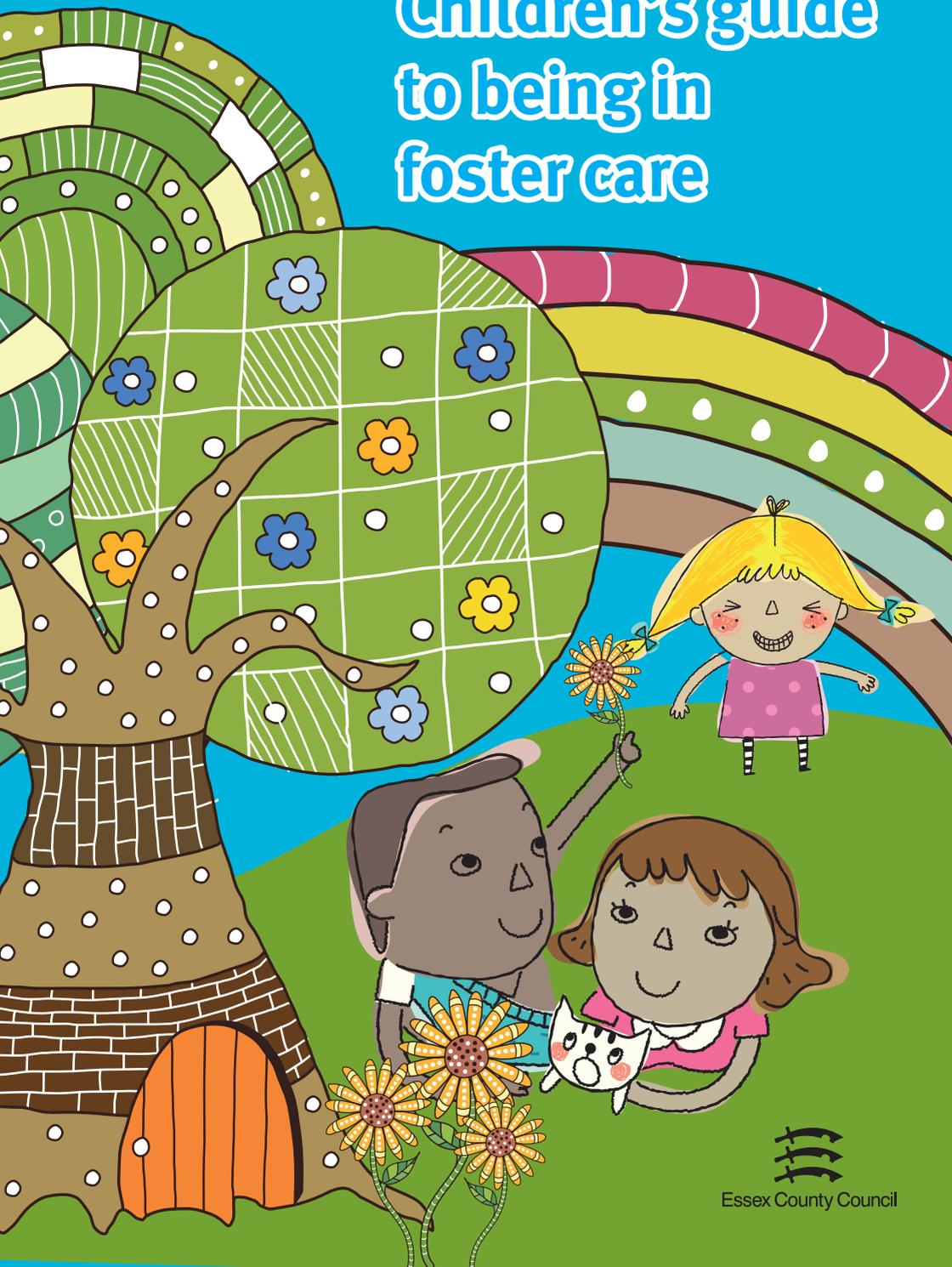


Children's guide to being in foster care



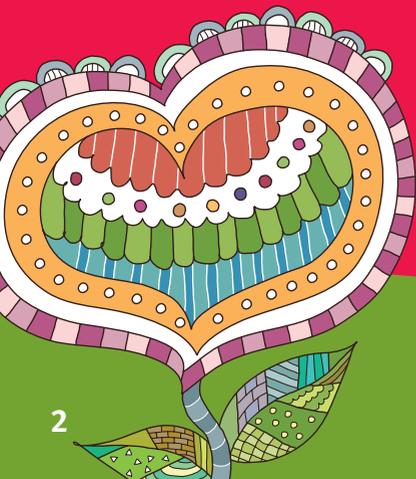
What is foster care?

Sometimes, mums, dads and family members can't give you all the things you need to grow up safe and healthy. When this happens you may need to be looked after by another family. They are your foster carers and they are chosen by social workers. Some children live with foster carers because their Mum or Dad is ill or because their parents have hurt them.

