

# A Young Person's Guide to Foster Care

This belongs to:.....



## Welcome to Following Whispers!

We hope this booklet will help to answer some of your questions about living in foster care. This guide explains what you can expect whilst you are fostered, as well as what you can do if you're not happy. If you have any questions after reading this guide then please get in touch with somebody who can help, there is a page at the end of this guide with lots of useful numbers.

### *So... What IS foster care?*



Foster care is a family home for young people to live in when it is not possible for them to live with their own parent(s) and there are no other family members or family friends to help at that time. This could be called 'being looked after' or 'going into care'. A foster care placement may be short or long-term, depending on your situation.

However you come to be living with a foster family, you may feel worried or upset. It is our responsibility to work together with you, your social worker and your foster family to ensure that you know what to expect, are kept safe and secure, and that your wishes and feelings are always listened to.

## *Why are young people fostered?*

There are many of different reasons why 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 safer if they were not living at home.

## *What is a foster family?*

Your foster family will be carefully checked and trained to ensure they can offer you a safe and comfortable place to live. They will take care of you and give you the guidance that you need until you turn 18 and help you to gain the skills to become more independent. Your foster family will work alongside your social worker and the Following Whispers agency to help you best achieve in all aspects of your life, such as education and health. They will offer you emotional and social support and you will become part of the family.

### *Fostering Facts*

*There are about 82,000 children and young people in foster care at any time in England. 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)*



All foster families are different. Some have one adult and some have two. They may have their own children or be looking after other children, too.

### *What do Following Whispers do?*

- We are an independent fostering agency who are asked by your Local Authority to find you a foster family.
- We supply foster care which will enable you to be stable, secure and continue with your life.
- We carefully recruit foster carers who are able to meet the needs of young people within our agency and match you to a foster carer who we feel are best suited to meet your needs.
- We support your foster carer to keep you safe, protected and nurtured.
- For young people out of education we can offer education support at our Ramsgate office.



- We will listen to you and value your opinion.
- We provide quality 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 personalised advice and support to foster carers 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

## Who's who?

### *Your Social Worker*

You will have your own Social Worker. This may be your social worker from where you used to live, but it could be a new one if your foster family live in a different area. When you turn 18, you will have already begun a transition from having a social worker to a personal advisor. More information on this is explained later in this guide.

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 somebody 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 to provide you with the best care.

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:

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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 placement and education. You can call the office to speak to them anytime you need to.

You can also call Paula Henderson (Managing Director) 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 263461**.

## 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 a bit strange and overwhelming to start with, but your foster family and social worker will help you settle in. It may take a little while to get used to your new home but slowly you will adapt and become more comfortable.

### **Your foster family will:**

- ✓ Get to you know you and find out your likes and interests.
- ✓ Encourage you to say what you think and feel, and what you would like to happen.
- ✓ Help you to look after yourself.
- ✓ Keep you safe and teach you how to keep yourself safe when you are away from home.

- ✓ Help you personalise your bedroom.
- ✓ Offer healthy meal choices and guide you to make good lifestyle choices.
- ✓ Support you in your education.
- ✓ Encourage you to see your family when it has been arranged.
- ✓ Make sure you can join clubs and groups if you want, and help you make new friends.
- ✓ Support you in practicing your religion.



## *Personal belongings*



Of course, you bring your own clothes and other personal belongings with you when you move into your new foster home. Your social worker will make sure you have a proper bag or suitcase to move things.

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. Your foster family will ensure you have somewhere safe to keep all of your belongings.

## Rules

All family 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.

### Foster carers will expect you to:

- Show respect to everyone.
- Stick to the rules the family live by.
- Respect the property of others.
- Share your views.
- Display no racial, religious or sexual discrimination.



## Pocket Money

When you are living with your foster carers, you will get pocket money every week. The amount you will get depends on some factors. This is money that you are entitled to, and it is purely for your own use. This will help you to practice budgeting and become more independent.



If it is agreed by your social worker, your foster family might encourage you to earn more money by completing small household jobs, however this is separate to your standard pocket money allowance.

## *Seeing your family*

Your social worker will talk to you about keeping in touch with your family. They will talk to you about who you would like to see and how this can happen in a positive way.

If you are worried or do not want to see particular family members, please inform your social worker or your foster family about this. You can keep in touch in many different ways. You might want to visit your family home, or where this is not possible you might meet in a public place or a 'contact centre'. You might even want to send letters to your family or speak on the phone rather than meeting face to face.

## **Meetings**

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

### *Placement Planning Meeting*

This is a meeting held within five working days of you moving into your foster home if it is an emergency move. If the move is planned it may happen before you move. 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 Review*

These are meetings held to agree what the plan for your future should be.

Sometimes the plan is to return home; sometimes the plan is to see whether this is possible. Where this is not

possible, the review could agree a different plan such as remaining with your foster carer on a 'Staying Put' placement. If you are going to be looked after for a longer time, the review will include how you are doing in your foster placement.



## *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 become better foster carers for you.

## *Monthly Progress Meeting*



We aim to see you on your own every month. This is so you have the opportunity to talk to you and find out how you are getting on in your placement and if anything can be done to improve things for you.

