

# YOUR GUIDE TO BEING IN CARE



**This book belongs to**



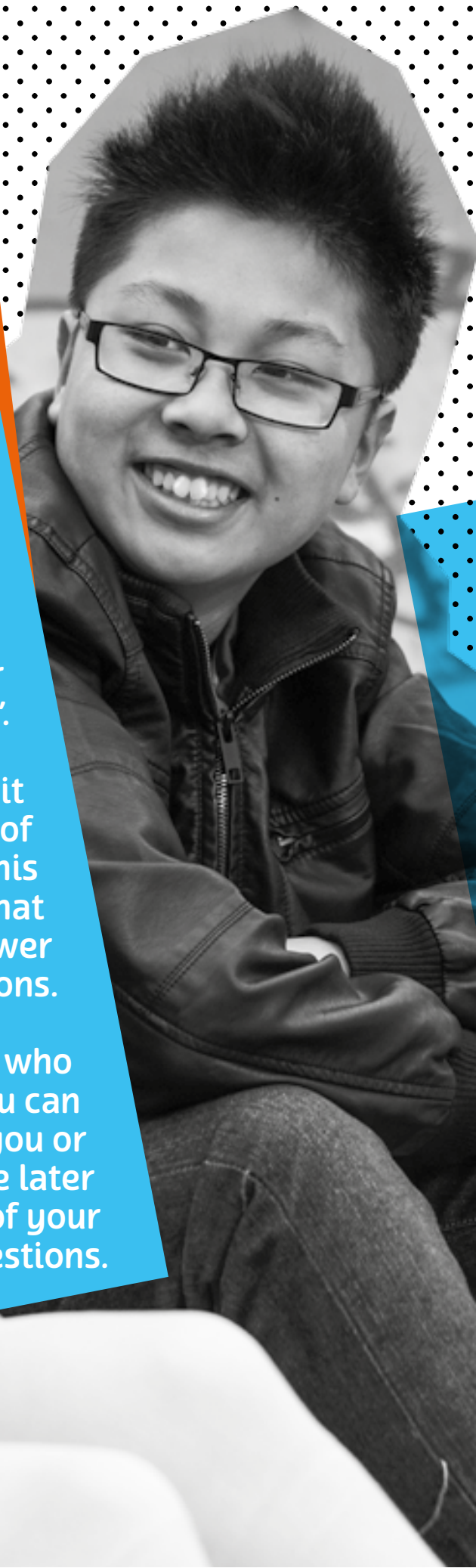
Derby City Council

Sometimes it's not possible for children or young people to live with their family, for lots of different reasons, and social workers have to make sure you have somewhere safe to live where you will be looked after. This might be with other family members, foster carers or in a residential home or school.

Having this booklet means that you are living away from your family and are in the care of Derby City Council. This can be called 'being in care' or 'looked after'.

This might be making you feel a bit confused and you might have lots of questions and feelings. We hope this booklet will help you understand what being in care means for you and answer some of your questions.

Don't worry, there are lots of people who you can talk to and who can help. You can speak with the people who care for you or your social worker – we have space later where you can write down some of your questions.



# All about where you are living

On this page you can write down all about where you are now living and who you are living with. Your social worker, foster carer or key worker can help you fill this out.

Your new address  
and phone number

Who lives here

What do they  
like to do?

What pets do they have?



# Feelings

*You might feel  
confused about  
why you are in  
care*

*You might be  
worried about  
your family*

*You might feel  
scared about  
what is going  
to happen next*

*You might  
feel relieved  
that you  
feel safe*

Living away from home in strange surroundings, with new people and new rules can be confusing, frustrating or upsetting at first. You are bound to have lots of feelings – sometimes you may feel sad, or worried or happy – and it is important that you know they are all OK.

Your carer or key worker is there to listen if you want to talk about your feelings when you feel ready and you can ask them any questions you may have. It is better to share them with someone rather than keeping them bottled up.

