

A GUIDE TO FOSTER CARE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE






Age 11 Years Plus (London)



OUTLINE













This handbook gives you information on foster care and living with your carers. Sunbeam has been caring for children for over 15 years and we work very hard to ensure that the young people in our care:

-  Receive full support
-  Feel happy
-  Needs are met and exceeded
-  Feel positive
-  Achieve independence and develop their education and future



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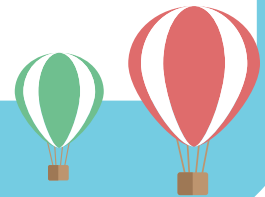




WHAT IS FOSTERING?

If you are new into foster care you may be feeling confused and unsure of what is happening to you.

Fostering is a way of providing a stable family life for children and young people who are unable to live with their own families or other relatives.



THERE ARE 3 MAIN TYPES OF FOSTER PLACEMENTS WITH SUNBEAM

1 EMERGENCY/RESPITE

This is for a very short time maybe a few days or weeks, this is usually for children who need to take some time out from their home. Social services will find them a family who they can stay with for a short time.

2 LONG – TERM OR PERMANENCY

This is when a child or young person is placed with a foster family for a long time, usually for a number of years or until they have grown up and reached independence.

3 SHORT – TERM FOSTERING

This is when a child or young person is in care for a short term period, this can be for a few weeks or sometimes longer.





You will have your own social worker who works for the local authority. This social worker oversees your care and welfare. You should get to know your social worker so they can support you through your time in foster care, tell them what you want or do not want, what you like and what you want to happen.

YOUR REVIEWS

- You should try to attend your review meetings, the meeting is all about **YOU**.
- At your review there will be an **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)**.
- They will speak to you and take your views and feelings into account. Be open and honest – that way everyone will know exactly what you want to happen.





Who is an independent reviewing officer?

An independent reviewing officer (also known as an IRO) makes sure that your care plan meets your needs.

They will do this by, chairing your review, letting you have your own say in your review; and by following up agreed actions to make sure that people actually do what they agreed to do.

These are your reviews, and it is very important that you make sure that the IRO knows how you feel and what you would want to happen.

The IRO also makes sure that the local authority knows when it is not doing well enough as a “corporate parent” for children in its care. IROs will also tell local authorities about where things are going particularly well for children.

TEN important things to know about IROs

01. If you are in care (or “looked after”) the local authority must appoint an IRO for you
02. Your IRO chairs your case reviews.
03. If you have brothers and/or sisters in care they too will have the same IRO as you do.
04. You should know who your IRO is and how to make contact with him/her.
05. You should keep the same IRO for the whole time that you are in care.
06. If you are a parent yourself of a child who is also in care, you both will have the same IRO but in some situations you may have a different IRO.
07. You should be given written information explaining the role of the IRO, and telling you what you can do if things decided at your review are not carried out.
08. If your IRO leaves (perhaps to go to another job or retire) they must introduce you to your new IRO.
09. Apart from your first week in care, you should never be without an IRO.
10. Your IRO should meet with you in person before your first review.

How to contact an IRO?

Your social worker or the Agency’s supervising social worker can provide this information to you. You can also take your IRO’s contact details when you meet him/her at your first review.



Sunbeam is 'Driven by Children's Needs'. This means that all our staff work hard to ensure that the children placed with our foster carers are happy and well cared for.

Your Foster Carers will have a supervising social worker who is available to offer them advice, support and to ensure that the care they are providing you is of a very high standard.

The supervising social worker may want to speak with you from time to time on their visits to find out how you are – you can talk to them, they are there to help.

About Sunbeam

Sunbeam is an Independent Fostering Agency established in 2000, we currently have over 300 foster carers in and around London and in the Midlands.

We value your views and feelings as our priority.





Your Family

- Your social worker will ensure that your family or anyone important to you know how you are and that you are safe.
- You may have contact with members of your family, it is important to remember that this has been arranged by your social worker and you should tell them how you feel about the contact you have.
- Your Foster Carers should support you in attending contact, you should discuss your feelings and emotions with them so they can continue to offer you their support and make sure that your social worker is aware of how you are feeling.
- Depending on your age and situation you maybe able to choose who and when you can have contact. Discuss this with your Foster Carers and Social Worker so everyone is aware of what is happening, where you are and who you are with.



Your Friends

- **Can I see my friends?**

Yes – just because you are in Foster Care does not mean that your friendships have to suffer. You may find that your friends are a good support to you.

- **Can my friends stay over and can I stay over at their houses?**

This depends on when and where, you should discuss this with your foster carer and social worker to ensure that it is an appropriate time (not a school night etc).

- **Am I allowed out?**

Of course, as long as your foster carer knows and agrees to this, where you are, what you are doing and with whom. It is the foster carer's job to keep you safe so sometimes they may feel it is better for you to stay at home.

- **Try to work with your foster carers, tell them who your friends are and what you like doing when you are out on your own. Try to keep to agreed times to come home and communicate.**



● Moving In

Your foster carers will welcome you into your new home, you should feel safe. They will understand that you may need some space or time on your own to settle in and they will be supportive of this. Remember that it will be important for them to know that you are happy in their home and that they are providing you with the things that you need and like.