Some children already know their foster carer before they go to live with them. They may be one of your family or a friend. Other children will go to foster carers they do not know. You may feel worried about that but your foster carer will help you feel at home by finding out about you and what things make you happy.

We do our best to make sure that all foster carers get all the help and support that they need to look after you. Foster carers have their own social worker (called a Supervising Social Worker) who you will also meet. They will meet with your foster carers regularly and see that they are supported to look after you in the best way possible.

More information about the fostering service is available in something called the 'Statement of Purpose'. If you want to see a copy of it your foster carers and/or your supervising social worker can show you. It is available on the Essex County Council website.

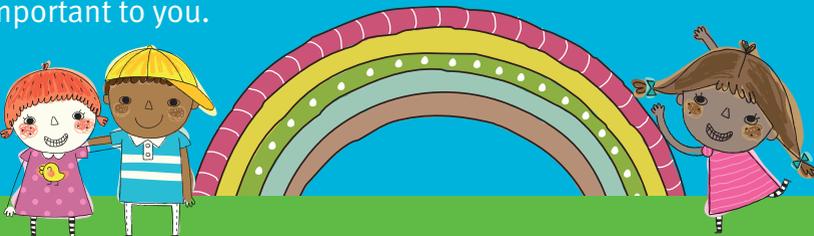


What does my social worker do?

You will have your own social worker and they will stay in touch with you. You can also phone them so it is good if you keep a note of their name and phone number.

My social worker is called	
I can speak to my social worker by calling	
Or email them on	

Your social worker will explain to you what is happening and what is going to happen in the future. Your social worker will visit you regularly and also help you to keep in touch with the people who are important to you.

