

My guide to living with a foster family



This guide belongs
to



Messages from other kids with foster families

Michael - age 9

– I remember feeling scared, angry, anxious. The door opened and a dog jumped up to me and licked my cheek. That was Duke. A lady asked did I want anything to eat and drink. I was feeling very tired, had a bath and went to bed. My carers made me feel very welcome. Didn't know why I was so scared. It felt a bit weird at first but I soon settled in and I am doing lots of activities I never got to do before, and eating lots of healthy food (but still don't like peas). So I know it feels strange at first going into care, but there are lots of people to support you and you can talk to your foster carers 'cause they are there to help and support you. I do! Don't be worried. Don't be scared."

Kimberly - age 12

"When I first was going to my carers' house I felt worried, nervous, and a bit excited. My Social Worker talked me through it and made me feel a bit better. When I got there, the carer had a big smile on their face, which made me feel happier. I don't know what I was expecting but they were nicer than what I was expecting. They made me feel welcome, showed me around the house and my bedroom, and the next day I went out and made new friends. I am glad to be here now."



David - age 9

"You may think that foster caring sounds bad. You don't have to be worried because you get love and care. If you are worried, tell your foster carers and Social Workers. My foster carers helped me settle in by talking about my problems and telling me what foster caring is about and that helped. When I went to foster care, I felt safe and cared for and the last few months I have been happy because I had a lovely family. Sometimes there is a LAC review, that's all about how to make you happy"

What's in this booklet?

Hi there! This booklet is yours and it tells you about fostering. On this page you can see all the different things you can find out. To find something, look at the number next to it. Then find the page with that number in the bottom right. If you ever have any questions, you can always ask your foster family or social worker.

If you need this guide in a different language or format, it's no problem at all. Just let your foster family or social worker know.

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What is Fostering?

Who are we?

Parallel Parents is a fostering agency which offers care to children and young people in a foster family, if they are unable to live at home. We've been doing this for over 25 years. At the moment, we're taking care of about 190 children and young people living with foster families in the North, North West, Yorkshire, East Midlands and West Midlands areas of England.

What does that mean?

We know there's lots of unfamiliar words that you might hear and read. If the word is in green, you will find a definition in a bubble like this.

What do we do?

We've written something called a 'Statement of Purpose'. This explains in detail what we do. You can ask to see a copy of it if you like, but this Children's Guide is a good summary of it.

We want to help you to sort out any problems you might have and to make sure you have every chance to achieve your dreams. All of us have plans for the future. We all have things we want to achieve and do when we're older. Together, we can work out what those are and help you plan them.

Things you want are put into Your Plan. To make the plan work out, we will work with your Social Worker and we'll try to work with your family or other people important to you.

Parallel Parents is registered by an organisation called Ofsted who inspect us every three years to make sure we are doing our job properly.

What is Fostering?

Reviews

Every six months or so, we'll meet with you to see how things are going and maybe look at your Plan. We call this meeting a review.

This is your meeting and is very important, but you shouldn't ever worry about it. If you ever feel uncomfortable in the meeting, just let us know and we can help you to get your point across and express your views.

What does that mean?

Local Authority - This is just the local government in your area. They look after lots of different things within your community so we work lots with them.

Your Social Workers

Social workers are the people who understand your family background and know what you have been through. You will have two. One from the **Local Authority** and one from Parallel Parents. Both of your social workers care about you and want to help you, and you can always speak to them about anything. But what's the difference, and why are there two?

Local Authority Social Worker

Your Local Authority Social Worker will:

- Visit you and your foster family
- Help out with your plans
- Sort out seeing your family if possible
- Support you if you are unhappy about anything and find out information for you
- Sometimes look at your bedroom (only if you're there!)

Parallel Parents Social Worker

Your Parallel Parents Social Worker will:

- Help your foster family look after you
- Visit you quite often and work with your other social worker if you're unhappy about anything.
- Speak to you in private and sign a form. It's nothing to worry about, it's just to make sure you're okay.
- Make sure you feel listened to.
- Sometimes look at your bedroom (only if you're there!)

My Social Workers

Contacting your Social Workers

Use this page to write down the names of your Social Workers and their telephone numbers. They're always happy to talk to you about anything.

