

The Havering Children & Young People's Guide to **Fostering**

Are you
looked after
well?



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

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Hello and welcome to

Fostering

We hope this booklet will help you find out about us and the people who want to help you while you are being looked after. It tells you about us and who you can talk to if you are unhappy or if you have any questions.

If you want to know about anything that is not in this booklet you can ask your foster carers or your social worker or anyone from Children & Young People's Service.



What is Fostering?

Foster Carers look after children and young people who are unable to live at home with their parents or relatives. Sometimes it will be for a few days or weeks or sometimes longer.

Do you know how long you are going to stay with your foster carers? If you ask, we will tell you as much as we can.

Our Aim

Our aim is to keep you safe, listen to you and create the best opportunities for you.



Our Pledge

The London Borough of Havering has made a Pledge to all it's Looked after Children and Young People and the Children in Care Council and Corporate Parenting Panel to ensure that we listen to you and provide what is best for you.

As you probably know another word for a pledge is a promise. We agree with the Government that it's important for us to make clear to all our looked after children, their families and foster carers what we promise to do for them. We asked a lot of children and young people what they thought were the kind of promises we should be making and we have based this pledge on what we were told.

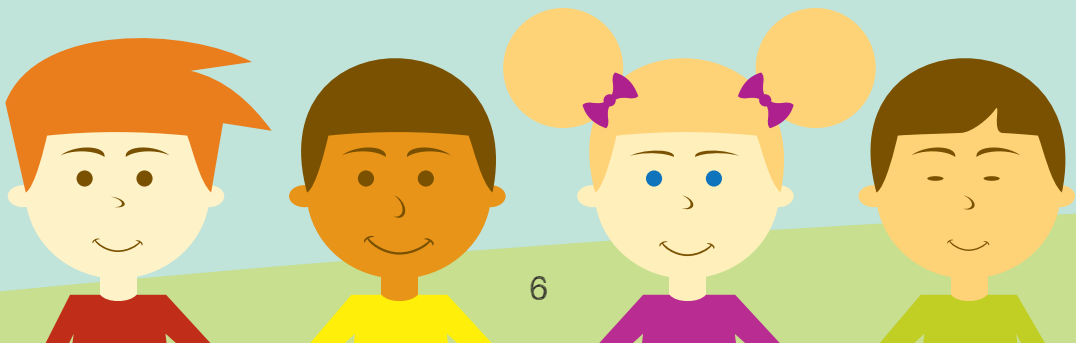
We will be doing this every year to make sure that we stay up to date with what our children and young people think and you'll see that's included as one of our promises.

If you think we're not keeping to our promises please talk to your foster carer or social worker.

The Havering Pledge for Children in Care

We promise...

- 1...to do all we can to look after you and keep you safe from harm
- 2...that you will have a qualified social worker and will know how to contact them in between their visits to see you
- 3...that you will have someone independent to chair your review meetings and who you will be able to talk to about what you want to be in your care plan
- 4...to care for you in a way that respects your family history, religion and culture
- 5...to do our very best to help you to live permanently with family, friends or foster carers in Havering as long as this will be what you need
- 6...that you will have a care plan, that you understand it and it is shared with you. This will include how to look after you in the best way that meets your needs and especially if you need things to help you communicate or manage a disability
- 7...you will have contact with your family, as long as this is what you and your family want, unless this will prevent you being cared for or puts you at risk
- 8...you will have full time educational provision and will support you with your studies
- 9...you will be provided with opportunities, support, advice if you decide to go into employment, training or further education
- 10...to help you find hobbies and activities that you enjoy
- 11...that we will help you to be fit and healthy and have the things that your doctor, dentist and optician say you need
- 12...to celebrate your achievements
- 13...to pay money into a savings account and help you look after you're most important possessions until you are an adult
- 14...to help you become a responsible, self reliant young adult well prepared to live independently
- 15...that you will know how to contact independent people if you're not happy or need advice or help
- 16...that we will use your views to help us improve our services and develop our pledge to you every year.



Your Foster Carers

Your foster carers want you to feel welcome. They will make sure you have things you need because they want the best for you.

What you call your foster carers is something you can talk to them about, they certainly won't expect you to call them mum or dad, but you can decide with them what works best.

Your Foster Carers are:

They live at:

Other people living in the household:

They have animals who are:



Your Social Worker

Your social worker is there to help you and answer your questions.

You will see your social worker quite often; at least once every 4 to 6 weeks and they will talk to you and they can be contacted if you need them.

