Shining Stars
Fostering Agency

For a Shining Future

SHINING STARS FOSTERING AGENCY

YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE

FROM 12 YEARS ONWARDS

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PERSONAL INFORMATION & USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Some of these numbers occasionally change for things like OFSTED. Your foster carers and social worker should check with you to make sure that they are up to date. If they haven't done this, please ask.

Your name	
DOB (Optional)	
Family telephone numbers	
Friends numbers	
Your Social Worker's name and telephone number	
Emergency out of hours telephone	
Shining Stars Fostering Office telephone	
Foster Carer's telephone number	
Childline telephone number	
Children's Rights Director Name and	
Ofsted	
Voice	
Compliments & Complaints Officer	

WELCOME TO SHINING STARS FOSTERING AGENCY

Going to live with Foster Carers can be a really difficult and emotional time. Every young person's circumstances are different. Some young people may be pleased to be fostered. Others may be scared and angry. It's natural to have all sorts of different feelings.

This Guide is to help you understand fostering and how your foster parent(s) will look after you. It tells you about Shining Stars Fostering Agency and other adults you can talk to about anything you want, even when things make you unhappy. If you need help to read or understand anything in the Guide, your foster carer will help you. You can also ask your Social Worker for help.

We have worked with lots of young people over the years and this booklet tries to answer the questions that children and young people have asked us over that time.

WHAT IS SHINING STARS FOSTERING AGENCY LIMITED

Shining Stars Fostering Agency is an independent fostering agency. We find homes for looked after children with families who are trained and want to look after children who need a new home away from their own family.

Children can sometimes stay with their foster family for a short while or even longer. This will depend on your needs. There will be a plan agreed for you that is called a CARE PLAN and will state how long you will live with your foster carer.

Your foster carer will look after you and do lots of things to help you stay safe and healthy. The foster carers are there for you and we hope that you get on well with them. Your foster carers will also work with the other people involved in your life, your family, your social worker and your teachers. They will help you have lots of fun as well. Together we aim to make sure you have the best chances growing up.

This includes

- Keep you safe
- Keeping you healthy and well looked after
- Listening to your wishes and feelings and acting on them
- Helping you with school
- Helping you to keep in touch with people you care about
- Help you learn new skills for when you grow up
- Help you to follow your culture and religion.
- Help you make new friends and have fun

Your foster carer(s) will welcome you into their home and want you to feel comfortable. You will have your own bedroom with space for your toys, clothes and favourite things.

CAN YOU THINK OF OTHER THINGS WE CAN DO TO HELP YOU?

Your foster carer(s) are

You can call them

They live at

Telephone number

They have children called

Other people who live in the house are

The pets are:

THERE SEEMS TO BE LOTS OF PEOPLE INVOLVED, WHO ARE THEY AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

There are normally lots of people involved, too many to write about here, but the following are the ones you will definitely see:

