



LITTLE ACORNS
FOSTERING

Young Person's Guide to Being in Care

Welcome

Firstly, Little Acorns Fostering would like to welcome you to your new home.

To help you settle in we have put together this booklet, which tells you a bit about Little Acorns, your Foster Carers and some advice on what to do if you are unhappy. We have also included some useful telephone numbers in case you need to speak to someone.

Who are Little Acorns Fostering

Little Acorns is a fostering agency who help to find families for young people, such as yourself, who need to live away from their own family for whatever reason.

The people who work for Little Acorns find foster families who are able to look after children who need a foster family. It is Little Acorns' job to make sure that you are being well cared for and safe whilst in our care.

Who works at Little Acorns?



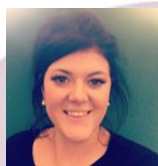
David Gee Responsible Individual



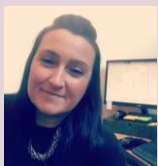
Cheryl Jillions Registered Manager



Michael Jillions Business Services Director



Emily Shore Senior Placements Officer



Jo Bilbow Business Support Coordinator



Nicol Robinson Senior Practitioner



Ana Freitas Supervising Social Worker



Vicky Bigmore Supervising Social Worker

Statement of Purpose

A statement of purpose is a brief outline of what Little Acorns has been set up to do. The work of Little Acorns Fostering is the care and protection of young people within a foster family. Little Acorns Fostering will:

- Ensure all children and young people coming to live with Little Acorns Carers will be encouraged, supported and provided with opportunities needed to make their time with those Carers a happy one;
- Maintain and develop a secure, nurturing and safe environment for all the young people placed with our Foster Carers;
- Maintain, promote and develop the health, educational opportunities, and positive experiences for all young people;
- Maintain, promote and develop the cultural identities of young people living with us;
- Offer and provide appropriate help for young people to come to terms with any difficulties they may have experienced, including the difficulties associated with 'being looked after';
- Maintain, promote and develop links and ties with your family, friends, and previous Foster Carers if appropriate;
- Strive to provide the highest standard of care and professionalism possible.

Your New Placement Details:

Your Foster Carers are called:

Address:

Phone Number:

Other young people in the home:

Pets:

Routines and Boundaries (House-rules)

Your new family want to keep you safe and healthy so there will be routines and boundaries to follow for things like: -

Meal times

Mobile and internet use

Homework

Clothing allowance

Bedtimes

Privacy

Pocket money

Your Carers will talk to you about these routines and boundaries and any others they may have shortly after you arrive. They will ask you about the routines and boundaries you are used to.

Don't be afraid to ask questions if you have any. If you find the routines and boundaries difficult tell your Carer and your Social Worker.

Complaints

If for any reason you are unhappy with your Foster Carer/s and things are not going right for you, you can call your Social Worker. It will help if you speak up because if you don't say anything, no one will know that something is wrong.

It might be your Social Worker you are not happy with. Maybe they haven't been to visit or haven't arranged contact with your family members, or perhaps it's just something else. No matter how small the issue, you can speak to your Foster Carer at any time – they are there to help.

You can also speak to Little Acorns Social Workers and Child and Family Support Workers. They visit you periodically and will try to sort things out for you.

You can also speak to the Registered Manager: Cheryl Jillions, who will arrange a meeting if necessary to sort out any problems. If you are still not happy, you have the right to speak to someone higher or even an Independent Advocate who can speak on your behalf, in which case, just let your Foster Carer know. They will help you to make contact. Here is a web address you can contact for help to understand what your rights are and what you can do next:

Children's Rights Director at: www.rights4me.gov.uk

You can also complain to the Ofsted Inspector who is from the Government. Ofsted Inspectors make sure that fostering agencies like Little Acorns are following all the rules set by the Government, to make sure that children and young people are kept safe, and all their needs are met.

