

Welcome to ISP

This book is about you and your time with us at ISP



If there's something you don't understand, ask your foster family and they will explain.



We hope that this booklet will help answer some questions you might have about ISP and being in foster care.



fostering
therapeutically
SINCE 1987

What is foster care?

When children can't live with their own family, they can stay with foster families. Your foster family will look after you and help you stay safe.

Every foster family is different. Some foster carers are married and some are not. Some carers have their own children, and some have family pets as well. Your foster family has been specially chosen for you. They will welcome you into their home and look after you.



Children come into foster care for different reasons, sometimes only for a few weeks and sometimes for a number of years or until they have grown up. Being in foster care can feel strange at first, but it does get better.

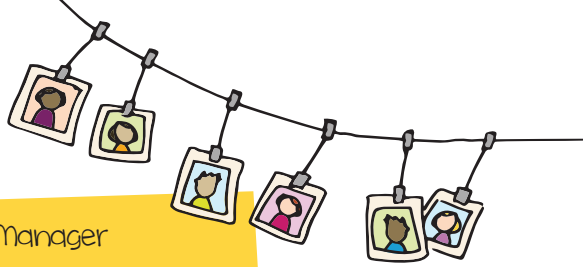
What is ISP?

We are an Independent Fostering Agency. We find foster families for children when they can't live at home. Children come to ISP for different reasons and we will try to help you to understand the reasons why you can't live with your family at the moment.

We support your foster family and make sure that they are looking after you well. You will meet us when we visit your foster family, and we are always happy to hear from you.

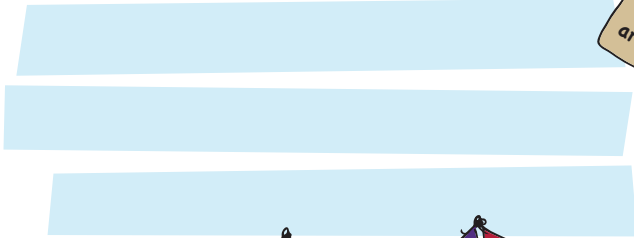


Some of the people you might meet include...



- The Manager
- Social workers
- Fostering advisors
- Advisory teachers
- Therapists

Important names & numbers



As well as having fun with your foster family, you can join in with events run by your local ISP centre. There are day trips, parties and events where you can share your ideas about how ISP can be even better.

Each year ISP holds a Fun Day in Kent and families travel from across ISP to get together and enjoy Fun Fair rides, games and races.



What can I expect from my foster family?

Moving to a new home, with new people, can be difficult but your foster carers will help you feel at home by finding out about you and the things that you like and don't like.

Your foster family will:

- Encourage you to say what you think and feel, and what you would like to happen.
- Look after you and help you look after yourself.
- Keep you safe and teach you how to keep yourself safe when you are away from home.
- Let you choose your own clothes, and buy the clothes you need.
- Help you to decorate and personalise your bedroom.
- Give you a healthy diet and let you help with planning and preparing family meals.





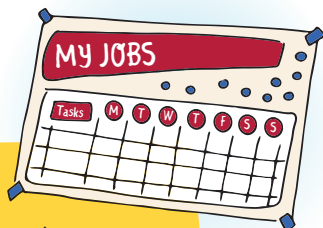
- Make sure that you have somewhere safe to keep your belongings.
- Help you do well at school and make sure you can join in with school activities.
- Make sure that you can join clubs and groups if you want, and help you make new friends.
- Take you on holiday.
- Support you in practicing your religion.
- Give you pocket money, help you learn to save and eventually to open a bank account and manage your own money.



What will my foster family expect of me?

Every family has rules about what children can and can't do. The rules are usually about making sure that everyone gets on well together, and about keeping you safe.

These are some things that your family might have rules about:



- What time you should go to bed.
- When you can watch TV or go on the internet.
- When you should do your homework.
- Keeping your bedroom tidy and helping with housework.
- What time you should be home in the evening.
- Having good manners and not swearing.

Your foster family will talk to you about the rules and you will learn them as you settle in and become part of the family.

Your foster family are happy for you to ask about anything you are not sure about.



If you think the rules are not fair talk to your social worker about this, or someone from ISP. We want to know how you feel so that we can help sort out any problems.