Something's will take time to get used to and everyone will have to change a small part of their own routine, it is about working together and talking things through.

● Your bedroom

Your bedroom should be warm and welcoming, it should have space for you to store your clothes and other personal belongings.

● Remember

Although this is your space you should still take care of it. Keep it clean and tidy and take pride in having a nice place to relax.

● House Rules






We encourage our Foster Carers to have some house rules for everyone in the home. These will be things like, what time you return home, knocking on doors, speaking to each other respectfully etc. Your foster carers will discuss these with you and you can express your views and feelings. Everything should be open to discussion but you should respect your foster family's views as they will respect yours.

● What if I am not happy with something?

If there is something which you are not happy about and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with your carer you can speak to your social worker or the Sunbeam Social Worker. Sunbeam will ask you to complete feedback forms from time to time – be honest, we will keep them confidential and we WILL read them and take action where needed.



The foster carer charter states that children in foster care deserve to experience as full a family life as possible as part of a loving foster family. It also states that children and young people should be given support to develop their own identities and aspirations, fulfil their potential, and be listened to.

-  You have the right to be listened to.
-  You have the right to voice your opinions - attend your reviews this is the best place to make sure you get heard.
-  You have the right to be kept safe
-  You have the right to receive pocket money and a clothing allowance.
-  You have the right to know why you are in care.

Check out the Children's Commissioner's website for more information:

www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk





We must make sure that all children and young people have a school/college place. If you do not have one then your social worker and foster carers will be working hard to find a place in a school for you.

Education is important and moving into foster care can be disruptive for you but you must try to maintain a strong attitude towards your education.

Your teacher will know that you are looked after and you can speak to them also about any issues or things which are upsetting you. A teacher or a member of staff from your school may also attend your review.

You should get as much help as possible to help you achieve your long term plans, this may be to study at college or university or an apprenticeship, whatever your plans are if you do not feel supported then make sure you raise your concerns. Aim high and stay motivated!



You may be asked to see a doctor when you are placed with your foster family, this is to make sure that you are healthy. This is called a Health Assessment and you will be asked to have this once a year.

Your foster carers have to register you with a GP, Optician and Dentist, you may have lots of appointments to attend when you move to your new foster home, it will benefit you to ensure that you are healthy and being well cared for.

+ EAT WELL

Your Foster carers will provide you with a healthy and balanced diet. There may be some foods you have not eaten before – TRY THEM, you may like them. There are lots of benefits of eating healthy, you stay in shape, sleep better and have more energy.

+ EXERCISE

Exercise is very important and your foster carers will encourage you to exercise. This could be by joining a club, gym or group (like football, swimming or karate), or by walking to school, having a kick around in the park or riding your bike.

Try to find an activity you can do after school – playing computer games does not count!







COMPLAINTS






If you are upset or feel that something is not right for you, you can talk to Sunbeam. It is important for us to hear your concerns so we can address them and ensure that you are happy and supported in your foster family. You will not be blamed for making a complaint, you should always feel supported by the people caring for you and your feedback will help us to ensure that you receive the care you need and that we can improve our service for other children and young people.

If you have a complaint or have any concerns, you can contact our Complaints Officer **Alison Lamb - Interim Registered Manager & Complaints Officer / Designated Safeguarding Officer** by phone on **0208 799 0930** or in writing to:

 **Sunbeam Fostering Agency**
Sunbeam House,
12 Waterside Drive,
Langley, SL3 6EZ
 duty@Sunbeamfostering.com

Any complaint or concern you make will be taken seriously, you will be listened to and the complaint or concern will be investigated appropriately

There are other people who can help or who can help you to make a complaint if you need to.

-  **Your Local Authority Social Worker**
-  **Your teacher**
-  **Your foster carer**
-  **The Sunbeam Social Worker**
-  **Ofsted**

Please see the next page for contact details



Sunbeam Fostering Agency Complaints Officer



Alison Lamb

0208 799 0930

duty@Sunbeamfostering.com

The Office of the Children's Commissioner

Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London, SW1P 3BT
0800 528 0731
advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

OFSTED

PICCADILY GATE, STORE STREET
MANCHESTER, M1 2WD
0300 123 1231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

✿ **NSPCC HELPLINE** : 0808 800 5000

✿ **CHILDLINE** : 0800 1111

✿ **VOICE FOR THE CHILD IN CARE** : 0808 800 5792

✿ **Advice & Advocacy Service For Children (NYAS)** : 0808 808 1001

Useful websites

www.thewhocarestrust.org

www.kidshealth.org

www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Young Person's Handbook

Confirmation of Receipt

● Your Name : _____

● I have read my Handbook

YES NO

● Did you find the Handbook useful?

YES NO

● Do you understand your rights and allowances?

YES NO

● Do you Understand how to make a complaint if needed

YES NO

● Do you have any questions?

Please return this page to the Sunbeam Supervising Social Worker