Your foster family can help you to talk to them if you need.

My Local Authority Social Worker is called:

Their telephone number is:

My Parallel Parents Social Worker is called:

Their telephone numbers is:



My foster family



Who lives with a foster family?

Sometimes your family can't look after you as well as they want to. There could be lots of different reasons why. They might not be very well, so are finding it hard to look after you. Your foster family is helping by looking after you instead. They will take good care of you and try to help you feel happy, and give you opportunities to follow your dreams.

How long will I stay?

You will be told by your social worker how long you will stay with your foster family. It is different for every child and young person. Sometimes it is a long stay, and sometimes it is a short one. You can always ask your foster family to find out anything you want to know.

Who are my foster family?

There are lots of different foster families! They are all different ages, cultures and have different backgrounds. Some have children or pets and some don't. Sometimes a foster family will have one foster parent, others have two.

Every foster family is **assessed** to make sure they're going to look after you properly, keep you safe, and importantly, treat you fairly and with respect.

Your foster family want to help you and make you feel happy. They are there to help with any problems you might have.

What does that mean?

Assessed - This means that your foster parents have been asked lots of questions to make sure that they are the right sort of person to look after you.

Living with a foster family

What happens when I arrive?

Firstly, you'll meet everyone who lives at the house and you will get a tour! You will see where you will be sleeping and where you can put your things.

You might talk to your foster family about what kinds of food you like. You can ask them any questions too!

Together you can make a list of your clothes and precious things so that nothing gets lost.



Will I get my own room?

Your bedroom is your own personal space. Your foster family will expect you to look after it. Sometimes brothers and sisters will share a room, but only if your social worker thinks that's ok.

Your foster family may check your room, but will ask you if you want to be there.

You will never be asked to share a room with anyone apart from your brother or sister

What about bedtime?

It's up to you and your foster family to work out bedtimes and coming in times. Your foster family and social worker will talk to you about reasonable times.



Seeing friends and family



When can I see my family and friends?

We're going to do our best to help you keep seeing the people who are important to you. We know your family and friends mean a lot.

You can make free phone calls to your parents or guardians, solicitor or Social Worker, as long as your foster family agrees. You can talk on the phone alone without anyone else listening.

You can talk to your foster family about making calls to your friends or other members of your family.

Visiting my family

Your foster family might help to sort out meeting your family. Your Social Worker will also help to decide if it's ok to see them. Sometimes when you see your family, a Social Worker will be there too. Your Social Worker can tell you more about this.

You might also like to use the Internet to talk to your family, on things like Facebook or Snapchat. Your foster family and Social Worker can discuss using these with you.



My day to day life

Am I allowed a mobile phone?

You are allowed to have a phone if you are old enough, but only if you use it properly. You can talk about rules with your foster family, but here are some things you should not do.

You should not use it in lessons, do bad things, or commit crimes. You should not use it to take any photos that would worry your foster family, your Social Worker, or the police.

You can talk to your social worker if you think the rules around your phone aren't fair. Don't forget that phones can be bad for your health.



Can I see my friends and have sleepovers?

It is great to make friends! If you would like to have friends over, you just need to make sure they have their parents or guardians permission. You can also go and see your friends as long as your foster parents say it's ok.

Sleepovers have to be agreed with your social worker too.

Can I choose what to eat?

Make sure your foster family knows what foods you really like or don't like. It's important that everyone knows if there are things you can't eat. You can be involved in shopping for food if you like. We try to make sure everyone has a healthy and balanced diet.



My day to day life



Will I get new clothes?

You can choose your own clothes if you like, and get £15 per week to spend. You can sometimes earn extra spends as a reward for effort. If you'd like to choose your own clothes, your foster parents might want to come with you.

Staying healthy

It's very important to us and your foster family that you stay healthy. If you need to go to the doctors then your foster family will help. You will get a check up at your local doctors. You'll also go to the dentist every six months, and to let an optician check your eyes every year. Everyone should have these check ups to stay healthy!

Your foster family will help you to eat healthy foods and do exercise. It's important to stay clean too, by doing things like brushing your teeth twice a day.