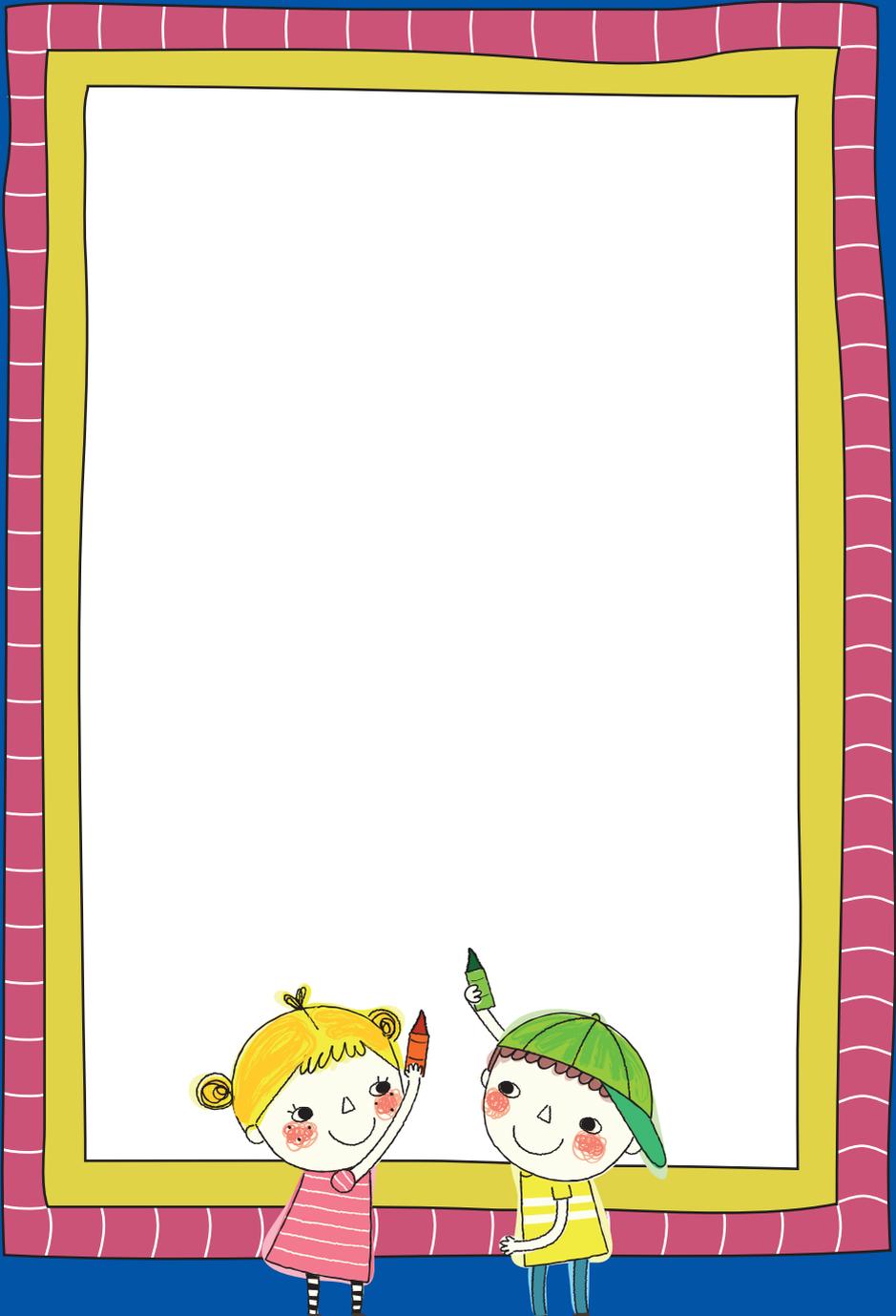


What can I expect in my foster home?

Every fostering family is different. You should be given a family profile so you can see who else lives in the family and where you will be living. You might want to put your own photo on the next page – or draw your own.

Foster carers will look after you if you are ill, make sure you go to school or pre-school, help you keep in touch with your family and friends and make sure you feel safe and well.

This is my foster family



Your foster carer will try to make sure you have everything you need



The chance to celebrate birthdays and festivals that are important to you.



The chance to see people you love, your friends and invite them round to play.



A nice, cosy bedroom of your own, or with your brothers and sisters, and space to put your things.



Help you to get to pre-school or school. They will support you with your homework when you get some too!



Some pocket money – you can talk to them about how much.

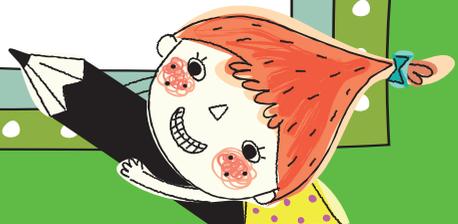
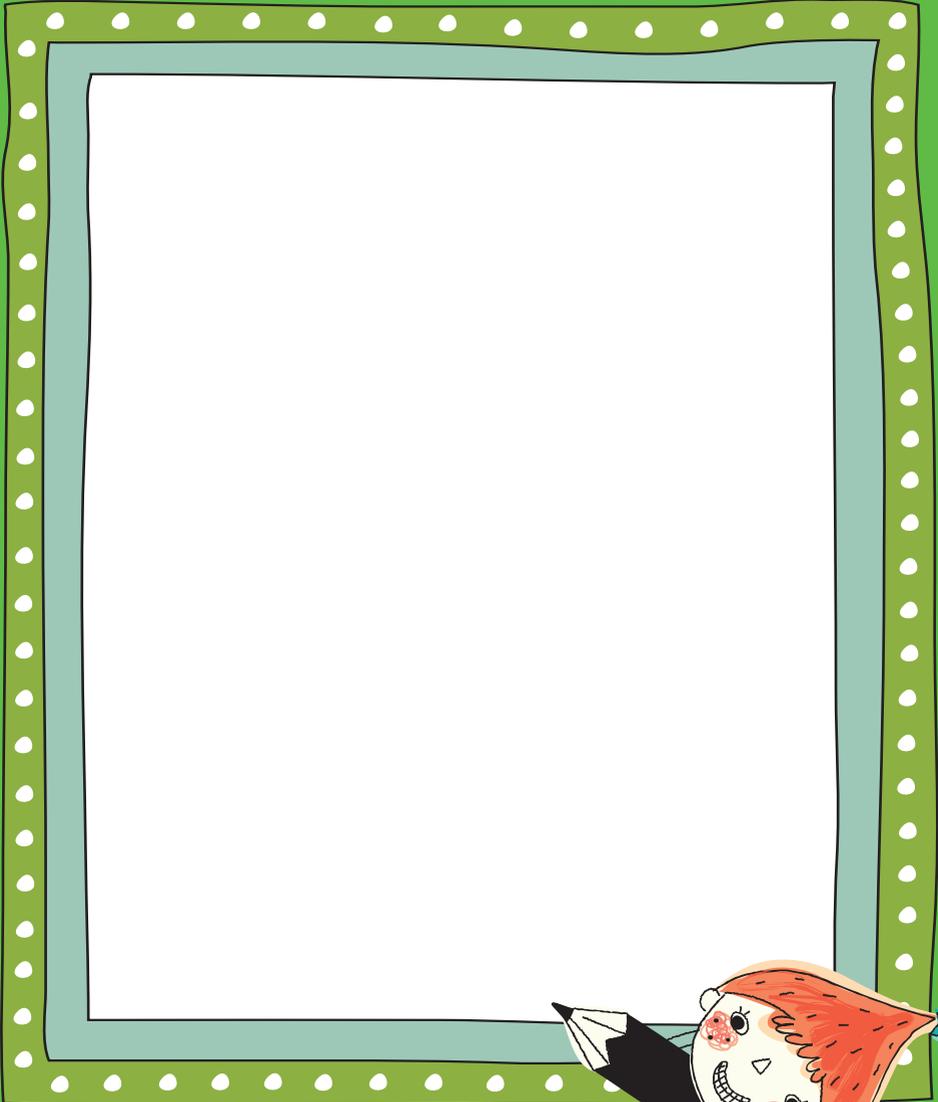


A quiet space to meet your social worker.