You can also talk to your social worker, another trusted adult (like a teacher or mentor at school), or your Independent Reviewing Officer.

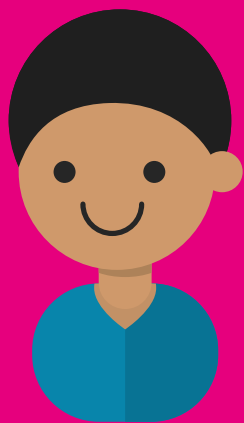
Your social worker will talk to you regularly to let you know what is happening.

**There are lots of people working together to make sure you get the right help, care and support.**



Some of these roles might be new to you, and not everyone will have each of them, it will depend on your individual situation. You can find out more about what each person does on the next pages.

## Social Worker



Every child in care has a social worker. Your social worker is there to help you, make sure you are safe and well looked after, wherever you are living. They know lots about children and families.

Your social worker will visit you regularly and talk with you about your wishes and feelings.

My social worker is:

Their telephone number is:

## Supervising Social Worker



If you live with a foster carer, this social worker helps your foster carer understand what you need and makes sure they are caring for you properly.



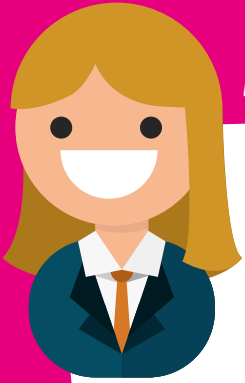
## Solicitor

Children and young people in care proceedings (see the section on Court) also have a solicitor to help them. The solicitor is a lawyer who works with the Cafcass worker to make sure the best decisions are made for children.

My Solicitor is:

Their telephone number is:

# Independent Reviewing Officer



My IRO is:

Their telephone number is:

Every child and young person in care must have an IRO. It is their job to Chair (lead) your review meetings, make sure everyone is keeping to their actions on your care plan, and make sure there are clear plans for your future.

They will meet with you regularly to make sure you are happy and getting the right care and support. They will send you a leaflet with more information and their telephone number on so you can speak to them.

# Cafcass Worker/ Children's Guardian



The court will ask a Cafcass worker (sometimes called a 'Children's Guardian') to help them decide what is best for you. They will look at the social worker's plans and tell the court what they think needs to happen next to keep you safe and well. They will usually talk with you to find out what you think and how you feel about everything. They will also speak to other people who care about you like your parents, family, social worker, and sometimes your teachers.

Your Children's Guardian/  
Cafcass worker is:

Their telephone number is:

## **Foster Carer**



If you're being fostered, foster carers are the people you live with who look after you as part of their family and keep you safe. There are lots of different foster families – some are single, some are married, some have children living at home with them, some do not. Foster carers are chosen carefully and get training to understand the best way of looking after you to make you feel safe.

Children and young people live with foster carers for different lengths of time depending on their situation, some for a few weeks or months and some until they are grown up. They make sure you have your own bed, clean clothes, healthy food, help with school and have fun things to do. Your social worker will visit you regularly whilst you are living with your foster carer.

## **Residential home or school – key worker**

Some children and young people live in a residential home or school because this gives them the right support they need. A residential home or school looks after a few children and each child has their own room as well as some shared areas like a lounge, dining room and places to relax and watch TV.

If you live in a residential home or school then you will have a key worker who will get to know you, what you need and make sure you are happy and settled. Children and young people live in residential homes for different lengths of time depending on their situation, some for a few weeks or months and some until they are grown up. Your social worker will visit you regularly whilst you are living in a residential home or school.



## Court (or 'Care Proceedings')

When people are very worried that a child or young person might not be safe, social care might begin 'care proceedings' with the family court. The Judge in the family court listens to what everyone has to say. It's their job to make safe decisions for you and your family. Your Social worker will work with your family to see whether it is possible for you to stay safely with them. If the court decides that is not possible, they will help to make sure there is somewhere safe where you can live.