Will I get treats?

You can get treats by behaving well. Maybe you will get extra pocket money or a special treat from your foster family. We'll keep track of your rewards, so that we can see how you are doing and see if you need help with anything.



Pocket money and savings

How much pocket money will I get?

It depends on how old you are. These are the normal amounts:

10 years old: £4

11 years old: £5

12 years old: £6

13 years old: £7

Your Local Authority might ask us to give you a different amount, but it will always be at least the amount you can see here.



Behaviour and savings

Sometimes you might need to sign something to say you have been given your pocket money. If you owe any money, like to pay for any damage, it will be taken from your weekly spends.

If you didn't behave well during the week, you might not get your full amount of pocket money. Any money you don't get will go into a **savings account**. If you don't think this is fair, you can talk to your Social Worker about it.

Some money is placed into a savings amount for you each week. The amount is however much less than £10 you get.

What does that mean?

Savings account - This is a special kind of bank account meant for saving up money. The idea is to put in money over time and let it build up. Then you have some money when you need it.

Celebrations, activities, and behaviour



Celebrations and activities

Your foster family should buy you presents for your birthday and Christmas, or any other celebrations you take part in.

If there's any activities you'd like to do, like sports or other clubs then your foster family can pay for this too, up to £15 per week. You can talk to your foster family and together you can find an activity that you would like to do. If you're not sure what you like, you can always just try something new!

Poor behaviour

When you don't behave well, there will be consequences from your foster carer. This could be doing extra housework or missing out on a planned treat. The consequences can be agreed between you, your foster family, and your Social Worker.

If you refuse the consequences, we could have a discussion to see whether we can help.

We're all going to work together to help you behave well.



School, drugs, and alcohol

Will I still go to school?

We will try our hardest to make sure you can keep going to the same school as before. We know how difficult it can be to change schools. Normally you won't have to change schools. Going to school is very important. You learn lots of things that you need to know later on in life. You can also make lots of friends and try different activities.

If you can't go to school, we'll work with your Social Worker to sort out another way to get your learning in. It will include the proper lessons you'd get at school and maybe some trips and activities, like going to a museum. This would only be while we sorted out getting you to school.

Drugs & Alcohol

You're not allowed to have any alcohol or illegal drugs. If your foster family thinks there might be drugs in the house, they can ask the police to come and have a look. In an emergency, to protect you, they may have to check if you have any but will always try to contact your Social Worker and/or the police first. You should never let yourself be talked into using drugs or alcohol. If you think this could happen, please talk to your foster family or Social Worker. There are also some useful phone numbers at the back of this guide that you can call if you are worried about drugs or alcohol. You can phone them if you are worried about you or someone else. Remember that it is also illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to buy tobacco products (cigarettes).

Unacceptable behaviour



We expect others to treat you with respect, so we expect you to treat others with the same respect. You will be challenged if we think that your behaviour or language is not acceptable, especially if we feel that it is racist or sexist. If you damage things or attack another person, or hurt yourself, it may be necessary to stop you (but we will follow certain rules if we do this). In some cases, we may even have to hold you. We can also call the police. The cost of any damage to things could be taken away from your pocket money. If you attack anyone, your stay with your foster family could end and we will have to call an emergency meeting with your Social Worker and family.

Bullying

Bullying can be very frightening, intimidating, and difficult to deal with; we do not accept bullying behaviour and will do everything we can to stop it. You must feel safe and able to speak about your experiences to a grown up you trust. Bullying means doing things which can make you miserable and unhappy. Bullying can be spoken, so things like name calling, teasing, intimidating or threatening. Bullying can also be physical, so things like pushing, tripping, punching, kicking, taking or breaking your possessions.



If you feel like you are being bullied or know someone who is being bullied, please tell someone – your foster family, Foster Care Development Worker, teacher or Social Worker etc. If you don't feel comfortable talking to any of the grown ups,, you can always call the useful telephone numbers in the back of the guide.

Don't suffer in silence!

