A Children and Young Person’s Guide to Foster Care
Hello & Welcome

The fact that you’ve been given this booklet means you are now living, or about to live, away from your family. You’re bound to be feeling at least a bit confused about what’s happening in your life.

You have probably got quite a few questions. This booklet will give you the answers to at least some of them and there is lots of other information about who can help you.
Fostering is much more common than you think. There are around 500 children and young people who are fostered in Suffolk. Many famous people have been fostered, including:

**Pierce Brosnan**
a famous actor, especially known for playing 007 James Bond

**Kriss Akabusi**
a sprinter who won several Olympic medals

**Neil Morrissey**
another famous actor, especially known for comedy

**Nelson Mandala**
winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, and the ex-leader of the African National Congress who became President of South Africa having fought against apartheid

**Eddie Murphy**
Famous American actor who starred in films like “The Nutty Professor” and “Beverley Hills Cop”

“There are about 40,000 children and young people in foster care in England today!”
What is Foster Care?

Foster care is when you live with a different family to your own, arranged by a social worker. Sometimes this can be with a friend or relative, but most often it is with a family you do not know.

How do children and young people become fostered?

Every child and young person is unique and will have a different story about how and why they came into care …..

Here are some of the reasons:

- There is not an adult to look after you
- You have asked for help
- The court has asked for you to be looked after
• Your family needs time to sort things out for you to return home

Whatever your story, while you are living in care, your foster carers will be there to help and support you.

You will have your own social worker who will arrange for you to meet your foster carers. Your social worker will visit you regularly to make sure that everything is working out and you are settled in the foster family.

Who are Foster Carers?

They may be:

• Single, married or in a partnership
• Have other foster children or children of their own
• From different backgrounds

Foster carers are approved by Suffolk County Council to look after children & young people.
“Every foster family is different and unique too”

Key facts about Foster carers:

- They will have been checked to make sure they can provide good care and help you make the most out of your life
- They have to be trained and have their own social workers to support them
- Some foster carers look after children and young people for a short time whilst things are sorted out at home
- Some foster carers have children and young people living with them until they’re old enough to leave home
All foster carers get money so they can look after you properly, this will include your pocket money and money to buy you clothing and pay for outings

**Foster carers are there to:**

- listen to your story and try to understand and support your needs whatever they might be, like your culture and religion

- they will work with your social worker to help you keep in touch with people who are important to you

- they are people who will do their very best to encourage and support you to achieve at school or in other activities that are important to you

- they will be involved with the day to day decisions about your care like having friends around or arranging sleep overs
What happens when you move in?

The Fostering team will work very hard to find you a foster carer who would be best able to care for you. Of course, whoever this is, you will feel strange at first, so do give yourself some time to settle in.

Your foster carer knows that when you arrive you may be feeling nervous or excited or even a bit sad or angry. They will try to help you feel at home as quickly as possible. They will show you around the house, introduce you to their family, explain about family routines and meals and ask you what sorts of things you are used to.

You will want to take your own clothes and any belongings which are special to you. You may have your own room, or maybe part of a room that you share. But you will always have a space that
is yours alone, where you can keep safe your personal belongings. While you are living in a foster family, you will be treated the same as the other children and young people living in the family.

**Will I have to change schools?**

Your social worker will try to make arrangements so that you can continue going to the same school. If it is in your best interests to change schools, your social worker and foster carer will help you to choose a new one.

**Will I have contact with my family?**

Your foster carer and social worker will do their best to ensure that where possible you keep in contact with your family.
When will I see my social worker?

There will be regular visits from your social worker to get to know you and help with any problems. You can also call them and ask them to visit you or ask your foster carer to contact them and arrange a visit.

What is going to happen to me next?

Within 4 weeks of being fostered there will be a meeting called a Review to look at how you are and to make sure things are happening as planned, for example contact with your family.

This meeting will be chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer – often called an IRO. You will be told who your IRO is and how you can contact them.

Your social worker will talk to you about who needs to come to your review and help
with your care plan. This might include your parents and your teacher.

You should always feel safe and well cared for whilst you are with your foster family.

Your views will be important in the review and the IRO will want to know what you think about being in foster care.

Your Rights

The views of children and young people are very important to Suffolk County Council. They have listened to what children and young people have said about being in care and have made a promise about what you can expect. You will find details of the promise on pages 12 & 13.

“Your views will count”
The Suffolk Promise

1 We promise only to share information about you with people who need it in order to look after you properly.

2 You will have a named social care worker, whom you know how to contact and who will keep in touch with you.

3 We will involve you in all the decisions that affect your life.

4 We promise that you will have a Care Plan or Pathway Plan that is up-to-date and meets your needs.

5 We promise we will find a home that meets your needs.
6 We promise we will help you where possible to stay in touch with your family, friends and any other people who are important to you.

7 We promise to help you to do the best you possibly can at school and in your education.

8 We promise to care about your health and encourage you to be healthy.

9 We promise to work with you to give you all the help and support you need to make a success of moving on from care to adult life.

10 We promise we will work hard to sort out any problems or worries you have.
“If you don’t feel happy speak to someone who can help”

If you do not feel happy with the care you are receiving in your foster home and do not feel your foster carer will be able to help you, then you should speak to your social worker or with the IRO.

You could also speak to someone from the Suffolk Children’s Rights Team. The Children’s Rights Team are there to make sure you understand what is happening in your life. They will help you find the right person to support you. If you want to make a complaint about your care, they will help you.

C2C - Child in Care Council

C2C work on your behalf to improve the way you are cared for and make sure your views are listened to. Contact us through:

Suffolk County Council Children’s Rights team

Tel: 0800 917 1119
www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolkspromise
Important Names & Contact Details

My Social Worker is:

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Telephone/Mobile number:

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Email address:

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My Independent Reviewing Officer is:

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Telephone/Mobile number:

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Email address:

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My LACESS Worker (Education Support) is:

Telephone/Mobile Number:

Email address:

Name:

Telephone/Mobile Number:

Email address:
More Useful Contacts!
The Suffolk Fostering Service
www.suffolkfostering.com Tel: 0800 328 2148
For all the information you need about the fostering service, such as who we are and what we do.

www.rights 4 me
Welcome to Rights4me!
This is the website of the Children’s Rights Director for England (CRD). The CRD Children’s Rights Director spends lots of time listening to what children and young people, who live away from home, have to say about how they are looked after.

So, if you are living in a children's home, family centre, boarding school, residential special school, further education college, with foster carers, are adopted, getting any sort of help from social services or a care leaver… then this is the place to find out about your RIGHTS and a way for you to BE HEARD!

Office of the Children’s Rights Director
Ofsted, 33 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6SE, Tel: 0800 528 0731
ACT Advocacy Service
Tel: 01473 213140
www.angliacaretrust.org.uk
Independent advocacy to help you say what you want in child protection meetings, reviews or if you have a problem.

Young Voices, Suffolk Speaking Up Advocacy Service
08452 412577
youngvoices@speakingup.org
www.speakingup.org

Customer Rights Complaints Team
Tel: 01473 260711

Childline
Tel: 0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk
Norcas
01502 513444
www.norcas.org.uk
Advice and support for young people experiencing problems with alcohol and drug use.

Ofsted
The organisation that inspects fostering services in England.
www.ofsted.gov.uk
08456 014 772

Suffolk Young Peoples Health Project
01473 252607/0845 310 8450
www.onesuffolk.co.uk/4yp
Advice and support for young people on their health and wellbeing.

Young Voices Advocacy Service
Tel: 07786 984123
info@voiceability.org
Independent advocacy and help for children and young people with additional needs.