

# A Children's Guide to Coventry Fostering Service



*This guide has been given the seal of approval by Coventry's Voices of Care Council*



Coventry City Council

[www.coventry.gov.uk/voices](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/voices)

# Hello!

This booklet will help you understand what fostering means for you. You can read this booklet to yourself or your social worker or foster carer can read it to you. It will tell you about living with a foster family and about the other people who will help you while you are in foster care. If you do not understand any part of this booklet please ask your social worker or foster carer to explain it to you.

**This booklet belongs to:**

**My social worker is:**

**Name:**

**e-mail:**

**Telephone:**

**My Independent  
Reviewing Officer is:**

**Name:**

**e-mail:**

**Telephone:**





Coventry Fostering Service believes all children and young people are important individuals in their own right. We have made a set of promises called the Coventry Pledge to make sure that you have the same opportunities in life as your friends. You can read about these promises at the back of this booklet.

We understand that having to move away from home and friends to live with a foster family can be really worrying and upsetting. There are lots of people around you who can help; your social worker, your foster carer, members of your family, teachers at school and your friends.

### **What being fostered means**

Fostering means going to live with a foster family when you cannot live with your mum and dad. Sometimes this is called “going into care” or being “looked after”.

**Getting to know the facts**

There are many reasons why children are fostered. Maybe your parents cannot look after you or they aren't looking after you properly. Your social worker will tell you why you need to be looked after away from your home.

It is important that you grow up in a family with a parent or parents who will take care of you and look after you as you are growing up. Even though you might be with a foster family for a short time, your foster family will treat you as if you are part of their family. If there are other children in that family, they will become your foster brothers and sisters. Being in foster care does not mean your parents and family do not love you.

# Social Workers

Every child in foster care has a social worker who they see regularly, and can contact if they need to. Your social worker's name and how to contact them is in the front of this booklet. Your social worker knows all about your case and is there to help you. They will listen to your problems and try to help your family work things out. It may seem strange at first, but get to know your social worker and build up trust. Their job is to keep you safe and well looked after.

You should be able to meet your social worker somewhere you feel comfortable and you can talk to them in private if you want to. Social workers want to help you return to your family as soon as possible, as long as you are safe and this is the right thing for you. Your social worker will talk to you regularly to keep you informed of what is happening.

Social workers know about the foster carers in Coventry and some that live further away. They will decide which carer is the best choice for you. This decision is based on a number of different things such as finding families that;

- Have a similar ethnic background to you
- Speak the same language as you
- Follow the same religious celebrations as you
- Understands your background and culture

The decision about which foster family to place you with is made by your social worker and the Fostering Service. They think about what food you like, where you go to school, who you will see from your family and when, any help you need with your health and lots more. All this information is recorded on a special form so that the people looking after you know all about you. You can ask your social worker for a copy of the form as well.



# Foster Carers

Foster carers are ordinary people who have been trained and 'checked out' to make sure they can offer you a safe place to live. The sizes of foster carers' families vary just like the size of ordinary families do. The important thing is that they will treat you as one of the family.

## Foster Carers will:

- Make sure you are well looked after
- Respect, help and support you
- Listen to you
- Treat the information about you and your family confidentially
- Explain why they are asking certain things of you
- Support contact with your family when this is planned
- Enable you to follow your religion if you wish
- Attend meetings about you at school and with social workers
- Help you learn the skills you need when you grow older and leave care



## Meeting your foster family

Before going to meet your foster family you will receive an information sheet with photographs of the family and their house. The sheet will also describe who is in the family, if they have any pets and what sort of activities the family get involved in.

Your social worker will take you to the foster carer's home to meet everyone who lives there. You will be able to take your belongings with you and your social worker will make sure you have some proper luggage to put all your things in.

When you move in, your foster carer will show you around the house, show you where you will sleep and where you can put your things. The house may feel strange and different at first but your carers will help you to settle in. Every family has rules about what you can and cannot do, your foster family will explain what the rules are e.g. watching TV, staying up late, doing schoolwork etc. You will learn these rules slowly whilst you are living there and will be treated as part of the family.

