A young persons GUIDE

It's all new, but there is nothing to be scared of.

Channels & Choices
Therapeutic Community

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION
ABOUT US
SO WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?
WHAT DOES 'BEING LOOKED AFTER MEAN' ?
FOSTERING FACTS
ABOUT YOUR FOSTER HOME
CHILD CARE REVIEWS
SCHOOLING
COMPLAINTS
BULLYING
USEFUL
ALL ABOUT YOU
THINGS TO DO

"We will help answer some questions.

WHY USE THIS?

Welcome to Channels and Choices. We want you to be well cared for during the time you are with the foster family you are going to be living with so we have chosen a family we think you will feel most comfortable with.

We've written this booklet for a number of reasons. Firstly, we would like to give you a better idea of who we are and what we do but we also want to provide you with information about what you can expect from living in a foster home and in another section you'll see there's information to let you know what to do if you are feeling unhappy.

The guide also provides you with somewhere for you to keep information about you and your family and lastly there's lots of general information including things about places to visit or things to do in your area.

If you have any trouble reading this or are unsure of any of the words please ask someone to read it to you or explain them.

ABOUT US

We are a therapeutic community

Channels & Choices is what is known as a 'therapeutic community'. This means that as well as us being a foster service we try to provide a structured environment for you to live in.

Relationships, the structure of the day and different activities are all designed to help you make positive changes and grow emotionally and physically. We will help you get involved in many new experiences including education, activities, and therapy so that a new life outside C&C is made possible. If you would like to know more about what we do please ask an adult.

Channels & Choices is a company that provides fostering, education and residential services for children and young people. Our fostering agency provides foster families for young people who are in care or 'Looked After' as it sometimes called.

Here are just a few things about the people who work for Channels & Choices.

Sarah Whiting is the Manager who runs the fostering agency from our office in Dover. If you visit the office you might see her there or sometime she might come to one of your meetings.

Ross Barnett is a Director of Channels & Choices and is also known as the Responsible Individual.

Ross, Steve and others started Channels & Choices back in 2005.

_____ is a Supervising Social Worker and it's his/her job to visit your foster family in the same way that your social worker comes to meet with you. When you meet _____, he/she will always be pleased to hear how you are and to see what you are doing at school, or at your foster home.

Either _____ or Sarah will also go to your review meetings.

In our office we've also got Sarah & Kerrie who answer the telephone, do lots of typing and all sorts of other things to help us.

There are other people who work for Channels & Choices and should you meet them they will always introduce themselves. If you're still not sure, you can always ask to see their identity card.

We would love to know what you think

We would really like to know what you think of our foster care agency and what else you want from it so that we can plan and improve our services in the future. Your foster carers' Channels & Choices social worker will be asking for your views at your foster carers' annual review. This could be a good time to tell us what you think of our service, but you can talk to your carers' social worker at any time, or ask your foster carer or social worker to pass on your comments to us.

We hold events such as Christmas parties, pantomimes, activities and outings where you can meet and talk to the fostering team. These events are really fun and we would love for you to be involved and give us your views on what it is like living in foster care.

Our contact details are:

Channels & Choices Therapeutic Fostering
Kearsney Manor, Alkham Rd, Temple Ewell, Dover CT16 3EQ
t: (01304) 827 777 e: fostering@channelsandchoices.co.uk

Would you like to help us recruit carers and staff members?

We try to include children's views in all of our work and this includes the selection of staff and carers. You might like to help out at one of the skills to foster courses, sitting on interviews or helping to design new questions. We offer you support and guidance so that you feel confident to be involved .

We listen to your ideas on other ways for you to contribute to making sure we have the right staff and carers to meet children and young peoples' needs.

If this is something that you think that you might like to do please mention it to your foster carers or their Channels & Choices Social Worker.