Running away or going 'missing'

Sometimes young people run away from their home, or go somewhere without telling the grown ups where they are. Sometimes, young people just want to see their friends or family and might go out without getting permission from their foster family first. It is very important that your foster family knows where you are all the time, so that they know you are safe. If they don't know where you are and can't get in touch with you, they might have to report you as 'missing' or 'absent' to the police and your Local Authority. Even if you are just late somewhere, it is very important that you try your best to tell your foster family, or the police might have to start looking for you.



If you are thinking of running away from your foster home, try to talk to somebody about it first. Maybe you could talk to your foster family, Social Worker, Support Worker or teacher or even a friend. Sometimes, we can do things to make you feel happier or arrange for you to have more contact with family and friends. If there is a reason you want to run away, please talk to us and we can work with you to try to fix it. There are some useful phone numbers at the back of this guide for organisations you can call for more information or advice about this.

Rules

House rules

Everyone in your foster family tries hard to...

- Sit together at meal times
- Keep their own rooms tidy. Your foster family can help you keep your room tidy
- Choose not to use bad words
- Knock on bedroom doors and wait until the person inside says its ok to come in
- Be fully clothed at all times, like wearing dressing gowns on top of their PJs
- Give hugs and affection only when you say it's ok. It's okay if you don't want a hug, and your foster family will understand.

Rules to keep you safe

- No smoking inside the house
- Your foster parents' bedroom is out of bounds and they will only come into yours if you say it's okay.
- TV and Internet use is checked by your foster family to make sure you are looking at things which are appropriate for your age
- Locks are used on the bathroom door when someone is using the room.

Charter of rights for young people



While I am being cared for, I have the right...

- To a reliable grown up who can be trusted to care for me
- To be accepted for who I am. My name, my family, my religion, my race, my culture, my beliefs, my sex and my age will be accepted. I will be respected as a person
- To expect the grown ups looking after me to be kind and understanding, and to be fair and honest with me
- To have appropriate boundaries and controls of my behaviour.

- To live in a place where I will be looked after and given good health care, appropriate education and other opportunities to develop my skills and interests.
- To have enough time and space to myself, and to have some privacy
- To know how to complain if things go wrong and to have my complaint heard and dealt with

- Know about my family and the reasons why I am being fostered
- Know how long my foster stay is supposed to last
- To have a say in what happens to me and be involved in making decisions and plans for my life, which are based on what I need and my experiences.
- To see my personal file. To see it, I need to ask my Support Worker or Social Worker. I know there are some things I might not be able to look at.

Parallel Parents has also adopted the Government's Foster Carers' Charter. This explains what fostering services, foster families and Local Authorities have promised to do to make sure children come first. Your foster family should have a copy of it.

Having your say



The Children in Care Council

This is a group of children and young people who are looked after by the Local Authority, who meet up with important managers of the Council. The Government says that every Local Authority must have a Children in Care Council.

They talk about things that are important to children and young people and help make plans with the Local Authority about looking after children. The young people involved get to have a say in big decisions the Council makes which could affect them.

Lots of Children in Care Councils have their own website, which can tell you what the Council is doing and how to get involved. You need to make sure you find the right one for the Local Authority that looks after you. If you can't find the right website, you can ask your Local Authority Social Worker or Independent Reviewing Officer about joining. Sometimes, you have to be a certain age to join.



Sometimes, we will write to you to see if there is anything we can do to make Parallel Parents better. If you need some help to say how you are feeling, we will always do our best to help you share how you feel.

Therapy and help

We are going to do our best to try and make sure that you are properly looked after during your stay and that nothing happens to you that is wrong or unfair. A Support Worker will come and visit you and your carer at least every 3 weeks. They will speak to you alone at least every six weeks and give you the chance to mention any worries. They will also ask you to sign a form to show that this has happened. We want you to tell us if there is something wrong with your room or food, or anything like that. We also want to know if anybody at all is saying or doing things to you that are wrong or make you feel bad or angry. It could be your foster family, Social Workers, other young people, or anyone else.

People of all ages sometimes need some extra help to deal with the things that have happened in their life. Parallel Parents has trained counsellors and therapists who can talk to you and help you if you need.

