A Young Person’s Guide to Fostering

Things you need to know about living in foster care

Please ask if you need this leaflet in another language, larger text, audio, makaton or British sign language this can be made available to you.
If there is anything in this guide that you are unsure about, ask your foster carer and they will help to explain things for you! There are also some useful websites for young people in foster care, like www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk, www.info4carekids and www.coramvoice.org.uk

A Few Fostering Facts

What is Foster Care?
Foster care is where young people are looked after by foster carers, if they are not able to live with their own parents, maybe whilst a problem at home is being sorted out. This can be for a short while or a longer time.

Why are young people in Foster Care?
There are many reasons why young people come into foster care. Different young people have different reasons, maybe...

- A court has decided this is best for them
- The young person has asked for help
- The young person’s social worker is trying to find someone else to care for them and a foster family is the best idea for a short amount of time
- Social Services are trying to find out when things will be ok for the young person to go back home but the young person needs to live somewhere safe until that is sorted out.

Who are Foster Carers?
Foster carers are kind, friendly people who want to support and help young people. They look after young people in their own homes when a young person is unable to live with their own family. Foster carers come from all different backgrounds and are all different! Your social worker will try to find you a family that can offer you the support that you need and that you feel most comfortable with.

How long will I be living in Foster Care?
Some young people live in foster care for a very short time. Other young people may be in foster care for longer; maybe months or years. Sometimes young people live with their foster carer in a permanent placement, which
means they stay there until they are 18 years old and even for a while beyond that age, if they want to.
The length of time that young people spend in foster care differs depending on the reasons to why they are in foster care. Your social worker will be working hard to see if you can go home – as long as it is a safe environment. Your happiness and safety is most important to your social worker and Cornerways staff and foster carers!

Who are Cornerways?

Cornerways is an independent fostering service providing foster families for children and young people who need this. We help children and young people, whose lives have been disrupted, by providing a safe foster home where they will be well looked after.

Fostering Social Workers at Cornerways will work alongside your social worker to make sure that you are happy in your foster placement, and that your needs are being met.

If you wish to contact Cornerways, maybe if you have a worry or want to make a complaint, you can talk to the Cornerways Fostering Social Worker or contact:

Cornerways Fostering Service,  Alpha B, Smallmead House, Smallmead, Horley, Surrey, RH6 9LW
Phone:  01293 826830
Web:  www.cornerwaysfosteringservices.org
What does Cornerways do?

Cornerways Fostering Service has a “Statement of Purpose” which tells everybody what we do and how we do it. This statement is written down and covers our aims and objectives and what we hope to achieve for children. The main points include:

- We aim to meet the individual needs of the boys and girls aged 0-18 who are placed with Cornerways foster carers.

- We work closely with children’s social workers to make sure that all their care plans are completed successfully and that all records about children are kept up to date.

- We work with foster carers from all different backgrounds, so that we can find a placement that best matches each child’s needs.

- We support foster carers and offer them training to help them provide a safe home for children.

- We will talk to children, young people and our foster carers often to make sure we’re providing the best possible service for the children and young people and foster carers.

(you can see the whole statement of purpose on the Cornerways website)
About Fostering Social Workers

Cornerways Fostering Social Workers work to help foster carers to look after children and young people properly by giving foster carers help and advice. If you and your carers are having problems, a Cornerways fostering social worker will come and visit ALL of you to help everyone to sort things out.

Your Social worker will come from your local authority to make sure all aspects of your life are going well, including school and contact with your family.

The two social workers will work very closely together to help you and your foster family. They will have regular meetings to check everything is going okay. At this time they will ask you for your thoughts, feelings and wishes. You can come to these meetings if you wish, and we hope that you will.
Child’s Reviews

All children and young people living in foster care have review meetings which are held about every few months. At these meetings the care plan will be talked about and everyone will check that the care plan is being followed and that you are ok. A care plan is about decisions now and for your future. It is important that you attend your review so that you can be part of decision making. At the meeting will be an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) who will be in charge of the meeting and will make sure that your thoughts, feelings and wishes are included in the plans made. Decisions will be written down and a copy given to you that you can discuss with your Foster Carer or Social Worker. Other people who may attend your review meeting include:

Your Social Worker
Your Family
Your Foster Carer(s)
Your School Teacher
The Cornerway’s Fostering Social Worker
Anybody else involved in your care

Care Plans

While you are living with foster carers, a ‘care plan’ will be made by your social worker with help from you, your family and your foster carers. This will be a written plan about what you and other people in your life will be doing to help you reach goals and remain happy and safe. For example these plans may include: when you next need to go to the dentist or when you’re next going to see your brother or sister.

