

Young Person's Guide to Fostering

This belongs to:



Fostering

What it is and what it means for you

Following Whispers provides families to care for children and young people who are not able to live with their own parents. Going to live with a foster family is sometimes called "going into care" or "being looked after".

This booklet will give you some more information about what to expect. More details are available in our "Statement of Purpose". If you would like to see this, please ask anyone at Following Whispers or find it at...

www.following-whispers.co.uk

We will always try to listen to your wishes and feelings, and there are more details at the back of this booklet about what to do if you are unhappy.

Fostering Facts

There are about 82,000 children and young people in foster care at any time in this country. Some famous former foster children include:

- ☐ Mo Jamil (The Voice 2017)*
- ☐ Mike Tyson (Boxer)*
- ☐ Eddie Murphy (Actor)*
- ☐ Sophie Willan (Comedian)*
- ☐ Kerry Katona (TV celebrity)*
- ☐ Lemn Sissay (Poet/Activist)*
- ☐ Marilyn Monroe (Actress)*
- ☐ Bruce Oldfield (Fashion)*

Why are children and young people fostered?

There are lots of different reasons why children and young people are fostered. Sometimes parents ask for help because they feel they are struggling to look after their children in the best way and sometimes a court decides that a young person would be looked after better if they were not living at home.

What is a foster family?

Children and young people who cannot live with their own family for any reason may go and live with a foster family. Your foster family will look after you and take good care of you. Along with your social worker, your foster family will make sure you are healthy and safe and will help you go to school.

You may live with your foster family for a short time, or it may become your permanent home. Some children and young people may move into their foster family with their brothers and sisters, and others may live with relatives or friends of the family.

All foster families are different. Some have one adult and some have two. There may be other children living in the home who could be either care-experienced or birth children.

Your foster family has had special training, so you receive the best possible care.

What do Following Whispers do?

- We are an independent fostering agency who were asked by your Local Authority to find you a foster family.
- We carefully recruit foster carers who are able to meet the needs of young people within our agency.
- We support your foster carer to keep you safe, protected and well looked after
- We will support you to have contact with your family if this is agreed
- We will listen to you and value your opinion
- We provide support and training to foster carers so they can look after you to the best of their ability.
- Staff at Following Whispers are able to offer advice and support to foster carers 24 hours a day every day of the year

Going to live with a foster family

Your social worker will take you to meet your new foster family. You will be shown around the house. It may feel all a bit strange and different to start with, but your foster family will help you settle in. Like any house there will be rules about things such as doing your

schoolwork, watching TV, staying up late, times for you to be in by, what time dinner is and other things.

It may take a little while to get used to the rules but slowly you will get used to these. You will be able to talk to your foster carer about your day, they will make sure that you have nice food to eat and clean clothes to wear.

Personal Belongings

You can bring your own clothes and other personal things with you when you move into your new home. If you're not sure about bringing something, then please ask us or your social worker.

It is a good idea to let your foster carer know if you have anything that is valuable or really special to you, so they can help you look after it.

Rules

All foster homes have certain rules to make sure that you are kept safe. They also make sure that the family home can run smoothly and that you get enough rest and nutrition to develop physically and healthily. When you join the family, the foster carer will let you know what these basic rules are.

Social Workers

Your Social Worker

You will have your own Social Worker who will be from where you used to live.

Your Social Worker's name is.....

Your Social Worker's telephone number is.....

If you need to talk to your Social Worker, you can phone them by yourself, ask an adult to phone for you or you can ask them to help you make the phone call yourself.

Your Foster Family's Supervising Social Worker

Your Supervising Social Worker is a person who works for Following Whispers. They are also here to make sure that you are safe and happy and to help your foster family look after you.

You can talk to your Supervising Social Worker at any time during the day Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm.

Your Foster Family's Supervising Social Workers name is:

.....

Your Foster Family's Supervising Social Worker's phone number is:

Your foster family's supervising social worker will meet with you every month to make sure you are ok and find out if there is anything we can do to help you.