Things foster carers can't do

- They cannot hit you or physically punish you.
- They cannot stop your meals.
- They cannot stop you contacting your social worker.
- They cannot stop you seeing your family when this has already been arranged.
- They cannot stop you asking anyone else for help.



My rights

You have a right:

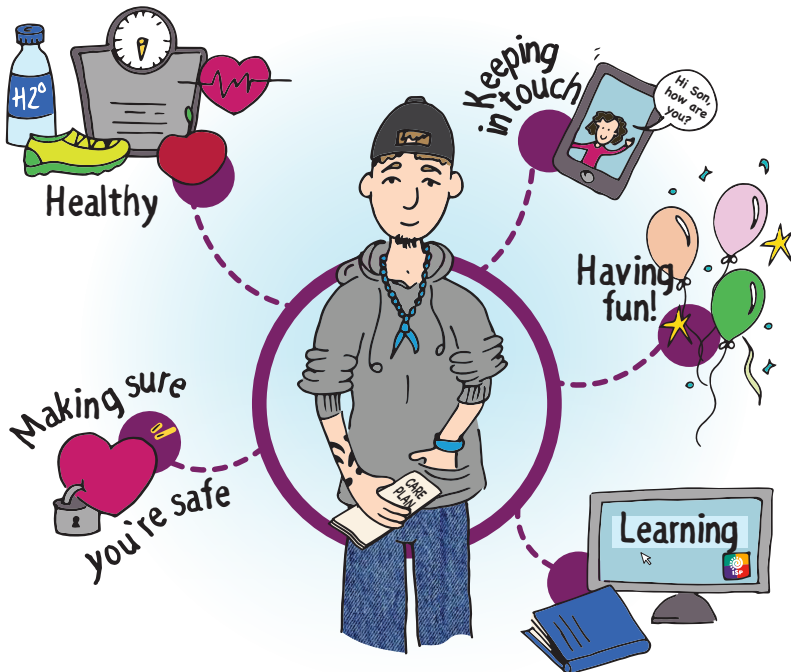
- To be listened to and treated fairly. You might not get everything you want, but if something is not possible then your social worker should explain why.
- To be helped with any problems.
- To be safe and protected from harm.
- To be prepared for adult life.
- To a healthy diet, sports and exercise.
- To have an education.
- To socialise and have friends.
- To have help with health problems and disabilities.
- To enjoy your religion and culture.
- If you do not speak English, you will have the help of a translator for meetings.

Talk to your social worker or an adult you trust if you think you are being treated unfairly.

What does my social worker do?

Your social worker is there to help you. Part of your social worker's job is to find you a foster family who can give you what you need, and where they think you will fit in well. Your social worker will try their best to find you a family that shares similar interests with you, and who shares or understands your culture and religion. It is your social worker's job to make sure that you are being looked after well. They will visit you and your foster family regularly to make sure that you are safe and doing well.

Your social worker will make a 'Care Plan' for you that will explain what is happening now in your life, and what people want to happen in the future. Your social worker will talk to you to find out what you think, how you feel and what you would like to happen. The plan will make sure that you are safe, healthy, learning, having fun and are able to keep in touch with your family while you cannot live with them. You should be given a copy of your Care Plan.



Who decides what I can do?

Your social worker should find out what your wishes and feelings are, and take them into account when making decisions and plans for you.

If there is something that you would like to do, talk to your foster family. They can make some decisions, but might need to check things out with your social worker. These decisions include:



Going on a school trip



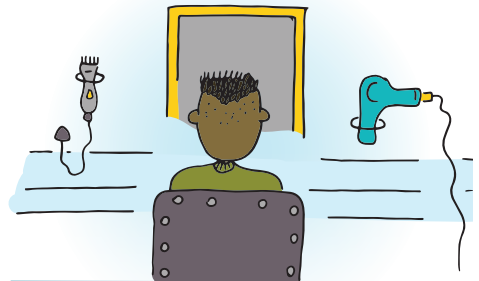
Having a sleep-over at a friend's house



Getting your ears pierced



Joining a club or church



Changing your hairstyle

Care Plan Reviews



Twice a year, a meeting is called to find out how you are getting on and decide what should happen next. This is called a 'review meeting'. The meeting is for you, so you should be there. Your Social Worker, foster family and people from ISP will be there and sometimes your parents, teacher or a nurse might be there too. If there is someone you don't want to be there, or someone you do, tell your social worker.

