



Department
for Education

A new rulebook for Fostering

**Seeking the views of children and young
people**

Launch date 4 February 2026

Respond by 17 March 2026

Contents

Introduction	3
General Questions	6
Issue 1: Amending the fostering limit (how many children carers can look after)	8
Issue 2: Removing barriers for kinship care (making it easier for family and friends to look after children who can't live at home)	10

Introduction

For a long time, fostering hasn't had clear rules across the country, and this has made it hard to find and keep enough foster carers. This has led to worse outcomes for children. We now want new rules to make fostering better and clearer for everyone and improve things for children.

We also want to ask big questions about what else should change and how we can share the best ideas across the country. To help with this, we are asking what people think on things like:

- Amending the fostering limit (how many children carers can look after)
- Removing barriers for kinship care (making it easier for family and friends to look after children who can't live at home).

Who this is for

- Children and young people with lived experience of care and / or fostering

Information sharing and support

We want everyone taking part in this call for evidence to feel safe and supported. You don't need to tell us your name or anything that would help us work out who you are – so you can be really honest about how you feel or anything you've gone through.

We know that some things we ask about may be upsetting or bring back bad memories or feelings. If anything feels upsetting, or answering the questions is too much for you, please know that help is out there. Please make sure you speak to an adult you trust or someone in the list here who can help you if you need to:

- [Childline | Free counselling service for kids and young people](#)
- [The Mix](#)
- [Mental Health Support For Young People | YoungMinds](#)
- [Useful contacts for support - for 11-18 year olds | Mind](#)

Taking part is completely **your choice**, and you **can stop** at any time.

Respond online

To help us analyse the responses please use the online system wherever possible. Visit [DfE consultations on GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations) to submit your response.

Other ways to respond

If for exceptional reasons, you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may request an alternative format of the form.

By email

fostering.CONSULTATION@education.gov.uk

By post

Fostering Policy Team
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 3BT

Issue date

This call for evidence was issued on **4 February 2026**.

Deadline

This call for evidence closes on **17 March 2026** at 23:59.

Questions

If your question is related to the topics of this document, you can ask an adult to email:

fostering.CONSULTATION@education.gov.uk

If your question is related to the website or the process in general, you can contact the DfE Ministerial and Public Communications Division by email:

coordinator.consultations@education.gov.uk, telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the [DfE Contact us page](#).

Additional copies

Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from [GOV.UK DfE consultations](#).

The response

The results of the consultation and the department's response will be [published on GOV.UK](#) in Summer 2026.

General Questions

We want to hear directly from children and young people about what foster care is really like. Your views matter, and what you share will help us work out what is working well and what could be improved. You can answer whatever questions you want to – there are no right or wrong answers. We want to hear your ideas, and anything you think could help make foster care better for you and for other children like you.

About Your Experience

Question 1 asks for personal details.

2. What are some things you like, or liked, about being in foster care?
3. What helps, or helped, you feel safe, comfortable, and/or supported in your foster home?
4. Can you tell us about something a foster carer has done that made a positive difference for you?

Voice, Choice, and Involvement

5. Do you feel that adults who look(ed) after you or work(ed) with you, like foster carers or social workers, listen(ed) to you?
6. What helps or has helped you feel heard while in care?
7. Who made or makes day to day choices in your life, while in care?
8. Do you or did you have influence over decisions about your day to day life while in care?

Relationships and Belonging

9. What helps, or helped, you feel like you belong in your foster home?
10. Are there any relationships (friends, carers, school) that are / were particularly helpful for you?
If yes, how did people around you help you keep those relationships?

Challenges and Things You'd Like to Change

11. Is there anything about foster care that you find, or found, difficult or would like to be different?
12. What would help/have helped make foster care better for you or for other young people in the future?

13. Sometimes adults have to make hard decisions. Is there anything you think these adults should understand better or learn more about?

Support and Wellbeing

14. What support has been most helpful to you?
15. Is there anything that would have helped you but wasn't an option for you at the time?

Looking Ahead

16. What are your hopes and dreams for your future?
17. What could adults involved in fostering do, or what could they have done, to help you reach your goals?

Issue 1: Amending the fostering limit (how many children carers can look after)

What do we mean by this?

At the moment, there is a rule about how many children a foster carer can look after at one time. Most foster carers look after **up to 3 children**.

Sometimes, carers are allowed to look after more children. This happens when brothers and sisters need to stay together, or when a child already knows and trusts the carer.

Some people think the rule helps keep children safe. Others think it can make things harder, such as stopping brothers and sisters from staying together or stopping carers from helping each other.

We want to understand what works well about this rule and what could be better for children.

Important things to think about

Every family is different. Some foster carers have more space, more experience, or more help to care for **more children** safely.

But it is also important to make sure that **every child gets enough attention, care and help**, and that no one feels crowded or ignored.

We want to hear what you think about this rule.

Questions:

18. What do you think about the rule that most foster carers look after up to three children?

Please choose one: I think it works well; I think it mostly works well; Sometimes it works well but sometimes it doesn't; I don't think it works well; It really doesn't work well; I don't know.

19. What good things do you think happen when foster carers look after fewer children?

(Free text).

20. What difficult things do you think can happen because of this rule?

(Free text).

21. When do you think it might be okay for a foster carer to look after more than three children?

Please choose all of the important ones: To keep brothers and sisters together; When the carer has enough space; When the carer has lots of experience; When all of the children get along well; Something else (Free text).

22. How important do you think it is for adults to check carefully that all children are safe and happy when a foster carer looks after more children?

Select one from: Very important; Quite important; Not very important; Not important at all; I don't know.

23. Have you lived in a foster family with more than 3 children? If you have, what was it like?

(Free text).

Issue 2: Removing barriers for kinship care (making it easier for family and friends to look after children who can't live at home)

What do we mean by this?

Sometimes, children are looked after by someone they already know and trust, like a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or family friend. This is called **kinship care**.

These carers are checked and approved in the same way as other foster carers. But kinship carers often have to step in very suddenly to help a child, during a family crisis.

People have told us that the current rules can be hard for kinship carers, even when they are doing their best to care for a child they love.

The Government has shared helpful advice saying decisions about who should look after a child should focus on what is best for the child, even if the carer needs some extra help at first.

We want to know if this advice is being used in the right way and what would help it work better.

Important things to think about

Children often feel safer and more settled when they can live with someone they know and at the same time, adults caring for them need the right help.

We want to hear what helps kinship carers and what makes things harder for them.

Questions:

24. Was there ever a time that you wanted to stay with a family member or family friend, but the rules have meant that you couldn't? (*You can share details if you want to*).

Please choose one: Yes; No; I don't know.

If you want to, please tell us the reasons for your answer (Free text).

25. What do you think would help family members or known adults care for children safely and confidently?

(Free text).



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