If you want to see your social worker, talk to your foster carer and they will phone your social worker for you. You should also keep your social workers telephone number in a safe place so that you can phone them directly if you want to talk in private

The name of my Social Worker and their telephone number:

Your Independent Reviewing Officer

Your Independent Reviewing Officer is there to listen to you and answer your questions and ensure the social worker and other people are doing what they should for you.

You will see your IRO at your reviews which are held shortly after you become looked after, then after 3 months and then every 6 months. We try to give you the same IRO for all your reviews, so they get to know you.

You should keep your IRO's telephone number in a safe place so that you can phone them if you need to speak to them in private.



Your Foster Carer's Supervising Social Worker

Your foster carer's supervising social worker is there to help and support your foster carer and also ask you how you like your foster home.

You will probably see the supervising social worker quite often as they will visit your foster carer regularly. The supervising social worker will also talk to your social worker and to people concerned with your health and education

The name of my foster carers Supervising Social Worker and their telephone number:



When can I see my family again?

This is a very important question, but the answers are not the same for everyone. Your social worker will talk to you and your family about arrangements for you to see them. Your foster carers will help with this as much as they can. If possible, we will arrange for you and your family to visit the foster carers before the placements starts but this is not always possible, if we need to keep you safe.

Sometimes you might be able to see some of your family even if you can't see everyone at once. We do understand that you will want to keep in touch and your foster carers will let you phone

and have a visit whenever your social worker and your family say this is ok.

Sometimes people get upset if they can't see their family or if they don't know what plans are being made. Everyone understands that you want to know what plans are being made. We will try to find out what is happening as soon as we possibly can.

You can speak to your social worker and independent reviewing officer about what you want and who you want to see and about any concerns you have about seeing your family.



When can I go home?

Sometimes your parents have asked us to look after you while they sort out some problems. If you are one of these children, you can return home as soon as your parents are able to care for you.

For other children and young people, it has been a social services decision to make you a looked after child. If you are one of these children or young people, social services will need to ask the Court to help them decide if it is safe for you to return home.

Why can't I go home?

Some families have problems which prevent them from looking after their children.

This can be very upsetting and hard to understand. Please talk to your foster carer about how you feel and they will help to make sure that everyone involved in your care knows this as well.

Sometimes the Court and social services agree that children cannot return home if it is not safe and then decide what is best for you in the long term.



Did I do something wrong?

No.

All families suffer with stress at sometime and unfortunately your family has needed sometime to sort this out. It is important to remember that everyone has problems when they are growing up, not just children or young people living in care.

Children and young people often think that it is somehow their fault when things go wrong at home. Children are never to blame for the things that adults do (even if they think they have been naughty or badly behaved).

What is going to happen to me?

The plan is always to help you return to your family as soon as possible, as long as you are safe. Social workers will talk to you regularly to keep you informed of what is happening.

Within 4 weeks of coming into care there will be a meeting called a "review" to look at how you are. You will be asked for your views and invited and encouraged to attend. If you find it hard to talk with lots of adults in a room, you can either talk to someone called a "reviewing officer" on your own before the review, or you can ask for an "Advocate" to be there with you to

help put your views across.

The review is held to make sure that your Care Plan is working and to make any changes to it in order to help you overcome any difficulties you may be having.

They will invite people such as your teacher, health visitor, parents etc, to hear what they think about your care, but most important of all, they want to know what you think too.

You can ask your social worker for an advocate or Children Rights Officer, details are at the back of this booklet.

Will I be able to do anything I want?

Probably not.

Your foster carers have to promise to keep you safe. This means that they might not always let you do what you want to.

Everywhere has rules. There are rules about how we treat each other, rules about listening to each other, rules about keeping safe and taking care.

Sometime there are rules about not going in other people's rooms or about looking after the home. There could be rules like, no shoes in the lounge or running around at teatime. This is because these make things better for everyone. Older children will have rules about going out and what time they come in.

