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A Young Person's Guide To Being Looked After




St.Helens
Council

Any questions?

14. How we can help you stay healthy?

We want you to be as healthy as you can be. We will make sure that you have a doctor and a dentist. If you are still within your local area you may be able to keep your current doctor and dentist.

Your keyworker or carer will make sure that you have regular medical and dental check-ups. They will arrange these check-ups to make sure that you are healthy. You do not have to go by yourself - there should always be someone who can go with you.

Your social worker will also arrange a health assessment for you when you are first looked after and yearly after that. You can decide what happens at these checks and you also have the right to refuse this if you are over 16, or if the doctor considers that you are able to make this decision.

To make sure that you are as healthy as possible,

- find out about your health history and keep a record on your file;
- we will support you to get to your appointments.
- we will give you advice and information on such matters as; drugs, alcohol, smoking and relationships.



Coming into care can be a confusing time for young people. This guide will try to help you understand what is happening to you and why.

There will be a number of people helping to look after you. It's important that these people listen to what you say, and help you settle into your new home.

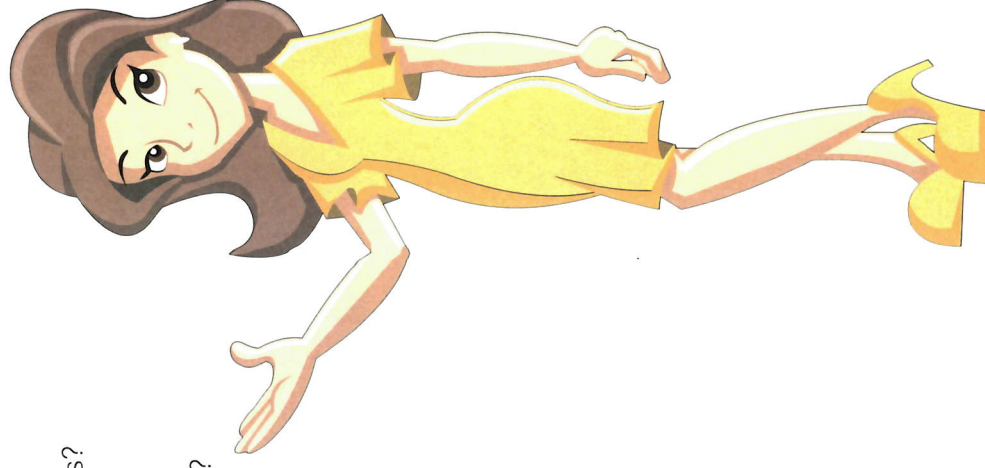
At the same time they will do their best to help you keep in touch with your family and friends (as long as there is no reason why you can't see them).

This guide should help explain more...



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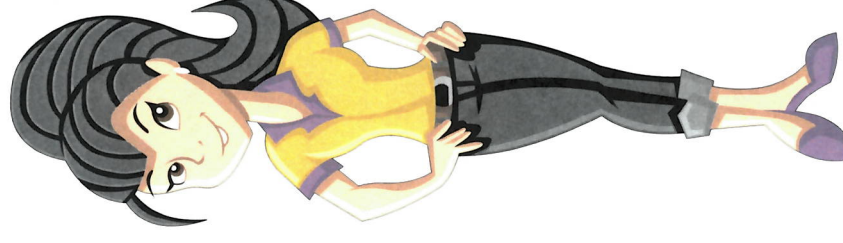


What is a review?

Review meetings are very important. The meeting is about you and your time in care. The review meeting is to check that your care plan is still right for you and make any necessary changes to it.

You will have your first review meeting when you have been looked after for one month. You can go to these meetings and make comments if you want. Your social worker will explain who else may be there.

The person who organises the meeting is a reviewing officer and it is their job to make sure they know everything about you and what has happened so far. This is to make sure any decisions made are appropriate to your needs and the best plans are made with you for your future.



12. What is a care plan?

To be able to care for you properly, we will need to know about you. We have to write the information down so it is not lost or forgotten.

When plans or decisions are made it is important that everyone remembers what was discussed and agreed and what they have said they will do.

The information written down about you might be helpful and important to you later on in your life.