### **Foster carers will:**

- Look after you
- Make sure you have food to eat
- Make sure you are safe and warm
- Get your breakfast in the morning and help you get ready for school
- Wash and iron your clothes
- Make sure you have your lunch or lunch money on school days
- When you are home they will be there to talk to you, watch television, and play with you

### **Foster carers will expect you to:**

- Show respect to everyone
- Join the family meals and activities
- Attend school regularly
- Stick to your coming in times
- Stick to the rules the family live by
- Respect the property of others
- Share your views



A number of meetings take place while you are in care. These are to make sure everyone is clear about what is going to happen to you. The information is put onto your care plan which includes information about your health, education, where you live, when you see your family and what happens when you leave care. The plan is checked regularly at review meetings which are run by an Independent Reviewing Officer.

**What happens while you are in foster care**



## Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

Your IRO is very important. They check your case and make sure your social worker and Coventry City Council are doing what they should. You should be told who your IRO is within seven days of being in care. You should have the same IRO throughout your time in care, but if your IRO leaves their job they should introduce you to the new IRO before they leave. Your IRO should talk to you before every review meeting to make sure you're happy and to check how things are going. Your IRO will make sure you get a copy of everything that was talked about at the review. Two weeks after the meeting you should have a written record of all the decisions that were made. You can contact your IRO at any time and not just before or after a review meeting. Your IRO's name and contact details are in the front of this booklet.



## Keeping Healthy

Your foster carer and social worker will make sure you get all the health and dental treatment you need. When you first come into care you will have a health assessment which is a check-up with a doctor. Then you will have health assessments once a year with the Looked After Children's Nurse (LAC Nurse).



# Your questions

## Will I have to change school?

The Fostering Service will try to make sure you can stay at your own school, if this is what you want, so that you can see your friends and carry on with the activities you enjoy. Sometimes this is not possible and your foster carer, social worker and teachers will help you to settle into a new school and make new friends.

## Will I see my family and friends?

Each child and young person's situation is looked at individually and your social worker will be able to explain what arrangements have been made for you. Many children and young people in foster care are still in touch with their families and friends; this may include you staying overnight or holidaying at friend's homes and them coming to visit you. Talk to your carer and social worker so they can check your care plan and help you to keep in touch.

## What happens if I am not happy with the foster family?

If you have lived with your foster family for a while and are not happy living there please let your social worker know. It can be a very difficult time leaving your own family, moving to a new house, perhaps changing school and missing your friends. Talking to your social worker will help you to sort out your feelings.

## Will I get pocket money?

You will be given pocket money and your carers will also be given money from Coventry City Council to pay for things like:

- Clothes and stuff for school
- Presents for your birthday, festivals or other special occasions
- Hobbies or interests you have





## Where can I get extra help?

Sometimes you want someone (other than your social worker or foster carer) who can give you advice, speak up for you in meetings, help you with complaints and understands what's going on. This person is called an **advocate**. You can find out how to contact them at the back of this booklet.

If you are feeling lonely, finding it hard to make friends or feel you are struggling with the situation you are in, then you can also have an **independent visitor**. The independent visitor will spend time with you and be a friend.

Or you could talk to your social worker about having a **mentor**. Your mentor is someone who will meet you every week to chat about things which are on your mind – like problems with homework or schoolwork or your friends. Or a mentor can help you find out more about sports, hobbies or out of school activities.

The Council's **LAC Mentoring Service** can find a mentor to help you. The service also organises events and activities for looked after children and young people. In the past they've done things like horse riding, snow boarding, bowling and archery.

In Coventry we also have a group called the **Voices of Care Council**. This is a group of young people in care who get together and give their views to staff at Coventry City Council about how to improve being in care. The group also get to go on some exciting trips and have lots of fun.

**Contact details for all these teams are in the Useful Contacts section at the end of this booklet.**

Don't forget your wishes and feelings must be taken into account when decisions are being made. This doesn't mean you will always get what you want but your social worker must explain what decisions have been made and how your wishes and feelings were considered.



Children and young people in foster care also have choice over the food they eat and are able to prepare their own meals, as long as this is done within fair rules the foster family have set. You also have choice about the clothes and personal things you need but remember this must be reasonable and fit in with the rules of the foster family.