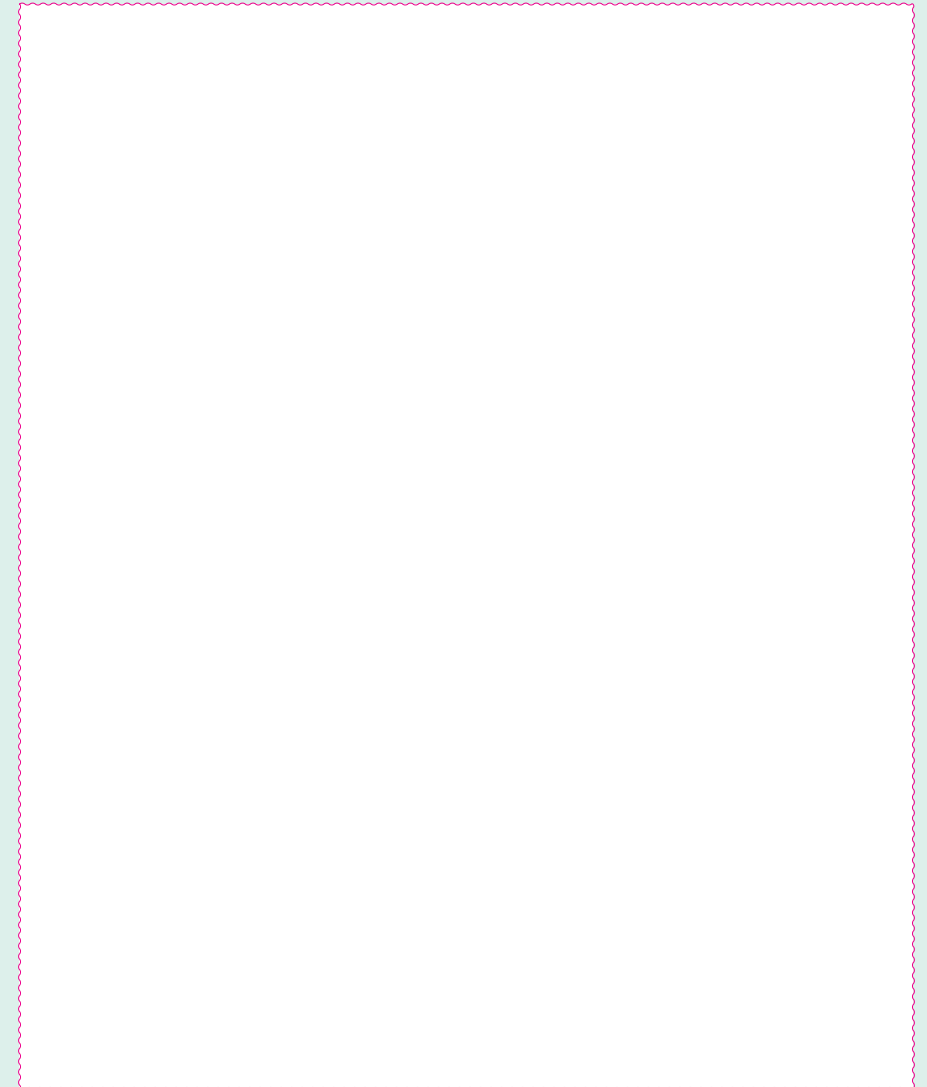
Having rules doesn't mean your foster carers don't want you to have fun, because they do. They just want to keep you safe as well.

What rules do your foster carers have?

What rules do your foster carers have?

You can write them down to help you remember

Household Rules:



Education

Foster carers and social services value education and school very highly, and as a result you will be expected to attend school or college and will be encouraged and supported with your studies and leisure activities.

Your foster carer will attend open evenings and social events at your school or college.

Virtual head teacher

We have a Virtual Head Teacher who is responsible for the education and attainment of all looked after children and young people. They will make sure you are in the right school, being supported to achieve and are happy.