HERE IS OFSTED'S TELEPHONE NUMBER: 0300 123 1231

Remember:

Your feelings are important to us and you have a right to be listened to.

Children's Rights

The Children's Charter was launched back in March 2004 and is aimed at protecting children and young people.

The charter sets out what children and young people need and can expect to help protect them when they are in danger of, or already have been, harmed by another person. An organisation called 'Save the Children' worked closely with children and young people to develop the charter. Professional and voluntary organisations and the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) were also involved.

Little Acorns Fostering have set the 13 charter statements out in a way you will understand.

Ihave a right to be protected and be safe from harm and others.

When I have difficulties or problems, I expect you to: -

- **Get to know me**
- **Speak with me**
- **Listen to me**
- **Take me seriously**
- **Involve me**
- **Respect my privacy**
- **Be responsible to me**
- **Think about my life as a whole person**
- **Think carefully about how you use information about me**
- **Put me in touch with the right people**
- **Use your power to help**
- **Make things happen when they should**
- **Help me be safe**

Rights and Responsibilities

Little Acorns Fostering also believes you should have the opportunity to have the same rights and responsibilities as any other child/young person of your own age.

Whoever you are with, wherever you are, whatever you are doing;

You have the fundamental right to:

- Be valued as an individual
- Be treated with dignity and respect
- Be cared for as a child first
- Be safe
- Interact using your established method of communication
- Be offered the opportunity of independence and choice
- Be offered education, care and therapy appropriate to your need
- Develop responsibility for your own actions
- Be offered privacy for yourself and your belongings
- Be treated according to your spiritual, social and cultural needs
- Be able to maintain and develop friendships and interests
- Be told what is happening to you before it happens, and why
- Be consulted regarding your activities and care treatment
- Be allocated a named person or team to care for you
- The opportunity of access to your individual education/care plan
- Be told about changes that directly affect you
- Be given the opportunity to complain about anything that concerns you
- Be given the opportunity to play and have fun

Help and Advice

ChildLine – www.childline.org.uk

ChildLine is a private and confidential service for children and young people up to the age of nineteen. You can contact a ChildLine Counsellor about anything - no problem is too big or too small. Call free on 0800 1111, have a 1-2-1 chat online or send an email.

Sometimes you can sort out a problem on your own. But if you have a worry you can't cope with, don't bottle it up.

It can really help if you talk to your Carer, your Social Worker, one of your friends or maybe a Teacher. You can call ChildLine at any time.

ChildLine Counsellors are trained staff and volunteers who all have experience of listening and talking to children and young people.

A ChildLine Counsellor is someone who:

- will listen to you and knows it takes courage to contact them
- is aware of the sorts of problems you might be worried about
- is genuine, open and friendly
- won't judge you or put you down
- is not easily shocked
- will let you take your time
- you can trust
- is supported by a ChildLine Supervisor so they can make sure that you are getting the best help

Counsellors are also human beings with different jobs, families and friends. They may be gay, heterosexual, bisexual, of any ethnicity or religion or have a disability or long term illness. They have all been children and had different experiences of childhood but they will never assume things about your situation or how you may be feeling. The focus will always be you and because of this, counsellors do not talk about themselves or answer personal questions. They are real people who care and want to be there for you.

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) - www.nyas.net

NYAS is a UK charity providing socio-legal services. They offer information, advice, advocacy and legal representation to children, young people and vulnerable adults through a network of dedicated paid workers and volunteers throughout England and Wales.

NYAS provides specialist legal advice and assistance. NYAS is a Legal Services Commission provider.

Through these services NYAS provides a safety net for children, young people and vulnerable adults, who have nowhere else to turn. They work within communities across the UK, with children, young people, adults, Carers, Local Authorities and professionals such as Social Workers and Lawyers.

They are independent and confidential as long as you are safe.

