



## Government response to children and young people in foster care

### Our vision for foster care:

You are listened to and involved in the decisions about your life and your care

You experience stability during your time in care

Your foster parents are supported to help you reach your full potential

There are enough foster parents in the right areas to meet what you need

#### What we heard from you:

You told us that stability means feeling settled, safe, comfortable and belonging somewhere. You told us that stability helps you to build relationships and trust the people in your life.

We heard experiences of too many placements and too many different social workers.

You told us that you want to feel normal and be part of a family.

You told us that foster care is about love, attention, comfort, and support. You want foster parents to listen to you and stand up for you.

You told us that you do not always feel listened to or included in decisions about your life. You want your opinions to matter and your voice to have an impact.

You told us it is important to keep in touch with your siblings, birth parents, family members or former foster parents. You want to have a say in these

#### What we are doing:

We want you to experience stability during your time in care. We want social workers to be planning for your future right from the time you enter care. We will develop new training courses to help them do this.

We have started a national programme to improve children's social work and to help us address issues such as caseloads and social workers leaving, so children have one social worker for longer.

We want you to have a 'normal' home life. We will update government guidance so that foster parents are included in review and school meetings, and can make day-to-day decisions, so you do not have to ask your social worker for permission to do things like go to sleepovers and on school trips.

We will be clear that foster parents should hug their foster children, if they need a cuddle, and everyday life shouldn't be disrupted by adults having meetings. We will work with councils to understand what is working well and to try out new ways to support you and your carers.

We will share information about your rights and entitlements with your council and make it available to you and your foster parents.

We will expect social workers to talk to you about who you want to keep in touch with and help you to do that.

The Corporate Parenting Principles mean that councils should listen to you and use your views to improve their services. We will ask all councils to use feedback from their children and young people to improve their services.



You were positive about the impact of advocates, for example helping you to keep in touch with siblings.

Some of you told us that you feel like there are too many people involved in your care.

At the start of a new placement, you told us that you want foster parents to know about your hobbies, favourite foods, and the things you care about, and not just the negative things that happened in the past.

You also told us that you want more information about your foster parents before you start your placement. You want to know what they look like, what your bedroom will look like and what they like to do for fun.

Some of you told us you want better matching with foster parents. For example, if you are active and enjoy sports, you want foster parents who are active and energetic.

You told us you want foster parent recruitment to be focused on supporting young people to succeed and be happy.

We will work with councils to make sure all young people in care know how to access an advocate and that advocates are able to help you in the best way.

We want to make sure that all the people whose job it is to look after you are doing so properly. We will work with council leaders to look at who does what, to make sure the system works to keep you safe and that all these people help to give you the best possible experience of care.

We want you to feel better prepared for moving into care and between foster families.

We will work with councils to find ways to improve the information they share, making sure it is about you and not all the things that have happened to you, to help match you with the right foster parents.

We are asking councils to explore creative ways to make it easier for you when you move homes. For example, short home videos by foster families could show young people where they will be living, who else will be there, what it looks like and what to expect.

We want matching decisions to be made based on your needs. To do this, we need to make sure there are enough foster parents, with a range of backgrounds and experiences, and councils must better understand their young peoples' needs.

We will help councils and fostering agencies to work together to recruit more foster parents and to think more creatively about who could foster.

We will investigate how technology can help, for example, better online systems for councils or support services for foster parents.

**Making improvements to the way foster care is working will take time and we all need to work together. This means working with you to better understand what you want and need, working with social workers, councils and fostering services to help them make good decisions about your care, and with foster parents to make sure they are supported to meet your needs.**