SO WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

All children and young people have rights. During the time you stay with your foster family you can expect to be:

- **able to say what your wishes and feelings are and to know they will be taken into account**
- **listened to if you are having any problems**
- **protected from harm and kept safe**
- **kept healthy and provided with health care to suit your needs**
- **encouraged to get the most from your education**
- **have your privacy and confidentiality respected**
- **valued and not discriminated against for any reason**
- **given information about your family and other important people in your life and to have contact with them, or a clear explanation of why this is not possible**
- **given opportunities to develop your skills and interests**
- **encouraged to participate in making decisions and plans for your future and to be prepared for life as an adult, with the necessary help made available to you while you do this**
- **know how to complain if things go wrong and for that complaint to be dealt with properly**
- **told clearly what you can do and what you are not allowed to**

During your stay, our foster carers, social workers, teachers and others will all work together to make sure that your rights are kept to.

We believe that by building on the skills that you already have, we can help you to reach your full potential.

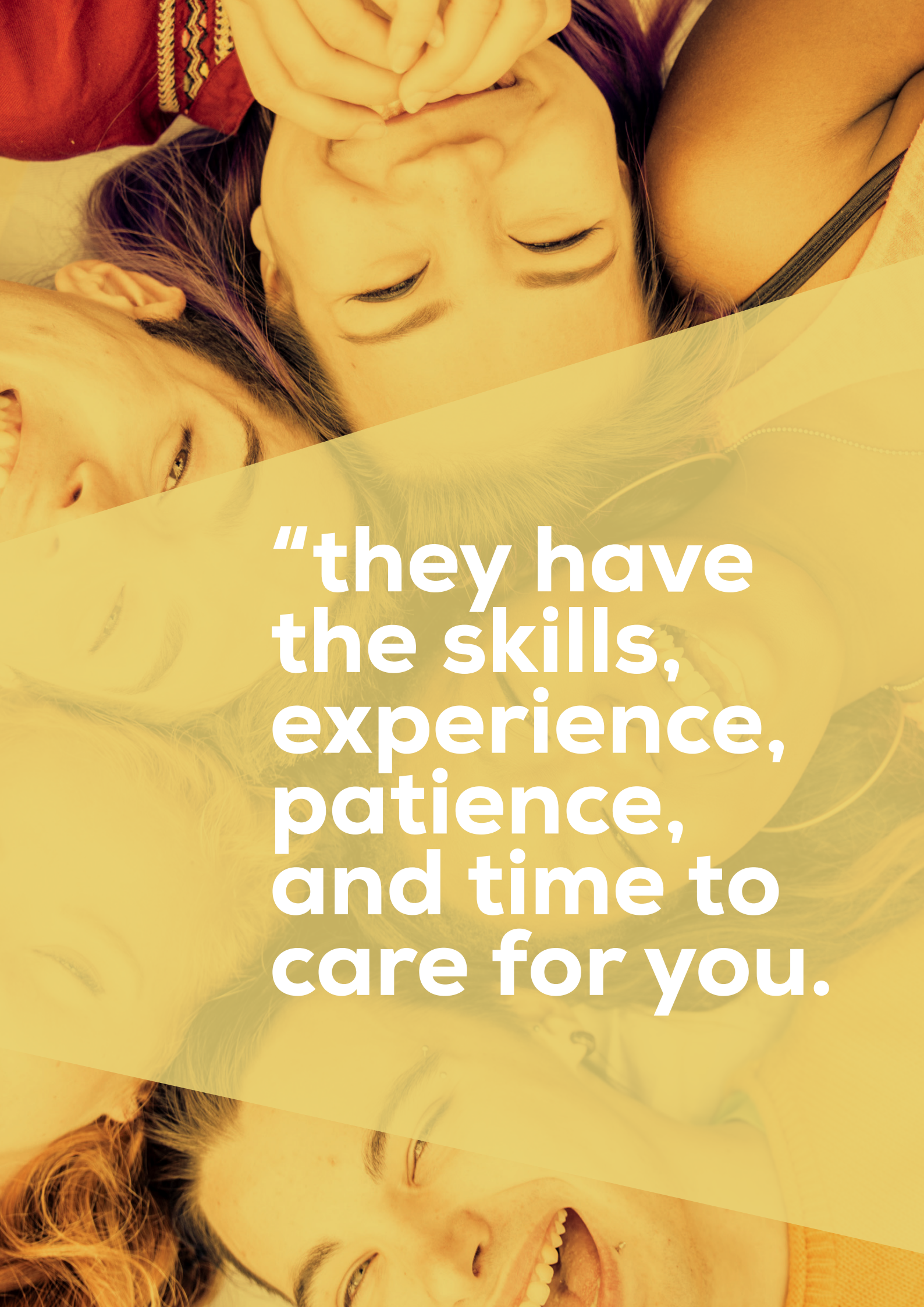
WHAT DOES 'BEING LOOKED AFTER MEAN' ?