They can help if you are:

- Not being listened to
- In need of some advice
- In need of help to talk to Social Services
- Aren't being treated fairly
- Being told you have to move
- Having difficulties about school
- Not having the contact with your family that you want
- Homeless
- A vulnerable adult who is disabled
- A Carer
- Experiencing the separation or divorce of your parents
- Not feeling safe

If you are a child or young person, or you are acting on behalf of a child, young person or vulnerable adult and need help, information or advice, please contact the helpline on FREEPHONE 0808 808 1001 or send an email to help@nyas.net

NYAS provides:

- Advocacy services
- Specialist legal services
- Independent visitors
- Independent persons
- Investigating officers
- Provision of IMHAs
- Advocacy for adult carers
- Regulation 33 visitors
- Participation and consultation
- Training
- Helpline
- Signposting
- Separated parents information programme
- Contact services

Children's Rights – www.rights4me.org
Contact Number – 0800 528 073

This is a guide for children and young people to explain what the Children's Rights Director and his teams do to advise and assist individual children and young people.

Who they can help

- those who are living away from home or living at home with support
- care leavers up to the age of 21, or 24 if they are in higher education
- adults on behalf of individual children. These can include Foster Carers, Advocates, Local Children's Rights Officers, Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO), children's home staff, Independent Visitors etc.

What young people have contacted them about

Here are some examples of what young people have contacted them about:

- My Social Worker says I have to move placement but no-one's listening to me about what I want. I want to stay where I am. What can I do?
- I don't feel safe when I have contact with my family.
- I'm worried that my friend is being bullied in his boarding house.
- I'm a care leaver and I've got a place at Uni. My Local Authority says I'm not entitled to any money to help me. What are the rules about this?

continued

How they can help

Here are a few examples of what they can do to help. They can:-

- Advise you of your legal rights concerning the problem you tell them about.
- Help you get an advocate if these rights are not being given.
- Advise you about your right to make a formal complaint to the right organisation and how this works.
- Advise you of the right to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman. This can be used if you are unhappy with the way the complaint has been handled by the Local Authority and you want to take matters further.
- In some cases, send a letter to the Director of Children's Services of your Local Authority, telling them about your concerns, what your wishes and feelings are, asking them to investigate this and then to report back to them.

What's changed

Here are some examples of the changes that have been made:-

- Following our advice children have been able to challenge decisions or situations where they have not been given their legal rights.
- Local Authorities have spoken with children directly to assess their safety and well-being.
- Local Authorities have delayed or stopped proposed placement moves.

Your Files/Records

You will find a leaflet within your Welcome Pack which explains how to access your records should you wish to.

Your Foster Carer will also be keeping a record of information about you; this will be paperwork regarding your background, placement, care plan, education, health etc. They will also complete a daily log using the Every Child Matters

5 Outcomes – Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a Positive Contribution and Achieve Economic Wellbeing.

All of this information enables everyone around you to keep you as safe as possible.

Common Issues

Bullying

Bullying can mean many different things. Here are some ways children and young people have described bullying:

- Being called names
- Being teased
- Being pushed or pulled about
- Being hit or attacked
- Having your bag and other possessions taken and thrown around
- Having rumours spread about you
- Being ignored and left out
- Being forced to hand over money or possessions
- Being attacked because of your religion or colour

Sometimes adults bully too

Adults can and do bully children - mums and dads, other family members, and Teachers, for example. They may do it by making you feel bad in front of other people, by shouting and scaring you or by teasing or making fun of you.

It can be very difficult to do something about it, especially if the adult is the one you would normally go to about being bullied. Don't give up - find an adult who you think will listen and talk to them about the problem.

Common Issues *continued*

How to Stop the Bullying

1. Stop taking the abuse

You don't have to accept this sort of hassle. Everyone has a right to live happily and free from discrimination, no matter what their nationality or race.

2. Accept that you're not the one with the problem

Your self-esteem may have taken a knock if you're having a hard time, but the thing you have to remember is that you are not the one to have caused the problem.

