



MORE ABOUT ME:

Seeing your family (ACCESS)

- * Your Social Worker will help you to see your parents, brothers and sisters and the rest of your family regularly;
- * In most cases, your foster parent should bring you to see your family;
- * For different reasons, sometimes it is difficult to make sure that you get to see your family;
- * Some young people in care do not want to see their birth family. If that is how you feel, you should talk to your Social Worker about this.

Your Social Worker will talk to you about this.

Living with a foster family

- * When you are in foster care, you should be treated like any other child in the house e.g. going on holidays or getting treats. Unfortunately, this means you might also have to do jobs or help around the house!
- * Most young people in care told us they prefer living with a foster family because:
 - You get good food instead of junk food;
 - You have a routine e.g. mealtimes and bedtimes;
 - You go to school more often and get a good education.
- * You should tell your foster parent what food and TV programmes that you like.

You can write them down in the 'ALL ABOUT ME' Page

- * Every foster family has different rules, just like any other family. It is a good idea to **ASK YOUR FOSTER PARENT ABOUT THE RULES IN THE HOUSE** e.g. what time you need to be home by, bedtimes, doing jobs in the house, cleaning your room or whether you can have a pet;
- * As with any young person living in a family, sometimes rules are broken. This might be because you are feeling upset or angry. If you break rules that have been set by your foster parent, you might be grounded or not allowed have treats for a while. You cannot be made to miss a meal or not see your family because you were misbehaving;
- * Your foster parent is NOT allowed to slap or push you at ANY time.

Some of the other things that young people in care thought you need to know about are:

PRIVACY: Everyone does not have to know your business. However, your Social Worker or foster parent might have to pass on some things you say to other people e.g. if you are in danger or it is important for your health. If so, they should tell you who else they are going to tell. You are also able to have your own personal 'stuff', like a diary or photographs, that you do not have to show to anyone if you do not want to;

MONEY: It is up to your foster family whether you get pocket money every week. You should get the same pocket money as any other children in the house. You might also get money to join an activity you are interested in e.g. a football club or an art class.

CLOTHES: Your foster parent is given money to buy you clothes. You have a right to help choose the clothes you wear. Like in any family, there are limits on the amount of clothes you can buy!

HEALTH: Your foster parent will arrange for you to have a doctor, dentist, optician or whatever you need close to where you are living. Every young person in care has a Medical Card. Young people over 16 years can give consent for surgical, medical or dental treatment.

SLEEPOVERS: Most young people in foster care just have to get permission from their foster parent to go on a sleepover at a friend's house. For some young people in foster care, it can be more difficult to get permission. Sometimes you might need to have permission from your Social Worker and sometimes from your parents as well as your foster parent. This is only because everyone wants to keep you safe and they need to know where you are going and who you will be with.

You can ask your
Social Worker
and your foster
parent for more
information
about this.

ADVICE FROM YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

Lots of the young people from the TACTIC group who helped to write this book have been in care for a good few years. They understand that going into care can be hard for some people. As well as all of the information so far, they wanted to give young people going into care this practical advice:

Talk to someone about how you are feeling

FIND SOMEBODY THAT YOU FEEL THAT YOU CAN TRUST AND TALK TO.

Having at least one person to talk to and who listens to you is really helpful. This might be a:

- * Foster Parent
- * Sister or Brother or other member of your family e.g. Grandparent
- * Social Worker
- * Friend or
- * Youth Worker
- * Teacher;

It is **GOOD TO MEET OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE**. You can ask your Social Worker to see if there are groups of young people in care that meet in your area.

Foster Family

- * **GIVE YOUR NEW FOSTER FAMILY A CHANCE** – you might think they are really different to you but you might have more in common with them than you think;
- * **TALKING TO PEOPLE ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE NOW** – It is ok to tell people about where you live and your new home. The TACTIC group advised that you should choose who you tell about being in care carefully as some people can be bullies.

You can get in touch with EPIC
(see contact details on page 20)

School

- * The young people in care really wanted you to know that they think it is really important to go to school regularly, stay in school and do as well as you can.
- * Lots of young people have problems with reading, writing or learning at school. Talk to your foster parents and Social Worker if you are having problems at school and they will support you to **GET THE EXTRA HELP YOU NEED.**

Friends

- * You might want to hang out with the friends you had when you lived with your family. Your foster parent or your Social Worker will help you to meet up with your old friends if you want to.
- * You might also want to make new friends in the area you are living in now. You will make friends in school but you can also join any local groups or clubs to help you make new friends.

Hobbies

- * Get involved in 'stuff' e.g. **TAKE UP A NEW HOBBY** or join a youth group.

Bullying

- * Some people are bullies and say nasty things. This can be online, on your phone or in person. If you are being bullied, the most important thing to do is tell an adult that you trust.

IT IS NORMAL TO FEEL...