### You have the right:

- To be treated with respect
- To receive praise and recognition for your achievements
- To be protected and kept safe
- To be listened to and consulted on plans or decisions made about you
- To have help in expressing your wishes and feelings
- To access health, education, and recreational activities
- To help so that you can keep in touch with all important people in your life unless it is not safe to do so
- To make a complaint
- To speak to an Advocate for advice and support
- To celebrate your birthday and special occasions
- To practise your religion

## What are my rights?



## How do I make a complaint?

If you feel you are not being treated properly then you should talk to someone you trust and feel comfortable with. **You could:**

- Talk to your foster carer, social worker or another adult you trust like a teacher. You can talk in private and they will be very discrete in sorting the problem out
- Talk about it at your next review
- Speak to an advocate

Or you can talk to the Children's Complaints Officer at Coventry City Council. His name is **Andrew Bell**.  
Telephone: 024 7683 3462  
e-mail: [andrew.bell@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.bell@coventry.gov.uk)  
Mobile: 07956 853969

# Coventry Pledge

Our pledge is based around six themes:

## Fit for life

- We will make sure you are cared for by people who can help keep you safe and healthy and can teach you to look after yourself
- As you grow older and are ready to move on, we will make sure you are prepared for life – including managing money, looking after your health, cooking healthy food and taking care of where you live

## Your views count

- We will listen to you, involve you in decision making and be honest about plans being made
- We will give you the opportunity to tell us what you think makes a good social worker, foster carer and residential worker
- Where possible we will give you a choice about where you live, for example living with other children/young people

## Safe and sound

- We will make sure you live in a safe and comfortable place, where you can have your own belongings and special things around you
- We will respond to your concerns about safety

## Investing in your future

- We will make more work experience and apprenticeships available for young people in care through city council connections
- We will make sure you have financial support and help with managing your money

## You can do it

- We will help you get a good quality education
- We will make sure you can participate in school activities and have the right equipment for school or college
- We will support you to try new leisure or cultural experiences and have a chance to follow a hobby

## Coventry cares about you

- We will make sure you know why you are in care
- We will give you the opportunity to have an independent visitor
- We will support you in your contact with family and friends
- We will make sure you have a significant adult taking an interest in your education and life

If you need this information in another format or language please contact the Participation Team.  
Telephone: 024 7683 4336  
e-mail: [voices@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:voices@coventry.gov.uk)



### **To get an Advocate or Independent Visitor:**

Barnardo's Coventry & Warwickshire Children's Rights Service  
Telephone: 024 7637 2596  
Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm  
If you can't speak to someone, leave a message on the answerphone and someone will call you back.

### **LAC Mentoring Team**

Coventry City Council,  
Civic Centre 2, Floor 3,  
Earl Street, Coventry CV1 5RS  
Telephone: 024 7683 3630  
Mobile: 07908 236146

### **Looked After Children's Nurse:**

2nd Floor River House  
Gulson Hospital, Gulson Road  
Coventry CV1 2HR  
Telephone: 024 7624 6311

### **Voices of Care Council**

Telephone: 024 7683 4336  
Mobile: 07904 395868  
e-mail: [voices@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:voices@coventry.gov.uk)  
[www.coventry.gov.uk/voices](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/voices)

### **OFSTED**

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street  
Manchester M1 2WD  
Telephone: 0300 123 1231  
e-mail: [enquires@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquires@ofsted.gov.uk)

### **11 Million**

11 Million is the organisation led by the Children's Commissioner. They make sure that adults in charge listen to children and young people.

Office of the Children's Commissioner, 33 Greycoat Street  
London SW1P 2QF  
Telephone: 020 7783 8330  
e-mail: [info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)  
[www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

### **Your Rights Your Say**

This team is led by the Children's Rights Director. It is their job to listen to what children and young people who live away from home have to say about how they are looked after.

Write to:  
Office of the Children's Rights Director  
Ofsted, Aviation House  
125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6SE  
Telephone: 0800 528 0731  
Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.  
[www.rights4me.org](http://www.rights4me.org)