



Your guide to fostering

For 11-18 year olds



A vision for you to be Happy, Safe & Loved, Thriving!



Hello

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Përrshëndetje

Salut

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Welcome

Hi,

If you have been given this guide, it means you have or will be moving to a foster family. We hope this guide will help you understand what foster care is.

Everyone understands that living with a family you don't know can bring a lot of different emotions. You may be worried, confused or upset about what is happening. You're likely to have some questions so this booklet will help answer some of them.

This guide is yours to keep, so feel free to write in it. If you need any help reading or understanding it then please let your foster carer or social worker know and they will be happy to help you.



Fostering is more common than you might think.

There are more than 200 children and young people who are fostered in Slough. Many famous people have been fostered too such as:

★ Simone Biles

An American artistic gymnast with over 30 medals. She was part of the gold-medal-winning team in 2016 at the Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. Simone was in foster carer before being adopted by her grandparents.

★ Pandora Christie

A radio presenter for Heart FM and ambassador for Global Academy – a unique school and sixth form by Global (Entertainment and Media Group) and University of The Arts London. Pandora went into foster care around the age of 9.

★ Steve Jobs

He was a very successful businessman and most commonly known for being a co-founder of Apple. One of Steve Jobs' other ventures included being a shareholder in Pixar (an animation company).

About you

Name.....

Age.....

Birthday/date of birth.....

Favourite food.....

Least favourite food.....

School.....

Hobbies or interests.....

Foster carers' number.....

Social worker's number.....

Emergency contact/ number.....

About foster care

What is foster care?

Foster care is when you go to stay with another family for a while because there are problems at home and other family members can't help at the moment.

Who are foster carers?

Foster carers are people who have been specially selected to make sure they can look after children/young people.

They take care of children/young people who need a safe place to stay. They open their homes and hearts to young people who need help. Foster carers provide love, support, and care, just like any family would. They make sure you have everything you need, like food, clothes, and a comfortable place to sleep.

How long will I stay in foster care?

The time spent in foster care can be different for every young person.

Some young people stay in foster care for a short time, while others might stay longer. Your social worker will talk to you and your family to figure out the best plan for you.

How does a young person come to be fostered?

A young person can go into foster care for different reasons.

It could be because someone is sick, or there are other issues at home that need to be fixed.

Other times, there might be problems at home that make it unsafe for kids to stay there.

Foster care is a way to make sure you are safe and well taken care of while the problem at home is being fixed.

When you are in foster care, you might hear the terms 'being looked after' or 'being in care' which means you are being looked after or under the responsibility of your local authority/children's services, which in this case, is Slough Children First (SCF).



About foster care

What happens in foster care?

In foster care, you will live with a new family who will take care of you.

You will still go to school, hang out with friends, and do fun activities.

Your foster family will help you with your homework, take you to the doctor if you need it, and make sure you feel safe and happy. They will also help you stay in touch with your own family.

How will you find the right family for me?

Every young person is different so your social worker will find the right family for you and your needs.

Your social worker will do their best to match you with someone who follows the same religion as you or has the same cultural values but their main goal will be to make sure you'll be with someone who'll make you feel safe, happy and can take care of you.



About foster care

What is a social worker?

A social worker is an adult who works with children, young people and their families, when they are going through a difficult time.

Your social worker works for Slough Children First.

They will make sure that you are OK and doing well. For example, they will make sure you're happy, safe, healthy, being looked after by your foster carer and going to school. They will ask you how things are and will tell you about anything that may affect you in what is called a Care Plan, which you'll get a copy of.

What else does a social worker do?

You and your social worker will also work with someone called an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) who will work with you and is responsible for your review meetings too.

If you are worried or don't understand something, you can tell your social worker to explain things to you or see your IRO in private.

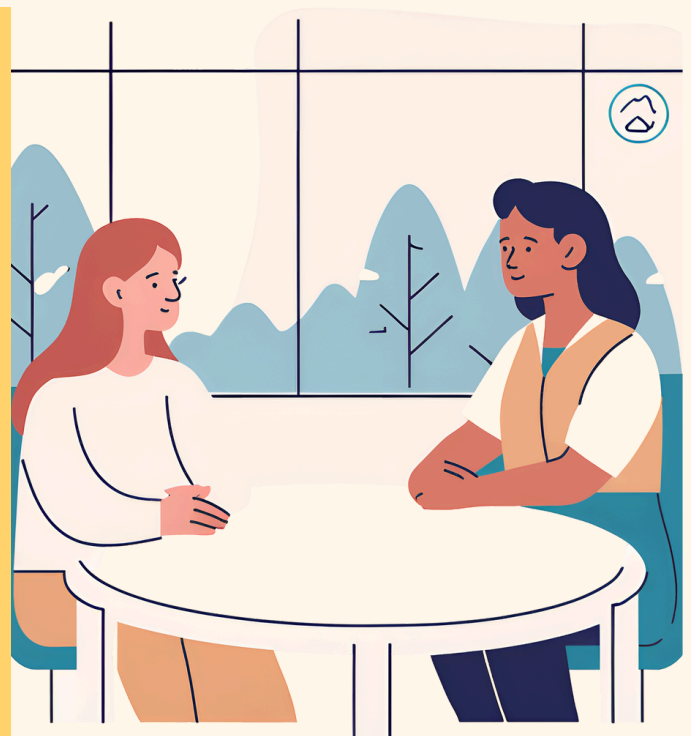
Every young person in care should have an IRO. The IRO will also check that the local authority/children's services is doing what it should be doing for you while you are in their care.