3. Tell someone what's happening to you

You don't have to suffer in silence. Think who's the best person to talk to about what's happening. Schools, Police, and Carers have a responsibility to protect you. Other parts of your life will suffer if you keep silent. If the problem is at school, your work might deteriorate. Speak up now before the problem takes over. Why not try having a word with a ChildLine Counsellor first to try out what you would like to say?

4. Go for a team effort

Get other people involved in tackling the problem - perhaps you could start an anti-racism project or newsletter at your school or youth group and invite an anti-racist speaker along. Or set up a discussion group to talk about relevant issues and see what you can do to help in your area.

5. Make people take you seriously

If you are going to alert someone to the fact that you're being threatened, abused or bullied, then do it properly. You have to be prepared to get across precisely how it is affecting your well-being.

6. Keep some evidence of what's happening (a diary of events, for example)

This might be useful to show others that you need help.

7. Plan what you would like to happen

Now go for it.

8. Make other parts of your life even better

Don't let racists ruin every area of your life. For example, if you're unhappy at school or work, then make sure you make up for the bad times by enjoying yourself at home or with your friends.

9. Keep safe and aware

You can't spend your life looking over your shoulder, but it pays to be aware of dangers. Stick with groups of friends if you feel vulnerable.

10. Never give up!

You might not be able to tackle racism by yourself. Seek out support and accept help where you can.

Overnight Stays

Little Acorns try to ensure you experience as much normality as possible; this includes having sleepovers at friends, or them visiting your home. When the Placement Planning Meeting takes place, we ask your Social Worker for their permission up front, allowing this to minimise any issues when the opportunity of a sleepover arises.

Common Questions asked:

My Social Worker says I'm not allowed to stay overnight with my friend because their parents haven't had a CRB check is this right?

No, your friend's family do not need to have a CRB check before you can stay overnight with your friend. As long as staff or your Carers are happy that you will be safe, they can give permission for you to stay. There is some Government guidance about this in the 'Rights' section of our library.

My friend wants to stay overnight at my foster home. Can they?

The Government has written some policy on this, saying that it wants to see decisions like this taken by Carers. The question of whether your friends can stay over where you live has caused some Carers to worry about whether allowing this would take them over their numbers, as permitted by Ofsted. There is, however, no need for them to worry about this because letting your friends stay over does not take a foster care placement over their numbers. They should therefore consider this request in much the same sort of way as they would need to think about you staying overnight at your friends. Have a look at what the Government policy about overnight stays says.

My social worker says I can't have a sleep over with my brother who's in care but in a different placement to me because it will take my brother's Foster Carer over her approved numbers. Is this right?

No, just because you sleep over at the Foster Carer's house it does not mean you are placed there. You are just a visitor and so it does not take the Foster Carer over the numbers they are registered for. In fact the Local Authority has a legal duty to promote contact with your family and friends unless there's a really good reason not to. This should all be written down in your care plan.

Contact

Sometimes issues can arise from your family contact, whether you want contact or not, or don't feel you have enough. Either way ensure you speak to your Foster Carer or Social Worker so that they can try sort something out for you.

Different forms of contact;

- Telephone Contact
- Social Network Site Contact
- Supervised Face to Face Contact
- Unsupervised Face to Face Contact

Don't be afraid to say if you no longer want a contact to happen, you have a choice!

This brings us to the end of our guide. If you feel there is anything missing then let us know at emily@littleacornsfostering.com

Always remember Little Acorns will help wherever possible, all you need to do is call 01440 732010. Your Social Worker is also there to help you, talk to them.

Be safe - Always tell your Carer where you are going, who you are with and when you will be back!

Useful Numbers

Here are some useful numbers that you may want to keep

My Social Worker –

.....

My Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) -

.....

Little Acorns Fostering - 01440 732010

If you have any problems getting any information you need, just get in touch with us and we will do our best to help you.



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