



Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**
Social Care **Wales**

Moving from residential to foster care or to family

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Go to <https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/improving-care-and-support/children-who-are-looked-after/moving-from-residential-to-foster-care-or-to-family> for the latest version.

Find out more about how you can support the young people you care for to move from residential care to foster care or go back to their family

How can you help support a child to move from residential care to foster care?

There are several things you can do to support your young people to make a successful transition from residential care to foster care. Here are some of the factors which may help:

- involve young people in every step of the process and planning, so they don't feel things are 'being done to' them instead of 'with' them
- give the child information verbally as well as in writing
- visit the foster carer before, during and after the matching process to help them to get to know the child and their needs and behaviours. This can help reassure you, who can then reassure the child
- support the foster carer to meet the child at the children's home and give the child information about the foster home
- plan overnight visits over a period – offering the child plenty of time to meet their new family and understand where they would be living. This can provide a gradual transition from the secure relations with children's home staff
- supporting key adults in the child's life, such as family members, teachers and other professionals to meet the foster carer. This can help establish trust and co-operation.
- involve a therapist for advice and reassurance to staff. The therapist can help the team of professionals to develop a shared understanding of the young person
- provide consistent support, such as involving a key worker for some weeks after the transition, while they young person settles

The importance of a residential worker's knowledge and input to a young person's transition journey onwards from residential to permanent family care cannot be over emphasised. They are key members of the team around the child.

How can you help support a child to go home to their family?

You have an important role in making sure the child is prepared to go home to their family, if that's in their best interests.

Research shows that a key factor in the success of children going home to their families shows is ensuring the child and the parents are carefully prepared.

[Reunification in Practice. An article by Research in Practice](#)

Many of the things you can do to support successful family returns are the same as those for successful transitions from residential to foster care above and include:

- involving the child and parent in every step of the planning process
- carefully preparing both the child and parent for the return home
- supporting any specialist services that are needed
- working with foster carers if relevant
- being available to support the child during the process
- helping the child to understand the conditions and expectations around their return to family
- supporting other professionals with any assessments and details of the child's case
- supporting the child's wider family, friends and community to give informal support to the return.

Why does going home to family break down?

Around 30 per cent of the children who go home to their birth families return to care within five years. Factors associated with going home to family breaking down, include:

- if the child is older/or has previously unsuccessfully returned to their family
- children who have significant behavioural or emotional problems
- lack of parental change – either that the problem/s had not been addressed or had remained unresolved or hidden
- inadequate assessments or professionals lacking clear knowledge and understanding of the child's history
- parental ambivalence about the child's return
- poor and inconsistent planning.

[Reunification in Practice. An article by Research in Practice](#)

Research and professional experience both highlight the importance of thorough assessment to support decisions about child going home to their family.

Useful resources

[Our work to support children who are looked after](#)

[Our chosen or 'curated' research about the number who are looked after](#)

[Reunification in Practice. An article by Research in Practice](#)

[NSPCC Reunification: An Evidence-Informed Framework for Return Home Practice](#)

We want your feedback

Help us to improve the Residential child care worker resource by telling us what you think about it in our short [four question survey](#).