



Lewisham
Fostering Service
Guide
for
Children over 11 years old

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LEWISHAM FOSTERING SERVICE



A big welcome to Lewisham. We are pleased to have arranged a foster family for you. Together with your foster family we promise to do everything we can to give you a safe and happy home.

We will always put your safety and needs first and will do what we can to ensure that our foster carers provide you with a stable home where you are listened to and encouraged.

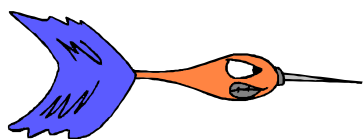
You can expect plenty of help and support from your foster carer in talking about your past and planning for your future. Your foster carer is there to help you develop your skills and talents and together we will all take the time to listen to your wishes, especially when it is time to make decisions affecting your future.

What being fostered means?

Being fostered means going to live with another family because for some reason you cannot live with your birth family. There can be loads of reasons why this may have happened. Some of them could be that you did not feel that your family were looking after you as well as you may have wished or maybe your family realised that they were not able to give you the best care or maybe a neighbour or a teacher noticed that you were not being looked after well enough.

Whatever the reason social workers will have been involved to find, even for short time, a foster family who will not take the place of your birth family. Foster carers may also have certain responsibilities to ensure that some things that are essential for your well being happen.

How has my social worker and Lewisham Fostering Service found the right family for me?



We both aim to provide a safe foster home for you where the foster carers are committed to providing you with the best possible care. We have both got to know you, your needs and your wishes well and tried our best to find a family where you will fit in well and settle down easily. You will be able to explore who you are (your *identity*), develop your skills and work towards achieving your goals in life.

No matter what culture, race, gender, beliefs, sexuality or religion you have, you will be treated equally and with *respect*.

In turn, we expect you to treat your foster family, foster home and our staff with respect.

Our aim is for our foster carers to keep you safe and to support you in developing your life skills so that you can take care of yourself when the time comes to leave care.

YOUR FOSTER FAMILY

Going to live with a foster family.

A social worker will take you to your foster carer's home, where you can meet everybody who lives there.

Wherever possible, your social worker will make sure that you bring your things and will help you pack a bag to take with you.

Apart from the things that you need, you can take your favourite games and books as well as photographs and anything else that you feel is important to you.

Who and where your foster family are.

Your foster family is made up of

Your new address and contact details are

Your foster carer will help you settle in and talk with you regularly to discuss any problems, talk through some issues that you think are important and help you resolve some difficulties you may be experiencing in your life.



If you need advice or a chat, they will listen. They will also tell you the truth if you are out of order, as sometimes we all need to be told when we get things wrong.

What you can expect on Arrival

When you move in your foster carer will show you around the house, show you where you will sleep and introduce you to everyone who lives there. Take some time to unpack and make your room your own. The house may seem a little strange and different at first but everyone will help you settle in. For your own benefit, your foster carer will need to make a list of your personal belongings so that we can see what other items we need to get for you such as clothes toiletries etc.

What You Can Expect of your Foster Carer



Your foster carer will treat you as part of the family and will look after you, make sure you have enough food to eat, promote a good standard of cleanliness and make sure that you are safe and warm. They will get your breakfast in the morning and help you get ready for school. They will either wash and iron your clothes or teach you how to do this and make sure you have your lunch or lunch money on school days. They will make sure there is someone there to meet you from school or for some young people there will always be an adult waiting for you when you arrive home from school. When you are home they will be there to talk to you, watch television, and play with you.

What Your Foster Family Expects

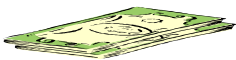
Every family has rules and your foster carer explain to you the rules in your new family. watching TV, staying up late, doing time is dinner and many other things. They will rules are and you will learn them slowly as you become a part of their family.



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Allowances



Age related allowances will be there for you, some for Pocket Money and some for clothing and special toiletries.

Additional pocket money can be given as a reward for achieving goals in your care plan or other positive pieces of work you agree in advance with your foster carer. There are also jobs in the house that need doing and you can top up your pocket money by doing some if you wish and if your social worker agrees that this is OK.

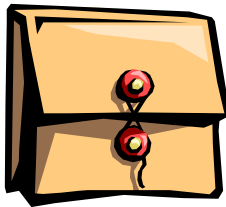
Your foster carer will also help you to save some money each week.

The actual amounts you will receive will be advised to you when you arrive and also the day when you can expect this money.

Confidentiality

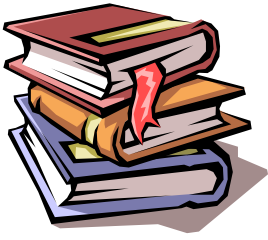
Confidentiality means that we will not talk about you to other people who are not involved in your care. It's like a 'need to know' kind of thing.

