

The Children's Book about Foster Care



DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH
AND CHILDREN
AN ROINN
SLÁINE
AGUS LEANAÍ

The Children's Book
about
Foster Care

© Government of Ireland 2003

ISBN 0-7557-1576-4

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH:
ARNA FHOILSIÚ AG OIFIG AN tSOLÁTHAIR

Le ceannach díreach ón
OIFIG DHÍOLTA FOILSEACHÁN RIALTAIS,
TEACH SUN ALLIANCE, SRÁID THEACH LAIGHEAN, BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2,
nó tríd an bpost ó
FOILSEACHÁIN RIALTAIS, AN RANNÓG POST-TRÁCHTA,
51 FAICHE STIABHNA, BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2.
(Teil: 01-647 6834/35/36/37; Fax: 01-647 6843)
nó trí aon díoltóir leabhar.

DUBLIN
PUBLISHED BY THE STATIONERY OFFICE

To be purchased directly from the
GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS SALE OFFICE,
SUN ALLIANCE HOUSE, MOLESWORTH STREET, DUBLIN 2,
or by mail order from
GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS, POSTAL TRADE SECTION,
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(€1)

*The Children's Book
about
Foster Care*



Growing up in Foster Care

If you can't be at home with your own family, then it is the government's job to make sure you are properly looked after and have all the things you need while you are growing up.

The government thinks that a very good way for children to grow up is in a family. And so, they get the health boards to find foster families for the children who need looking after.

What are these health boards?

Your foster carers' job is to look after you every day and make sure you get your meals, and go to school, and have somewhere comfortable to sleep, and get toys and books, and have little treats sometimes, and do your homework, and get new clothes when you need them, and see the doctor if you are sick, and have your friends around to play – and all the things that children have and do in every family.

They are people who work for the government. Their job is to make sure you are well looked after. Your social worker is part of the health board.



But even though it is your foster carers who mind you every day, it is still the health board's job to make sure you are well cared for in your foster home.

They want you to be safe and properly looked after.

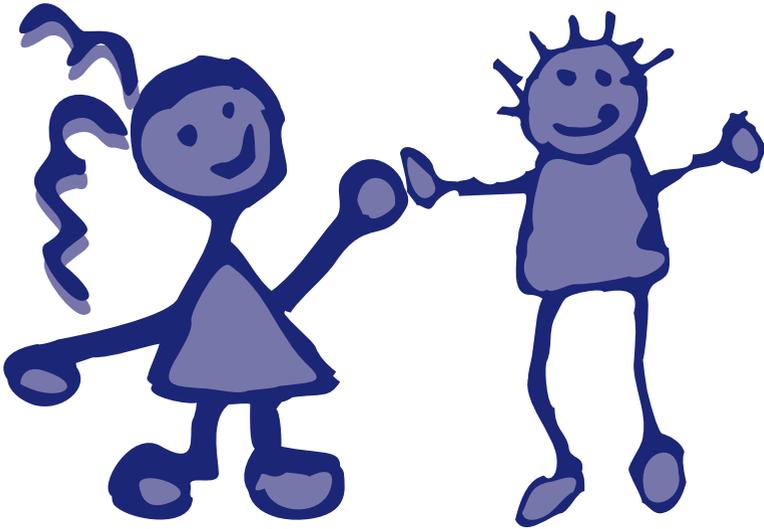


What's a foster carer?



It's another word for foster parent. Foster carers are the people that the health board has asked to mind you.

The health board's job is to make sure



you are well and safe in your foster family

Standards for Foster Care

The best way for the government to make sure you are well cared for is to have a set of rules about what living in a foster family should be like.

These rules are called **standards**.



Rules?
I don't like rules!



These are not no-fun rules like 'No running in the corridor' or 'No wearing your favourite tracksuit'. Standards are different. They are about how good things are supposed to be.

These **standards for foster care** are all about making sure you are well and safe and properly cared for and that people listen to what you have to say about how you feel about things.



