

Young Person's Guide

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Welcome to Ascent Fostering Agency

Ascent is an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) that supports children who have been placed in the care system.

This guide has been created to help answer any questions you may have about being in a foster home.

It will help explain how your foster carer and Ascent will care for you and what support you can expect.



What does Ascent do?

At Ascent, we aim to provide loving, supportive foster families for children who come into care for the first time or were fostered previously. Our dedicated fostering team consists of Supervising Social Workers, Mentors, and a Therapeutic Team, all working together to ensure you receive the care and support you need.

Our Supervising Social Workers are here to support your foster carers and their family, helping them understand your unique needs.

They also offer a safe space for you to talk and are in regular contact with other professionals in your network, like your Social Worker or your teacher to make sure everyone is working together for you.

Our Mentors organise fun activities and run a Youth Council during the school holidays, so you can connect with other young people. They also offer one-on-one sessions to help you develop your talents, explore your hobbies, and build important independence skills.

The Therapeutic Team is here to support you and your foster family with any concerns, fears, or worries. Their goal is to ensure you feel safe, understood, and supported at all times.

What is Foster Care?

Foster carers look after children and young people who, like you, cannot live at home. Your Social Worker would have discussed with you and your family the reasons why you have come into care. Our foster carers look after children on a short-term or long-term basis. Ascent provides foster carers with support and training to help them understand what's going on and they have been assessed to make sure that they can offer you a safe place to live and grow.

We understand that you may experience many different feelings and emotions such as being anxious, upset, angry, confused, bored, or just sad.

That's OK and it's normal to feel lots of different emotions. Your foster carers and the team at Ascent are here to support you and we are committed to providing you with the best possible care, help you to find out what you would like to achieve and support you to reach your full potential.



Is it my fault?

No, it is never your fault, you are a child.

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

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

Why can't I go home?

Sometimes, parents have asked the Local Authority to look after their children while they sort out their difficulties and their problems. If you are one of these children, you can return home as soon as your parents can care for you.

Some families have very difficult situations which prevent them from looking after their children or the Local Authority may be worried about a child's safety and well-being. Where this is the case, your Social Worker who represents your Local Authority will go to Court to speak to a Judge. This can take time whilst the adults around you make the best decision for your future. All this can be very upsetting and really hard to understand.

Please talk with your Social Worker about how you feel, and they will help to make sure that everyone involved in your care knows this too and that your foster carer knows any concerns that you have. You will also have a Guardian and Solicitor who are also there to share your wishes and feelings with the Court.

Sometimes the Courts and Local Authorities agree that children cannot return home because their family's very difficult situation means that they are not able to keep them safe.



What is going to happen to me?

Within four weeks of coming into care, there will be a meeting called a 'Review' or 'Looked After Children's Review' to look at how you are. You will be asked what you think and invited to attend. If you find it hard to talk with lots of adults in a room, you can speak to the 'Independent Reviewing Officer' on your own before or after the meeting.

Review meetings make sure that the plans for you are working. The adults will make changes to the plan if things can be better. People who could be invited are your foster carers, parent, teacher, therapist, or mentor to hear what they think about your care, but most importantly, they want to know what you think too. These reviews will take place every six months.

The Local Authority will work with your family to check out if the worries about why you came into care are still there and if it is safe for you to return home. Your Social Worker will talk to you regularly to keep you informed of what is happening. For children and young people who are not able to return home, they may remain with a foster family until they are adults.



How long will I be here?

Some children and young people remain in foster care for a short time; others need to stay for longer. Your Social Worker or your Guardian will be able to give you some idea of how long this could be.

If the Local Authority is working with the Courts, then this can take some time as the adults around you need to work together to decide whether you can return home. They will try to decide within 26 weeks, however, sometimes it can take longer.



When can I go home?

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

For other children and young people, the Local Authority has decided to intervene to ensure the young person is safe. If you are one of these children, the Local Authority will need to ask the Court to help them decide if it is safe for you to return home. Some young people will remain in care until they are 18 years old.

When can I see my family?

As soon as you come into care, your Social Worker will talk to you about seeing your family. They will support you to keep in touch with your family and your friends. How often you see them and where you see them will depend on the reasons you are in care.

Do I have to change schools?

The Local Authority will try to make sure that you remain at your school if this is what you want so that you can see your friends and continue with the activities you enjoy. However, sometimes this is not possible and therefore, your Social Worker will work with the Virtual School to find you a closer school to your foster family.



What can I tell my friends?

For some children and young people, they may feel embarrassed, scared or unsure about how to tell their friends or people at school what is going on for them at home. These feelings are OK and normal. If this is how you feel, your foster carer can help you think about who and what you would like to tell people.

When will I see my Social Worker?

Every child in foster care will see their Social Worker every six weeks, however this can be more or less depending on your needs. If you want to see your Social Worker; talk to your foster carer. They will phone your Social Worker for you. You should also keep your Social Worker's telephone number in a safe place so that you can call them directly if you want to talk in private. You can also send them an email. Fill in your Social Worker's details in this guide.



