

Coming into care guide



Young people looked after have put together this guide to answer questions you may have about being in care. We hope you find it helpful.





What is Foster care?

● Foster care is where you are moved from your family home where you live and move into another home with another family who will care for you and look after you for a short or long term stay depending on your circumstances.

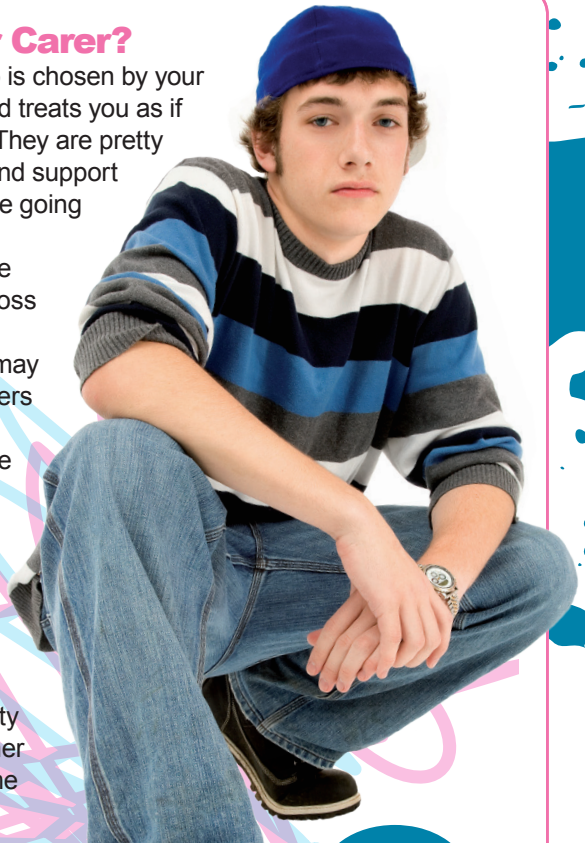


What is a Foster Carer?

● A Foster Carer is a person who is chosen by your local authority to look after you and treats you as if you are a member of their family. They are pretty normal people who want to help and support children and young people who are going through difficult times.

There are many different people who are foster carers who live across Cumbria. They all have different backgrounds, cultures and some may have children of their own and others may not.

A foster family will never replace the family that you already have, but they will be there for you and will look after and care for you as if you were one of their own children. You will be asked your views on whether to still see your own family and, if you have been there a long time or there are safety reasons you may be asked whether you wish to use a different surname (perhaps the foster carers').



Did you know?



As a child in care you are entitled to an advocate service (NYAS) to help and support with complaints or any aspects of your care.



Different types of care

● Foster care doesn't mean that you have to be fostered forever, and there are many different types of care placements that a child or young person may have:

- **Emergency** - Foster carers who provide a home placement for children or young person looked after at short notice but for limited time only.
- **Respite** - respite care means a foster carer will care for children for a short time. This is normally on a regular basis to give foster carers and young people a time out/break.
- **Short term** - means you go into foster care and stay with a foster family for a short period of time.
- **Long term** - is when you go into foster care and live with a foster family for a long time when it is not possible for you to live with your parents in the near future.
- **Kinship Foster care** - this is where a child or young person goes into foster care and lives with family or friends who become foster carers so they can look after you. This means you won't have to live with people you don't know.
- **Adoption** - is where a young child or baby will be moved and looked after by another family who then become the child's legal parents with the same rights and responsibilities as if the child was born to them.
- **Residential Care Home** - Are also known as a children's home and these homes ensure support and care to meet the children's needs when they cannot live with their family but also would find it too hard to live in a foster family.
- **Homestays** - Homestays is for young people aged 16-24 who are education, training or employment they are able to stay with a Homestays provider who will support them 7-10 hours a week.

Stay Put is an opportunity for young person in a placement with a foster carer to remain there post eighteen until they are 21.
- **Residential Schools/independent schools** - are schools that specialise in the education and care of children and young people who can't be at home and also have educational problems. They provide support and therapy services when needed. These are usually boarding schools (where pupils stay overnight).