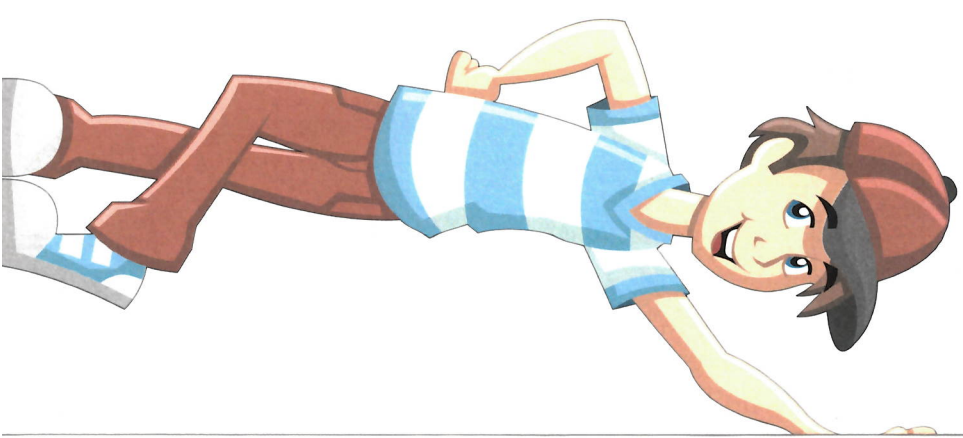
A plan for your time in care will be put together - this is called a care plan. All young people who are looked after must have a care plan. A care plan is all about you and will provide help and support for your needs. Your care plan should clearly state what we plan to do for you and when things will be done by. We can only change the content of a care plan at a review meeting.



1. What does being looked after mean?

Being looked after is also called 'being in care' or 'being accommodated'. When you are in care it means that the local authority (the council) is responsible for looking after you.

Under the Children Act 1989 the local authority has a duty to provide help for children in need. Usually this means supporting children in their own families. Sometimes this is not enough, and children need to be looked after somewhere else. This could be a foster family or a children's home.



2. Why are we being looked after?

The answer to this question is different for every young person. However, ask your social worker about the reasons why you have become looked after. The reason may be that your family is having problems and that they are finding it difficult to cope or you may have been at risk of some sort of harm if nothing changes.

When you first come into care, you will be invited to a meeting to talk about the plan for you to be looked after by St. Helens Council. A social worker will be there and your parents will be invited. During the meeting there may be certain words used that you do not understand. If this happens, ask someone to explain. Don't be embarrassed or feel sorry about asking a question. The meeting is about you and your life. So, if you don't understand, it needs to be explained so that you do!

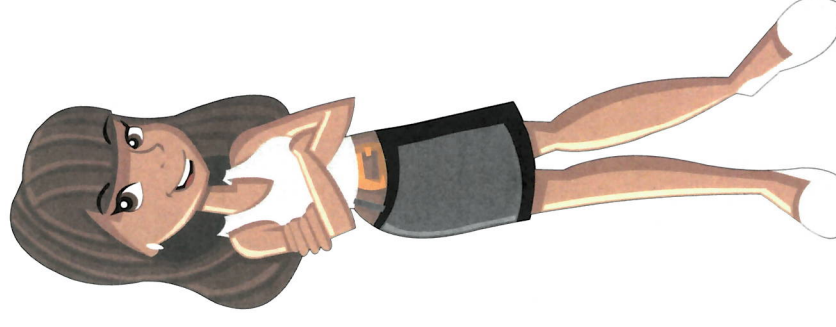


11. What are Personal Education plans?

Your key person in school will guide you through a PEP plan. This is a way of looking at how to support you to do your best at school. The plan will be discussed at your review. Your PEP should make sure that everyone pays full attention to your education. It is important that you contribute to your PEP.

The PEP will help everyone listen to what you say. It will include:

- what you enjoy at school;
- what you are good at in school;
- any areas you would like to improve on;
- plans for the future including what you would like to do when you leave the school; and
- anything else you feel is important to help you achieve to the best of your ability.