Some young people cannot live with their mums and dads or carers because of things that happen in their family. There may also be reasons such as arguments or an illness. It might also be because the young person in the family is not being looked after properly of the young person has been hurt by their mum and dad. When this happens, the local authority has a duty to make sure that the young person is safe. If you have brothers and sisters, they may also have to leave home as well. Every effort will be made to make sure that you stay together.

When this happens, you will be allocated a social worker to keep you safe and they will have spoken with us and asked us to find a foster family for you to live with.

Sometimes, you may have to live somewhere else for a short time while things are sorted out at home or sometimes for a long period, depending on the situation or in some cases, you may go to live with a family member such as an Aunt, Uncle or another relative. However, sometimes this is not possible and you may have to live with a foster carer. All foster carers have been assessed and trained by Channels and Choices to ensure that they have the skills, experience, patience, and time to care for you.

You will probably have lots of questions about being in a foster home and although everyone's situation is different, we have tried to give answers to questions we thought young people might have. The important thing is, if you have any questions that are not answered in this booklet then please do not keep them to yourself and ask your foster carer or social worker.



"they have the skills, experience, patience, and time to care for you.

FOSTERING FACTS

You are not alone. At any one time there are about 50,000 children and young people living in foster care in this country.

Did you know these famous people were fostered?

- **Nelson Mandela, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize and South African leader, was fostered by the chief of his tribe after his father died.**
- **Eddie Murphy, US comedian**
- **Pierce Brosnan, a famous actor, who you may know as the character from James Bond, 007 books and films**
- **John Lennon, member of pop group, The Beatles**
- **Bill Clinton, former US president**
- **Seal, singer and musician who has had worldwide hits**
- **Steve Jobs, the co-founder of Apple computers**
- **Samantha Morton, Oscar-nominated actress who starred in Minority Report**
- **Oprah Winfrey, the American chat show hostess, who was fostered by her grandmother**
- **Beenie man, reggae artist**

ABOUT YOUR FOSTER HOME

Who will i live with and what will they be like?

Foster carers are people who choose to look after young people just like you. They will do what's best for you and treat you like part of their own family.

Foster carers are all different. For example, sometimes they may be a single foster carer, or sometimes they may be a couple. Some may have children and some may not. Sometimes, but not always, there might be another child living with the family who is also 'Looked After' like you.

When a foster carer is being chosen, we always make sure that we try to match your ethnicity, culture and religious needs (if you have any). We also try to make sure that they live near to your school, college and friends. If you have a disability then we will make sure that you live with carers who are trained to look after you. Most importantly the foster carer will need to understand you. A lot of work is done to pick a suitable family.

Your foster family may eat the same kind of food as you and celebrate the same special days like Christmas, Eid-Al-Addha or Passover. Even when your carers do not share the same tastes, or perhaps the same religion, it is important you know they will do all they can to meet your needs, beliefs and wishes.

The foster carer will also do lots of the things that most parents do like taking you to school if you cannot go by yourself and helping you with homework but most importantly they will make sure you are kept healthy, take you on outings and give you support with any hobbies or interests you might have.

Will i meet my foster carers before i move in?

If there is enough time we will always do our best to let you meet your foster family before you move in. If you have not met them already, then we will always try to make sure that you are given some information about them as soon as possible. All our foster carers have a booklet called 'All About Us' which includes

photographs and a description of who is in the family, where they live and things they like to do. Hopefully a copy of your foster carers 'All About Us' is in this pack. If not, ask your foster carer who will make sure we get a copy to you.