My social worker is called.....

.....

Their telephone number is

.....



Family and friends

Can I see my family?

It is important that you stay in touch with your family and people important to you.

Your social worker will help you to see your family and people important to you in the best way possible and will talk to you about this.

This is called 'contact' and you might have phone calls, video chats, or visits with your family, depending on what is best for everyone.

What if I'm not happy with these arrangements?

If you're not happy with these arrangements, you can speak to your social worker, foster carer, IRO, advocate or another adult you trust.

Can I see my friends?

Your foster carer will do all they can to help you stay in touch with your friends and will also help you make new friends.

It is also important that you tell your foster carer when you are going to see your friends or if you would like to have a friend stay over or visit so that arrangements can be made.



Your education

Will I have to change school?

Your social worker will do their best to keep you in the same school.

If you are going to stay with your foster carer for a long time and the school that you go to is far away, you might have to change schools to one that is closer to them.

You will be spoken with about this and if anything needs to change, we'll do our best to make sure you are happy. You will also be given a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that forms part of your Care Plan.

You will also be able to get help from the teachers at Slough Children First's Virtual School, who support care experienced children and young people with their education.

What about when school is closed?

In the half term or whenever school is closed for a break like the Summer holidays, your social worker will speak to you and your foster carer about plans.



Your health

Hygiene

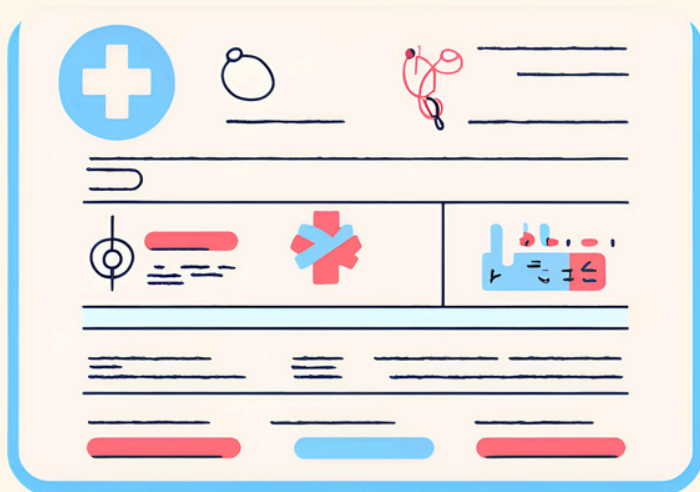
It's important to take care of your physical and mental health, to ensure you stay happy and healthy and we will support you in doing so.

We and your foster carer will support you with all your health needs. This includes the doctors, dentist, and opticians.

Medical card

Depending on when you were born, you might have a medical card (an important document with your full name, date of birth, NHS number and your doctor's details on it).

Your carer will look after it for you until you are 16, or longer if you want them to.



Medical card

If you don't have a medical card, you will be issued an NHS patient number, that is used to identify you whenever you need it to get medical and dental treatment on the NHS.

Health passport

A Health passport is a small booklet given to all young people before they leave care.

Your Health passport gives you a summary of your health history and immunisations and is for you to keep and update at any time.

It can be translated for you if English is not your first spoken language and we can also deliver it to you electronically or by post.



Mapping out your future

Pathway Plan

Your social worker will help you by talking about your future and mapping out a Pathway Plan. Your Pathway Plan will include any plans relating to your further education, training or employment ambitions.

Your Pathway Plan will set out how you will be supported to achieve the things that you want for yourself in your life, and who is going to provide the help you need.

It is important that your Pathway Plan accurately sets out what is important to you, and what you want to achieve in the future.

Your social worker/young person's advisor (once you reach care leaver age) will also talk with your parents or carers and other important people in your life.

Your Pathway Plan is a 'live' document, and you will continue to have reviews every 6 months to add to or edit it.

If you stay in care after you reach 16, you will continue to have looked after reviews chaired by an IRO. The Pathway Plan will replace the Care Plan, and this will be reviewed at your Statutory Child Looked After Review.

Life story work

Your social worker will complete life story work with you; this will be a planned piece of work to help you understand why decisions have been made about your life.

During the life story work, you will be supported in learning about your identity. You will talk about significant events and key memories at a pace that is comfortable to you.



Talking things through

Meetings and reviews

When you're in foster care, there will be regular meetings and reviews that we have to do by law.

These meetings and reviews are important because they help make sure you are safe and getting the support you need. It's important for everyone to understand your feelings and what you want.