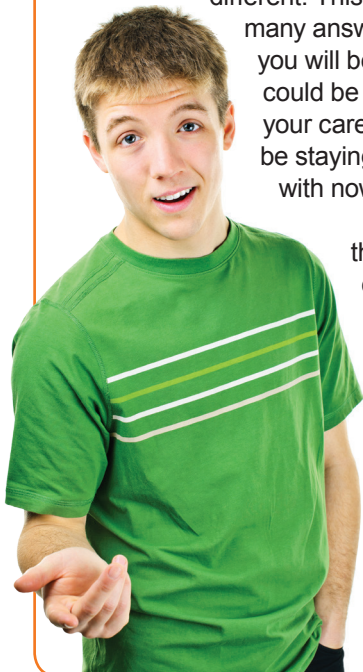


Did you know?



What may happen next?

● This question is very hard to answer, and this is because the situation for each child or young person is different. This answer can be varied to many answers, meaning it could be that you will be moved placements, or it could be that you stay long term with your carers, and could mean you will be staying with the foster carer you're with now for a while.



Each situation to decide the next stage for each child or young person involves long discussions over what happens next, to then find ways to see what the best outcome is for that child or young person. You can expect that you will be spoken to as part of all of this.

Decisions can't always be what every person thinks is the best outcome, but it just depends on the current situation and whether or not it is safe and right for you.

You will have something called a Care Plan written with your Social Worker. This is a set of written statements saying how you will be cared for, where you will live, who will look after you and when and how often you should see your family.



Will I get my things back?

● You will be able to take your belongings with you to your new foster home? Depending on the amount of space you may have in your foster home this will have to be discussed with your Carer.

You can wear your own clothes and take your own belongings to your foster home. You will never be made to wear different clothes as a punishment.





Will I get to see my parents again?

● This question is hard to answer, but the realistic answer to this is both Yes and No. This is because it depends on whether it's a safe environment for you to be in. So Yes you could possibly see them if you wanted this, but this would have to be a question to ask your social worker.



Privacy/Confidentiality

● It is our duty to ensure that all children and young people who are in Care are looked after the best way possible.

Each child or young person situation is different to others. So, for some, extra things might need to be done to protect a child or young person's confidentiality. Confidentiality is making sure that certain things about you and your situation are not passed onto people who don't need to know.

One thing that can be a big thing whilst in care, is having your photo taken, and this is to hide your identity as sometimes this is the safest way possible, to ensure you are well looked after.



How much pocket money will I get each week?

- 0-4 years old £2.00
- 5-10 year old £5.00
- 11-15 year old £9.00
- 16-17 year old £12.00





What to say to people at school?

● This is a situation that would be discussed prior to you attending your school/ new school, and this would be a discussion that your foster carer would probably have, allowing the right staff at school to know, so that they're aware of your current situation.

It is however up to you as to what you say to your new friends, and what you tell your teachers, but this is a stage that will continually develop, which will allow you to trust certain people so that you can tell them some things that you feel comfortable with saying.

Telling your whole story is however something that never has to arise to your school friends, or people out of school. This is something that should be mentioned to your carer or social worker first, if you feel it's best for you to tell someone at school or a friend.

Remember your story is special to you, and that it's you that has come this far, so it's a decision that only you can make, but yes, it is a special story to tell someone one day if you wish.



Did you know?

As a child or young person looked after you will always have an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).



What might it be like being in foster care?

A personal account by Harvey McCaffrey

● **Harvey says:** “My experience of being in Care is obviously different to the experience of someone else who has been or is in care, but I can only base it on how it was for me.

“My experience of being in care was not bad at all. Things weren’t always straight forward there were some hard and some difficult times but having people around me to, give me advice, supporting me along the way, and giving me a shoulder to cry on, is what every young person should have whilst growing up.

