



A Little Book of Big Words

**Orchard
fostering**



Building brighter futures

Welcome everyone!

The day I left my family was the day that I was told I'd be safe , secure and have no fear of what was going to unfold.

I felt a little different from all my friends but the love my new family has for me I don't think you could even comprehend.

They help me grow daily and love me with all their hearts , I couldn't imagine being anywhere else safe and warm at last.

I was scarred and frightened leaving what I knew behind but life is so much better now that people are loving and kind.

I feel so loved and cared for , my worries have started to fade. I have a wonderful life now and my frown is now upside down.
I love my foster family and know they will never let me down.

By Rebecca , age 12



- First of all we would like to start by introducing ourselves. Orchard Fostering asked us if we would like to be part of the Children's Ambassador Board and we jumped at the opportunity as we all wanted to be able to help other young people and share our experiences of being in care. This group was set up to give young people a voice and to share our ideas and experiences and what better way for professionals to understand us than to hear it directly from us. We decided as a group that we did not like the name 'Children's Ambassador Board' as we felt it was too formal so we decided to call ourselves "A Young Orchard's Voice". Our group is made up of foster children and birth children who foster.
- Throughout this brochure we will share our experience of foster care and we will discuss our first day in foster care and our first day having our foster sibling come to live with us. There are lots of people involved in your life when you come into care so we will explain the different professionals you may meet and the job that they do.
- Our aim for this booklet was to help all foster children and birth children understand that they are not alone. We are all in this together.

Introductions from “A young Orchard’s voice”

My name is Sophie.
I am 14 years of age.
I am in secondary and I enjoy school.
We started fostering when I was 6years old and I loved it. I liked having different people in the house, everyday was different. I like to know I'm helping in some way and I like spending time playing with younger kids. I hope my parents keep fostering for a long time. I like when someone new arrives and getting to know them and what they like, I get a lot of satisfaction from helping out.



I'm Steven and I'm 10 years old. I was 3 1/2 years old when we started fostering. I don't remember too much from then. I really like it now; there is always someone to play with. I like talking to different people and listening to them. Our house is very busy, but I love having a full house, there is always something to do. We live in the country and we have lots of animals and space to play.

My name is Leanne, I'm 13 years old.
I am in first year of secondary school.
My family are foster carers; we have two children with us now, they are in long term care. I like sharing our home with others and I like to help out and play with them.



Introductions from “A young Orchard’s voice”

Hello my name is Yessie. I am 12 years old and I am from Dublin.
I have 1 brother and 2 sisters.
I love baking, hockey and doing cricket. I wanted to be a part of the ambassador board because I really want to have a voice for the children in foster care. My idea for the booklet is to have some foster children share their perspective on their first home or their first time outside from home.



My name is Rebecca I am 12 years old.
Some of my hobbies include dancing, singing, drama, art and hiking.
I wanted to join the Children's Ambassador Board to help other children and to help ensure that other young people are heard. I also wanted to be involved to give social workers advice and hear suggestions from children/teenagers as well as to meet new children my age in foster care.





My first day in foster care

By Yessie

My first day in foster care. I was only four, so I don't remember too much.

I'm 12 now.

The policemen came with the social workers. They came to our door and spoke to our parents and explained to them that we were being taken somewhere safer.

I had three other siblings and sometimes it's very hard to stay with all of them, so the social worker decided to split us up, it was very scary. Me and my younger sister went to one house, and my big brother and my big sister went to another. It was at night-time and I remember we were all crying as we went in a car with my social worker at the time to my first foster home.

We stopped to get something to eat in the shops. When we arrived at the house it was very late at night we just went to bed.

The next day my social worker brought me to school and I saw my brother and sister which was nice.

I don't remember much of going back to the foster home at that time. I lived with that foster carer for a year and then another one for a year.

I'm now living with my forever family for the last six years. Guess what I now live with my big brother and sister as well!



Our experiences of Foster Care

My name is Steven. I was only 3 when my family started fostering. The last 8 years have been very good, but they have been tough as well at times with some foster children. I think we need to let children know about the different experiences and challenges that both birth children and foster children face on a daily basis in everyday life.



My name is Leanne and my family first started fostering when I was 5 years old. I think this book is a good idea because it will give children a good perspective from both sides. When I first started fostering I did not know a lot about it. I remember being told that young people would be staying for a sleepover. I was excited to meet new people. When they finally came, they were really nice and treated my siblings and I really well. I learned lots of new things from them also. I would have liked to know more about what foster care was from the start so that's why I think that this book is a good idea to teach children a bit more about what foster care is.





