The Young Person’s Guide to Fostering

Section two:
Some more stuff you need to know
1. Review meetings

What are they?
Review meetings are important! They are set up to make sure that your needs are being met and so you can have your say! Reviews are mainly to make sure you are safe where you are and to look at changing some things if that would make you happier. In other words, Review meetings help sort out things.

Who might be in the meeting?
You; your foster carer(s); your social worker; your parents; someone from your school. It is chaired by an independent reviewing officer (This means someone who makes sure the meeting goes well and who isn’t on anyone’s side). Your parents might be there and also an advocate if you want this.

There should be a child care review one month after your placement starts, then in another three months, and then every six months. Dates may vary to make sure everyone can attend.

You can ask for your review out of school time if you do not want to miss school and it should be held somewhere you feel comfortable & safe.

Your views
Sometimes it’s hard to say how you feel in front of everyone. Your social worker should meet with you before each review meeting to listen to your wishes and feelings. You should have a chance to fill in a review form which will help you think through what you want to say. You have the right to an advocate who will help to make sure your wishes and feelings are heard at the meeting. The independent reviewing officer may meet with you outside of the review meeting.

Notes from your meeting
Reviews are written up and you should have a copy of the notes. If you have not got these ask your foster carer.

Other meetings:
There will also be education reviews at your school or college and an annual medical review.

Although review meetings may make decisions that make you happy, angry, sad or confused you should always have someone to talk to and to explain things to you. (Advocate; Foster Carer; Social Worker)

Try not to bottle up your thoughts - make sure your voice is heard!
At all the meetings you are involved in and meetings with your foster carers and social worker, we will always check out that you feel you are doing as well as you can, are happy and achieving in your life in and outside of school or college.
2. Your files

Your social worker keeps a file containing information about you, and Action for Children has information about you that we have received from your social worker and others working with you such as your school. We also hold records that we and your foster carer have written.

We keep the information so that:

- We know your needs and can work out how best to support you and your carers.
- If someone working with you leaves or goes on holiday, other people can continue their work more easily.
- Others can check our work and be sure that you are being properly cared for.

Reading your file

You have the right to see what we have written about you unless there is a very good reason why this may be harmful to you. If you want to see the records then you should ask your carers or your social worker or Action for Children social worker. If you want to see information in our records written about you by other people such as your social worker, doctors, health workers, then we need to ask for their agreement.

Your local authority social services will also hold other records about you and you will need to ask your local authority social worker if you wish to see the local authority file.

Some of the information may not be available to you until you are over 18 years. We keep your records safely locked away and only those working with you have access to them. We would need to get your permission to show them to anyone else. We will keep your records until you are 75 years old. You may wish to see them in the future and can ask to do so through any Action for Children regional office. We will always ensure your confidentiality.
3. Safeguarding

Safeguarding’ is what we call our responsibility to make sure you are safe and well.

Action for Children has a responsibility to make sure that all young people living in foster families are safe and not being abused or hurt in any way by anybody.

If you do not feel safe, or are being hurt, or something is happening that you don’t like and don’t want and can’t stop, you should talk to an adult who has responsibility for you. This includes: your social worker, the Action for Children social worker, foster carer or teacher. They should give you time and listen seriously to what you are saying and they will do something about it. If they don’t, talk to somebody else who you trust and who will act to make sure you are safe.

Remember, whatever anyone says, no one has the right to hurt you in any way.

You are not to blame and it’s not your fault. You won’t get into trouble, so speak out and get help!

You can find names, addresses and phone numbers of people who will help in ‘The young people’s guide to fostering Section 1 – What you need to know first of all’

Going missing

Going missing means that you go away from where you are meant to be without permission and don’t tell people where you are or who you are with. We take it very seriously if you are missing as we want to make sure you are safe and well. We will take immediate steps to find you. We will then talk to you so we can find out the reason for you going missing and to check if anything is troubling you and, if there is, try to put this right.

If things aren’t right

Don’t suffer in silence

Talk to someone

They can help you sort it out

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They can help you sort it out
If you are unhappy about anything it is important that you talk to someone about it. It doesn't matter how big or small the problem, someone needs to know about it. This is not about trying to cause trouble for anyone but about having your voice heard and everyone trying to sort out the problem quickly.

If you are not satisfied after talking things through or you find talking hard, you can write your complaint down on the leaflet enclosed with this guide and send it to Action for Children or your own social worker.

If you want to talk to somebody completely separate you can contact your advocate, Voice or Childline, the Children’s Commissioner’s office or Ofsted who are there to make sure that looked after children are cared for safely and properly.

An advocate is someone who does not work for Action for Children or for Children’s Services. They are skilled at listening to children and young people and their job is to help you make your voice heard and make sure your views are listened to.

These are the people you can talk to or write to:

1. Talk to your foster carers
2. Talk to a teacher who you get on well with
3. Talk to your own social worker
4. Talk to the Action for Children social worker
5. Talk to the Action for Children complaints officer
6. Talk to Voice or Childline or the NSPCC
7. Talk to the Children’s Commissioner
8. Talk to the Chief Inspector Ofsted
9. Your advocate

Find the names, numbers and addresses in ‘The young people’s guide to fostering Section 1 – What you need to know first of all’.
It is important to us to know what you think of our foster care agency and what else you want from it. We need to know your views and wishes to help us plan and improve our services in the future.

Your foster carers’ Action for Children social worker will be asking for your views at your foster carers’ annual review. This could be a good time to tell us what you think of our service, but you can talk to your carers’ Action for Children social worker at any time, or ask your foster carer or social worker to pass on your comments to us.

We hold events such as Christmas parties, pantomimes, summer barbecues and outings where you can meet and talk to the team. We will invite you to events where you can have fun, be involved in an activity and give us your views on what it is like living in foster care. We recently held a circus skills workshop for young people who gave us ideas about other new and exciting activities and trips they would like to be involved in.

We also run activities and groups for young people such as music workshops, film making, sports and outdoor activities, where you can meet other young people as well as the team at your local Action for Children Fostering Service. We will be making contact with you to let you know more about these and hope you can join us!

Helping us to recruit staff and carers

You may wish to be involved in the recruitment of staff and carers. This happens in different ways such as sitting on an interview panel, welcoming candidates or helping design questions to ask new staff and carers. We offer you support and guidance so that you feel confident to be involved. We listen to your ideas on other ways for you to contribute to making sure we have the right staff and carers to meet children and young peoples’ needs.