Will it be like living at home?

Once you have moved into your foster family's home, there will be something called a Placement Meeting held within the first five days of you moving in. This meeting, which you can attend, is a chance for you to talk about the day-to-day arrangements of what it will be like for you living in the foster home. This includes helping you to maintain, where this is thought to be right for you, the routines you would have had at home like:

- **what time you should come home if you are out**
- **when your mealtimes are**
- **what time you go to bed**
- **keeping your bedroom neat and tidy**

There are other things that will need to be agreed such as how much pocket money you should get. Your foster carer may also have some rules of their house which they will want you to agree to whilst you are living with them.

Your foster carer will be given an amount of money to look after you. This is called the fostering allowance. This money is given to the foster carers to meet all of your needs. This includes your pocket money and allows for things for your personal care such as toiletries and money to go to enjoy trips out like the cinema or pay for any hobbies, sports or interests that you may have.

How long will i stay?

This depends on the reasons you are in foster care. The foster families at Channels & Choices provide places for children for all different lengths of time. Shortly after you arrive, the people who come to the Placement Meeting will talk with you about how long your stay will be.

You might hear people talking about short or long term fostering. You can find an explanation of these words in the section called 'A list of words you may hear people use and what they mean'.

Sometimes, when a young person finds it too difficult to live as

part of a foster family, great consideration will be given to other places that may be able to meet their needs; this might be a children's home for a while.

What about keeping in-touch with my family and friends?

We believe it is very important, wherever it is possible, for you to keep in touch with all the people who are special to you.

Whilst you are living with your foster family, arrangements will be made for you to have contact with your family, friends, brothers and sisters. Your social worker will speak to you about this, as there may be reasons why you cannot see them on your own. These things will be talked about at your review meeting and before a decision is made, you will be asked what your feelings are.

Your foster carer and social worker will need to know when these visits happen, so that they can make sure you are kept safe at all times. These visits will be set up by your social worker.

If you feel worried about seeing someone in your family alone please speak with your carer or your social worker.

What other people will i see when i am living with my foster family?

Whilst you live with your foster family, you will have regular statutory visits from your social worker. However, if you want to see your social worker sooner, or more often, you can discuss this with them. Your foster carer will have regular visits from their Social Worker who works for Channels and Choices. These visits take place once a month.

You will also be invited to attend 'Child in Care' reviews. An explanation of these is given in the next section.

CHILD IN CARE REVIEWS

What are they?

So that everyone can talk about what is best for you and make plans for your future, there are meetings held that are called Child in Care Reviews. Your social worker, foster carer, and teachers and parents where appropriate, will attend. You will be invited to go, or if you decide not to attend, you will be asked to let someone know what you want and feel. You could either write this down or perhaps do a drawing.

These reviews will be chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer or IRO as they are known. It is the IRO's job to discuss your progress and ensure everything is being done that can be done. Prior to the meeting, the IRO will speak with you to get your views.

If you would like to contact your IRO you can write to them at:

(* address)
Or telephone:

How often are these meetings?

The first review meeting should happen in the first month after you arrive at your foster home.

If, after three months, you are still living away from home the next meeting will take place. After that, the meetings are held every six months, although they can be more often, if you or other people think there is a need for this.

SCHOOLING

We believe that learning is very important and if it is at all possible for you stay at the same school then your social worker will sort out how you will get from your foster home to school and back each day. Sometimes this is not always possible and if this happens to you then your social worker will find another school for you. Changing schools can be stressful, so make sure you talk to your foster carer and social worker if you have any worries or if anyone is bullying you or you just need to talk about it.

There will also be a teacher at your school called a 'Designated Teacher' whose job it is to help you sort out any problems you might have. Make sure you know who they are and speak to them about any problems

COMPLAINTS

What to do if I want to make a complaint?

Complaints are dealt with in different ways, depending on what it is you wish to complain about. If there is anything that you are not happy about, such as the time you have to go to bed, or how much pocket money you get, then these are everyday grumbles and you should try talking to your foster carer or social worker about these things.