⇒ Supervising Social Worker/sometimes called Link Worker

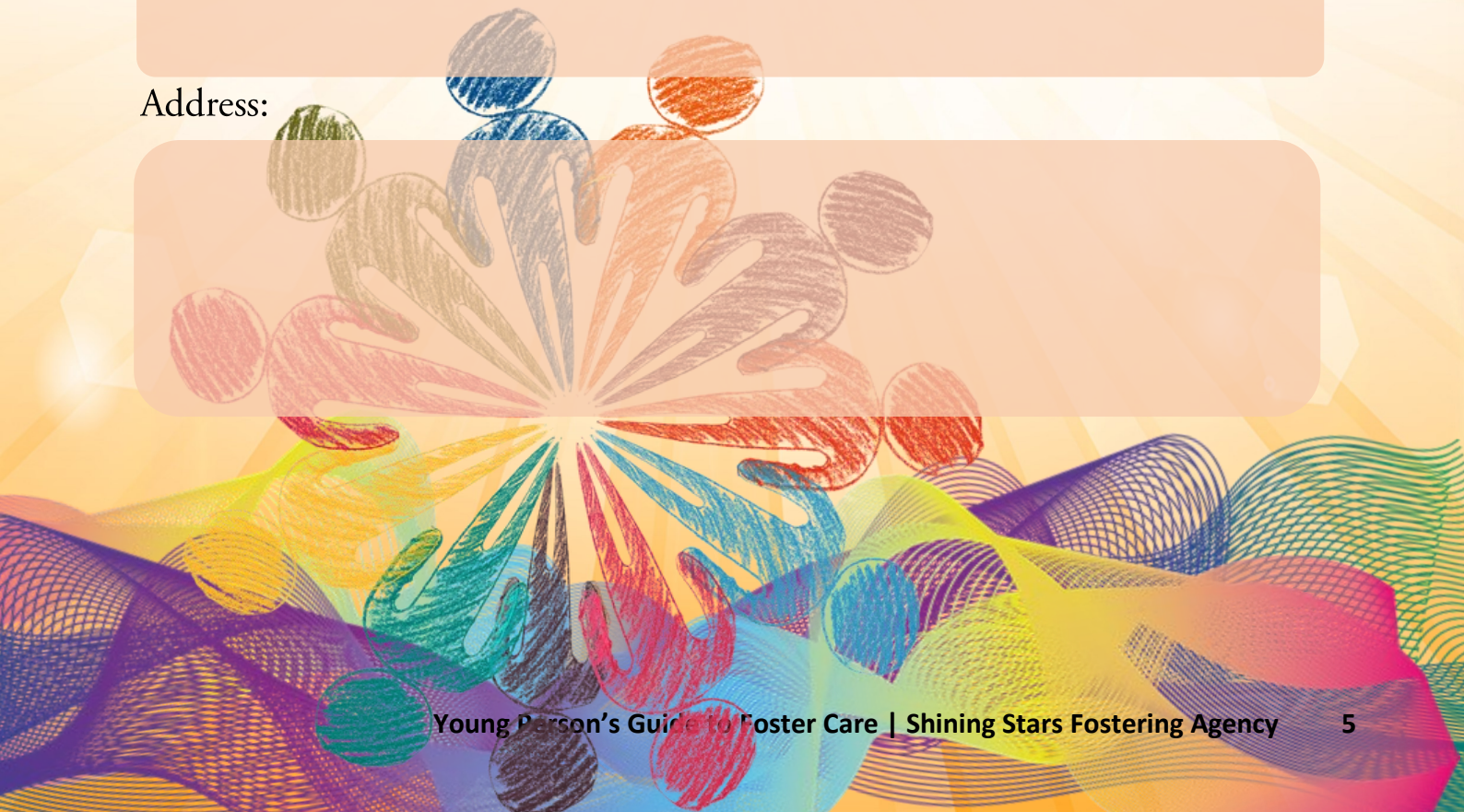
This person's job is to supervise and support your foster carers to be sure that the foster carers and Shining Stars Fostering are doing all that we can to help you achieve your potential. The Supervising Social Worker should visit the foster home regularly and sometimes they would like to talk to you to find out how you are feeling about living with the foster carers.

Your Foster Carers' Supervising Social worker is:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:



⇒ Child Social Worker

This person is responsible for your case. It is this person's duty to make sure you are well cared for and to make sure that everyone is working to achieve your care plan. Your Social Worker should visit you regularly and explain to you what's happening, they should also listen to your views and things that you want to happen. This doesn't mean to say that they will do everything you want but they have to show to you and others that they have listened to you and taken your views into account when decisions are being made about you.

You should be able to contact your Social Worker when you want to and it's a reasonable time to do so (not at 1 am!). If you have difficulties contacting your social worker, talk to your foster carers and they should be able to help you get in touch.