The meeting is led by your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) whose job it is to make sure that you are being well looked after - and to make sure that you have your say.

At the meeting, you will talk about how you are getting on with your foster family, how you are achieving at school, things that have gone well for you and how people can help you with any problems that you are having.

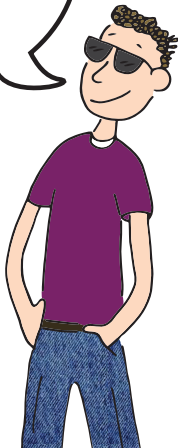
After your review you should get a written copy of the decisions that have been made.

Where and when are reviews held?

“ Reviews can be held anywhere, at a time and a place where you will feel comfortable. Let your social worker know if you would like your review to be held somewhere else, or at a different time. ”



Do I have to go?



“ No, but it is best if you do, as the meeting is about you and decisions will be made about you and your future. If you don't want to be there, you can write down what you want to say, or talk to your social worker or IRO before the meeting to let them know what you want and how you feel. If you only want to come to your meeting for a little while, that's OK too. ”

We will work hard to make it easy for you to join in. You need to tell us if people are hard to understand. Sometimes they use words that don't make sense or just say too much. We want to know if this happens.

Can I see my family?

Your social worker will talk to you about keeping in touch with your family. They will talk to you about who you would like to see and how this can happen in a way that is good for you. If you are worried, or do not want to see particular family members, talk to your foster carer and social worker about this.



You can keep in touch in many different ways. You might visit your family home, meet up in a public place or at a 'Contact Centre'. Some young people send letters or speak on the phone rather than meeting face-to-face.

What about school?

School is very important because it's where you can make friends, learn and enjoy activities that interest you.

We have education workers at all our ISP Centres who help to make sure that you are happy and doing as well as you possibly can at school.



Here is their message to you:



"If you have moved to a new area, we will help to find the right school for you. Sometimes this doesn't happen right away so we will help your social worker to make sure that you don't miss out on learning while we look for the right school for you.

When you are at school, we will have 2 or 3 meetings each year. This is where we find out about the things you are enjoying and are good at. It is also a chance to find out about any other things we can help you with. We will discuss with you and your school whether some money called 'Pupil Premium' can be used to help you make more progress. If you have a special plan for additional needs, we will make sure the right choices are made.

We love hearing about your successes and do our best to celebrate them with you and the people important to you. We want you to do as well as you possibly can. If school isn't going as well as you would like we will work to make things better for you."



Your teachers will know that you are living with a foster family, but nobody else will need to know, unless you choose to tell them.

What is therapy?

Some children in foster care have a therapist to help them when life is hard, when they need someone to talk to, or if they need help to understand changes that are happening.

Our therapists explain how therapy can help:

"Therapy is a place and a space where people can talk. It helps you find healthy ways to express feelings. We play, draw, use games and do activities too. Everyone gets confused and scared sometimes - sometimes we can't understand what's going on and sometimes we're not sure how we feel. Therapy is a safe space to share our thoughts and feelings.

The therapist is a person who has been specially trained to help and be a friend. They will respect and help you while keeping things safe for you too. Therapy most of all is a safe and healthy place where you can be truly yourself. Sometimes this is a little hard (like in school, learning new things) but you will almost always find ways to solve problems and smile."



I feel safe to talk here

Your social worker might ask us to arrange for you to see a Therapist at ISP - or you could ask for this help yourself.

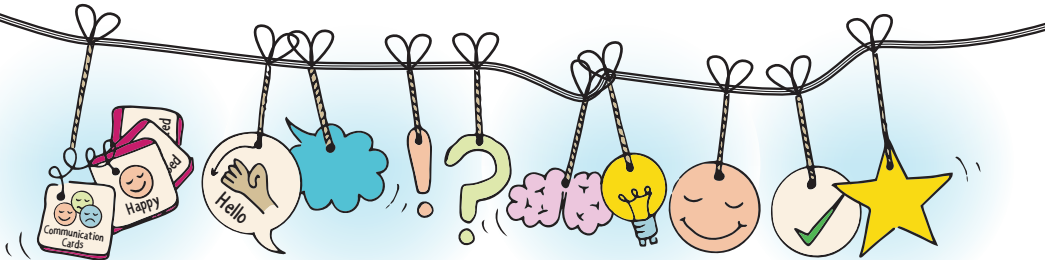
What is Speech and Language Therapy?

