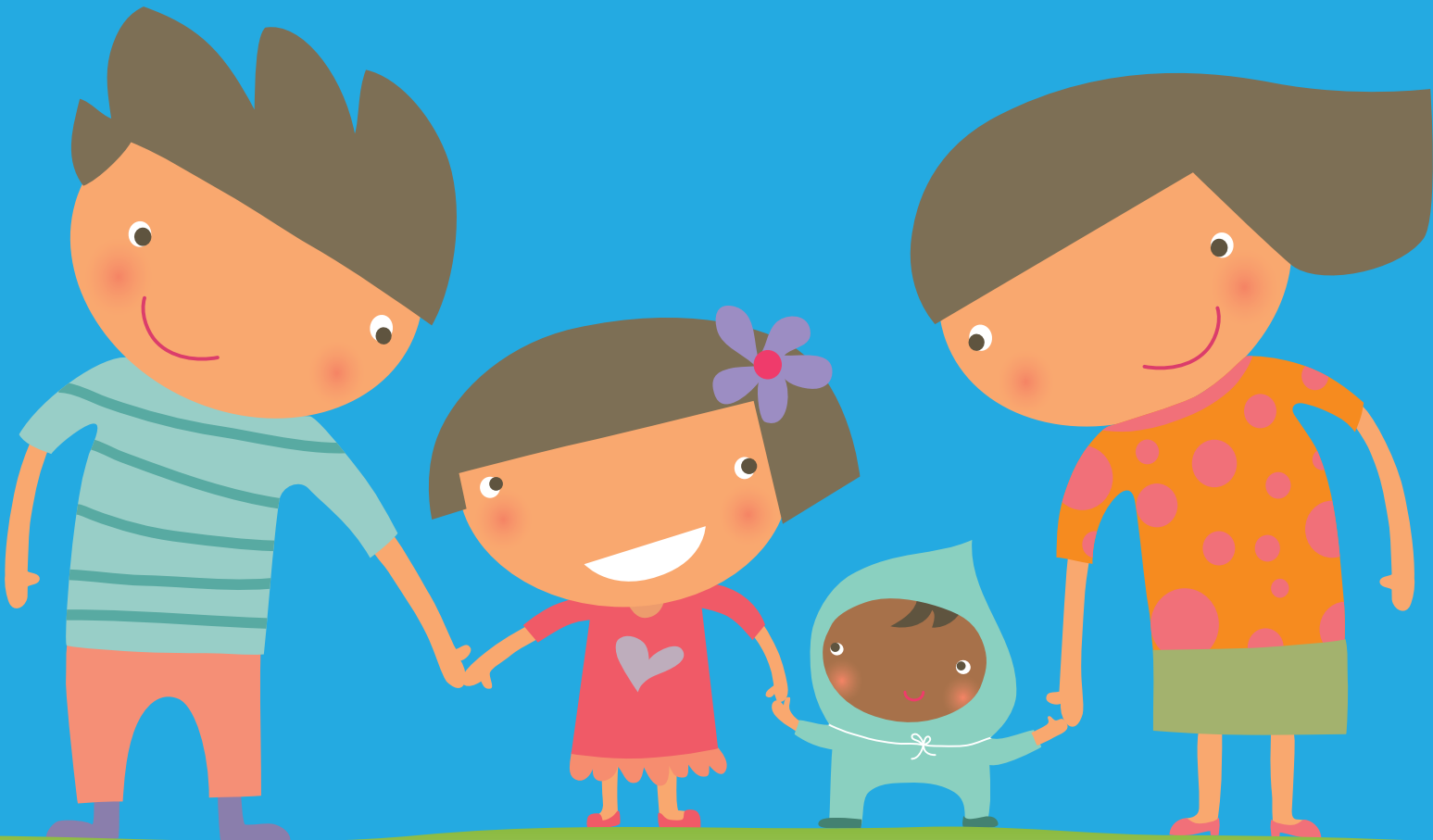


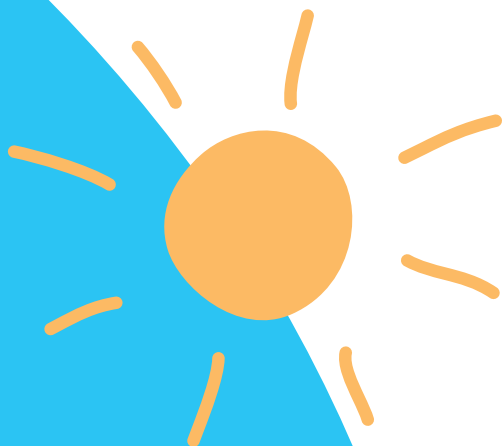
Your guide to being in foster care



Hello!