Your Social Worker is:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

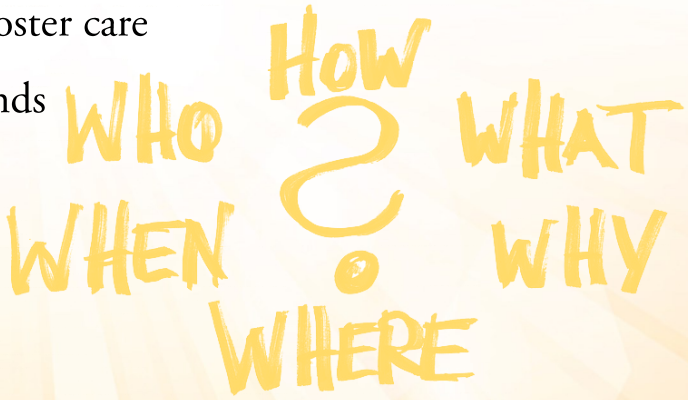
⇒ Independent Reviewing Officer

This person is in charge of your review meetings, which is the meeting where the big decisions are made about you, like, how long will you be in foster care for, if you are going to move, where will you move to. It's very important that the Independent Reviewing Officer and everyone who attends the review meeting knows what you think. Your social worker and foster carer should help make sure your views are heard. Please talk to your foster carers, if you feel able, to make sure they know what you think and what you would like to happen. Your Social Worker will be able to provide you with details of your Reviewing Officer.

WHAT IS A CARE PLAN

The care plan is the plan for your future and covers all the important things like:

- how long you are going to be in foster care
- contact with your family and friends
- your education
- your health
- leisure activities



To start with the care plan is written by the social worker and their manager. After this, it is reviewed and changed whenever necessary at a review meeting.

WHAT IS A REVIEW MEETING?

Whilst you are in foster care you will have regular review meetings. All the people involved in your case attend the review meetings and agree the decisions about your care plan.

Your parents will normally be invited to attend the meetings but sometimes this will vary depending on your circumstances. The meetings are all about you and it is important that you are involved as much as possible. Your foster carer should help you with this.

The law says that you must have a review.

- Within four weeks after the start of your placement
- Within three months after that
- At least every six months from then on

WHAT ABOUT MY EDUCATION?

We want you to go to school because your education is important and we want you to learn. Your foster carers know how important you school work is and they will encourage and support you. They will remind you to do homework and help you with it if you would like them to.
If it is possible, and it meets your needs, you will continue to attend the same school and your carers will help you with this. If you have to change schools, your foster carers and social workers will help you work out how this can happen.

As well as above, your foster carers will:

- Encourage you to take part in educational activities
- Listen to how you're feeling about school
- Liaise with the school and attend meeting when needed
- Make sure you have all the books, equipment and school uniform you need.
- Make sure you are not bullied while at school. But if you are, work with the school to help sort it out.

Education is about learning, but it can also be fun. It is not all linked to school and we will celebrate all your successes, both in and out of school. Your foster carers will give you lots of opportunities to take part in activities that are fun and from which you can learn.

All looked after children have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). Your social worker will ask the school to complete a PEP soon after you have moved to be with foster carers. The PEP tells us how you are doing at school and what the school and your foster carers can do to help make sure you achieve the best you can within education.

WHAT ABOUT MY HEALTH, WILL I KEEP THE SAME DOCTOR AND DENTIST?

While you are with the foster carers, you will need to be registered with a General Practitioner (GP). It might be possible to stay with your existing GP if your foster home isn't too far away. If your foster home is too far away, you will be registered with the GP that your foster carers see.
Your foster carers will also make sure you have regular checks for your eyes and teeth. We want you to be, and remain, healthy, so your foster carers will offer you a healthy and balanced diet with different foods to choose from. Your foster carers will ask you what sorts of foods you like to eat.

Your foster carers will encourage you to be active and do lots of different things like sports. As part of encouraging you to be healthy, we may ask you to walk sometimes rather than be given a lift, for example when you are meeting friends. Your carers will only ask you to walk if they think it is safe to do so.

Some children and young people smoke. Smoking is not good for your health. Medical research tells us that young people who smoke are more likely to suffer very serious health problems as they get older. We would therefore rather you did not smoke. If you want to smoke you should talk to your foster carers about this. We would need written permission from you Social Worker or parents. We do not think it is a good idea to have cigarettes in the foster home and your foster carers will not buy cigarettes for you. If you do smoke and you would like to stop your foster carers will do all they can to help and support you in giving up. They can also, with your permission, get other people involved who can help you quit.

CAN I SEE MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS?

Contact with your family is important to you and your foster carers understand this. Your foster carers will do all they can to assist you in having contact with your family. The care plan sets out the arrangements for your contact with your family and your foster carers will work with you and the social worker to make sure that you see your family according to the agreements made. Please tell your foster carers (if you feel able to) about how you feel about contact. Also, you can talk to your Social Worker and Independent Review Officer so everyone knows your views. Your foster carer will also help you to make sure that everyone knows what you think because it is important.

We want you to be able to see your friends and we will help you with this. There may be some restrictions and we can discuss this with you. The most important thing is that your foster carers know where you are because they want to make sure that you are safe.

Shining Stars Fostering does not provide you with a mobile phone. If you have a mobile, we will want to talk to you, your Social Worker and your family about how you use it, and make agreements about its use. We want to make sure that the people who contact you are not going to cause you any harm and that you can have peace, quiet and rest when you need it.

WHO WILL SUPPORT ME AS I GET OLDER AND NEED TO MOVE ON?

As you start to think about leaving school and getting ready for adult life your foster carers will do their best to make sure you have all the skills you need to move on. They will help you with cooking, washing, managing money as well as lots of other things depending on your needs. We will work with you, your social worker and everyone else involved to agree and follow your "Pathway Plan" to independence. Your Pathway Plan talks about your future plans and aspirations.

We all need to make sure we do this when the time is right for you and you feel ready. If and when you move on, we hope that you will keep in touch with your foster carers and they will be pleased to keep in touch with you.

HOW CAN I BE SURE THAT I AM BEING LISTENED TO AND TAKEN SERIOUSLY?

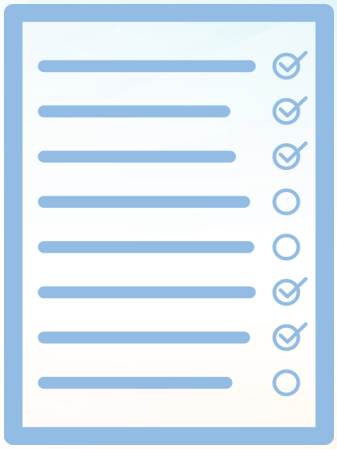
Please talk to your foster carers if you want to, they want to listen to you and will do all they can to make sure that your views are heard by everyone involved in making decisions about your life. Talk to your social worker and reviewing officer. At the back of this booklet there is a list of people and numbers you can contact. Check with your foster carers and social worker that all the numbers are correct at the time that you read this.

WILL I GET POCKET MONEY?

Yes. This will be agreed with your foster parents and your Social Worker. The amount you will get each week will depend on your age.

If you are very young or learning how to look after your money, your foster parent will help you spend your pocket money on things you like. Any pocket money that you don't spend can be saved for you.

DO THEY HAVE HOUSE RULES?



Yes they do. The rules are to keep everyone safe and healthy. They are also about treating each other properly, listening to each other and respecting each other's space and possessions. Here are some rules your fostering family may have:

- Not going into other people's bedrooms without knocking and getting permission
- No swearing
- Adhering to Children's bedtimes
- Treating each other with respect

Your foster carer will have other rules to make sure you and everyone else in the home are kept safe and well. Use the space below to write down your foster parents rules, ask for help if you like:

WHAT IF I DO SOMETHING WRONG?

Well no-one is perfect; adults get it wrong sometimes too. Your foster parents understand this and will help you learn to do the right things by explaining and showing you the right way to go about things.

Sometimes children's behaviour can be challenging or they do things that are not accidents- maybe because they are angry about something or just unhappy. If this happens your foster parent will try to find out from you why you did what you did and help you sort out the things that make you angry and unhappy.

There are things your foster parent cannot do to you because they are not allowed. These include:

- They cannot harm you which means no smacking, or hitting of any kind
- They cannot lock you in your bedroom even though they may lock up the house at night to keep everyone safe
- They cannot stop your contact with family and other people that it has been agreed you can keep in touch with

WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM UNHAPPY, HAVE A PROBLEM, OR NEED TO COMPLAIN?

If you have a problem with your foster carers, or something to do with your foster carers that you can't sort out, you have a right to complain and for that complaint to be taken seriously.

Following is how you complain and to whom:

- You can speak to one or both of your foster carers
- You can telephone your Social Worker or the emergency duty team
- You can telephone "Child Line" or you can telephone or write to Ofsted. The numbers are at the back of this booklet.
- All children in care also have access to an Independent Advocate or Independent Reviewing Officer through their placing local authority to share their concerns or worries.
- You can also telephone Shining Stars Fostering Agency, email us on info@shiningstarsfostering.com or write to us at:

Complaints Department

Shining Stars Fostering Agency

The Lansdowne Building

No 2 Lansdowne Road

Croydon

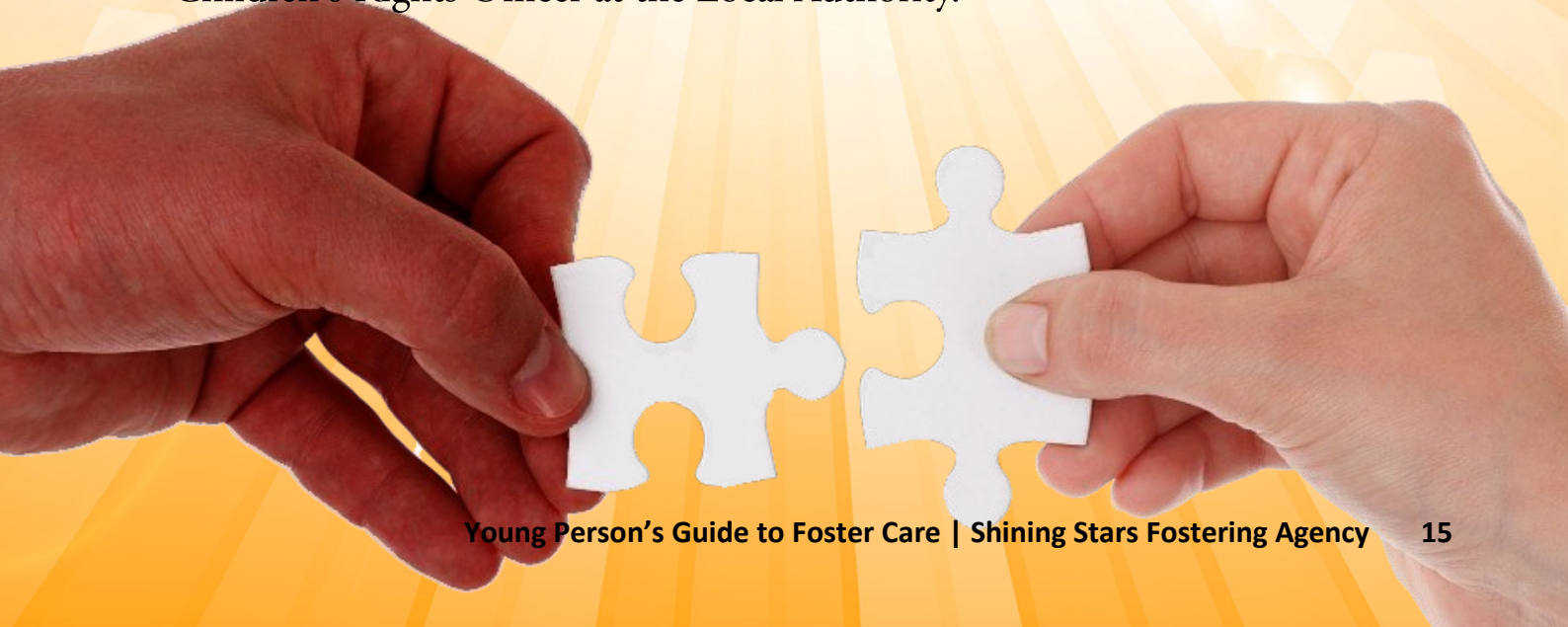
CR9 2ER

Our contact numbers are: 020 8263 6260, 07886127826, 07905209748.

If you make a complaint to Shining Stars Fostering Agency then we will talk to you about that complaint. We will attempt to resolve your concerns and keep you informed of how this will be achieved. If we have not done this within 2 weeks you can make a complaint to the Manager. The line manager will discuss your complaint with you and confirm in writing to you within 7 days of your contact.

The manager will then make enquiries and provide you with a written report. If you are not happy with this outcome you can contact the Director of Shining Stars Fostering, Shabnam Abbas. She will look at everything to do with the complaint. She may ask someone else to look into the complaint. She will then make a decision and inform you of this within 28 days of you contacting her.

Other sorts of complaints: If your complaint isn't really about the foster carers or the services that Shining Stars Fostering Agency provides, it is possible that the complaint may be about Children's Services. There is a separate complaints process for these sort of problems. Your Social Worker should be able to give you a leaflet that tells you what to do. If you are not sure you can talk to your Social Worker or foster carer and also speak to Children's Rights Officer at the Local Authority.



If you want to talk to someone completely separate from Shining Stars Fostering Agency and your Social Worker, there are lots of other people who will listen to you and give you help and advice. You can contact:

Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills)
Piccadilly Gate, Store Street,
Manchester M1 2WD
0300 123 1231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk
0300 123 4666 (Contact Ofsted about any concerns)
CIE@ofsted.gov.uk

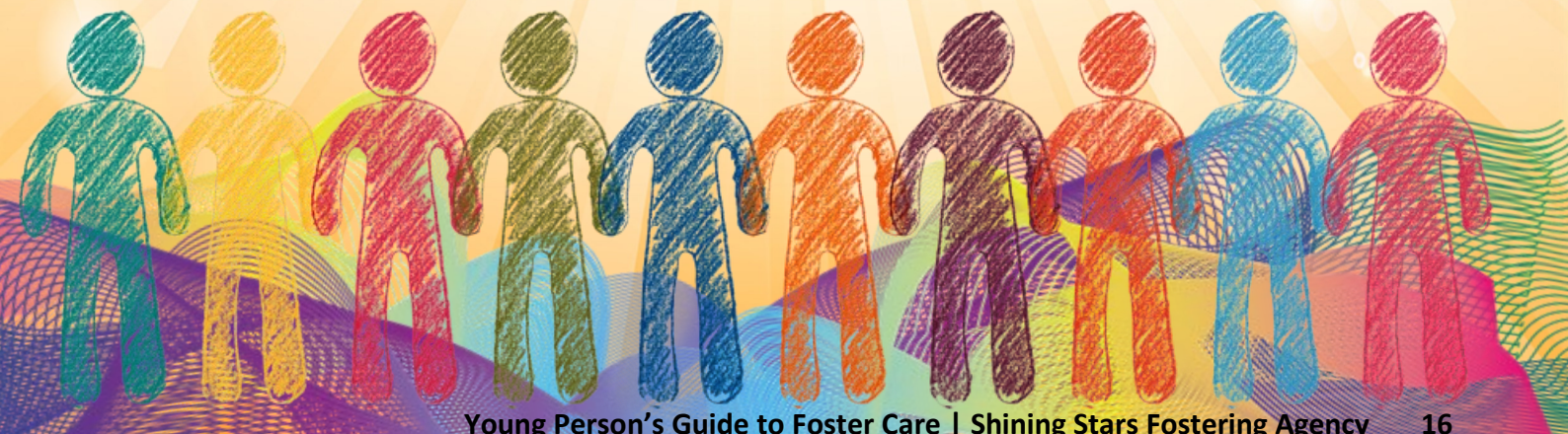
Children's Commissioner for England
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT
020 7783 8330
info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk
www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Bullying UK
www.bullying.co.uk
For advice and support on dealing with bullying
0808 800 2222

BECOME
The charity for children in care and young care leavers
15-18 White Lion Street
London N1 9PG
0800 023 2033
advice@becomecharity.org.uk

NSPCC
The UK's Children's Charity
Weston House
42 Curtain Road
London- EC2A 3NH
0808 800 500
help@nspcc.org.uk

Childline (childline is a service provided by NSPCC)
0800 1111



HAVE YOUR SAY AND TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Shining Stars Fostering Agency will organise regular group meetings called Children's Support Group for foster children to meet up and talk about things that concern them or any ideas that can help us look after you better.

This is also a time to talk about ideas for our fun days. The meetings are run by foster children with help from agency staff.

This is also a time when you can put forward ideas for events and fun days for children, foster carers and Social Workers. Even if you can't come to these meetings, we'll talk about your ideas if you let us know.

RECORD KEEPING ABOUT YOU

Foster carers are expected to keep a record of the time that you are living with them, therefore, they will regularly write down the things that you do and the things that happen to you. The information they record will be shared with other people involved in your life, like your social worker. Information is only shared with people who have a proper reason to know about what is happening in your life. If you want to know who will have access to this information, about you specifically, you can ask your foster carer or your Social Worker.

The foster carer will keep any records about you, safe and securely within the home. We encourage your foster carer, whenever possible; to share with you any information they are recording as they go along. You might like to agree between yourselves, a regular time to talk through what they have been recording and you are welcome to comment on this and the foster carer can add your comment to the record.

Sometimes your foster carer may be asked to write a report about you, for example, for your LAC (Looked After Children's) review. If they do, they will show you this report before the meeting so that there are no surprises.

When you leave the foster placement your placement record will be passed back to Shining Stars Fostering Agency who will make sure there is a copy with your Children's Services Record. You can see any records that are kept about you by Shining Stars Fostering Agency, whether you are in one of our placements or not, there can be some exceptions about some information but we will explain this to you. All you need to do is let anyone from Shining Stars Fostering know that you wish to see your records. Someone will talk to you about the process and arrange for you to see the information that we have.

We will also organise for someone to be available to talk the information through with you in case there is something you don't understand. Normally, we will be able to do this quite quickly, if there is a lot of information and any complications it might take up to twenty eight days to provide you with the information.

One of the reasons that we keep records is because it is important for you to have an accurate record of your time with Shining Stars Fostering carers, so that you can look back and understand how and why things happened, we also hope that they will remind you of good times!

We welcome feedback on the Children's Guide to improve the services that we provide to the children and young people placed with our Foster Carers.

Please send all feedbacks to:
info@shiningstarsfostering.com

Alternatively you can post your feedback at the following address:
Shining Stars Fostering
The Lansdowne Building
Office No 131
No 2 Lansdowne Road
Croydon
CR9 2ER

Our contact numbers are:
Landline 020 8263 6260
Mobile 07886127826
Mobile 07905209748