We also hope that you can feel safe to tell someone if there is something that happened to you in the past, that you now think is wrong or is worrying you. If there is anything wrong, you should speak to your foster family. If you do not feel comfortable speaking to them then you should tell your Social Worker or Support Worker who will try to sort it out. If they can not sort it on their own, they may have to tell somebody else to come and see you. Some things are too important to keep secret so, once you tell us, we have to tell others. Anyone we tell will only be trying to help. It is their job to help with problems and they have helped lots of young people in the past. Sometimes, after talking with you, we may think that only by telling your Local Authority can the problem be sorted out, and together we can talk to them.

Getting help and complaining



Whenever you like, you can ask to speak to a Senior Manager/the Responsible Individual or someone you trust in your social services department. There are also some phone numbers in this booklet that you can call for help and advice. You can safely talk to these people - you don't even have to tell them your name if you don't want to. You will also get a copy of our complaints policy and form with a pre-paid envelope, which you can use at any time. Sometimes, we will write to you as well, to check that you are happy and to see whether you think there is anything we can do to make Parallel Parents better.

You have a right to say if there is something you do not like! There is always something to dislike and most things can be sorted out. If it is something serious that really is bothering or upsetting you, or you do not think it is fair, you should contact your Social Worker or Support Worker, who will help to put your complaint in writing to the Responsible Individual, who will then have a look and usually reply to you within 28 days. You can also contact Ofsted if your complaint is serious. You can call them on 0300 123 1231



If you're unhappy about having to go to bed at a certain time or things like that, you should talk about it with your foster family or social worker. If you really do not want to talk to your foster carer, Support Worker or Social Worker, we can arrange for you to see someone called an independent advocate. This person has nothing to do with us or Social Services and will only be interested in doing what's best for you! Speak to your Social Worker if you would like them to arrange this service for you. There are also contact details for some advocacy organisations at the end of this guide.

My contacts

Your contacts

On this page you can write down any important names, phone numbers, addresses and things like that. On the next pages you can find lots of useful phone numbers and websites for lots of different kinds of help if you would like it.

People involved in my fostering

My Parallel Parents Social Worker is called:

I can call them with this number:

My Parallel Parents Support Worker is:

I can call them with this number:

My Local Authority Social Worker is:

I can call them with this number:

My Independent Reviewing Officer is:

I can call them with this number:

My Leaving Care Worker is:

I can call them with this number:

My contacts

Parallel Parents

We are Parallel Parents, a fostering agency. You can contact the Responsible Individual or the Complaints/Quality Department. You can contact the Responsible Individual about any complaint or problem.

Email: qualityadmin@caretodayparallelpajrents.net

Call: 0800 0234441

Text (start message with the word 'talk'): 80818

Website: www.parallelpajrents.com

Address: The Responsible Individual,
Parallel Parents, 2nd Floor Lansdowne House
85 Buxton Road, Stockport, SK2 6LR



Ofsted

Ofsted are the people who make sure we are doing our job properly. You can contact the chief inspector Amanda Spielman or the Parallel Parents Inspector Sarah Oldham.

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Call: 0300 123 1231

Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

Address: Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate, Store Street
Manchester, M1 2WD

The Children's Commissioner

The Children's Commissioner is called Dame Rachel de Souza. She promotes the views and interests of children and young people in England

Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Call: 020 7783 8330

Website: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Address: Children's Commissioner for England
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT



My contacts

Domestic abuse and assault support

Rape Crisis

They can give you advice and support following incidents of rape or indecent assault.

Email: rcewinfo@rapecrisis.org.uk

Call: 0808 800 9999

Website: www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Address: Rape Crisis England & Wales,
Suite E4, Josephs Well,
Hanover Walk,
Leeds, LS3 1AB.



Victim Support

Victim Support is the independent charity which helps people cope with the effects of crime. They provide free and confidential support and information to help you deal with your experience. They have a web chat as well as a way to request support through their website.

Email: supportline@victimsupport.org.uk

Call: 0845 3030 900

Website: www.victimsupport.org.uk

Domestic Abuse Support

Visit this site for lots of links to other services and organisations who can offer advice and support on domestic violence, sex and relationships and sexuality.