Your foster carer is responsible for keeping a record of your life during the time you stay with them. This record is confidential so that only you, our foster carers, your social worker, ourselves and a few others involved in your care may see it. You will be able to read your file whenever you want, provided you have arranged to do so in advance.



It is important that you should know that foster carers are **not allowed** to keep any secrets that you may tell them. Such secrets need to be shared with other people directly involved in your care, so that they can be taken into account when making decisions about your future to make sure they are in your own best interests.

Education and Employment



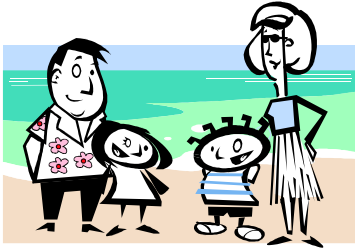
We all need to get ourselves a good job so that we can earn enough money to enjoy life. To get a job though, we need to learn all the skills needed to do the job.

No matter what job you want - DJ, dancer, actor, plumber, lawyer, teacher, bricklayer or social worker – you won't be able to do it without training and skills.

Education and Training therefore is really important for your future and opting out is not an option at Lewisham Fostering Service. Your foster carer will discuss all this with you. If it is possible, your social worker will try to make sure that you stay at the same school. If it isn't possible they will find another school for you.

When you are ready, your foster carer will help you look for a job, prepare you for interviews, accompany you to job centres etc and be there to help you with any problems.

Family and Friends



When you are ready and want to, your Social worker (after speaking with you and your foster carer) will help you to keep in contact with your family. Your Social Worker may also arrange for you to visit them and you may be able to invite them to visit if you want to and your social worker considers this is OK. You just need to tell (him/her) so that they can check if this contact is OK and to plan the visit.

If it is not possible to see your family or if you do not want to, your foster carer will talk to you about this and help you decide who you do want to see.

If there are some special people, say friends teachers and other relatives that you want to see or telephone from time to time, you can talk to your foster carer about it. Also, if there are some people that you feel frightened of seeing and don't want to see, again tell your foster care.

You may be wondering about your parents and whether they have agreed to you being fostered. It may be that the decision has been made by a judge, but remember that the most important thing is that the decision has been made to be sure you are safe and looked after well.

Health and Safety



Eating good food, keeping our bodies, clothes and home clean, getting some regular exercise are all important to being healthy.

When you move in, your foster carer will go with you to see a doctor to be examined so that we all know you are keeping well and healthy. If you have to take any medicines regularly, or have any special injections, your foster carer will make sure that this happens. You will a visit to the doctor for a further examination every year, if you stay in care.

He/she will also need to make sure that the house is safe for all who live in it. If you notice anything you consider dangerous, please tell him/her.

Meetings

Placement Plan Meeting.



Either before you move in or within a week of your move into foster care, you, your foster carer and their supervising social worker, your parents/family and your social worker will have this meeting in your foster home to agree how you will be looked after day to day.

Everything will be talked about, the food you like, any medicine you take, and your school how and when you see your family. Everyone will want to hear from you about the things you like and dislike. In fact, the more you tell everyone the better so that a care plan can be made about how you should be cared for and to plan for your future. This may seem scary; in fact many young people can feel confused or even angry at this time. Whatever you feel do speak about your feelings in order that your foster carer and your social worker can understand what you need to make you feel safe and secure.

Review meeting

These will happen from time to time to review the plan that has been made for you and to be sure it is right for you. Here again you will be able to speak out for yourself. The first meeting will be when you have been in foster care for four weeks. The next meeting will be three months from that date. After that, review meetings will take place every six months. So, you see if your care plan is not quite right at that the start there are plenty of chances to make changes along the way.

Religious Faiths

Your foster carer will encourage you to practice whatever religion or faith you wish and we will help you to find places to worship.

Your foster carer will also observe any special days with you, arrange special food and try to get whatever you need to practice your religion.



Leaving Care and After Care



It maybe that you stay in care for only a short while and that then your social worker thinks it is OK for you to go home to your birth family again. This will then be carefully planned with you first going home for visits, then overnight stays until it is clear that your parents and or people who are significant to you are able to look after you and that you will be safe.

If after a while, things start to go wrong again, you must remember you can always ask for help once again and know that your social worker will still be visiting you regularly.

If your social worker thinks that you will not be able to go back to your family, they may agree with you that you stay with your foster family or that it would be better to look for a family who can care for you on a longer term basis.