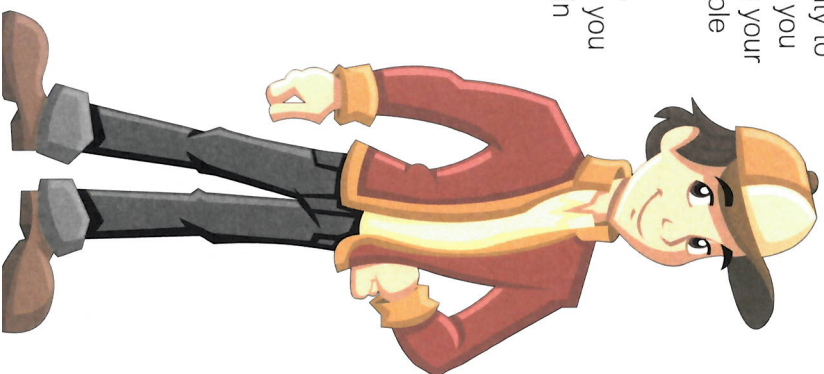
10. Why do I need to go to school?

The right education means the right job or career in the future. All young people between the ages of 5 and 16 must be in education. This is the law.

We want you to have a good start in life and we will help and support you with your learning. Your carers will probably visit your school from time to time to make sure you are doing alright there. They will help you to get organised for school by helping you sort out uniform and any other things you may need.

Being at school can help in many ways. It can help you too make friends, be part of group, feel safe and try new things. Going to school is a real opportunity for you to gain the qualifications you need to succeed. You have a responsibility to make sure that you go to school every day. If you have any worries about school, please talk to your carer, they will be able to help. They will be able to help you sort out whatever the problem is.

In school you will introduced to a key person, who you can go to or talk through any issues you have. Designated teachers keep all children in care in their schools.

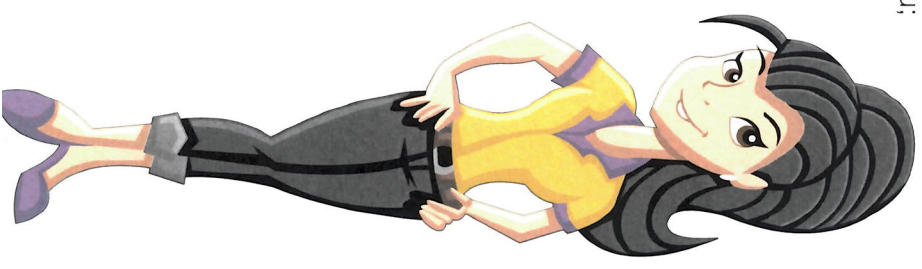


3. What will your carers get to know about you?

Before you go to your placement your carers will have been given some important information about you, so they can look after you properly.

This will include details of:

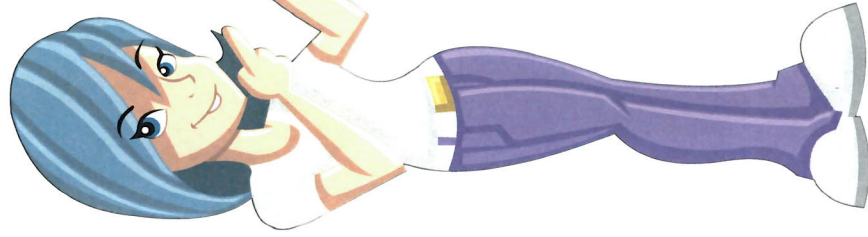
- where all your family members live and how to contact them;
- what members of your family can you still see;
- whether there is anything about your health they need to know;
- whether you have a disability;
- what your religion is and how important it is to you;
- which school you are at and how you're doing;
- what your interests and hobbies are.



4. Will I still see my family?

If you are placed away from your family this does not mean that you won't see or hear from them again. We know how important it is for you to stay in contact with your family. You may be able to see your family regularly, unless there are special reasons why this cannot happen. This will all be discussed and explained to you.

Sometimes it is not a good idea for you to have contact with someone. This may be because they have harmed you in the past, or said hurtful things that upset you in the past. If you are worried about having to see anyone, you should tell your carer or social worker, you will not have to see them. If you are unhappy about the amount of contact you have with your family and friends, you should talk to your social worker about this too.