“Giving a personal perspective I always look at things being harder than they actually are and that the foster carers I was placed with supported me when times were tough.

“Your Foster carer will support you, giving you advice and help identify areas that you may need support with along the way.

“Every young person has a mind of their own, and even though they’re looked after, this shouldn’t stop them having a Voice, and to be heard.”

Harvey McCaffrey



**Have
your voice
heard!**



Something about the Children in Care Council

CiCC stands for Children in Care Council. The CiCC is a youth council which is made up of Children and Young People who are in care who meet up regularly. They discuss issues and problems that affect children and young people in care and talk to people such as corporate parents (these are County Councillors who have a particular interest in making sure children in care are properly cared for and listened to), and senior managers to get their ideas across to help make all children and young people's experience of care a better one.

The CiCC is a way for young people to communicate with other young people, who are in care, share their experiences and work together to promote the voice of children and young people in care.

'I like being in the CiCC as I get to meet new people and go to new places.'

'I am a new member of the CiCC and have only been involved for a few months, but I have gained lots of confidence, met new people and tried new things.'

So if you are a child or young person in care who is interested and would like to know about the local CiCC group why don't you get in touch with:

- **For Allerdale and Copeland:** Rebecca Barnes
Tel: **07770 938021**
Email: **rebecca.barnes@cumbria.gov.uk**
- **For Carlisle and Eden:** Liz Wright
Tel: **07825 340475**
Email: **liz.wright@cumbria.gov.uk**
- **For Barrow and SouthLakes:** Joanne Gawne
Tel: **07825263452**
Email: **joanne.gawne@cumbria.gov.uk**



Other important stuff

When you come into care you may meet people or be visited by them and you may think ‘I have no idea who they are, or what their job is all about, why they are here and how can they help me’? Don’t worry, as the following information will answer some of those questions for you and may help you to understand who these people are and what they do.



What is an advocate?

This is an independent person who can give you advice about your rights and represent you (speak for you) at case reviews or if you have a complaint. All looked after children and care leavers are allowed an advocate if they need one.



What is an Advocate service?

An information and advice service which is provided to children, young people and vulnerable adults. The service also provides a legal representation to help and support children and young people with their rights and entitlements.



What is a Social Worker?

This is the person who is from the local authority and works with you and your family. You will probably have had a social worker working with your family for a while before you came into care. When you first go into care, they should spend time making sure you are settled in and will visit to make sure that you are happy with the way you are being cared for. You can phone your social worker and ask them to visit you (inbetween their regular visits) if you need to talk to them about something.



What is a Social Worker Fostering (SWF)?

This is the social worker for your foster carers and will visit regularly to support and supervise them. The SWF will also get to know you and is another person you are encouraged to speak to about how you feel your foster placement is going.



What is an IRO?

This is a very important person for looked after children, so it's good for you to be clear about what they do and how they are supposed to help you.

The most important thing to know is that your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is in charge of monitoring your case. They have to make sure the local authority is doing what it is supposed to do for you while you're in care, make sure your placement is right for you and that you are happy. This is different from the job of your social worker.



What is a Designated Nurse Children Looked After?

This is a nurse who has the responsibility to understand and meet the health care needs for looked-after children and young people. They also can help by providing a supporting service straight to you.



What is a Designated Teacher?

This is the teacher at your school who has particular responsibility for children who are looked after (although they may not be one of your actual teachers). He or she will know a bit about your situation, although they may not know personal things about your family background and why you are looked after. They will talk to your social worker regularly about how you are getting on at school. Although you may not mind people knowing that you're in care, your designated teacher should not tell other pupils that you are, or treat you differently in front of them.



What is a Virtual Head?

Your virtual school head teacher is the person in charge of education for children in care in your area. They are 'virtual' because they aren't based at a particular school - they visit all of them and sometimes have other virtual teachers helping them. They call and visit designated teachers in actual schools, making sure everything is being done for young people there. Simple!

Even if your placement means you move outside your local authority, your virtual school won't change.