They will attend all meetings about your home and school. You can call the office to speak to them anytime you need to.

You can also call **Paula Henderson** (Responsible Individual) at any time if you need an adult to talk to. Her number is **07966 005 731**



We also have an out of hours service (open Monday to Friday 5pm to 9am and 24 hours over the weekend) which you can call us on.

This service operates when the office is closed. The Out of Hours number is **01843 263 461**

Meetings

There will be some meetings about how you are getting on in your foster home. The main meetings are:



Placement Planning Meeting

This is a meeting held within five working days of you moving into your foster home. It will discuss the day-to-day care arrangements. You will be involved in this meeting and will have your chance to have your say.

Statutory Child in Care Review Meetings

These are meetings held to agree what the plan for your future should be. The review will be about how you are doing in your foster placement and any changes that need to happen in the next few weeks and months.

Your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) chairs this meeting and will want to know your wishes and feelings. You should have a review within a month of moving to a new home and then every six months.

Monthly Home Supervision

Your supervising social worker will meet with your foster carer every month. We talk about how you are getting on in your placement and how they can help to support you.

PEP Meetings

As a Child in Care, you are entitled to a Personal Education Plan (PEP). The PEP is to support your learning to help you get the best possible education. This will be reviewed three times a year.

Carers' Annual Review

All carers have an annual review; this is when Following Whispers looks at their work over the past year to make sure they are doing a really good job looking after children. Your supervising social worker will ask what you think, so we can take your views into account.

Education

What about school?

Your social worker, foster carer and a teacher from your school will work with you and develop a "Personal Education Plan" (or PEP for short).



Your PEP will show what you are doing well at in school, and if there are any areas where you need extra help. Your PEP also gives you a great opportunity to say what

sports, music, drama or other after-school clubs you would like to be involved in.

My Family

Will I see my family again?

Living with a foster family does not usually mean that you won't see your family. Social workers call the times when children visit their family "family time" or "contact". You may have family time with your parents and also with grandparents, your extended family and friends. Visits, phone calls, emails and letters are all different ways you will be able to keep in touch, and your foster family will help you do this.

It may not always be the best thing for you to visit your family frequently or you may not want to see certain people. Your social worker will discuss with you what is happening and will always listen to your wishes and feelings.

Your Life, Your Views

Following Whispers is here for you. It is important that we listen to what you want and, where possible, help provide it for you. It is very important that you express your views, and we will listen to them.

Talk to your foster carer, social worker or supervising social worker about what you like, what you don't like and whether there is anything else that could be done to make things better for you.

Complaints and representations

Sometimes we make mistakes or things go wrong. Our aim is to discuss any concerns or worries you may have and, by working together, resolve any problems.

There may be times when this does not work, and you remain unhappy about the situation. All carers, children and young people have the right to complain, and parents can also complain on behalf of children and young people.

It is important that you let us know what you're thinking because sometimes adults try to guess what young people want, and we don't always guess right.

If you make a complaint, it will be investigated by the Agency. The person you complain about will not be involved in the investigation and

you will never be in trouble for making a complaint. We will tell you what is happening, and you will be involved in resolving the problem.

How to Make a Complaint

- Speak to your Supervising Social Worker
 - ✓ Phone us - 01843 263 461
 - ✓ Email us - admin@foster-care.org
 - ✓ See us - we can come and talk to you.
- The Supervising Social Worker will act on your complaint, and you can expect a response within 48 hours of alerting us to your complaint.
- Your Supervising Social Worker will let you know how to access independent advocacy.
- If you do not want to speak to your supervising social worker, or the complaint is about them, you can contact Paula Henderson (Managing Director), your social worker, IRO, or any of the numbers on your Contact Card and they will act on your complaint.
- See the list of useful numbers at the end of this section for other people to contact (not related to Following Whispers) if you have a concern or complaint.

Your foster carer is not allowed to hurt you in any way and nor is anyone else. If you are worried about anything at all, please don't be afraid to speak up as there are lots of people who care about you and want to help.