Stage 1 - Informal Complaint.

If your complaint is about Channels & Choices or the care that you receive in your foster home you need to tell someone from Channels & Choices such as your foster carer or their Channels & Choices Social Worker.
You may feel that you want to tell your social worker or you may choose to tell someone else you can trust, such a teacher or a friend, who can then pass your complaint to Channels & Choices. We will then deal with your complaint as quickly as possible.

Stage 2 - Formal Complaint.

If you are not happy with the response to your complaint at Stage 1 you can ask for it to go to Stage 2. Sarah Whiting the Manager at Channels & Choices will go through your complaint with you, speak to relevant people involved and she will give you a response in writing within 28 days.

Stage 3

If you still feel that the complaint is not sorted out the next stage (stage 3) is for the complaint to go to one of the company's Directors; Ross Barnett. If the complaint is regarding the Manager Sarah Whiting the complaint will also go directly to Ross as a stage 3 complaint.

At any stage you can also contact Ofsted or the children's commissioner regarding any part of the service. Their contact details are on page 17 and 18.

If your complaint is something to do with your social worker, someone from, or something about your local authority then you will need to follow the complaints procedure for your local authority. Your foster carer or someone from Channels and Choices will be able to help you with this.

Will i be in trouble for making a complaint?

If you have what you think is a real complaint then it is only right and proper to let someone know if something is wrong and you will not get into trouble for doing this. Remember – you should never be afraid to do this and it is best for everyone if you say what's wrong. We will ensure that you are heard and supported.

Never though, make a complaint about something or someone that is not true. This will only cause upset for everyone involved.

Can i speak to my IRO?

The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is there to make sure that all of your wishes and feelings are listened to. The IRO's role is to speak to all the people involved in your care and make sure that everything is being done that should be done. They will also make clear recommendations about your care plan, which could be for you to return home or to remain with your foster family. Your IRO's contact details are on Pg 11.

Other people you can speak to

ChildLine

ChildLine is a free 24-hour helpline for children and young people in the UK where you can talk about any problem, at any time - day or night. ChildLine's counselors are there to help you find ways to sort things out.

ChildLine is confidential - which means they won't tell anyone about your call, unless you want them to talk to somebody for you, or you are in danger.

They produce leaflets about all sorts of things that you might find interesting. Their website address is www.childline.org.uk

You can email them on info@childline.org.uk or call their helpline on 0800 1111 or write to Freepost 1111, London, N1 OBR

Kidscape

Is a children's charity, who give practical advice on bullying and keeping safe. You can access their website by going to www.kidscape.org.uk

National Youth Advocacy Service

The National Youth Advocacy Service provides free advice and information for young people, including free legal advice. Where needed, they will send an independent advocate (someone who is not your foster carer or social worker) to court or meetings to speak for you or to help you make a complaint.

You can call them on their Freephone 0800 616 101 or Email at help@nyas.net. Their website can be found at www.nyas.net

NSPCC

You can call the NSPCC's free 24 hour helpline to talk about any kind of problem. You can also email for advice and they will reply within 24 hours. On the other hand, you can visit the NSPCC's site for young people, which includes lots of info about all sorts of problems.

Their website address is www.worriedneed2talk.org.uk or you can email them on help@nspcc.org.uk or call their Freephone on 0800 800 500.

Ofsted

Channels & Choices are visited by Inspectors who work for Ofsted. It is their job to go around and look at all the places where children in care are living, to make sure they are safe and being well cared for. If you are unhappy about your care, or something that Channels & Choices is doing, or not doing, then they will listen to you.

You can write to them at:
Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
or telephone 0300 1231231 or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The Children's commissioner

The Children's Commissioner for England is Anne Longfield OBE. She promotes and protects children's rights in England. You can contact the team on 0207 783 8330 or
email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Voice for the Child in Care

Voice for the Child in Care or VCC says it "is committed to "campaigning for improvements to the lives of children and young people in care and empowering them to speak out for changes in their lives". It also offers a service for children and young people that provides access to "immediate advice and telephone advocacy", through their team of trained telephone advocates, based in their London headquarters. It will also provide a local VCC advocate to meet and support you if they feel this is right to do so.