- | | | |
|------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| * Scared; | * Lost; | * Confused; |
| * Anxious; | * Sad; | * Relieved; |
| * Worried; | * Down; | * All over the place. |
| * Unsure; | * Curious about everything; | |

WHAT TO DO IF...

You are stressed or worried...

Moving into care can be a stressful time. As the young people living in care have said, it is completely normal to feel anxious or worried. Going through a stressful time can affect your mental health.

You might feel shy
or like you don't
want to join in
when you first go
into care

This might mean that you are not sleeping well, not eating well, feeling anxious, quiet, getting cranky or in a bad mood. If you have any of these problems or are feeling stressed in any way, the MOST important thing to do is to talk to someone about it.

You can talk to your foster parent or Social Worker, a teacher or a friend. There are also websites and organisations that help young people when they are worried about their mental health e.g. Reachout.com or Headstrong (see list of groups that work with young people in care on pages 20 and 21).

You feel really scared...

It is completely normal to feel scared and again, the best thing to do is talk to someone about how you are feeling and why you are feeling scared. If you can, talk to your Social Worker or your foster parent and they will help you.

WHAT TO DO IF...

Things go wrong with the people caring for you

Things go wrong in every family. Sometimes people make mistakes and say and do things that they wish they had not. Nobody does the right thing all the time.

This does not mean that the situation cannot be fixed. If somebody says or does something to upset you, you should talk to them about it, explain how it made you feel and ask them to apologise to you.

Again, if you feel that things are going wrong, the most important thing to do is to talk to someone about it. If you feel that things have gone so wrong that they cannot be fixed, it is very important that you talk to your Social Worker who will talk to you about what can be done.

If you do something wrong or say something that hurts or upsets someone, it is important to say you are sorry. It might help to explain how you were feeling at the time but you should still apologise and take responsibility for your actions.

You want to make a complaint

If you are unhappy for any reason, you can arrange to talk to your Social Worker. You can contact your Social Worker anytime, even if it is just for a small thing; You can also talk to your foster parent or any other adult you trust.

If you would prefer to talk to make a complaint to someone else, you can contact a senior manager in the Child & Family Agency, EPIC (a group that works with children in care), the Ombudsman for Children or the Gardaí. (All of the contact details are on pages 20 and 21).

You should get something called 'Speak Up, Speak Out' when you come into care. This will tell you how to make a complaint if you want to.

GROUPS THAT WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

Group	Contact details
ALATEEN is for young people aged 12 - 20 who have a family member who has a problem with alcohol.	T: 01 8732699 W: www.al-anon-ireland.org
BIG BROTHER BIG SISTER is a 'mentoring programme' that matches an adult volunteer to a young person. The volunteer and young person spend about 2 hours a week together having fun, hanging out, chatting and doing things together. It is a really great way of 'having someone to talk to'...	Check out WWW.BBBSIRELAND.IE/MAP.PHP to find a Big Brother Big Sister programme in your local area.
The CHILD AND FAMILY AGENCY is responsible for all young people living in care. If you need to make a complaint, you can contact their 'YOUR SERVICE, YOUR SAY' team.	T: 1859 24 1850 E: yoursay@hse.ie W: www.hse.ie
EMPOWERING PEOPLE IN CARE (EPIC) is an organisation that works with young people who are living in care or who used to live in care.	T: 01 872 7661 / 087 903 6598 (for text messages) E: info@epiconline.ie W: www.epiconline.ie

Group	Contact details
EXTERN IRELAND gives care and support to children and their families. A lot of young people in care are supported by Extern Ireland.	T: 045 878 720 E: externireland@extern.org W: www.extern.org
FOCUS IRELAND helps people who are homeless with a special service for young people under 26 years of age.	T: 01 881 5900 E: info@focusireland.ie W: www.focusireland.ie
HEADSTRONG is an organisation that helps and supports young people's mental health in Ireland.	T: 01 472 7010 E: info@headstrong.ie W: www.headstrong.ie
The OMBUDSMAN FOR CHILDREN'S OFFICE (OCO) can support you to find out more about your rights and help you with a complaint about services.	T: 1800 20 20 40 E: oco@oco.ie W: www.oco.ie
The YOUTH ADVOCATE PROGRAMME (YAP) supports young people to return home after spending time away from their home and families. Each young person and their family will work with YAP to come up with a plan. The young person and their family will be given a YAP worker who will be in contact with the family every week and help them to put their plan into action.	You can ask your Social Worker to talk with you about YAP.
YODA is the Youth Drug and Alcohol Service based in Tallaght. YoDA provides help and treatment for young people under 18 who are having problems with their drug or alcohol use.	T: 01 466 5040

THINGS I WOULD
LIKE TO ASK OR
TELL MY SOCIAL
WORKER ABOUT





An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gníothaí Óige
Department of
Children and Youth Affairs



**GOING INTO
FOSTER CARE**

INFORMATION
FOR WHEN YOU FIRST
GO INTO FOSTER CARE

