



Children's Handbook

Ages 5 – 11



What's in this book?

- My details
- What's this book about?
- What we do at Nationwide Fostering
- What is Foster Care and what people are involved and around me?
- Who is a Foster Carer?
 - What will my Foster Carer do?
 - What about school?
- Who is a Social Worker?
 - What will my Social Worker do?
- Meetings
- Keeping in touch with family and friends (Contact)
- Why are there so many meetings?
- What do I do if I'm unhappy?

What's this book about?

This book explains to you about different people who will help you and be there for you whilst you are with foster carers.

You will find out how you can make others listen to what you want to say. It will also tell you that we believe your health, your education and your friends and family are very important.

How to best use this book?

- 1) Read this book by yourself to find out more
- 2) Read this book with a trusted friend and then talk about it
- 3) Go through this book with your social worker or foster carer
- 4) If you see a word in bold, **like this**, then you can find out what the word means at the back of the book.

If grown ups use words you don't understand, ask them what they mean.

My Details

My Name	
My Date of Birth	
My Address	
Foster Carer's Name(s)	
My Social Workers Name and Number	
My Carer's social worker (SSW)	



Other Important Names and Addresses

Name			
Address			
Telephone		Mobile	
E-mail			

Name			
Address			
Telephone		Mobile	
E-mail			

Name			
Address			
Telephone		Mobile	
E-mail			

Name			
Address			
Telephone		Mobile	
E-mail			

Name			
Address			
Telephone		Mobile	
E-mail			

Let me tell you a bit about Nationwide Fostering

- Nationwide Fostering is an independent fostering agency which helps find foster families who can support and care for children and young people who aren't able to live with their own family.
- Nationwide Fostering carers are carefully chosen, assessed, checked, and trained before they can provide care for children and young people.
- Nationwide Fostering will do their best to find foster carers who share your culture, religion and language. But most importantly to find a family that will make you feel safe and secure.

This is what Nationwide Fostering says about its service:

Statement Of Purpose

The statement of purpose is a booklet with quite many pages, some of it may be a bit boring for you, so we have tried to pick out the main bits and write them down in this box here:

We, from Nationwide Fostering are committed to making sure that everyone does their best to look after you. We will take our time to listen to what you have to say, and it is important to us that everybody works together. That includes your social worker, the foster carer, the school, your family and maybe even friends.

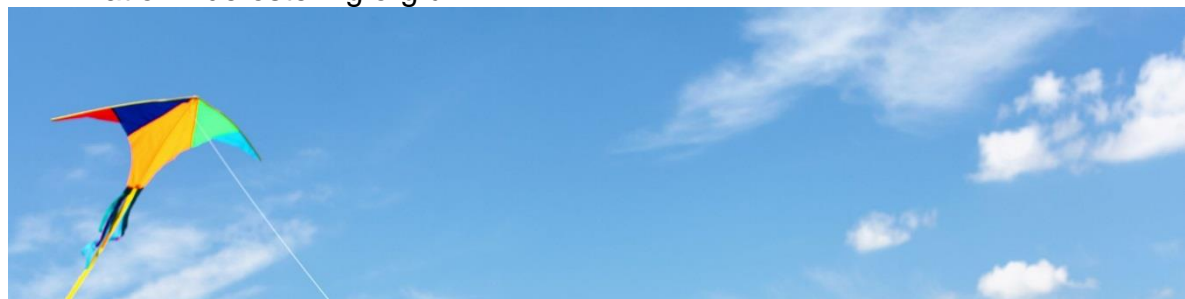
Nationwide Fostering is an organisation who has many foster families, who we have selected and trained, so that they know what is important when looking after you. We will come to visit regularly to make sure everything is OK. But if you at any point feel that something should be different, please let us know.

We have different people who work for us, some are social workers, others work in the office. Together we make up what we call Nationwide Fostering.

We want to help you have a good time in your foster home, so that you have time to play, learn, be serious but also to have fun.

There are a number of laws and rules which we have to abide by. The most important ones are called the 'Children Act 1989' and the 'Fostering Services Regulations 2011'. These regulations tell us a lot about what we have to do and when.

You can find a more detailed 'Statement of Purpose' on our website www.nationwidefostering.org.uk



What is Foster Care, and who is doing what?

There are many reasons why children and young people need to be in foster care. Your own family may not be able to provide a safe and healthy home for you at this time. Your parents may have been unwell, unable to cope, or they may have argued a lot. Perhaps someone has treated you badly.

