend some time getting to know you and your family.

Supervising Social Worker

This worker supports your family and makes sure you have everything you need to do fostering and everything is going ok at home for you and any children placed with you

Assessment

Your supervising social worker will spend lots of time getting to know you and your family and tell you all about what to expect when you become foster carers. The supervising social worker will write a very long report about you all which will describe all the ways in which you will be a great fostering family.

Placement/ Foster Home

A 'placement/ foster home' is made when a child goes to stay with a fostering family.

Support Care

Support Care is where a fostered child goes to stay with another fostering family for a short time, this can be a real treat for the fostered child because they get to do different things and meet different people, and get to spend time with you and your family.

Disclosure

If a fostered child tells someone that they have been hurt, or someone has done bad things then this is called a 'disclosure'. If someone makes a disclosure to you, you must tell your parent or a safe grown up.

Allegation

If a fostered child says that their carer has treated them badly or unfairly, this is called an 'allegation'. The social worker for the fostered child and the supervising social worker will then have to look at what has been said to find out if this is true. They may ask lots of questions but remember that they are trying to make sure that everyone is safe and well cared for. This could also involve the police.

Reviews

Reviews are important meetings where foster carers, social workers, family members and other professionals get together to talk about what's going well for the fostered child and what jobs people need to do to make things better. Fostered children will be given the choice as to whether they would like to come along, because it's really important that they feel safe and are happy in their foster placements.

Remember, if you don't understand something what is said to you, then always ask for it be explained in a different way.

Things Other Sons and Daughters Say About Fostering



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Don't Forget!



Remember that questions are ok! Starting to foster is a big change for you and your family. When changes happen, it is normal for us to feel a bit worried about them. Asking questions and knowing what is happening can make us feel better so talk to your parent/s or your supervising social worker

One last thing!



Every year the Nottinghamshire County Council Fostering Service celebrates children who foster and says thank you. This is called the Sons and Daughters event. Last time there was a day out where the birth children of foster carers met together and had fun. This was at an inflatable water park; everyone had a great time and laughed a lot. It was nice to spend time together and make new friends.

Speak to your supervising social worker, as they will be able to give you lots more information about these events and other exciting activities in the future.



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