Who are corporate parents?

Corporate parents are people (Councillors) who are elected for different parts of Cumbria on the Cumbria County Council it's their responsibility to make sure children in care are properly cared for and listened to.



Reminders to challenge service providers

It is very important that when social work staff are planning and supervising the care of children and young people they always remember to think about what is in the best interests of the safety and welfare of children in care and ask them what they think and want. Children and young people should talk often to their social workers and carers and will usually feel listened to and respected. However, if they are not happy, they should tell them. If they do this but still feel the same, they can get someone else to listen to their complaint (see later).



What is NYAS?

NYAS stands for National Youth Advocacy Service which provides specialist legal advice and assistance. NYAS is a legal aid agency provider for family law.

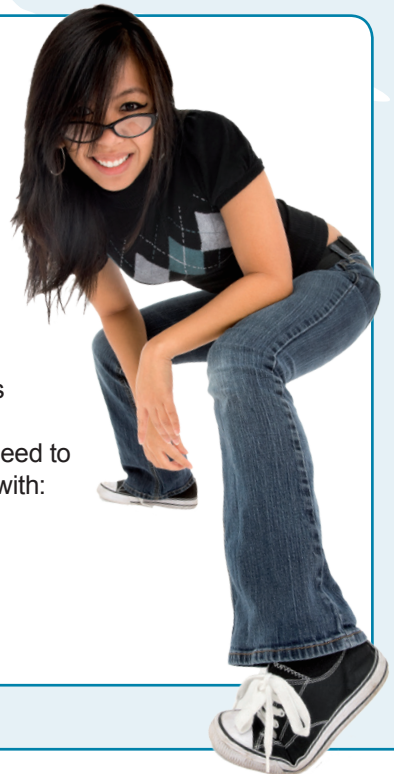
Through these services NYAS provides a safety net for children, young people and vulnerable adults, who have nowhere else to turn. We work within communities across the UK, with children, with young people, with adults, and with carers, local authorities and professionals such as social workers and lawyers.

If you are interested in having an advocate or need to talk to someone about you rights you cancontact with:

- **NYAS**

Email: help@nyas.net

Tel: **0300 330 3131**



If you are not happy about something you can always make a complaint.

If you have a complaint you can talk to someone that you already work with like a social worker or foster carer.

If you don't want to talk to them you can make your complaint straight to the Complaints Team in writing, by email, by phone or by text. If you want, the Complaints Team can put you in touch with an advocate (someone who can help you make your complaint). The Complaints Team will pass your complaint to someone who will try to sort things out for you.

If you don't think your complaint has been sorted out, get back in touch with the Complaints Team and we can ask someone independent to look into it.

How to complain

Write to:

- Information Governance Team
Cumbria County Council
Cumbria House
117 Botchergate
Carlisle
CA1 1RD

Email: **complaints@cumbria.gov.uk**

Phone: **01228 221234**

who cares trust?

Trust is a voice and a champion for children and young people in the UK living in care. They believe that every child in care should receive the support, encouragement and opportunities they need to enjoy their life and to achieve. They have a brilliant website for children and young people. Check it out at **thewhocarestrust.org.uk**



Did you know?

You have the right to see your files. This means information that has been written about you such as Children's Services files from when you came into care of the local authority.





Did you know?

You are entitled to £1,200 bursary if you fancy staying in full time education and you are aged 16-19 but you are entitled to £2,000 if you are going to university.

If you require this document in another format (eg CD, audio cassette, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone

আপনি যদি এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে **01900 706375** নম্বরে টেলিফোন করুন।

如果您希望通过母语了解此信息, **01900 706375**
请致电

**Jeigu norétumėte gauti šią informaciją savo kalba,
skambinkite telefonu 01900 706375**

**W celu uzyskania informacji w Państwa języku proszę
zatelefonować pod numer 01900 706375**

**Se quiser aceder a esta informação na sua língua,
telefone para o 01900 706375**

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