

# Your guide to By the Bridge

## Welcome

Welcome to By the Bridge. We have created this booklet to help guide you on the journey you are beginning with us.

This transition may feel overwhelming. We believe it is our duty to provide you with as much information as possible to ensure you know what support, entitlements and opportunities are available for you.

Still, if there is something you would like to know, which we haven't mentioned, please don't be afraid to speak to your Foster Family, Supervising Social Worker, EAGAL or Social Worker. There is also more information available on our website at [www.bythebridge.co.uk/myzone](http://www.bythebridge.co.uk/myzone)

## About us

By the Bridge isn't part of Social Services, we are an independent organisation who work closely with Social Services to ensure you are carefully matched with a Foster Family who will provide you with the best possible support.

We will help you feel safe and work with you, your Foster Family and anyone else around you to develop tailor made opportunities for you to explore your talents and grow in every aspect of your life.


## YOUR FOSTER FAMILY

Your Foster Family is there to provide you with a safe, caring home and to understand what it might feel like to be you. The family has been specially chosen to help you find the best ways to get your needs met and make a good and HAPPY life for yourself.

Your foster family, their Link Worker and your Social Worker will all work together to provide opportunities for you to do well in all areas of your life.

Your Local Authority is there to help you too. Write their contact number here:

## Meetings

We know that sometimes taking part in meetings about you and your life can be tough. We will work super hard to make sure that your feelings and wishes are understood. Whether the meeting is to **Plan** what happens next, or **Review** how you, your Foster Family and Social Worker are doing – we will be there for you to help you get your voice heard. 

Your Independent Reviewing Officer is there to help you as well. Write their contact number here:

## COMPLAINTS & COMPLIMENTS

By the Bridge will ensure all complaints made by young people are monitored and solved as soon as possible. You can let us know how you are feeling via Mind of My Own

### A Personal Advocate

You are also entitled to an advocate, which is an independent advisor. Their purpose is to make certain your rights are being met throughout your experience in foster care. They also ensure your views are being fairly represented and considered during important decisions. If you want to receive the contact details for your own personal advocate, please speak to your Social Worker, Foster Parent, Link worker or EAGAL.

## Rights and Responsibilities



Everyone has the right to be treated fairly and with respect—including you—this is your right and responsibility for others.

Rights have been developed by humans for humans to protect us from harm and causing harm to one another. Hence, rights are legally guarded by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## Keep in touch

The By the Bridge team is here for YOU, we want to hear what you have to say (good or bad) about being in care. Get in touch with us during the day by calling our Head Office, The Oast House on **0800 644 6230** (this is the best number to call if you want to reach us quickly), or mailing us at [info@bythebridge.co.uk](mailto:info@bythebridge.co.uk) or you can text us out of hours on our Keep In Touch number, **07967 738 924**

## Who else can help?

**Ofsted** 0300 1231 231

**[www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand)**  
Children's Rights Commissioner.

**[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)**  
Know what's what with Franks A-Z of drugs. Get help, get advice.

**[www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk)**  
Confidential advice on contraception and sexual health for young people.

**[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)**  
Confidential 1-2-1 online advice for teenagers, plus private in-box. Includes on-screen advice on relationships, exams, difficulties at home or school and more. Call Childline on 0800 11 11

**[www.antibullyingpro.com](http://www.antibullyingpro.com)**  
Committed to protecting, training and supporting young people – there is lots of helpful advice on the site, or you can get involved and become an Anti-Bullying Ambassador for your school.

**[www.coramvoice.org.uk](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk)**  
Help for young people in care and care leavers 0808 800 5792

**<https://youngpeople.nyas.net>**  
Advocacy and legal assistance for children, young people and vulnerable adults. Call nyas on 0808 808 1001

**[www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk](http://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk)**  
Beating Eating Disorders.

**[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)**  
Get the lowdown on how to stay safe online. Get help, support and make a report.

## Grow Achieve Learn

This programme, for young people provides loads of exciting opportunities and experiences to try new things, like expeditions to foreign countries, Prince's Trust Awards, Children's University and the Arts Award.

You will be able to take part in activities and workshops that help prepare you for becoming an adult AND you get rewarded for taking part!

To find out more about Grow, Achieve, Learn send an email to:

*eagals@bythebridge.co.uk*

## Social Workers

All By the Bridge families have a **Link Worker**, they visit every month to make sure you and your Foster Family are ok. They'll attend meetings with you and your Foster Parents to help check everything's going well for you.

You'll have your own **Social Worker** and they will attend your meetings as well. They're responsible for any links with your own family.

## TIME AWAY

If you spend time away from your Foster Family, providing a change for all to '**recharge your batteries**', or take a break if your Foster Parents are unwell or if there's an emergency.

You might spend your time with another Foster Family or on an activity holiday. Many of By the Bridge's young people go away on holidays with their Foster Family.

## SAVINGS

Your Foster Parent will provide you with pocket money each week. The amount will be decided by your foster family and social worker. However, you may also help decide how much you will receive.

What's more, we will help you make the most of your money by teaching you how to budget. As an adult, this is an essential skill to prepare you for your journey beyond foster care, especially when you become financially independent.

In addition to your own personal savings, By the Bridge will set aside £10 a week for you. You can access these savings when you turn 18.



## TIME WITH YOUR FAMILY

We believe it is important for you to keep in touch with your family and friends when possible. This is an opportunity to visit them outside of your foster home.

Sometimes, your time will be supervised to ensure you feel safe. This decision would be made by your Social Worker or a judge.

If you did want to raise any concerns about the amount of time with your family, you can speak to your foster parent, social worker or a member of By the Bridge.

## EAGALs

You get your own By the Bridge 'Education Advisor and GAL Consultant' – we shorten this to '**EAGAL**'.

They can attend meetings about your education to make sure you have what you need to get the most from your schooling.

They also arrange fun activities, days out and workshops where you can try new things and develop your skills and interests.

## We promise to...

### Believe in you

We believe you have a huge amount of potential. Hence, we promise to help you develop the confidence in yourself to achieve your desired goals in life.

### Accept you

We believe it is important to celebrate your individuality. Therefore, we will promise to accept and value your traditions and beliefs.

We will also promise to help you make sense of your experiences. Naturally, we know there are some thoughts, feelings and memories, which may affect your actions and behaviour. We promise to support you through these moments by providing you with the best possible care and support.

### Invest in you

Our staff and foster parents promise to make sure that you have tailor made opportunities to explore your interests. We will provide you with education advisors who will fight for you to have the best education and develop the skills you need to thrive in the future.

### Listen to you

We believe one of the best ways to ensure your rights are being respected at By the Bridge is to get you involved with the running of our organisation. We value the participation of every young person including you in all aspects of what we do. You have a unique insight into the challenges young people who are in care face on a daily basis.

One way we could facilitate your knowledge is by offering you an opportunity to join your local forum with likeminded young people who want to make a positive impact for others who are also experiencing care within our organisation. If you're interested in participating please contact your EAGAL.

## MOVING ON

Some young people move back to their own families. Others, when they are old enough move into their own place.

By the Bridge will work with you to make sure you are totally prepared for moving on.

## Staying Put

When you are **18+** there maybe an opportunity for you to 'stay put' in your Foster Family and no longer be a foster child. If you and your foster family like the sound of this then tell us, your Social Worker and Independent Reviewing Officer. Make sure it gets talked about at your Review. Every Local Authority has a 'Staying Put Policy', you can request a copy from your Social Worker.