If you don't feel comfortable attending the meeting, you can ask your social worker to share your thoughts and feelings on your behalf.

Your feelings matter

It's normal to have lots of different feelings in foster care.

You might feel sad, scared, or even happy. It's important to talk about your feelings with your foster family, social worker, or someone you trust. They are there to listen and help you feel better.

Remember, it's okay to feel however you feel.

Who can help me?

There are many people who can help you in foster care, like your foster family, social workers, teachers, your participation officer, and counsellors.

They are there to support you and make sure you are okay. If you have any questions or need help, you can always talk to them.

There are also advocates, people who do not work with any of the workers who support you and can help you to make a complaint or suggestion about your care.

What's an advocate?

An advocate is someone who will speak up, for, or on behalf of a child or young person.

They can:

- Listen to you
- Make sure your voice is heard
- Advise you of your rights
- Provide you with information so you can look at your options
- Speak on your behalf
- Help you to make a complaint

Getting involved

Fun things

Although you may be in foster care, you can still do fun things like playing sports, going to the park, and making new friends.

Your foster family will help you find activities you enjoy and make sure you have time to play and have fun. You might also meet other young people in foster care.

Participation

Your voice matters! It's important to share your thoughts and feelings about your care.

- You can attend meetings to talk about what you want and need.
- You can get involved in planning or organising events we hold.
- You can support interview panels.

By participating, you can make new friends, learn new skills, and have fun! It also helps you feel more connected and confident.

Remember, your opinions are important, and everyone wants to make sure you feel heard and supported.

Our participation officer will get in touch with you about events coming up, including Care Council events where you can meet other young people in care and fun stuff we plan.

You can also email your participation officer at yourvoice@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk and keep an eye out for information on <https://www.sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk/get-involved/>



Other questions you might have

It's okay to have questions about foster care.

You can ask your foster family, social worker or teacher anything you want to know. They are there to help you understand and feel comfortable.

Don't be afraid to ask questions, no matter how big or small they are.

Slough Children First are your corporate parents. This means we're adults who have a legal responsibility to look after you while you're in care.

We will listen to you: Your voice is important in everything we do. We want to understand your thoughts, feelings, and needs to support you in the best way possible.

We will keep you safe.

Your safety is our top priority. We work hard to ensure you are in a secure and caring environment, whether you are in foster care, a residential home, or with your family.

Will I ever leave care?

The time spent in foster care can be different for every young person.

Some young people stay in foster care for a short time, while others might stay longer. Your social worker will talk to you and your family to figure out the best plan for you.

If you stay in care until you reach care leaver's age (16), we will still continue to support you with your independence and moving on from your foster home.

When you reach 16, you will be allocated a Young Person's Advisor (YPA) to prepare you to leave care and to build a relationship with you.

The relationship between you and them is important.

The better the relationship, the more you will benefit from having a YPA and it's important to keep in touch and agree how much contact you would like.

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- Provide you with information so you can look at your options
- Speak on your behalf
- Help you to make a complaint

Glossary/ jargon buster

Assessment

This is when someone talks to you and your family to understand what kind of help you need.

Advocate

A person who helps you speak up and makes sure your voice is heard.

Care Plan

A plan made just for you, showing how you will be supported and what services you will get.

Caseworker

A social care professional who helps organize the support and services you need.

Child in our care

A child who is being cared for by the local authority, either living with foster parents, in a residential home, or with other approved caregivers.

Child Protection Plan (CPP)

A plan to keep you safe if there are concerns about your safety.

Confidentiality

Keeping your personal information private and only sharing it with people who need to know.

Foster care

When you stay with another family for a while because your own family needs help.

Guardian

A person who is legally responsible for you and takes care of you.

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

A person who checks that your Care Plan is working well for you.

Intervention

Actions taken to help improve your situation or solve problems you are facing.

Key worker

A person who is your main point of contact and helps coordinate your care and support.

Glossary/ jargon buster

Multi-agency working

Different organisations and professionals working together to support you.

Outreach services

Support services that come to you, often visiting you at home.

Personal Advisor (PA)

Someone who supports and guides young people, especially those leaving care, to help them transition to independent living.

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

A plan designed to support your educational needs and goals, ensuring you receive the help you need to succeed in school. This forms part of your Care Plan and all young people in care must have one.

Referral

When someone directs you to the right services or professionals for help.

Residential care

Long-term care provided in a home where you live with other young people and caregivers.

Respite care

Short-term care to give your regular caregivers a break.

Risk assessment

Checking to see if there are any dangers or risks to your safety and well-being.

Social worker

A professional who helps you and your family cope with challenges and find solutions.

Supervising social worker

Supervising social worker. This person is your foster carer's social worker.

Glossary/ jargon buster

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Extra help for children and young people with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Support plan

A plan that shows how you will be supported and what services you will get to meet your needs.

Team around the child (TAC)

A group of people who work together to support you and your family.

Wellbeing

Feeling comfortable, healthy, and happy in your life.

Young Persons Advisor (YPA)

Another term for a personal advisor.



Our office:

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