My name is **Matthew Davies**
and I'm the Registered Manager
of Aspris Fostering Services.

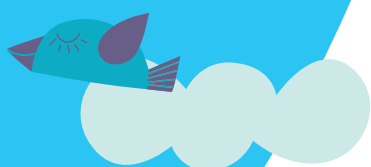




Your children's guide to foster care has been written and designed by the children who live with foster carers and Aspris Fostering Services. I hope it answers some of the questions you may have.

You may not have lived with a foster family before, or you may be moving to live with a new foster family. It's normal to have a lot of questions and we want to help answer some of these as quickly as we can.

I want to make sure that you feel safe, that you're well looked after and supported to do well, whether you are looked after by our foster carers for a short time, or a long time.



We've made sure that your children's guide has the name and contact details of the important people in your life, but I also want you to know that if you would like to talk to me, to share what's going well, to share what you may be worried about, or to tell me what you would like to happen, then you can!

If you'd like to talk to me on the telephone, then you can call my office number on **01684 560333** or mobile number on **07796 992637**. You can also write to me by email at **MatthewDavies@Aspris.com** or by posting a letter to Aspris Fostering Services, The Dairy House, 1 Mathon Place, Mathon, Worcestershire, WR13 5NZ.

If you would like to learn more about Aspris Fostering Services, then please let either your foster carer, their supervising social worker or I know, and I will send you a copy of something called our statement of purpose.

Matthew Davies
Registered Manager
Aspris Fostering Services



Why do I have to live with a foster carer?

When a child cannot live with their own family, they can move into a foster home where they will be safe. Children live with foster carers for all sorts of reasons, **but it's not because of anything you have done.**

What about what you want?

Your social worker should find out what your wishes and feelings are. They should take them into consideration, depending on your age and understanding.



What is a foster carer?

Foster carers are special people who have been carefully chosen to look after children who can't live with their own family. They have been supported to learn about how to look after children who haven't grown up in their family. Foster carers can look after children for a short amount of time, or a long amount of time. Foster carers do all the things parents do, such as setting rules and helping you with things like going to school, making sure you eat the right food and spending time enjoying the activities you like.

What makes a good foster carer?

We asked our children what makes a good foster carer and they told us;

SUPPORTIVE

friends

SAFETY

loving

CARING

TEACH

LISTEN

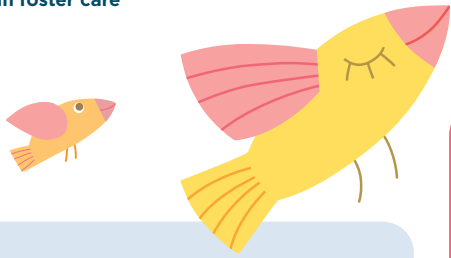
Your wishes and feelings

Wishes are what you want to do, what you want to happen or what you want someone to do for you. Feelings are about being happy, surprised, sad, scared, angry and excited about something, even if you don't understand what is happening.



What does your social worker do?

Your own social worker is someone who likes children and works for children's services. It is their job to make sure you are cared for and looked after, so you should think of them as someone who is there to help you. Your own social worker will visit you regularly and talk to you about what is happening in your life. They care about you and **you can talk to them** about anything you are worried about.



Why does your foster carer have a social worker?

We do our best to make sure that your foster carer gets all of the help and support 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 spend time with and talk to your foster carers regularly, to make sure that they are supported to look after you in the best possible way. They will also talk to you to make sure you're happy, well cared for and looked after.

What is an independent reviewing officer (IRO)?

It is your independent reviewing officer's job to make sure that the decisions made about your life are the best ones for you, follow your 'care plan' and respect your rights. Your 'review' checks that your care plan is the right one for you.

Your independent reviewing officer should listen to you about how your review is completed and who you think should attend. Some children do not like having their parents at their reviews at the same time. Also, it might be that some places and times are better for you. You might prefer smaller meetings with fewer people and you may have your own ideas about what you want to say and how you would like to say it. Your review should allow you to discuss the things that matter to you.