For more information you can download a leaflet from their website on http://www.coramvoice.org.uk/
or you can contact them on 0808 800 5792 which is a Freephone only for children and young people.

You can also email them at
info@coramvoice.org.uk

“We are a caring team that are here for you.

BULLYING

No one at Channels & Choices will tolerate anyone being bullied, for whatever reason, so we want to make sure you know what to do if you, or someone you know, are being bullied. Here is some guidance for you.

What is bullying?

Bullying is something that can hurt you on the inside or on the outside:

- **bullying hurts you on the outside if someone hits you or hurts you physically**
- **bullying hurts you on the inside if someone calls you names or teases you, and hurts your feelings.**

Bullying can be:

- **pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching, any form of violence or threats**
- **name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing**
- **tormenting, threatening ridicule, humiliation, excluding someone from a group or activities**
- **racial taunts, graffiti, gestures**

Here are some other things about bullying:

- **bullying is done on purpose**
- **bullying is not an accident. If someone hurts you during a game by accident, this is not bullying. If every time you played a game, someone hurts you or your feelings, this is bullying**
- **bullying happens more than once**
- **bullying is wrong**
- **no one has the right to hurt you or make you feel bad.**

How you may feel if you are being bullied

- **Sick**
- **In pain**
- **Worried or stressed**
- **Frustrated**
- **Isolated**
- **Lonely**
- **Feel like you don't want to go to school**
- **Have difficulty eating or sleeping**

What should i do?

If you are being bullied you must get help!

- The first thing to do is tell an adult who is looking after you what is happening
- Remember adults should make sure you are protected from harm
- If you feel shy about asking for help, visit our website www.channelsandchoices.co.uk/help enter your name, contact method and your message so we can help.
- If you have a friend to support you, you could ask them to come with you to ask for help
- It is ALWAYS important to report bullying. It is not telling tales or grassing, it is keeping safe.

What if it is an adult who is bullying me?

- You must tell another adult straight away. You could tell a carer, a teacher or a social worker.
- You could phone Social Services, Childline or the NSPCC (telephone numbers in the Useful Info Section).

What can I do if I think someone else is being bullied?

Be a special friend!

- Try to be a friend to the person being bullied
- Don't rush over and take the bullies on: you might get hurt and you don't want other people thinking you're a bully
- Tell the person being bullied you know what is happening and that you will help them
- You could go with them to get help from an adult
- Remember if you ignore bullying, you are saying it is okay
- Don't let the bullies get away with thinking that no one will do anything

Remember: Ask for help

It is very important that you talk to an adult if you are worried about something because if an adult knows something is wrong they can help you, but they need to know, to be able to help!

USEFUL

Telephone numbers and addresses

The Children's Legal Centre

The Children's Legal Centre is run by lawyers and other people with experience in child law and is an independent national charity concerned with law and policy affecting children and young people. The Children's Legal Centre has a lot of experience in providing legal advice to children, their carers and other people like social workers, across the United Kingdom. Call them on 01206 873820 or write to them at:

Children's Legal Centre
Wivenhoe Park
Colchester
Essex CO4 3SQ

FRANK

FRANK provides free and confidential advice and help to anyone affected by drugs. You can access their website by going to www.talktofrank.com or call their free 24 hour Helpline on 0800 77 66 00

The Who CARES? Trust

The Who Cares? Trust is a national charity, working to improve the care for children and young people, who are separated from their families and living in residential or foster care. Their website address is http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/

You can write to them at:

Kemp House
152 – 160 City Road
London, EC1V 2NP
Telephone 020 7251 3117 or Email
mailbox@thewhocarestrust.co.uk

Words you may hear people use

When you are at your meetings, or talking with adults, you might sometimes hear adults use words that you're not sure about. We've tried to list some of those we think might be of help and give each one an explanation.

Advocate – a person who is independent of your carer and social worker. They help children by putting forward their views, or making their case on their behalf.