## *PEP*

As a child in care, you are entitled to a Personal Education Plan (PEP). The PEP is to promote your learning to help you get the best possible education.

## *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 meeting your needs effectively. Your supervising social worker will ask what you think so we can take your views into account.

## Moving on

### *Your 'Pathway Plan'*

When you turn 16, you begin a transition period to help prepare you for adult life when you turn 18. Your social worker will already be trying to understand your level of independence ready to start your pathway plan. This is to help you prepare to transition from being looked after to living independently and will include the areas of health, education training and employment, family and social network, identity, money and accommodation.



Your pathway plan will be reviewed every 6 months, but you can ask for it to be reviewed at any time. The last year of your pathway plan will focus on the support you can access while living independently. This should include a list of who's there to help you, what they can do and how you can get in touch.

As you approach the age of 18, you will start meeting with a personal advisor (your PA), who will take over the role of your social worker to support you post 18. As well as this, if you currently receive any support for your mental health, then you will begin to transition from Your Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) team to an adult mental health team. You will be fully supported during this time of change.

## *Education*

By this point, you might already be thinking about your future and what your next steps are. You may already be attending college and gaining some qualifications in something you are interested in. Your foster carer and social worker can guide you with this and support your learning needs if you are



unsure. With the right qualifications you may look at attending university to study something you enjoy.

As a 'child in care', you are entitled to a Personal Education Plan (PEP) until the age of 18, which aims to help you achieve and make progress within your education and fulfil your potential. Your PEP will

include a full range of your educational and development needs, which will be explored by the virtual school or college, social worker, foster carer, supervising social worker and yourself.

Once you do turn 18, you will be eligible for financial support to help you carry on with education. You will be eligible for a bursary of £1,200 a year from your college through the 16-19 Bursary Fund scheme.

Your education is an important part of your pathway plan to ensure you are able to access all the services needed to prepare for training, further or higher education and employment.

### *Semi-independent living*

When appropriate, young people may move onto a place to give them some independence when they turn 18. This could be something like 'semi-independent' accommodation, where you will have more independence but are still supported to gain some living skills. There are many options for you, and you should begin discussing this with your social worker a while before you reach 18 and all of the options will be explored with you.



## *'Staying Put' placements*

You may also want to stay living with your foster family, which is an option that can be considered. This is called a 'staying put' placement and allows you to remain living with your foster family until you turn 21.

## *Who else can support me?*

One great way to access support is through an independent advocacy service. The Young



Lives  
Foundation



works with young people and can help to support you when you might be struggling to express how you feel or if you are unhappy

about any decisions made by professionals or family that are impacting your life. They will listen to your views and feelings and do what they can to ensure that your voice is heard. You can access their website using this link:

<https://ylf.org.uk/how-we-help/advocacy-childrens-rights>.

## **Your Life, Your Views**

Following Whispers is here to support you. We will always listen 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, dislike and whether there is anything else we could put in place to better support 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 we don't always get it 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 263461
  - ✓ Text us - 07966 005731
  - ✓ Email us - [admin@foster-care.org](mailto:admin@foster-care.org)

✓ See us - Either at your Monthly Progress Meeting, attend a team meeting, drop in at the office or we can come to talk to you.

- The Supervising Social Worker will act on your complaint, and you can expect a response within 48 hours or alerting us to your complaint.
- Your Supervising Social Worker will let you know how to access independent advocacy and there is information in this guide to point you to an independent advocacy service.
- 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.

## 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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 your views taken seriously.

## **Helpful information**

### ***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 (02 network 116 1110 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](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### ***Become Charity***

This is the National Charity for Children in Care. Their website is [www.becomecharity.org.uk](http://www.becomecharity.org.uk) if you want to find out more about what they do.

Tel: 0800023 2033 or email: [advice@becomecharity.org.uk](mailto:advice@becomecharity.org.uk)

### ***Coram Voice***

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

0808 800 5792 (free to call) / [info@coramvoiceyp.org](mailto:info@coramvoiceyp.org)     [www.voice.org.uk](http://www.voice.org.uk)

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## ***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. This helpline is open from 10.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Website: [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

Email: [help@NSCPCC.org.uk](mailto:help@NSCPCC.org.uk)

## ***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 at 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](mailto:enquires@ofsted.gov.uk)

[whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk)

Website: [www.ofsted.co.uk](http://www.ofsted.co.uk)

## ***The Children's Commissioner for England***

Dame Rachel de Souza promotes and protects 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.

Look at: [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk) to find out more.

Phone her office on 0800 528 0731

Email: [help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](mailto:help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

## ***The Young Lives Foundation***

This organisation can set you up with their independent advocacy service.

Their phone number is: 01622 693459.

Email: [enquiries@ylf.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ylf.org.uk)

**You can also talk to your IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer)**

**They are there to act as your voice for any  
issues/concerns/worries/complaints you may have.**

## My useful numbers

**My Social Worker's Name:**

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**My Social Worker's Telephone Number:**

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**My Foster Carer's Name:**

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**My Foster Carer's Telephone Number:**

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**My Supervising Social Worker's Name:**

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**Following Whispers' Telephone Number: 01843 263461**

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**Paula Henderson's Telephone Number: 07966 005731**

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**My IRO's Name:**

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**My IRO's Telephone Number:**

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