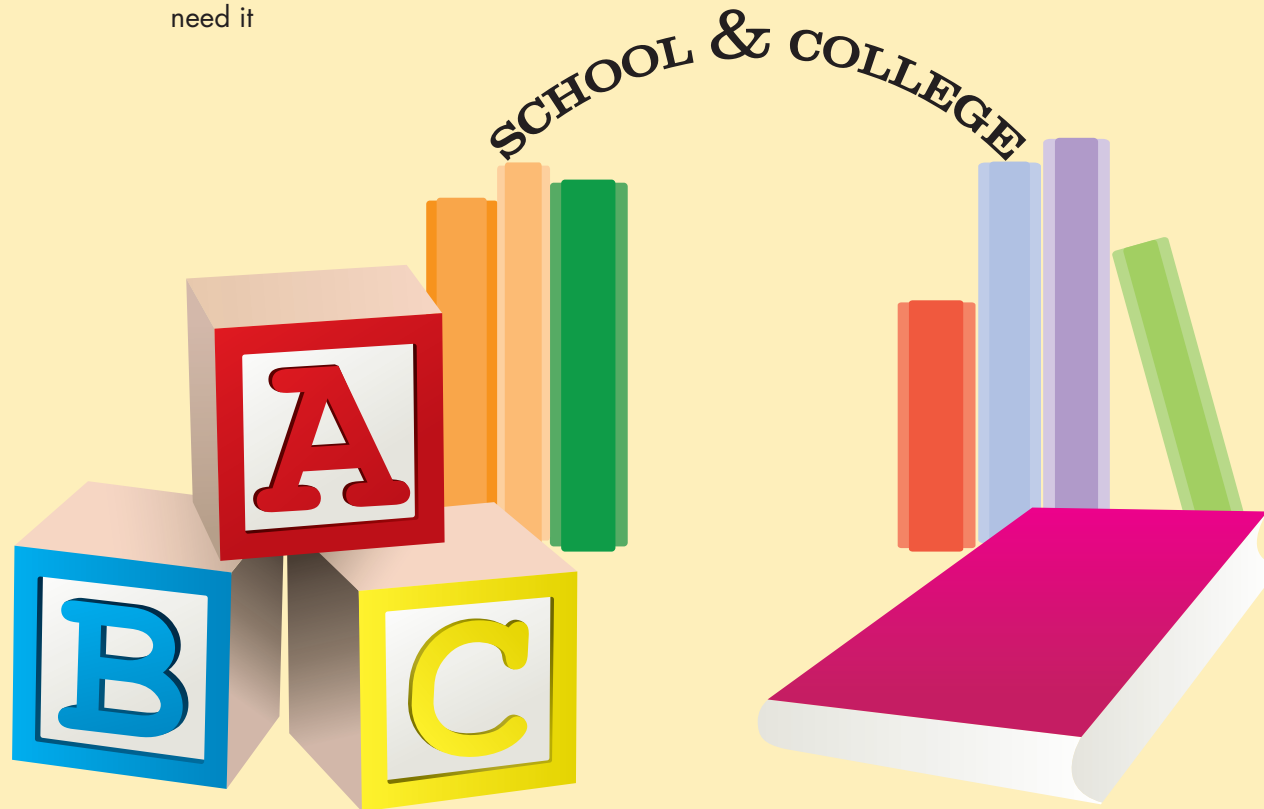
They will talk to your designated teacher at your school and will provide additional support if you need it

What about school?

If you are already in school or college, your teachers, social worker, virtual head teacher and foster carer will try to work out if it is best for you to move schools or stay at your old one. If you are in years 10 and 11 we would not move your school, so we do not disturb your studies leading up to your GCSE exams.

If you don't go to school at the moment we would look at the reasons and work out how to solve the problems, so that you can return to school. You might be pleased about this or you might not, but everyone needs an education.

If you haven't been at school for a while this could make you feel a bit nervous. We will help you with this. Remember, school isn't just about lessons; school can help you make new friends or give you the chance to take part in activities and school trips.



Health care

When living at your foster carer's house you will be encouraged to look after your personal hygiene. This will range from regular showers or baths to brushing your teeth, wearing clean clothes and eating healthy food.

Where possible we will try to continue with your own doctor. However, if you are living a long way from your family home, we

may need to change your doctor. If this is the case your foster carers will arrange another doctor for you.

Your eyesight and teeth are very important and you need to have regular checks. Your foster carer will make an eye and dentist appointments and attend with you. If you have to wear glasses foster carers will help you choose some fashionable frames.

Looked after children's nurse

We want you to be healthy. It is important to learn to take care of yourself and to get help or treatment if you are not well. Every year you can have a health check with your doctor or the

Looked After Children's Nurse to make sure you are fit and healthy.

Your foster carer can contact the Looked After Children's nurse if you would like a chat.



Smoking

Smoking is bad for your health and can present a fire risk. However, if you do smoke this will be discussed at your Placement Planning Meeting when you arrive at your foster home, so you understand what rules will apply to you smoking.

Help is available if you want to give up smoking, ask your foster carer.

Bullying

Bullying includes such things as: threats, name calling, pinching, hitting, pulling hair or other types of physical intimidation or action which deliberately upsets you.

If you feel that you are being bullied at school please talk to your teacher.

You can always speak to your foster carer or social worker about school or life in the foster home.