How will people look after me in my foster home?

There are certain ways you should be treated no matter what;



YOU SHOULD BE SAFE, SECURE AND PROTECTED.



YOUR FOSTER CARERS SHOULD LISTEN TO YOU AND TREAT YOU FAIRLY AND EQUALLY.



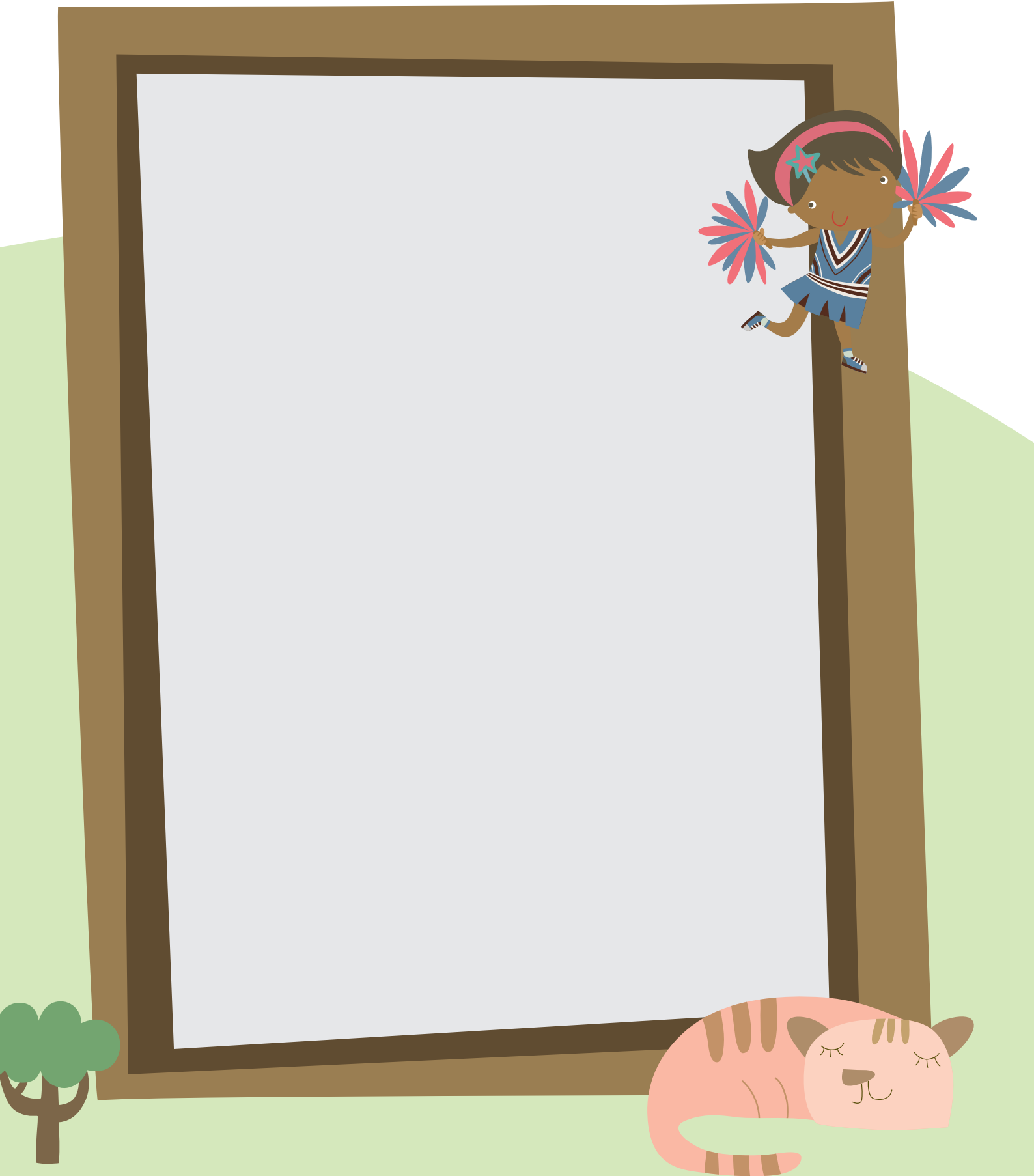
THEY WILL HELP YOU TO BE HEALTHY AND SUPPORT YOU IN SCHOOL AND TO ENJOY YOUR RELIGION AND CULTURE.