If you stay with your foster family, then probably between your sixteenth and seventeenth birthdays, you may be able to move into your own flat or lodgings where we will continue to support you as much as we can. This will only happen after full consultation and agreement with you, your social worker and relevant family members.

Such a move is meant to help you prepare for the day when you leave care to live independently. After moving, either your foster carer or one of our your key workers will visit you at least once per week and offer you support in things like filling in forms, finding places to study or work, local information, paying bills or just changing light bulbs.

Both your key worker and foster carer will be someone to talk to if you have problems or are just a bit lonely. It is likely that you will be able to visit the foster home, just give them a call beforehand.



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For some young people it may be agreed that they stay with their foster carers after their 18th birthday. This is called 'Staying Put' and the foster carer, yourself and social worker will need to agree this is the best plan for you and how long you will continue to stay with your foster carers.

What happens if you are not happy with your foster family?

If, after living with your new family for a while, you feel unhappy about your care, you should tell your social worker, one of the staff in the Lewisham Fostering Service or someone else you trust for example, your teacher. Both your social worker and Lewisham Fostering Service will listen to your worries and wishes and work with you to make new plans, and to help with what is making you unhappy.

If you have a problem or want to complain

If you have any problems talk to your foster carer, your social worker, or Lewisham Fostering Service. These problems might be in the home or at school. For instance, you might be being bullied or you may feel you are not being heard. There may be a long list of reasons why you may want to get help.

If whatever is making you unhappy is to do with where you are living or with anyone involved with your care, then you have the right to make a complaint and also the right for us to take that complaint seriously.

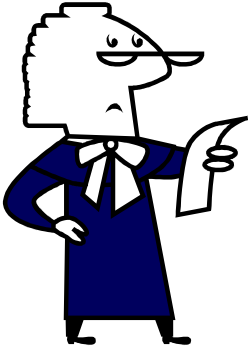
Our complaints procedure takes a little time but hopefully you will eventually be satisfied with the result. The procedure is explained fully in the *Complaints Booklet* and you will be given a copy when you become looked after.

Basically, this is what happens:-

Either someone from Lewisham Fostering Service or your foster carer will write your complaint down and if you agree that it is what you said, you then sign it. We will tell your social worker of your complaint, as it may need to be dealt with through their own complaints procedures. A more senior member of Lewisham Fostering Service will then discuss it with you and any others involved, to see if your complaint could be sorted out by talking about it. The result will be written down and you can say if you are happy with this. This should take a week at most. If you are not satisfied, we go to stage two:

Lewisham Fostering Service will ensure your complaint is investigated by an Independent Person. He/She will write down what they have found, what they have done about it and will check with you that you are happy with the result.

Independent Person/Advocate



An *independent person or advocate* is some one who is not from social care, Lewisham Fostering Service or your foster family. They are independent and are there for you, to make sure that you are being treated well.

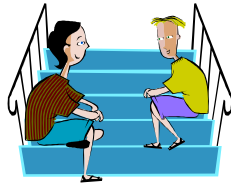
They will represent you if you have a complaint or are involved in some kind of legal process where you feel that your foster carer, your social worker or ourselves are not the best people to support

you.

They are also there if you just want someone not from Lewisham Fostering Service or your foster family to talk to, or to talk for you if you do not feel able to do so yourself.

If you feel you need to talk to or get advice from someone completely independent of Lewisham Fostering Service, you should call any of these organisations free of charge:

- Croham Services for Children:
- 0800 093 2012
- Children's Legal Centre:
- 08088 020 008
- National Youth Advocacy Service
0300 330 3131



You can also take your complaint to Ofsted whose address is on the next page.

Who checks that Lewisham Fostering Service and your social care team do their job properly?

Ofsted is a government organisation that ensures that all of foster care homes and fostering agencies, like Lewisham Fostering Service, in the country keep to an agreed standard of care. They inspect the foster care homes and our offices to make sure that this is the case.



Ofsted's contact details are:

Ofsted,
Piccadilly Gate, Store Street
Manchester. M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Finally

Well that's pretty much what we do and what you can expect from us. We hope you soon settle and enjoy your new family life.

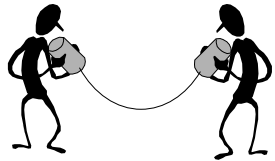
We also thank you for taking the time to read this book and hope you found it interesting and easily understood. If you have any questions, please ask your foster carer.



Some other free phone numbers/email addresses, which may be useful.

ChildLine: 0800 1111. or www.childline.co.uk

Children & Young People who are deaf or find using a regular phone difficult can try the new text service on 0800 400 222.



NSPCC Child Protection Helpline: 0800 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk

This page is for your own notes