If you feel that you are being bullied, please tell your foster carer, teacher or social worker. They can be supportive and sensitive and there are other agencies that might be able to help or you can call Childline on: **0800 1111**



Food

Your foster carer will go shopping regularly, so you can ask for your favourite food and also help with the shopping if you wish.

You can have a drink when you choose, and eat when you are hungry, but remember to ask and say thank you. Please also think of others in the household.

If you have anything you are unable to eat due to personal preferences i.e. being a vegetarian, have allergies or on religious grounds, please let your foster carer and social worker know so they can get you the foods you can eat.



Pocket money/ allowances

You will receive pocket money or an allowance; the amount will be according to your age and agreed between you, your foster carer and social worker.

Your foster carer will also put away savings for you for the time you reach independence or return home. How this is spent or given to you will be discussed with you, your foster carer and social worker.

Within the fostering allowance your foster carer receives is an element for clothing, and activities the amount changes according to your age. As you reach independence you will become more responsible for buying your own clothing and toiletries and paying for your leisure activities, with the support of your foster carer and social worker

Activities and holidays

General leisure activities within and outside the foster home will be encouraged, arranged and supported by your foster carer.

If you have any interests or hobbies or are a member of a club i.e. judo, swimming, dancing, football etc. These will be supported and encouraged.

Holidays are encouraged to be taken with your foster carer and they **MUST NOT** be taken in school term time. Support is available for school trips.

Speak to your foster carer and social worker if you want to do an activity.



Bed times

These will be dependent on your age and circumstances (if it is a school night or weekend/holiday) This needs to be discussed with your foster carer.

Going out/coming in times

Depending on your age you may have to be supervised when going out on an activity. However, foster carers always need to know where you are going, who with and what time you intend to return. This is for your own protection and to keep you safe. You will need to discuss this with your foster carer and social worker.

Sleep-overs

We encourage children and young people in care to develop friendships and have the same experiences as any other child, without putting too many rules and regulations in the way. If you have been invited to a sleepover at friends, tell your foster carer in good time, they will need to know where you are going to stay and the telephone number, so they can check the arrangements with your friends parents just like any other parent would do.

Bedrooms

When living in your foster carer's house, you will be given your own bedroom, unless you are sharing with a sibling. You will be responsible for helping to keep your own room tidy.

You can use your bedroom to be on your own and have your own space and personal possessions. However, there will still be times when foster carers will need to go in your room. Before entering, foster carers will knock on the door. You should not go into other people's bedrooms.

Music and Television in bedrooms need to be kept at a level which does not disturb other people. Computers/Lap Tops/Mobile Phones are not encouraged to be used in bedrooms, especially late at night, this will need to be discussed with your foster carer and social worker. This is to keep you safe and for the foster carer to ensure you are accessing appropriate sites according to your age and getting enough sleep.

What happens if you do something wrong?

During your stay in foster care it may be necessary to use some form of consequences due to bad behaviour.

This may take the form of grounding, telling off, stopping leisure activities, taking away privileges, having additional household chores or sanctions i.e. payment from your pocket money or allowance for deliberate damage to the home or household items.

It is not acceptable for you to physically attack or verbally threaten foster carers or members of the household, as this could lead to serious consequences for yourself.

Foster carers are not allowed to use physical punishments but if you are putting yourself or others at risk of harm they may use restraint until you calm down.

If you are not happy

Dealing with your worries, your foster carer will not mind if you tell them about your worries or concerns.

If you would rather talk to someone else you can contact your social worker or any of the fostering team or your reviewing officer.

You can also ask to speak to the Children's Right Officer who is not part of social services

If you have any worries that you do not want to talk about with your foster carers or the social workers, or want to make a complaint, you can contact the Service Manager for Children's Care & Support Services or the Children's Social Care Complaints Department or email: social_services_complaints@haverling.gov.uk



Who can help you?

The Children's Rights Officer
01708 554694

Havering's Children in
Care Council (Deciphers)
01708 724127

Service Manager Children
in Care & Support Services
01708 431523

Social Worker

Foster Carer

Independent Social Worker

Supervising Social Worker

Other ways to get help

Childline
0800 1111

Voice of the Child in Care
0808 8005792

NSPCC
0808 800 5000

Ofsted are the people who inspect fostering services to make sure we are looking after children properly. If you think we are not doing our best for you, they will listen to you and try to help

Their address is:
Ofsted
Royal Exchange Buildings
St. Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA
01904 545 000

This guide was produced with the help of "Deciphers" Havering's Children in Care Council