Statement of Purpose and Participation Pledge

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12 states.

"Any child or young person has a right to express their views and have them given due weight in decisions affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity."

This means that **YOU** have a right to say what you think and have your thoughts respected and considered when decisions are being made about your life.



This Participation Pledge means that Following Whispers promises to....

- Tell you what your rights of participation are, and if you need help to understand them, provide you with someone who can explain what

they mean. You will be given a booklet and a credit size card that has information and telephone contact details of who you can phone if you do not feel that you have been listened to.

- Make sure that everyone who works at Following Whispers understands that they must be proactive in engaging you in participation.
- Listen to your views, respect them and take them seriously.
- Not discriminate against you in any way and to treat you as an individual.
- Make sure that you have the opportunity to give your honest views and give you help to do so if you need it.
- Provide you with a safe, child friendly environment to have your say without fear of getting into trouble.
- Provide you with a variety of ways to have your say, including (but not limited to) face to face meetings held individually or in a group, telephone calls, emails and letters.
- Let you know about things happening at Following Whispers that affect you, how you can be involved in making decisions about them and then what changes will be made based on what you have said.
- Provide you with opportunities to have your say on things outside Following Whispers, like the future of children's rights.
- Give you prompt and honest feedback and let you know how your

contribution will be used.

- Be honest with you about what can and cannot happen and make sure you understand why.
- Continue to strive to build meaningful participation into our values, structures and procedures. We would like you to tell us if you feel we can improve what we do.
- Promote and champion your right to have your say and have your views taken seriously.
- Make sure that our Participation Policy is available to all young people and their Social Workers, Following Whispers families and staff, and that if you need help to understand it, we will provide you with someone to explain what it means.
- Make sure that every child and young person who lives with a Following Whispers foster family has access to a copy of this Participation Pledge.

Useful numbers

Here are some numbers that may be helpful for you to have.

Child Line

This is the free 24-hour helpline for children and young people in the UK.

You can call the Helpline on Tel: **0800 1111** (O2 network 116 111) about any problem, at any time, day or night. Child Line's counsellors are there to help you find ways to sort things out. Child Line is confidential - which means they won't tell anyone about your call unless you want them to talk to somebody for you, or you are in danger. Website: www.childline.org.uk

Become Charity

This is the National Charity for Children in Care. Their website is www.becomecharity.org.uk if you want to find out more about what they do.

Tel: 0800 023 2033

Email: advice@becomecharity.org.uk

Coram Voice

This has lots of advice for children in care and provides help and support. They can take up your complaints too.

Tel: 0808 800 5792 (free to call)

Email: info@coramvoice.org.uk Website: www.coramvoice.org.uk

NSPCC National Society for the Prevention of

Cruelty to Children

If you need help or advice, or are concerned that another child is being hurt, or is in danger you can call the NSPCC.

Tel: 0808 800 5000 (10.00 am to 8.00 pm Monday to Friday).

Website: www.nspcc.org.uk

Email: help@NSPCC.org.uk (anytime)

Ofsted

An organisation called Ofsted checks the work of fostering agencies in England and Wales. If you are unhappy with the care you receive, you can contact them.

Piccadilly Gate, Store St, Manchester, M1 2WD.

Tel: 0300 123 4666 (Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 6.00pm).

Email: enquires@ofsted.gov.uk

whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk Website: www.ofsted.co.uk

The Children's Commissioner for England

They promote and protect the rights of children in England by listening to what children and young people say about what matters to them and making sure adults in charge take their views and interests into account. The Children's Commissioner is Dame Rachel de Souza.

Look at: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk to find out more

Phone her office on 0800 528 0731

Email: help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

My Useful Numbers

My Social Worker's Name:

My Social Worker's Telephone Number:

My Foster Carer's Name:

My Foster Carer's Telephone Number:

My Supervising Social Worker's Name:

Following Whispers' Telephone Number: 01843 263461

Paula Henderson's Telephone Number: 07966 005731

My IRO's Name:

My IRO's Telephone Number:
