



SHINING STARS FOSTERING AGENCY

GUIDE TO FOSTERING

A guide for children who live in a family who are applying to foster or are already fostering

For under 12's



My family are fostering – what do I need to know?

You have been given this booklet to help you understand what fostering is about. Read through it and keep it safe as you might want to read it again later.

We need to give you information about fostering to make sure you are happy to foster as well as your parent/s. We've also included some tips to make sharing your home easier. We hope you enjoy it!

What is fostering?

Fostering is a way of looking after children and young people, when they cannot live at home. Children and young people stay with people called 'foster carers' whilst problems at home are being sorted out. Every year lots of children and young people are fostered.

Some children and young people go to live with foster families with their brother or sister, or sometimes they'll come on their own. They can need a foster family at any age from a new born baby up to a teenager.

If you are reading this then your family have decided to become foster carers. Fostering involves everyone who lives in your house, even the dog and the cat! It is important that we involved you as much as your parent/s. If you have any worries, thoughts or questions please ask or write them down and pass them to your parent/s or the assessing social worker, who will be visiting you and your family. It is so important that you feel happy.

Who are foster carers?

Foster carers are people like you and me, who care about children and young people and want to offer them a safe place to live. They are specially trained to look after children/young people who are unable to live with their own family.

Not all foster carers are the same, some are single people, and others are married or live with another person. Some foster carers have children of their own, some have never had children.



A good foster family has time,
patience, tolerance, energy
and a good sense of humour!

Why do children and young people need fostering?

Children and young people come into care for many reasons. All families go through stressful times and some families need some time and extra help to get sorted out. Whatever the case, it's important to remember that it is not the child or young person's fault that they are in foster care.

What is fostering like?

Fostering is looking after a child or young person in your home and in your family. You may have lots of visitors who will also be helping look after the child or young person such as social workers and support workers.

Lots of children who are fostered find big changes difficult and this can affect their behaviour in lots of ways. They may be upset, angry, worried, confused and scared. Your family will have support from Shining Stars to help them with this.

Helping a child or young person at such a difficult time is extremely rewarding. They may be staying with you until they go home or move somewhere more permanent. We are sure you will have fun together and even some arguments, just like brothers, sisters and friends do!

What happens next?

How your parent/s become foster carers

1. Your parent/s will be visited by a professional social worker. This is called the initial visit.
2. After this visit, your parent/s will be asked to attend a foster carers training course. This will give them lots of information about fostering and the children/young people they will be looking after. In this training they will need to think about what fostering will be like for their own children. That's you, off course!

Remember you will be fostering too. This will give the assessing social worker a good idea of what kind of children will fit in with your family.



3. Your parent/s will then be given their own assessing social worker who will visit your house around six to eight times. They will write a report about the information your parents and you have shared. The assessing social worker will also spend time with you to find out how you feel about your parents becoming foster carers as this is just as important.
4. Once the assessment is completed your parent/s will be given a date to go to the fostering panel. The panel is a group of people such as doctors, solicitors, teachers, counsellors and foster carers and others, who meet with people who want to become foster carers and decide what your parent/s would be good at.

Children and young people who have come into foster care may also be scared, worried and excited - just like you! Further on in this booklet there are some ideas and things you could do together, this will help you get to know each other better.

Once the panel has approved your parent/s your family are ready to foster. It all takes quite a long time as we need to make sure everyone is happy and ready to help another child or young person.

We're going to foster!

At this time you are probably feeling happy, excited, nervous, scared and a whole bunch of other feelings. These are completely normal feelings. If you are getting a bit worried you can always speak to your parent/s or the assessing social worker.



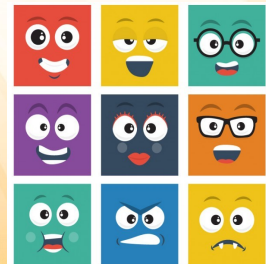
Below is a list of emotions.

Tick the boxes that match how you feel about fostering and how you think a child or young person will feel when they move in with a foster family.
How did you do? Did you notice any similarities?

Emotions	You	Young Person
Happy		
Angry		
Nervous		
Excited		
Sad		
Frustrated		
Confused		

You may both be having similar feelings.

Children and young people who have come into foster care may also be scared, worried and excited - just like you! Further on in this booklet there are some ideas and things you could do together, this will help you get to know each other better.



You could add some more of your views or ideas here:

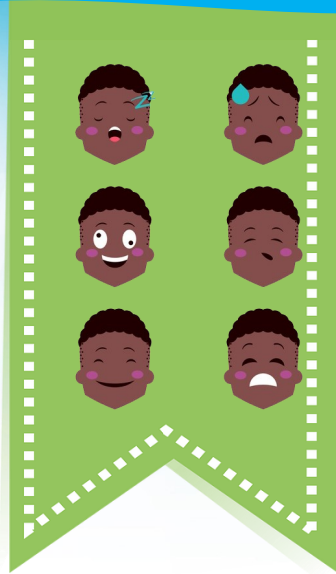
What to expect Children and young people who have been placed in foster care may behave and feel differently than you.