My name is Sophie and I am 14 years old.

I was 6 years old when my family started to foster. I have two younger siblings and we were all very excited to enter the world of foster care. I remember our parents telling us that we would have children coming to have "sleepovers" at our house. I couldn't wait to meet all the young people on their way.

At the start I didn't really understand what foster care was. As I grew up I got to experience the ups and downs of foster care. I couldn't imagine not living this life however I do wish that I had a bit of guidance and a better understanding of what my family was about to go through.



Hi My name is Rebecca. My foster care experience was hard at first because I was taken away from my family and I thought I'd never see them again. I didn't know where or who I was going to be staying with.

As soon as I walked in the door of my foster placement my foster carers made me feel so welcome and it felt like home straight away.

It has gotten easier and I see my family regularly. I have made new friends. We go lots of places with our foster carers and I've had more fun experiences in the last 2 years than I ever had before. I am so lucky, I now have two families that love me and care about me.

Things foster children might like to know:

1. You are going to see your family if possible (depending on your circumstances).
2. Your foster family will give you love and support.
3. Your foster carers and social workers will listen.



When you come into care you might often hear about a lot of people that are now responsible for your wellbeing. You may also hear a lot of big words that you might not know the meaning of. We are here to help you understand what these words mean and who these people are.



What is a social worker?

A social worker is someone who likes children and works for children's services who are called Tusla. It is their job to make sure you are okay, 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 do I have to live with a foster carer?

Sometimes a child cannot live with their own family, so they 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 I want?

Your social worker should find out what your wishes and feelings are. Your social worker and foster family will work closely together to make sure you are looked after and your voice is heard.



Foster carers are special people who have been carefully chosen to look after children. Foster carers do all the things parents do, such as setting rules, helping you with things like, going to School, making sure you eat the right food, that you feel safe and have someone to talk to.



What is a care review?

While you live with your foster carers, there will be meetings called 'reviews'. This is where all the important grown-ups in your life will get together and make a care plan for you. This may include what type of access and how frequent your access visit's may be.

Before the review, you will be asked what you think and what your views are. You may be asked to write this down or to tell your social worker. If you are old enough, you may also take part in the meeting.

If you have any worries in between these meetings, you can talk to your social worker or your foster carer or you might even have a guardian ad litem to talk to.

Who is a guardian ad litem?

A Guardian ad Litem also sometimes referred to as a GAL They support children to have their voice heard and will attend court to act on behalf of a young person, they will make an independent assessment of the young person's best interests.

Who is a link worker?

Your foster carers have their own supervising Social Worker. Their job is to make sure your carers are looking after you properly and have all the help they need. They may also check in with you sometimes to see how you are doing.

You may hear the word access a lot. Access means that you will get to see and spend time with your birth family. Just because you live in a foster home doesn't mean that you won't get to see your birth family. Your foster carer and social worker understands how important your family is to you. This may include seeing your brothers and sisters and other members of your family and getting to spend time with them. Your social worker will speak with you about when you can see your family and how often.

When do I get to see my family?

What is a care plan?

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 and when you see your family and friends and how long you will stay with your foster family.

Advice from Birth Children to other Birth Children

Our advice to a family who has decided to start fostering is to remember that you can always talk to someone when you are feeling overwhelmed. This could be your parents or your link worker. They want to make sure that you are happy and comfortable in your home just as much as the foster child. It's important to not bottle up any thoughts or feelings that you might have as there is always someone to talk to. We would also advise that you keep an open mind and that you are welcoming to the child coming to live with your family. Just remember you are helping them to feel welcome in their new surroundings and they will be grateful to you for that. And you never know you might even consider these children to be family.

By Leanne, Steven and Sophie



Advice from Foster Children to other Foster Children

Hi, I've been a foster kid myself for the last 7 years. I came into care when I was only 4 years of age.

My advice would be, at first it can be hard not knowing anyone. It's a new environment, new people around. It can be hard at first. You might look at them as someone you don't want to know and shortly you will warm up to them and find they love, care and would do anything for you.



We really hope that you enjoyed reading this booklet that we made. It was important for us to share our experiences with you all so that every young person in care and involved in fostering understands that they are not alone. There is always someone to talk to.

We hope you enjoyed reading our booklet .
By Leanne, Steven, Sophie, Yessie , Rebecca,
Teegan and Emily



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Building brighter futures

We hope
this helped!





Building brighter futures

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