Some children in ISP have help at school from Speech and Language Therapists.

How can this help me?

- It can help you say what you want to say.
- It can help you understand what others say.
- It can help you to make friends.
- It can help you talk about feelings.
- It can help you to do well at school.
- It can help you solve problems with words.

Your social worker or carer might ask us to arrange for you to see a speech and language therapist at ISP. You can ask for this help yourself. We'll ask you about your communication skills and what you want to improve. We'll also ask other people who know you and work together to find the best way to get you the help you need. This might involve changing how adults talk as well as helping you develop your skills.



Getting involved with ISP

At ISP we are always pleased to see you, and hear what you think. Let us know how you are feeling and what you think about ISP. This can help us to make ISP even better.

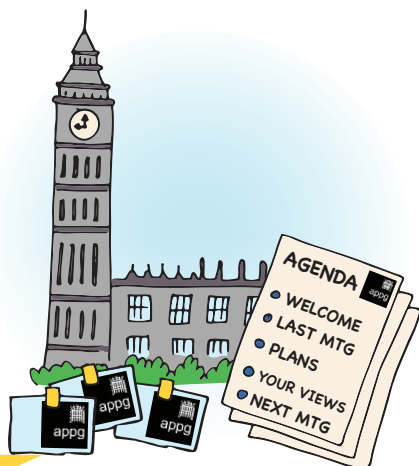
How can you do this?

- We will sometimes write to you and ask you some questions.
- You can talk to us when we come and visit you and your foster family at home.
- Come to your local ISP Centre's activities and events where you can have fun with other young people and share your views.



Having your say about the care system

ISP sometimes takes a group of young people to the Houses of Parliament to attend the meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. This is called the APPG Meeting. It is your chance to hear what the Government has planned and share your views with them. If you would like to go to a meeting, speak to your foster family or your local ISP manager to find out when the next group is going.



What if I'm unhappy?

If you are unhappy about something, sharing your problems with an adult can help to make things better. Talk to someone you trust, e.g. your foster family, social worker or someone from ISP.

Always tell someone you trust how you feel and what you think. If you are finding it hard to say what is worrying you, you could draw a picture or write it down. Adults at ISP, and your social worker want to help keep you safe.



If you think you have been unfairly treated, or something has gone wrong, then you have the right to complain.



How do I make a complaint?

If you want to make a complaint about your Local Authority, let your social worker know and they will give you the complaints procedure. Your foster family, or an advocate, can help you to make the complaint.

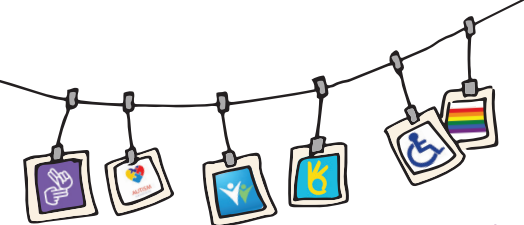
If you want to make a complaint about ISP, you can contact our Complaints Officer in the following ways:

Write to: The Complaints Officer,
ISP, Tunstall Court, 4 Gore Court Road,
Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 1GL

Telephone: 01795 428097 and ask to speak to the complaints officer

Email: Send an email to: enquiries@ispfostering.org.uk
Put the word COMPLAINT in the email title.





Important details

Your ISP office phone number:

Your social worker's phone number:

Your IRO's phone number



Help outside of ISP



If you are worried about something, you can contact any of the following organisations:

Call Childline free on 0800 11 11

Coram Voice

www.coramvoice.org.uk

Coram Voice helps children who live with foster families. They can help you to tell adults how you feel and what you would like to happen.

You can call them on 0808 800 5792

The Children's Commissioner
www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand

The Children's Commissioner promotes
your rights.

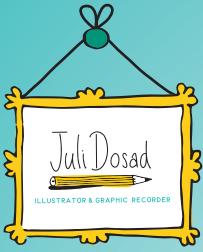
You can call them free on
0800 528 0731

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