Different behaviours could be:

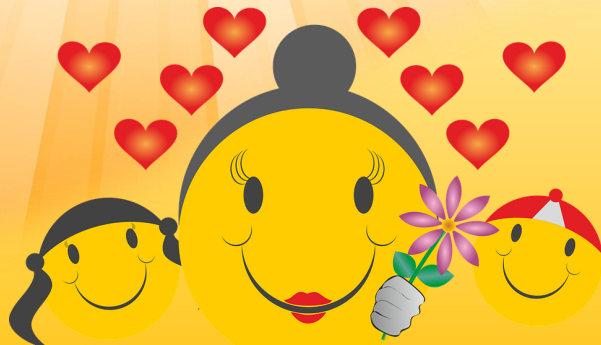
- Being very quiet
- Being very noisy
- Not knowing how to share or take turns
- Getting upset over small things
- Arguing
- Being very friendly
- Being angry

Different feelings could be:

- Feeling lonely
- Feeling sad
- Feeling upset
- Feeling angry
- Feeling confused
- Feeling like they have to try really hard to make their foster family happy
- Worried about their family and future



You might see the child behave in lots of different ways. This may be because they had different rules to what you have grown up with. They will also have lots of different feelings about living with a foster family. Your parent/s have been trained to deal with the different ways they might behave. With your help they will allow the child time to settle in your family.



Sharing

Having another child/young person in your home means you will be sharing a lot of things. This includes your parent/s, home, toys and games, time, friends, the television. Although sharing can be brilliant, (especially when someone is sharing their treats!) sharing your life can be difficult at times. It is important that you have time to yourself and with your parent/s.



If you feel that you are not having enough time with your parent/s, this can make you feel upset. This is why you may need to talk to your parent/s or your family's supervising social worker, from Shining Stars, so this can be sorted out. If your parent/s feel they need more time with you, the family supervising social worker may be able to arrange for you to have time on your own with them.

- What can you do if you feel upset or angry?
- What are you looking forward to?
- What might you like about having another child around?
- What is it that you don't like about having another child around?



Tips for making friends

- Smile!
- Be friendly and helpful.
- Talk to each other.
- Show an interest in what the other person likes.
- Be kind.
- Practice listening to them - try not to interrupt!
- Ask questions to show you're interested in what they are saying and that you are listening.
- Try to see things from their point of view as well as your own. Imagine how you would feel if you were in their shoes.
- When arguments happen, try to find a good way to reach an agreement that you're both happy with. This means you will both have to compromise!
- Be honest. Lying will only hurt and anger your friends and you will lose their trust.
- Remember they may be very angry, upset and scared and may take a long time to be friendly back!



Doing things together

You can help the child or young person that comes to stay with you feel comfortable by getting to know what they like and what they're interested in.



Remember, they might be feeling scared at first and want a bit of time to settle in, but once they're ready, here are a few suggestions of things you might like to do together.

Why not do a big collage together of all your favourite things? There are probably lots of things that are the same. You could cut out pictures from magazines and draw some yourself.

Why not ask your parent/s to take you all out on a short walk, perhaps to the shops or your local park? You can play lots of games whilst you're out such as 'I spy'. Or if the child doesn't know your area, why not pretend to be a tour guide, telling them about it? You could even take photos and make a booklet about it when you get home.

Support for you

You will receive support from your family's supervising social worker. It is important you tell them if you are worried about anything related to fostering.

Shining Stars Fostering agency offer a get together group for foster carer's children and they would like you to take part.

This group allows you to discuss how fostering feels. They talk about the good things, the bad things and let you express your feelings in a safe, friendly environment.

If you would like to attend the get together groups, please ask your family's supervising social worker for more information.


Write the details of you family's supervising social worker below.

NAME	
PHONE	
EMAIL	

People Network

It is also important to have people around you that you can talk to. It could be a friend at school or your parent/s.

Write the names of friends or family you feel you could talk to below.

		
	ME	

Remember, being a foster carer's son or daughter is an important role and you will do this better if you are happy about what is happening.

Feel Free to talk to us

Tell us about what you think about the process that you and your family went through to foster and what you feel about this booklet and anything else that will help us to do better for children and young people who foster.

You can call, write to us or pop in to the office anytime, here are the details:

Supervising Social Worker
Shining Stars Fostering Agency
The Lansdowne Building
2 Lansdowne Road
Croydon, CR9 2ER

*YOU ALSO HAVE THE RIGHT TO TALK DIRECTLY TO AN ORGANISATION
CALLED OFSTED IF YOU LIVE IN ENGLAND.*

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This Guide has been produced in consultation
with Foster Carers' Children