The most important thing to remember if you are in care proceedings is that none of this is your fault. If this is going to happen for you, your social worker will talk to you about this. They will ensure you have a Cafcass worker, who will make sure you have a Solicitor. You will be asked your wishes and feelings. Your Cafcass worker and Solicitor will also explain what is going to happen.

## Independent Advocates

Advocates make sure children and young people are supported if they want to make a complaint about a service they are receiving, or if they would like support to ensure their wishes and feelings are being heard when decisions are being made.

Sova's Independent Advocates can be called upon at short notice, as and when you need them. Your Advocate can come to your reviews to support you to say what you want. They will ensure, whenever they can, that your views are heard and taken into account. They are there to listen.

If you would like to know more about having an Independent Advocate, please contact Sova, or ask your social worker or foster carer to do so for you.

There is more information on their website [www.sova.org.uk](http://www.sova.org.uk) or contact Gill Black by telephone on **01332 294534** or by email at [gillian.black@sova.org.uk](mailto:gillian.black@sova.org.uk)

# Your Care Plan and meetings



## Care Plan

Your Care Plan says how you will be cared for and what needs to be done to make the plan work. This includes who will look after you, where you will go to school, how we will make sure you are healthy, how you can do things you enjoy, when you will see your family, how you can practice your religion and culture and what will happen for you in the future.

Your Social Worker and IRO must listen carefully to your wishes and feelings. They can also listen to what your parents have to say and they will talk to other people such as your teacher.

## Review meetings

The people who play an important part in your life, will meet on a regular basis. This is called a Review Meeting. The first review meeting is within 4 weeks of you becoming looked after by Derby City and the second review is 3 months later. Then there will be review meetings at least every 6 months whilst you are in care.

You can go to your meeting, as it is important you get to give your views. Your Social Worker or IRO may talk to you after the meeting to make sure you understand what was talked about and the decisions that were made.

You will be sent a leaflet telling you about your IRO, what they do and review meetings before you have your first meeting.

## Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

PEP meetings are to talk about how things are at school for you and plan for any help you might need to make things better.

Your first meeting will be within 20 days of coming into care. You can go to your meeting or give your views before the meeting – it's important to hear what you think is good or bad about school. Your social worker, your carer, the Designated Teacher at your school and anyone else who is involved in your education will also be there. Your carer or social worker will talk with you about what was said and what targets were set.

The Virtual School help all children in care with any education or school issues. They have a leaflet to tell you more about what they do and PEP meetings. You can also go to [www.derby.gov.uk/education-and-learning/virtual-school/](http://www.derby.gov.uk/education-and-learning/virtual-school/)



# Health



It is important that you are helped to keep healthy and well by your social worker and those caring for you. This means you should have a healthy diet, lots of exercise and be taken to see a Doctor, dentist or optician when you need to.

When you are a child who is in care, there are a few health appointments that you will be taken to. These are to make sure you have everything you need to be healthy and well.

You might not have been to these type of appointments before you came into care. You can ask your carer if you have any questions and let them know if you feel nervous. The nurses will write to you with more information about your health checks.



# Health Assessments

Each year you will have a yearly health assessment, with a looked after children nurse or Doctor.

This makes sure you are having all your health needs met. They will talk with you and your carer or key worker about your health.

You can tell them how you are feeling and if there is anything you are worried about. They will measure how tall you are and weigh you and may talk about your diet.

You can ask your carer to stay with you, or ask to be seen on your own if you prefer.

## Dentist and Optician

You will also go to the dentist every 6 months so that they can check your teeth.

You will go to the opticians every 6 months to 2 years (depending on whether you need glasses). An optician checks your eyes to see if you need glasses to help you see more clearly. If you need glasses your carer or key worker will make sure you have the right prescription.

# **Your questions**



There is lots happening for you right now, so it is understandable that you might have lots of questions.

Over the page there is space to write down or draw any questions you might have, to ask your social worker or your carer.

# Your questions

## **Do I get pocket money?**

All children and young people should get pocket money. Your social worker and carer will decide how much you should get, and will encourage you to save some money too.