It is the responsibility of **Social Services** to provide you with somewhere safe, happy and comfortable to live. You will have a **social worker** who has been trained to help families through difficult times, they will explain things to you and make sure you understand what's going on. Your social worker will have found a foster carer to look after you. Your social worker visits you in your foster home.

Going into care and having to move away from home and your friends and family can be rather scary. You may not understand why you are being moved.

You will meet new people who are nice and want to look after you, but you may feel shy and upset because you are confused, worried or angry.

Whatever the case, your foster carers are there to reassure you and to help you settle in. You are not alone – your foster carer is there to talk to you, to listen to you and to keep you safe.

Who is a Foster Carer?

Foster carers are special people who are carefully chosen and trained to look after you. They have all been thoroughly checked to make sure that they can provide the best possible care for you in their home. Some foster carers live on their own and others have their own children.

Foster carers are assigned their own **supervising social worker** to give them additional support and guidance to look after you. You will see the supervising social worker regularly.

What will my foster carer do?

Your foster carer will welcome you into their home. They will give you all the support and help you need to settle in and to feel comfortable, safe and happy. Your foster carer will be there for your daily needs – things like preparing your meals and doing your washing, helping you with your homework and all the things that parents would normally do.

When you first go to a foster carer they will register you with their doctor and dentist – just to make sure you are fit and healthy. That's nothing to be worried about. You will also have an eyesight test to check that's all okay too.

Your foster carer will support you at meetings when plans for your future are being discussed.

What about school?

School is so important!!

If your foster home is near to where you used to live, it may be possible for you to go to the same school.

Sometimes you won't be able to stay at your old school - it may be because it is too far away. If this happens your foster carer and social worker will find another school and will take you to visit the school so you can see what it is like before you start there. There will be a teacher at your school who will know you are in foster care, but you do not have to tell anyone else if you don't want to. You may want to tell a teacher you like so that they can help you if you have any problems. They may also want to ask what you are good at and what you may need help with.

If you have any problems or are being bullied you must tell a teacher or your foster carer.

Who is a Social Worker?

A **social worker** is someone who has been trained to help children and their families through difficult times. They will explain things to you and make sure you understand what is going on.

It is a good idea to let your social worker know how you are feeling about being in foster care and together you can talk about what is the plan is.

What will my Social Worker do?

- Come and visit you regularly at your foster home.
- Make sure you are safe and your needs are met.
- Listen to you about your wishes and feelings.
- Speak to you about your interests and things you want to do.
- See your nursery or school reports.
- Speak to your foster carer, teachers etc about how you are getting on.
- Keep you informed of what is happening with your family.
- Be available to listen, support you and to talk to you about things happening in your life.
- Inform you of your rights.

Foster carers have their own social workers (they are called **Supervising Social Workers**) who provide additional support and guidance to help the foster carers provide the best possible care for you.

You will see the Supervising Social Worker regularly and they are someone else you can turn to if you have any questions or worries.

Meetings

Meetings are to make sure that you are happy and to find out how you are getting on. Everyone who is involved in looking after you will get together to make plans for your future. You can go along to these meetings and have your say too. Sometimes there will be a **review meeting**. This is when you will see people filling out forms and talking about your **care plan**.

There may be meetings at your school, and meetings at the social worker's offices, but mainly you will be involved in meetings in your foster home. Your social worker will come to visit you and will talk to you to see that you are alright.

A care plan is where your social worker writes down all about how you will be cared for and what the plans are for your future. It says what has been decided about where you live, who you live with, seeing your family & friends and going to school. The care plan helps to make sure you receive all the help and support you need.

Everyone will want to make sure you are well taken care of. They will listen to you and help if there is anything you don't understand.

Keeping in touch with family and friends (Contact)

When I first went to live with my new foster family they made me feel comfortable, I had a nice bedroom of my own, and I felt happy and safe in my new home. But I still missed my mum and dad, and my nan and granddad. I missed my mates down the road, and I missed Felix, our cat (even though she scratches!).

My foster carer said she understood that I'd be missing them. She said that no matter how long anyone is in foster care, and how happy they are, it is normal for them to think about their family and friends and to want to talk about them.

My foster carer said that she, and my social worker, will always listen to me if I wanted to talk about my family and friends – good stuff and bad stuff.

My social worker said that all children in foster care can keep in touch with their family and friends when it is safe for them to do so.

Your social worker and foster carer will talk to you about **contact** – this means how often, when and where you can see or talk to your family & friends.