There are three sets of standards:

- The most important ones for you are the standards that have to do directly with you, the foster children – **making sure foster children are safe and well cared for.**
- The next group of standards have to do with **making sure foster carers do a good job.**
- And the last group of standards have to do with **making sure the health boards and social workers do a good job.**



If you think you are not getting the sort of care in your foster home that you should have, you should tell someone about it and the health board promises to listen to you.

This book tells you what those standards are.



First things first: Making sure foster children are well looked after

The government wants foster children to grow up well and safe and these standards (1–13) are all about how you should be minded when you are in foster care.



1: Children in foster care should feel good about themselves.

The government and the health boards and your social worker all want you to be well looked after while you are in foster care.

They think it's a good idea if brothers and sisters can be together in one foster home. They can't promise that it will work out that way, but they do promise to try their best to keep you all together.



You should have a foster family

*They also think children will be happier
if they are in foster homes
near their own families,
so you can still see your friends and still go to
the same school,
so they will try to make
that happen.*

Yeah, that's a good idea.

*And of course you should be able to bring
your favourite things from home with you –
some of your toys and books and photos and
things like that.*

*They also think it's very important to explain
everything to you
and to give you as much information
about your foster care as they can.*



where you can feel happy

2. Children in foster care should be able to keep in touch with their family and friends

Most kids who live in foster like to keep in touch with their own families and their friends.

I know someone in foster care who wasn't allowed to see her dad.

Yes, well, sometimes that does happen. The most important thing is to keep you safe. But even if you can't see your mam or dad, you might be able to see your granny or auntie.



and you should be able



*If you are seeing your family,
your foster carers and your social worker
should talk to you about
the arrangements for the visit.*

*You should be able to ring your family up,
as well, or send them a
text message or an email.*



to see your family sometimes

3. Children in foster care should be treated with respect

This means that your foster carers and social worker should be kind to you and listen to you and let you have a say in how you are looked after.

They should let you keep things like letters and diaries private.

They should let you spend time alone with your family when they come to visit, as long as it is OK with you and it is safe for you.

If something is going to happen about your foster care (for example, if you had to move to a new foster home) they should explain everything to you before it happens.

Your foster family should look after

You should be able to
make some decisions for yourself,
for example, about the kinds of clothes
you like to wear,
especially as you get a bit older,
or how you spend your pocket-
money.

Hey!
Does this mean I can
have a mobile phone?

They should make sure that any
information
they have about you is correct,
and let you make changes to it if it isn't.



They should listen
to what you have
to say,
and if you want to
make a complaint
about something to do with your
foster care,
they should explain to you how you do
that and help you to do it.

Well, it depends...
But you and your foster carers
should talk about it and make the
decision together.



you properly and be nice to you

4. Foster families should respect children's backgrounds and needs

This means that, if you come from a religious family, you should be able to go to the same kind of church or mosque or synagogue that you have always gone to.

It also means that if your own family speaks a different language from your foster family, you should get a chance to speak your own language sometimes and your foster carers should take an interest in your language and culture.

If you have a disability, your foster carers should do their best to make sure you get the care you need to help you cope.



5. Children in foster care should each have their own social worker

This means you should have your very own social worker, a person whose special job is to make sure everything is going well for you in your foster home and who you can talk to if you have any questions or are unhappy about anything.



6. Children's needs should be assessed before they go into foster care

This means that the social workers should talk to you and your family about what kind of care you need before they choose a foster home for you.

This helps them to make a proper plan for how you are to be looked after.



Your social worker should talk to you

7. There should be a care plan for every child in foster care

The social workers should talk to you and your parents and foster carers about how you are going to be looked after.

Does that make you feel important?



After talking to you all, they should write a plan for your care so they can check it every now and then and so that everyone knows what the story is.

They should show this plan to you and your parents and foster carers or talk to you about it.

They should listen to what you have to say about it, and maybe make changes to it.

Well, we are very important!