Website: www.thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk

Drugs and Alcohol help

Talk to Frank

Talk to Frank is a website and phone helpline who can give you advice, information and support if you are concerned about drugs or other substance misuse, whether it's you, your friends, your foster family, or your family. They have a chat you can use from 2pm - 6pm on their website.

Email: frank@talktofrank.com

Call: 0300 123 6600

Text: 82111

Website: www.talktofrank.com



My contacts

Drinkline

Drinkline can give you information and self-help material if you're worried about your own drinking, support to the family and friends of people who are drinking and advice on how to get help.

Call: 0300 1231110



Other useful resources for alcohol issues

www.alcoholconcern.org.uk - They offer lots of information about alcohol

www.drinkaware.co.uk - Supports people in reducing their drinking, as well as offering lots of information and advice.

Advocacy Services (helping you be heard)

NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Services)

They are about standing up for children and young people's rights, making sure their voices are heard and that they get the help and support they need.

Call: 0808 808 1001

Email: help@nyas.net

Website: www.nyas.net

Coram Voice

They can help you to get your voice heard, tell you about your rights, give you the support you need through their advocates and work with you to improve the care system.

Email: info@coramvoice.org.uk

Call: 020 7833 5792

Website: <https://coramvoice.org.uk/contact-us/>

Address: Coram Voice, Coram Campus,
41 Brunswick Square, London WC1N 1AZ



My contacts

Other information and support for young people

The Become Charity

They help young people to make sense of the care system when they are in it, and to understand their options and support them when it's time to leave. They have a contact form on their website.

Email: advice@becomecharity.org.uk

Call: 0800 023 2033

Website: www.becomecharity.org.uk

Address: Become Charity, PO Box 151

Mailboxes Clapham Junction

264 Lavender Hill, SW11 1LJ



Welfare and Support Services for Young People

Childline

Childline is a free and confidential 24-hour helpline for children in distress or danger. Trained volunteer counsellors can talk to you, help, and protect you. There is a chat and forum on their website, as well as lots of help, games and tools.

Call: 0800 1111

Website: <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

They aim is to protect children from cruelty, support vulnerable families, campaign for changes to the law and raise awareness about abuse.

Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Call: 0808 800 5000

Text: 88858

Website: www.nspcc.org.uk

The Mix

The Mix is a free, confidential helpline for people under the age of 25. They can help put you in touch with the services you need, and provide support for your problems. They have a chat on their website. There's also a contact form on their website.

Call: 0808 808 4994

Text: you can text THEMIX to 85258 if you are experiencing painful emotion or crisis

Website: <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Address: The Mix, 209 City Road, London EC1V 1JN

My contacts

Samaritans

The Samaritans can give you confidential (just between you and them), no-judgement support. They will answer the phone to talk with you any time of the day or night you like. Look at their website for all the ways to get in touch.

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Call: 116 123

Address: Freepost SAMARITANS LETTERS

Runaway Helpline

They give advice to children or young people who are thinking about running away from home.

Call or text: 116 000

Website: www.runawayhelpline.org.uk

Phoning someone in an emergency (reverse charge)

0800 Reverse

If you run out of credit on your mobile phone, but need to phone somebody in an emergency, you can make a reverse charge call, which means that the person you are phoning will have to pay for the call. Dial 0800-r-e-v-e-r-s-e (0800 738 377). Then dial the number of the person you want to phone. Record your name, so the person you are calling will know it's you. Wait for them to answer.

Information and support for asylum seeking young people

Protecting Children and Families Across Borders (CFAB)

CFAB is a charity which helps to look after young people who have been separated from their family because of trafficking, migration, abduction or other things.

Email: info@cfab.org.uk

Call: 020 7735 8941

Website: www.cfab.org.uk

Address: Lower Ground Floor, 136 Buckingham Palace Road,
London, SW1W 9SA

Information about LGBTQ+ rights

Stonewall is an organisation who stand up for LGBTQ+ rights and have lots of information and support.

Call: 0800 0502020

Email: info@stonewall.org.uk

Website: www.stonewall.org.uk/



Your booklet

This booklet is yours to keep. We hope that it has answered some of your questions and helped you feel better about staying with a foster family. Please remember that you can always ask your foster family and Social Workers any questions you'd like.