Your foster carer would like to know all the things you like to do...

If you like reading, computer games, dance, sports - draw them here!



Your rights



There are certain ways you should be treated no matter what; these are called your ‘rights’. You have the right:

- 🌸 To be kept safe, secure and protected.
- 🌸 For adults to listen to you and treat you fairly and equally.
- 🌸 To information and advice, health care and help with your education.
- 🌸 To an advocate to help you if you want to make a complaint.
- 🌸 To enjoy your own culture and religion.
- 🌸 If you have a disability you have the right to any help you need.
- 🌸 To know why you are in care and when you can see your family and friends.

In Essex we have something called The Essex Pledge which is made up of 5 promises. In it we promise to do our best:

- 🌸 To do everything we can to make you feel cared about, valued and respected as an individual.
- 🌸 To make sure you have a social care worker who will spend time with you and get to know you.
- 🌸 To make sure you have opportunities to achieve and succeed.
- 🌸 To help you keep in touch with your family, brothers and sisters and friends when you come into care.
- 🌸 To involve you in decision-making so your views are listened to and to explain when we make a decision you may not like or agree with.

If you think that someone is taking away your rights or that we are not sticking to our promises then let your social worker, foster carer or independent reviewing officer know. You can also contact our Customer Care Team – you can see how to do this later in this guide.

What is going to happen next?

Your social worker will write a care plan to work out what is best for you and what will happen next. Your care plan is talked about in your review meeting.

Everyone that is important to you will be invited to the meeting – you may even go yourself.

The person in charge of the meeting about you is called the **Independent Reviewing Officer or I.R.O.** You can also talk to them between your review meetings if you want to.

My I.R.O.'s name is

Phone number

You can find lots more information about being in care on our children in care website cicc.essex.gov.uk



Have a look at this or ask your foster carer to help you. There is lots more information about the different people that you may meet, school, staying healthy, different meetings that you may hear about, staying over at friends' houses, bullying and what to do if you are bullied, what would happen if you ran away and could not be found and also what to do if you want to see what is written about you.

Other people who can help you:

Complaints and compliments: If there is something you want to complain, comment or make a compliment about, the Customer Care Team are there to help you.

You can contact them if you have a comment, complaint or compliment about anything to do with your social worker or being in care, they will listen to what you have to say and will help you to sort out the problem where they can.

They can be contacted by:



Email: haveyoursay@essex.gov.uk



Tel: 03330 139817

Or you can complete the Have Your Say form online. Your foster carer should also have a copy of the Have Your Say form, or you can get one from your social worker or a member of staff. These can be posted to:

Customer Services, Essex County Council,
PO Box 11, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1QH

Need help to tell people what you want?

An independent advocate may also be able to help you get your voice heard in decision-making meetings like your Review or help to you to make a complaint if you are unhappy about something. To find out more about getting an advocate, contact the Essex Advocacy Service run by the children's charity, Barnardo's:



Email: essexadvocacyservice@Barnardos.org.uk



Telephone: 0800 652 4546 calls will cost from a mobile phone

Ofsted

This is a government organisation and part of their role is making sure that Essex County Council are doing all they can to make sure you are looked after properly. Sometimes they come and do an inspection and will talk to social workers, managers, foster carers and others who are involved in making sure you are well cared for.

They also like to get your views and they will sometimes send you a questionnaire to fill in. You might also be asked if you want to talk to an inspector when they visit. They like to hear from children and young people as your views are very important. You can also contact them if you would like to.

Their address is:

Ofsted,

Piccadilly Gate,

Store Street,

Manchester, M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



There is a **Children's Commissioner** who promotes and protects rights of children and young people.

Their website address is: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk
The website gives you the opportunity to ask your own questions as well as look at information you might find useful.

There is also a helpline for children in care, phone: 0800 528 0731

Help at Hand email address:
help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Childline has a website that you can look at which has lots of useful information on. You can also talk to someone online from there (it's a bit like instant messenger).

The website is www.childline.org.uk
Or you can phone them on 0800 1111



This information is issued by:
Essex County Council
Fostering Service

Contact us:
adoptionandfostering@essex.gov.uk
www.essex.gov.uk/fostering
0800 801530

Fostering, Essex House,
200 The Crescent,
Colchester Business Park,
Colchester, Essex CO4 9YQ

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The information contained in
this document can be translated,
and/or made available in alternative
formats, on request.

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