IF YOU HAVE A DISABILITY, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO ANY HELP YOU NEED SO IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU LET YOUR SOCIAL WORKER KNOW WHAT YOUR NEEDS ARE.

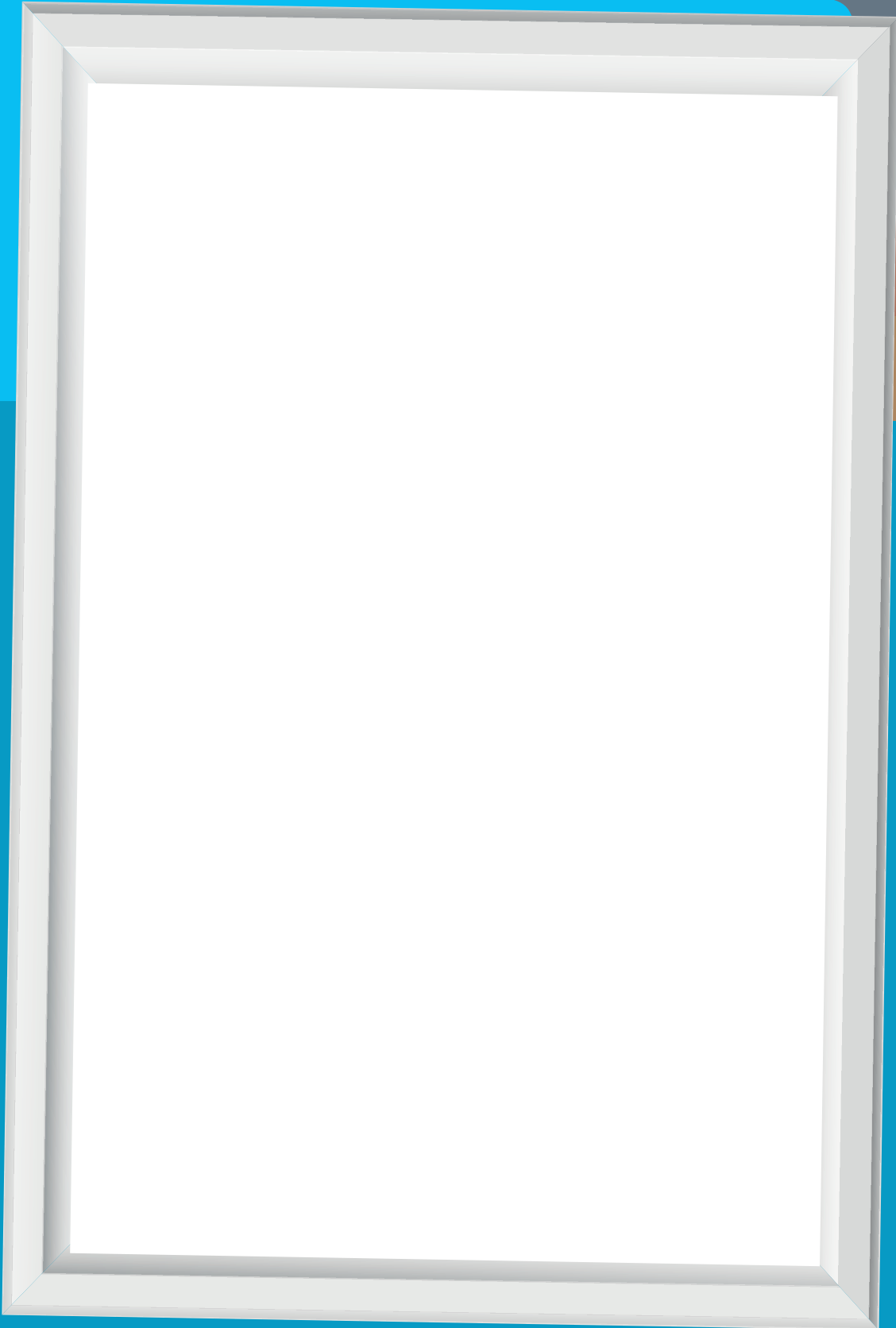
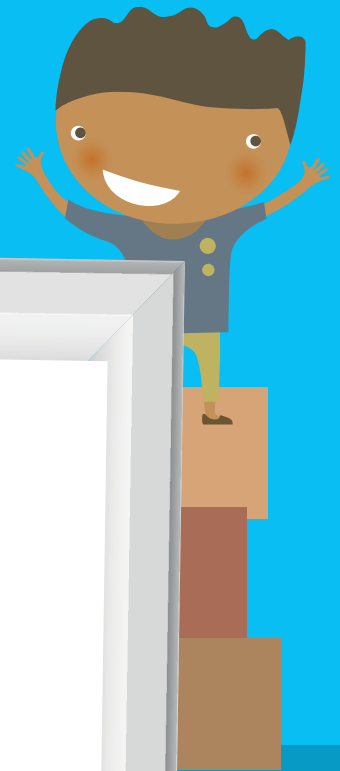
Every foster family has rules. These are about how to treat each other, listening to each other and keeping safe. What are your foster carers' rules?