Staying with a foster family is not a bad thing and it is not your fault. There are so many different reasons why you might have to stay with a foster family - lots of people just like you have done it before, including some famous celebrities like Cher and John Lennon!



Appendix (Extra bits of info)

This last section contains extra bits of information that is for grown-ups. You are welcome to read it if you like, but it might be a bit boring!

Who are we?

Parallel Parents is an Independent Fostering Agency that is inspected by Ofsted. The Agency was established in 1994 and currently has over 170 approved fostering households that provide needs-led family placements to children and young people. All of our foster carers are appropriately trained and are supervised by experienced Social Workers. We do not function in exactly the same ways as Local Authorities, but we do work in close partnership with them. Ofsted awarded Parallel Parents an 'Outstanding' inspection rating in 2010; this means that the children and young people our foster carers look after have achieved, and continue to achieve, excellent outcomes.

Why have I received this booklet?

This leaflet may have been given to you by a child/young person you know – perhaps your son or daughter – or one of the professionals involved in the care or development of that child. You may, yourself, be one of those professionals: a school teacher, counsellor etc.

Our first priority is making sure that the children and young people we look after receive the best possible care, are happy and safe, and go on to achieve their full potential. Therefore, it is very important to us and our foster carers to work in partnership with you, and other people who are significant to each child and young person. The purpose of this booklet is to give you a little bit of information about Parallel Parents – what we do, how to contact us and so on.

How to contact us or provide feedback

There are a number of ways to contact the Agency if you have questions or would like some information. The best person for you to speak to (apart from the Local Authority Social Worker) is probably the Supervising Social Worker, because they will know all about the child/young person and the foster family they are living with. However, you can also send an email to admin@caretoday.co.uk, which will go directly to our Head Office. There are various other ways in which children and young people can get in touch at any time of the day or night. We are happy to receive feedback, both positive and negative, at any time, as this helps us to improve our service to the children and young people we look after. If you would like to give some feedback on any aspect of our service or a specific placement, please email admin@caretoday.co.uk and mark your message for the attention of the Quality Team. The Local Authority Social Worker may also ask you about your views of the placement so that they can be included in the foster carer's annual review.

How to find further information

Several documents and resources are available on request.

- Statement of Purpose
- Ofsted Inspection Report
- Complaints and Representations Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Child Protection Guidelines
- Foster Carers' Charter

If you would like a copy of any of these documents, please email your details to admin@caretoday.co.uk and mark your email for the attention of the Quality Team. You may also like to look on the Local Authority website for further information, but please note that the Local Authority which looks after the child/young person may not be the same as the Local Authority in which the fostering household lives.

What to do if a child or young person has run away

Young people who are looked after are three times more likely to go missing than young people who are not looked after. One of the most common reasons for children and young people to abscond from their foster placements is so that they can go and see family and friends. We do our best to promote contact with families wherever possible, but this must be done safely. If our foster carers do not know the whereabouts of the child or young person they are looking after, they are required to report them missing to the Police, and this can be distressing for everyone involved. Therefore, if the child/young person whose name is on this leaflet comes to see you unexpectedly, it is very important that you contact somebody – preferably the foster carer – to let them know.

Our Records

We are required to keep various records about the children and young people we have looked after, including foster carers' records, case notes, outcomes monitoring forms etc. Usually, when a young person is discharged from Parallel Parents, all of these documents are returned to the Local Authority that is responsible for the young person, but we do keep copies. Any information held is kept confidential and is completely secure. If you would like information about these records or how to access them, please contact the relevant Local Authority first, and they will make any necessary arrangements.

What our Young People have to say

'Well, [foster carer] is a really good carer. She looks after me properly, she treats me well and she treats us like a family. She's a nice mum, she helps me out with stuff and she's just a good person.' 'I have learned to save my pocket money and buy nice things; to eat healthy food. I haven't been ill in two years that I've been in care. I've learned manners. 100% attendance for two years at school. HAPPY!' We process some of your data on behalf of the Local Authority (this means that we hold some information about you). You are allowed to ask to see this information

A little bit of fun!

Can you help
Miss Rabbit
make her way
through the
maze?