SOCIAL WORKERS DETAILS



Who else lives with my Foster Carers?

It will be different for each foster family; sometimes, you may be the only child, or you may live with the foster carer's family including other children. The important thing is that they will treat you as one of their family.

What does my Foster Carer know about me?

Your Social Worker will need to tell your foster carers the important information about you and your family so that they can understand your experiences and care for you in the right way. If you are worried about this, talk to your Social Worker, they are there to help you. Your Social Worker is the person who makes sure that you are getting what you need. Your foster carer will keep a record of the essential things that happen to you, such as achievements in school, when you may have had a stressful day and special celebrations.

Do Foster Carers have any rules?

Yes, just like every family, foster carers have some basic rules that you'll be asked to follow. Most of these rules are in place to keep you safe and to ensure everyone in the household gets along well.

- B** – Be respectful of each other's personal space and feelings.
- O** – Own your actions and be responsible for what you do.
- U** – Understand that everyone has different needs and limits.
- N** – No means no—respect when someone sets a limit.
- D** – Don't hurt others—physically or emotionally.
- A** – Ask permission before using or taking something that's not yours.
- R** – Respect privacy—everyone is entitled to their own space.
- I** – Include everyone in decisions that affect them.
- E** – Express yourself calmly and clearly when setting your own boundaries.
- S** – Stay safe—set boundaries that protect you and others from harm.

If you occasionally forget the rules or find them difficult to follow, your foster carer will talk with you to help understand what happened. Remember, foster carers also have rules they need to follow—most importantly, they are never allowed to hit or harm you. Their main responsibility is to ensure that you are always safe and well-cared for.



Your Rights

- To be treated with respect
- To receive praise and recognition for your achievements
- To be protected and kept safe
- To celebrate your birthday and special occasions
- To practice your religion or beliefs
- To be listened to and consulted on plans or decisions made about you
- Having family time with people who are important to you (the only exceptions may be where your Local Authority or Courts thinks that it may not be safe)

Your Responsibility

It's important to try your best to let your carers know when you are struggling with your feelings and finding things tough, rather than lash out at them with angry words or behaviours. While foster carers understand that it can be challenging to adjust to a new family, it's your responsibility to be respectful and considerate. A safe and respectful environment helps everyone in the home feel comfortable, safe and secure.



What if I am unhappy with something?

If there's something that's making you unhappy, it's important to speak out or if that's too difficult write it down. Whether it's something your foster carer or someone in the foster home has done, or something happening during visits with your family or at school, you deserve to be treated with kindness and respect. If you feel you're not being well cared for, reach out to someone you trust.

You could:

- Talk to your Social Worker
 - Your Foster Carer
- An Ascent Supervising Social Worker
- Another trusted adult like a teacher or mentor.

They'll listen to you in private and handle the issue discreetly. Bring it up at your next review meeting, where you can discuss your concerns in a safe space.

You also have the right to independent advice and support through an Advocate or Independent Visitor. Remember, your well-being is a priority, and there are people ready to support you.

Independent Advice and Support

Here are several organisations that you can contact for independent advice and support. They can attend any meetings to support you in expressing your views such as your review or any educational meetings. If you would like support in contacting any of them please speak to a trusted adult about this.

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

0808 8081001
help@nyas.net
www.nyas.net

Help at Hand

0800 528 0731
help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk
www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand

Childline

0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

Coram Voice

Helpline 0808 80057932
help@coramvoice.org.uk
www.coramvoice.org.uk



If you want to raise a complaint

If you want to raise a complaint about an issue with your care or the services you are receiving, all the organisations below will try to resolve your complaint as quickly as possible.

You can talk to:

Your Social Worker – your Social Worker is always the right person to talk to if you have any concerns. Or you can contact the Children's Complaints office by phoning your Local Authority. The Complaints Officer will look into the complaint and respond to you in writing.

Your carers Supervising Social Worker – their role is to support and supervise your foster carer and ensure that you are receiving the best possible care. They are also a trusted adult for you to talk to.



Ascent Fostering Agency

Sita Alexander is the Fostering Director and Registered Manager for Ascent. You can contact her on **0203 757 0070, 07867 303 149** or **sitaalexander@ascentfostering.com**

Ofsted

Ofsted governs all Independent Fostering Agencies such as Ascent. You can get in touch at **enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk** or **0300 123 4666** to complain about a childcare provider.

Children's Commissioner for England

Children's Commissioner for England – they are responsible for promoting and protecting the rights of children in England.

You can contact them through
www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk
events.occ@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk or
write to them at:

**Sanctuary Buildings,
20 Great Smith Street,
London,
SW1P 3BT**



**Ascent's Youth Council has been
consulted on this guide.**

**ascent
fostering
agency**