You and your foster carer can write them down to help you remember:



Who is in my foster family?

DRAW YOUR FOSTER FAMILY HERE:



Who decides what will happen?

Whilst you live with your foster carers, there will be meetings called 'reviews', where important people in your life will come together and make a 'care plan' for you. Before your review, you will be asked what your wishes and feelings are. You may be asked to write these down or to tell your social worker.

If you are old enough, you may also take part in your review by attending a meeting with the important people in your life. If you want to attend your meeting, but don't want certain important people there, you can tell your social worker, foster carer or your independent reviewing officer, who is responsible for chairing your reviews.

If you have any worries in between your reviews, you can talk to your social worker, your foster carer, your foster carers supervising social worker or your independent reviewing officer.



How long will I have to stay?

Your social worker will make a plan for you. This is called your 'care plan' and includes everything that's important to you such as your school, your health, when you see your family and friends, and how long you will stay with your foster family.

Tell your social worker if there is anything in your care plan that you don't like or disagree with, as they may be able to change this. If you ever feel worried about your future, you can tell your social worker, foster carer or your foster carers social worker and they will do everything they can to help.



When will I see my family?

Just because you live in a foster home doesn't mean that you have to lose touch with your own family. Your foster carer understands how important your family is to you. This may include seeing your brothers and sisters and other members of your family either in your foster home or at another place.

Your social worker will speak with you about when you can see your family and how often. Tell them who you want to see so they can try and make sure this happens.

What about school?



If you are already at school, we will try to work out whether it's best for you to stay at your school, or move to a new school. School is very important because it's where you learn to make new friends and where you can take part in activities and hobbies after school. Your teacher will know that you have gone to live with a foster carer, but it is your choice if you want to tell other people. If you have any problems, difficulties or are being bullied, you must tell your teacher, social worker or foster carer. They will want to help you.

What about my health?

You will have the opportunity to have a health assessment every year, where you get the chance to talk about anything to do with your health, like your skin, what it's like growing up, friendships, your feelings and lots more.

Health assessments happen once a year and your foster carer will support you, or you can speak to the Nurse or Doctor on your own, although they may still wish to speak to your foster carer. Your foster carer will make sure that you are registered with a Doctor, Dentist and an Optician.

Your foster carers will not mind if you ask them all sorts of things...



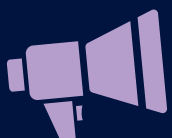


GAME, CHAT, *Link-up!*

Link-Up! is a chance for children living in foster homes to connect with each other, play games, chat, and vibe! It's a space just for you, to have fun, to meet other children being cared for by foster carers and an opportunity to make new friends, whilst being supported by Aspris Fostering Services.

If you'd like to find out more, then please speak to your foster carer, or your foster families Supervising Social Worker.

SHOUT OUT!



We have a forum of children and young people called Shout Out! They make sure that the voices of all children and young people in the care of Aspris Fostering Services can be heard, to help them and make a difference to their lives.

Shout out! work really hard to help improve things for other children in care. They also do lots of fun activities too and help arrange Big Shout Out! our summer party.

If you'd like to find out more, then please speak to your foster carer, or your foster families Supervising Social Worker.



What if I have a problem or I'm unhappy?

YOUR FOSTER CARER IS NOT ALLOWED TO HURT YOU IN ANY WAY AND NEITHER IS ANYONE ELSE. IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT ANYTHING AT ALL, PLEASE DON'T BE AFRAID TO SPEAK UP AS THERE ARE LOTS OF PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT YOU AND WANT TO HELP.

We want to know if you have any problems, or whether you are worried about something or someone in your foster home, at school or somewhere else. There are lots of ways you can tell us what you think, if you are worried or whether you would like to make a complaint. You can tell your foster carer, your social worker, your foster carers social worker or your independent reviewing officer.