There have to be special meetings every now and then, called 'reviews'. At a review, you and your family and your foster carers get together with your social worker to have a chat about how your care plan is working.



and find out if you are ok

8. Every child who goes into foster care should live with the kind of family that is best able to look after them

Everybody is different.

Some children need one kind of care and others need something else.

When a foster family is being chosen for you, it should be the kind of family that understands you and is able to give you the sort of care you need.

If possible, you should be able to go to your new foster family for visits at first, to see how you settle in.

The health board should ask you what you think about the foster family and listen to what you have to say.

Your social worker should always listen

9. Every foster home should be a safe and positive environment

Your foster home should be a place where you are safe. It should be a healthy place to grow up, and your foster family should have a good attitude to you and should help you to feel good about yourself.



I have to get food that I like?
Can I have crisps for dinner?

especially how to keep yourself safe.

You should get good, nourishing food that you like to eat, and you should get new clothes when you need them.

You should be able to have your friends around to play sometimes, and your foster carers should help you to make new friends and learn things,



Don't be silly! You have to have food that is good for you as well as what you like.

to you if you have a problem

10. Children in foster care should be protected from abuse and neglect

The most important thing about a foster home is that it is a place where you are not abused or neglected. You should not be smacked or slapped by your foster carers, and you should not be bullied.

If anything nasty happens to you in your foster home, you should tell your social worker about it immediately, so that something can be done about it.



11. The health of children in foster care should be looked after

Foster carers should know about first aid and how to look after children who are sick.



If you get sick or need glasses or have to go to the dentist, or if you have any health problems, such as asthma or diabetes or a disability or anything that needs medicine or special looking after, your social worker and your foster carers should make sure you get the things you need.

They should make sure you see your doctor when you need to and that you keep your appointments at the clinic or go to hospital if you have to.

They should make sure that you eat the right kind of food and that you get whatever medicine or other things the doctor says you should have.



12. Children in foster care should go to school and learn their lessons

Your foster carers should make sure you go to school and do your homework.

They should keep in touch with your teachers and go to parent/teacher meetings.

They should encourage you to do your best at school.

As you get older, they should help you to choose your subjects, and they should discuss with you what you would like to study or what kind of job you would like to have when you leave school.



13. Older children in foster care should be helped to make plans for their life as adults

As children get older, they start to make plans for their adult life.

Your foster carers and social worker should help you with these decisions and help you to plan your future.

You can get quite a lot of help and support when you leave care and set up on your own for the first time, and your social worker should let you know about that and help you to settle into your new life.



Next up: Making sure foster carers do a good job

You probably don't really want to know a whole lot about the standards for foster carers, so there is just a little bit about these standards here.

Are you sure I don't want to know more about this stuff?



14. People who want to be foster carers have to be properly checked out to make sure they are the best people to care for children like you

15. Foster carers need to have their own social workers (different from the children's social workers) who help them with their job as foster carers

16. Foster carers need to be properly trained to do this very important job

17. The work that foster carers do has to be checked out every now and then, to make sure they are still doing a good job

You can always ask your social worker if you want more information.



And finally: Making sure the health boards do a good job



Most of the standards for health boards and social workers aren't very interesting to children either, so there's only a little bit here about them.

- 18. Health boards should provide a good foster care service for children who need it*

- 19. It is the health boards' job to make sure the foster care service is working properly*

- 20. People who work in the foster care service should be properly trained*

- 21. Health boards should find lots of different kinds of foster carers to help look after all the different sorts of children who need foster care*

22. *Health boards must provide a special foster care service for children with different needs*

23. *There is a special group of people (called the foster care committee) who help the health boards to find foster carers for children who need to live with a foster family for a long time*

24. *If a health board gets some help from another organisation in finding a foster family for a child, the health board must make sure that the other organisation uses the same rules as the health board itself*

25. *Foster children and their families and their foster carers should all be able to talk to the health boards if they have a problem, and they should be able to make a complaint if they need to, and the health board must listen to them*







ISBN 0-7557-1576-4



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