## **Will I see my family or friends?**

You may be missing your family or friends. Your social worker will talk to you about what arrangements have been made for you, as each child or young person's situation is different. Talk with your social worker and carers about the plan for keeping in touch with your family and friends, if it is safe – this might be through seeing them (this is often called 'contact'), phone calls or letters.

## **Will I have to move school?**

Usually we try and make sure children can stay at their same school. However, if you are going to stay with your carer for a long time and are a long way from school, you may be able to change to a nearer school that is easier to get to.

## **How do I let people know what I want?**

Your social worker will be talking with you about your wishes and feelings, as these are important to us. You will also be able to let your Independent Reviewing Officer know so that they can think about this when looking at the plan in place to look after you.

# Your questions

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*Draw here...*

*and here...*



# Complaints and having your say

If you feel unhappy about the way you are being cared for or the services that are trying to help you, you can let us know.

It might be good to talk to someone you trust, like your social worker or carer, as they may be able to help you sort it out first. If you still want to complain, talk to your IRO or an advocate. They will know what to do to next.

Making a complaint can feel hard sometimes, but you don't need to worry. There is a leaflet to help you with how to make a complaint, called Have Your Say. You can also tell us if there is something that has gone well and you are pleased and happy.

You can contact our complaints team by email: **customer.feedback@derby.gov.uk** or telephone: **01332 643498**.

# Children in Care Council

The Children in Care Council is a group open to children and young people, aged between 10 and 21, who are looked after by Derby City Council and have experience of being in care. We discuss issues that matter to us and other young people in care, to help those working with us to make positive changes and make things better for everyone. We meet once a month.

You can find out more at: **[www.derby.gov.uk/children-in-care-council/](http://www.derby.gov.uk/children-in-care-council/)** or contact Claire Hurst, Participation Officer, on telephone: **01332 640269** or email: **claire.hurst@derby.gov.uk**.

# The Pledge



We will show you how to contact your Social Worker. We will tell you who to contact if things go wrong and what to do if you need urgent help.



We will provide a safe place for you to live. We want you to know that you are safe, protected and valued and can trust those caring for you.



We will encourage and support you to participate in wider opportunities to build your confidence so that you are able to make safe decisions for yourself.



If you need someone to talk to, this includes at evenings and weekends, we will make sure you know who to call.



We will respect you for who you are. We will help you to develop a strong sense of personal identity and maintain your cultural and religious beliefs.

# The Pledge



We will help you to access all the services you need to keep you healthy and safe.



We will support you to get the most from your education and encourage you to reach all of your goals and achieve your potential by providing apprenticeships and work experience.



We will help you to understand all of your rights and help you to join with other young people to share your views, concerns and aspirations.



We will ensure your voice is at the heart of all decisions made about you and that you understand why and when meetings are held.



We will join with you to celebrate your 18th birthday and ensure you are prepared for and supported into adulthood.

# Useful contacts

## **Become – Care Advice Line**

A charity for children in care and young care leavers.

**0800 023 2033**

**[www.becomecharity.org.uk](http://www.becomecharity.org.uk)**

**[advice@becomecharity.org.uk](mailto:advice@becomecharity.org.uk)**

## **Childline**

A confidential service to speak with a counsellor. Also available to chat online or via email.

**0800 11 11**

**[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)**

## **Children's Commissioner, Help At Hand**

Offer free support, advice and information.

**0800 528 0731**

**[www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand)**

**[help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)**

## **Coram Children's Legal Centre**

Legal information and representation for children and young people.

**[www.childrenslegalcentre.com](http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com)**

## **Coram Voice**

Children's rights – Young People's Zone.

**0808 800 5792**

**[www.coramvoice.org.uk](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk)**

**[info@coramvoice.org.uk](mailto:info@coramvoice.org.uk)**

## **Young Minds**

Leading charity committed to improving the wellbeing and mental health of children and young people.

**[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)**