What is an advocate?

An advocate is different from any other professional. They are there to help and support you and to make sure you are involved in all decisions about your life. Advocates also help you speak out when things go wrong. They make sure you know your rights and help you to get the support you need.

They will always be on your side. They will tell you about your rights and give you information and advice about the things you should get from your social worker, foster carer or where you are living. They can go with you to meetings with your social worker, such as your 'reviews', to help you say the things that are important to you. If you are unhappy about how you are being treated or if you are worried about what is happening, they can help sort out any problems or concerns. They can make sure people listen to you. They will make sure you understand what the important people in your life are saying and help you to say what you want to say.

If you want an advocate, you can ask your social worker or foster carer and they will request an advocate to speak to you. Unfortunately, this can sometimes take longer

than you would like. In these situations, you can also contact **Coram Voice's 'Always Heard' helpline** by telephone on **0808 800 5792** or by email on **help@coramvoice.org.uk**, or the **Children's Commissioners 'Help at Hand' helpline** by telephone on **0800 528 0731** or by email on **help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk**

Both Coram Voice's 'Always Heard' and the Children's Commissioners 'Help at Hand' will want to help and support you. You can speak to both confidentially about any questions you have or anything that's troubling you. No issue will be too big or too small.



Who can I talk to if I need help?

Your social worker is:

Name:

Office:

Mobile:

Email:

My foster carers social worker is:

Name:

Office:

Mobile:

Email:

Your independent reviewing officer is:

Name:

Office:

Mobile:

Email:

Useful numbers



Ofsted is the government body responsible for upholding standards in foster care. They inspect and regulate fostering agencies, including Aspris Fostering Services.



If you would like a copy of the latest Ofsted Report for Aspris Fostering Services, please ask your foster carers social worker for a copy, and we will ensure this is shared with you. You can contact Ofsted by writing or phoning them at:

Address: Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Phone number: **0300 123 1231**

Email: **enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk**

Website: **www.ofsted.gov.uk**

The Children's Commissioner promotes and protects the rights of children, especially the most vulnerable, and stands up for their views and interests. She is the 'eyes and ears' of children in foster care and the country as a whole, and is expected to carry out her duties 'without fear or favour' of Government, children's agencies, and the voluntary and private sectors, which includes Aspris Fostering Services. She also provides advice to children who are in or leaving foster care, through her advice line, Help at Hand.



The Children's Commissioner's name is **Rachel de Souza**. You can contact Rachel by writing or phoning her at:

Address: Children's Commissioner for England, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT

Phone number: **020 7783 8330**

Email: **info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk**

Website: **www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk**

Who else can help?

The logo for Childline, featuring the word "childline" in a blue, lowercase, sans-serif font.

ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME
childline.org.uk | 0800 1111

A free, private and confidential service where you can talk about anything. Childline will help anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue they're going through. You can talk to Childline about anything and no problem is too big or too small. Call **0800 1111** or chat to them online. Childline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, so you can talk to them any time. But they might not be able to talk for as long when it's after midnight. Visit: **www.childline.org.uk** for all of the details.

The logo for YoungMinds, with "YOUNG" in yellow and "MINDS" in grey, both in a bold, sans-serif font.

The YoungMinds Crisis Messenger text service provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis and need support, you can text YM to **85258**.

The logo for Papyrus, featuring a stylized purple and blue speech bubble icon to the left of the word "PAPYRUS" in a bold, sans-serif font, with "PREVENTION OF YOUNG SUICIDE" in smaller text below.

PAPYRUS provides confidential support and advice to young people struggling with thoughts of suicide through their helpline, HOPELINEUK. PAPYRUS are open 9am-12am (midnight) every day of the year. Call **0800 068 4141**. You can also email them and find help and advice on their website: **www.papyrus-uk.org**

The logo for FRANK, with the word "FRANK" in a bold, blue, blocky font where the letters are interconnected.

If you need friendly, confidential advice about drugs, you can talk to FRANK. Call FRANK 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on **0300 123 6600**. You can also text a question to **82111** and FRANK will text you back. The live chat service operates 2pm-6pm, 7 days a week. Visit: **www.talktofrank.com** to find out more.



YOUR NOTES:

A space for you to write
down any feelings, or just
have a doodle...