You will be visited regularly by your social worker to discuss any problems, needs or wishes you may have, so that these can be taken into account when planning your future care. Your social worker will discuss your care plan with you to make sure you understand what it happening, but if you ever have any questions about your care plan, JUST ASK!
What’s Contact?

We will work with your Social Worker to help you keep in touch with the people that are important to you. There may be people you want to keep in contact with and people you don’t. Contact might mean visits and meet-ups, but it might mean phone calls or email. Your views about contact are important.

Your Foster Home

Cornerways wants to make sure that you feel comfortable in your foster home and to do this it is important to know how things work where you are living. Here are some questions that you might like to ask your foster carer so that you can feel more at home...

- Can I put posters up in my bedroom?
- Can I have friends over?
- Can I help myself to a snack when I feel hungry?
- When and where do we eat meals?
- What time will I go to bed and get up?
- Can I flush the toilet in the night?
- Will I receive any pocket money?
- Can I use the internet?
- Can I go to my church, mosque or temple?
- At what times can I watch TV and/or listen to music?
It is important for your foster carers to know what you like doing in your spare time. They will want to do some leisure or fun activities with you and it may be useful for you to tell them your likes and dislikes. Why not make a note of some here, which you can then share with your foster carer?

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If you need to talk to someone else ...

Cornerways encourage you to speak with your foster carer, but sometimes you might wish to speak to somebody else. Here are some useful contacts.

**NSPCC Childline: 0800 1111**
A free and confidential helpline for children and young people in danger.

**KIDSCAPE : kidscape.org.uk/childrenteens**
Online advice about bullying

**FRANK: 0800 77 66 00**
A free 24 hour helpline that offers support around alcohol and drug use

**THE WHO CARES TRUST www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk**
Online advice and support and access to advocacy services

**www.info4carekids.org.uk**
website for children and young people who are Looked-After

The **Children’s Commissioner** is also interested in the views and concerns of children and young people and can be contacted on 0800 528 0731.

**OFSTED: 08456 404040**
Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
Email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted inspect Cornerways to make sure that we’re doing our job properly. They always ask about children’s views and you can contact them if you are unhappy about Cornerways Fostering Services. Ofsted also inspect your school and the services you receive from social services.

The **Missing People charity** is there to listen to anyone who is thinking about running away or has been missing. They also come to see young people who have been missing from foster care to offer support and understanding. They are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to provide free and confidential support by phone, text or email. Contact them by phone on 116000 or visit their website [www.missingpeople.org.uk](http://www.missingpeople.org.uk).
Advocacy Services

An independent advocate is somebody you can also talk to. Not all looked after young people want or need an advocate, but if you do then this is possible. An advocate is totally independent and will keep your discussions private unless it seems that you or someone else is at risk of being hurt.

What can an advocate do for children in foster care?

An advocate can help you if:
- You want some help in saying the things you need to say to those who make decisions about you.
- If you are unhappy about the way you are being treated by social services or you are worried about plans being made, such as a move.
- If you need information and advice and want to know your rights.
- An advocate can make sure you understand what people are saying and help you say what you want to say and make sure people listen to you.
- An advocate can be with you at meetings.

“CoramVoice” is an organisation that provides Advocacy Services to children, their helpline is – 0808 800 5792

You can contact an advocate by contacting the Coram Voice helpline. The helpline is open every weekday from 9.30am to 6pm. Your call will be FREE from any landline or mobile. They will always very happy to call you back

To find out more about your rights, see their website www.coramvoice.org.uk
Important Information

Your Foster Home Phone Number: _________________________________

Your Mobile Number: _________________________________

Your Email Address: _________________________________

Your foster home address:
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

Social Worker’s Name: _________________________________

Social Worker’s Number: _________________________________

From: _______________________________local authority

Email:_____________________________________________

Foster Carer’s Name(s): _________________________________

Foster Carer’s Number(s):
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

Cornerways Fostering Social Worker Name: __________________

Cornerways Fostering Social Worker Number: 01293 826830

IRO’s Name: _______________________________________

IRO’s Number: _______________________________________

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