9. Will I receive any money?

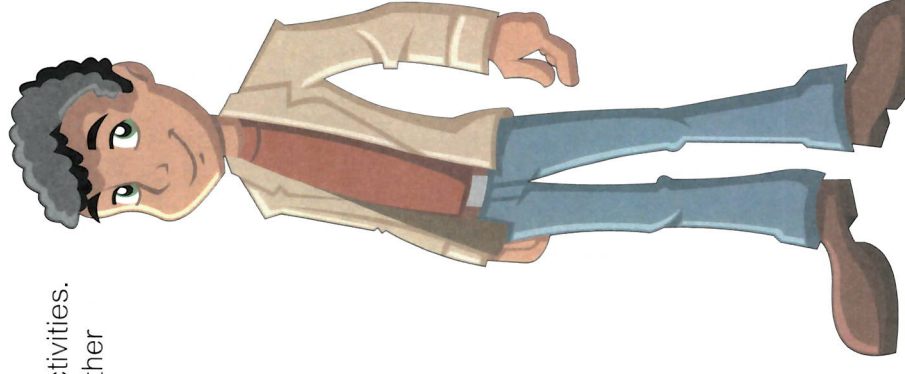
You will be given pocket money every week. The amount given will be dependent on your age. Your pocket money can be kept for you in a secure place. Everyone is encouraged to open a bank account and save some of your pocket money for special occasions, treats and trips out.

Christmas and Birthdays

At Christmas and Birthdays, you will be entitled to an amount of money. The amount will depend on your age. Your carer will inform you of the amount. They can help you plan what you might like to buy with your money.

Activities

You will be encouraged to get involved in activities. If there is a cost to this, we will decide together what can be paid for.

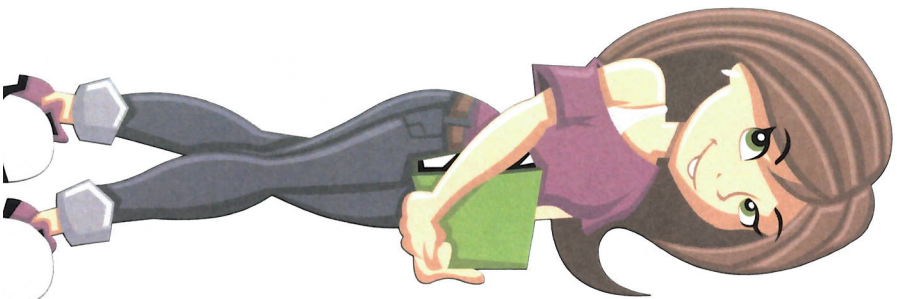


8. Are there any rules?

Whenever people live together there need to be rules. We need rules to be considerate to other people we are living with. We try not to have too many rules and do not make them without a reason.

For instance, we feel that it is very important to respect each other, to treat people how you would like to be treated. A relaxed atmosphere, with chatter and laughter is a nice environment to live in.

Arguments, violence and bullying create a horrible unfriendly place to be, this is not where we want you to live. If rules are broken then there may be consequences these will be discussed with you by your Carer.



5. What is a Social Worker?

A social worker is someone who has been trained to help young people and their families when they go through difficult times.

Every child and young person who is "looked after" has a social worker. Your social worker works for St.Helens Council and they are there to help you during your time in care.

Your social worker will visit you when you move within one week and then monthly after that, this is to check you are okay. They will ask you some questions about your placement and will also speak with your carers.

If you are unhappy or feel like you need to talk to someone, you can spend time with your social worker and ask to see him or her on your own.

They will offer you whatever advice and support you need. When you spend time with your social worker you can talk to them about anything, including your interests or hobbies.

Your social worker will go to different meetings with you, like your placement meeting and review meetings.



6. Where may I go to live?

You may go to live in either a children's home or with foster parents.

What is a Children's home?

A children's home can be a large house where several children can stay or a smaller home where one or two children live. A team of people work together to make sure you always have help and support when you need it. Each young person has a special member of staff called a key worker to make sure all your needs are met. Young people still go to school and college and are encouraged to carry on with their hobbies or interests.



7. What is Foster Care?

Foster carers are people who have been specially chosen to care for other people's children in their own homes.

There are many different types of foster families - some are single and others are couples with their own children. They come from many different backgrounds. Wherever you live your carers are there to help and give you support.