Care plan - an agreed plan made at your Review Meeting that should include details of your needs, now and for the future.

Child in Care Review – these are meetings where adults in your life talk with you about your progress and making the best plan for your future.

Young Person's Guide – this booklet is a young person's guide!

Complaints Officer – an independent person who deals with any complaints that are made, in a fair way.

Foster family – a family, like the one that has been especially chosen for you, to live when you are not living at home.

IRO – IRO stands for Independent Reviewing Officer. This is the person who will take charge of your Child in Care reviews.

Social Worker – someone that visits your carer, to make sure everything is going OK.

Local Authority – every Social Services Department is part of something called a local authority.

Looked After – a term used to describe children and young people who can't live with their own family.

Long-term or permanent fostering - Some children will need to move to a foster family for a longer period of time. This means that a child will stay with a foster family for many years until they are grown up. This means they are not going back home to live with their mum or dad.

Placement – another name for the place where you will be living with your foster family.

Placement Plan – when you first arrive at your foster family, decisions will be made about all sorts of things like, when you should go to bed, pocket money and what school you are going to go to. These things are all written down into a Placement Plan.

Policy – something that is written down, to help everyone know

what they should do about the subject they're talking about. For example, it is Channels & Choices policy to make sure that every child is kept safe and so we have written down, what carers and staff have to do make this happen.

Procedure – these are steps people have to follow, in order to make sure they're meeting a policy.

Registered person – someone in a fostering agency who is registered with Ofsted, as either the owner, or a manager, of the office.

Responsible Individual – someone in a fostering agency or children's home who is required by Ofsted to register as the person who represents them in law.

Short-term fostering - Sometimes foster families might look after a child for a few weeks or a few months. This is called a "short term placement".

Short breaks - Some children who need a lot of support and help may need a short break from home. Social workers will then help to find a foster family who can look after them for a few hours a day, a weekend, or a weekend.

Social Services – the people in the area you used to live in, that your social worker works for. Every area has its own department.

Social worker – the person who has been given the job, by your local authority, to act on your behalf

Staff – all the people who are paid to work for a company like Channels & Choices
Statement of Purpose – something that Channels & Choices has to write to meet the law. This tells you what Channels & Choices does, who does what and how it is done. If you would like a copy of this, you can have one sent to you.

Welfare – people use this word when they're talking about what is best for someone. Like, they might say "We're only thinking of your best welfare", could mean they are worried about whether you are being kept safe. It can also mean other things to do with your health, your feelings and your general well-being.

"We are a caring team that are here for you.

ALL ABOUT YOU

We've made some space here for you to write down things about yourself so that you can keep them for the future.

My name is	
My birthday is on	
The colour of my hair is	
The colour of my eyes are	
My height is	
My address is	
My telephone number is	
My social workers name is	
My social workers number is	

People that are important to me:

Fill in the people that are important to you and why.

Name	Details

Likes and Dislikes

Why not fill it in and give it to your carer so that they will know what you like and dislike. This will help them to help you more. Use the empty spaces to add other things we haven't listed....

The things i REALLY LIKE			
Meal		Food	
Drink		Snack	
Toy		Game	
Colour		TV Programme	
Film		TV / Film star	
Book		Simger / Group	

The things i DONT LIKE			
Meal		Food	
Drink		Snack	
Book		Simger / Group	

Special Dates

Use this page to note down dates of special occasions, such as birthdays and anniversaries. Again, why not fill it out and give a copy to your carer so that they can make sure you don't miss any important dates.

January	**February**	**March**
April	**May**	**June**
July	**August**	**September**
October	**November**	**December**

THINGS TO DO

Children who live with our foster carers do a huge variety of activities and experiences ranging from swimming, dancing, horse riding to visiting castles, theatres, cinemas and skateparks.

Your foster carer and their social worker will encourage you to try new experiences but if there if there is anything that you would like to try please let us know. These websites can give you some great ideas of where to go and what to do:

www.visitsoutheastengland.com
www.kentattractions.co.uk
www.whitecliffscountry.org.uk

Channels & Choices
Therapeutic Community