There are lots of different ways to keep in touch:

- you can telephone (or text)
- or you can write letters (and emails)
- or you may be able to visit.

Your foster carer can help you telephone and write, and sometimes a trusted adult may need to come with you when you visit your family - this is to make sure you are safe.

If there is anyone you would rather not stay in touch with, or if you ever feel worried or frightened about seeing anyone, you should talk to your foster carer and social worker.

What about how I feel about being in foster care?

You may feel like one of these faces:



SAD ?

ANGRY



C O N F U S E D

If you are feeling sad, angry or confused you can always talk to your foster carer, the Supervising Social Worker, your Social Worker, or another adult you can trust.

If you are not happy about the plans that are being made in your life, you can contact an **advocate**. An advocate is a person who can support you and help you speak up if you need them to; they can also give you information and advice to help you to have your say.

Things you can do if you feel angry or upset about being in care:

- Talk to your foster carer.
- Talk to a friend you trust, teacher, social worker, supervising social worker or other trusted adult.
- Ask your foster carer if you can speak to an advocate to help you to have your say.
- Keep a diary.
- Write a letter to an adult that knows you to tell them how you are feeling.

- Use the **Have Your Say Form** in this booklet to let Nationwide Fostering know how you feel or use it to make a **complaint**.
- **You can contact Ofsted**
Ofsted Chief Inspector
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231 email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- **Children's Commissioner for England**
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT
Tel: 0800 528 0731 email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk
- Nationwide Fostering has a Complaints Officer who can also listen to you. You can call them on 0203 6000 750 or you can email on enquiries@nationwidefostering.org.uk

The address is: Nationwide Fostering, The Atrium, 4th floor, 1 Harefield Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 1EX.
- Ring a confidential helpline
 - Childline – 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk
A free helpline for children to talk about any problem.
- You can also contact your Independent Reviewing Officer of your Local Authority

How do I complain?

There will be times in your life when things can go very well and there may be other times when things can go wrong. If you are not happy about something to do with your care then it is your right to make a complaint.

It is your right to be treated fairly and unless you tell someone that you are unhappy, things may not change. A complaint can help to make things better for you and maybe even other young people like you. A complaint is not about getting you or other people into trouble, it's about making sure that you are being listened to.

If you want to make a complaint, there are three steps (also known as stages):

Stage 1:

This is the first stage where you speak to your foster carer or social worker about what is bothering you. If you don't feel comfortable speaking to them, you can also speak to the Nationwide Fostering Complaints Manager by phone, letter or email, at the following address:

Registered Manager (Complaints Officer)

Nationwide Fostering, The Atrium, 4th floor, 1 Harefield Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 1EX

Tel: 0203 6000 750

Email: enquiries@nationwidefostering.org.uk

You can have support from your foster carer, friend, advocate or someone that you trust to do this. They should try to sort out the problem within ten working days.

Stage 2:

If you still think that there is a problem, the complaints manager will ask for an independent person (someone who doesn't work for Nationwide Fostering or the local authority) to look into it for you. This is a formal investigation and you should be told within 20 working days about what will happen. A report will also be written up and a senior manager will go through this with you.

Stage 3:

If you are still not happy then a review panel will look into this for you. The panel is made up of three people, and at least one of them is not working for Nationwide Fostering. They will try to sort the problem within 20 working days and will let you know of the outcome.

What does that word mean?

Advocate: Someone who works with you to help you speak about what you want or think. An advocate can speak for you, if you ask them, and help you with your problems.

Care Plan: This is a plan which says why you are in care, and what's is going to happen whilst you are with your foster family. It includes things about your contact with family, school, your health, activities and money.

Consultation Form: This is a form on paper which you can fill out to let others know how you feel and what your wishes are. You will have a form from Nationwide Fostering and your Local Authority.

Complaint: This is when you write down or speak to someone about things that you are not happy with.

Local Authority: This is the council which is responsible for you and your care plan. They are also called your 'Corporate Parent'.

Review Meeting: This is a meeting where you and adults who care for you check how you are doing and whether your care plan is up to date and working for you. In the Review Meeting decisions are being made about you. That is why it is important that you are taking part in this meeting.

Social Services: A department of the Local Authority which supports and protects people. They may also be called 'children's services'.

Social Worker: This is the person from the Local Authority who is making sure that you are looked after well. You can speak to your Social Worker about anything you like.

Supervising Social Worker: This is the person who is from Nationwide Fostering who makes sure that the foster carer is doing a good job in looking after you. The Supervising Social Worker visits your foster family at least once a month.

