

All you need to know

Guide for Children/Young People Looked After by
York Children's Services

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Introduction



If you have recently come into care you may have lots of questions as you try to understand what is happening in your life

This guide is to try and help you understand some of the things that happen when children and young people come into care. It has been designed with young people who have been in care as they know what being in care is really like and know what you need to know about. You can also find information about what you can expect when you come into care, in York's Pledge.

My name is Eoin Rush and I am the Assistant Director who is responsible for making sure that you have the best possible care. If you think that you have not been listened to or you think I can help I will always be happy to hear from you. Your social worker, carer or our Children's Rights Officer can put you in touch with me or you can call directly on 01904 554212.

I hope you find this guide helpful.

Eoin

Written by Eoin Rush, Assistant Director.

Part one – Becoming a young person looked after by children’s Social Care Services



What does ‘being looked after’ mean?

Being looked after means that Children's Social Care (CSC) are responsible for making sure that you have somewhere safe to live.

What is a Care Order ?

If there is a Care Order, it means that the court has decided that it is safer for you to live away from home.

What is ‘being accommodated’?

This is when your parents and CSC have agreed that it would be helpful for you to be looked after for a while.

We will talk to you to see what you would like to happen.

Your Social Worker



You will have your own social worker who will keep in touch with you and check how things are going.

They are there to help you and your family and to do what is best for you.

Your Care Plan



When CSC start looking after you, they have to work out a plan about what you need and what help you will get (this is called a Care Plan). They do this by talking to you to

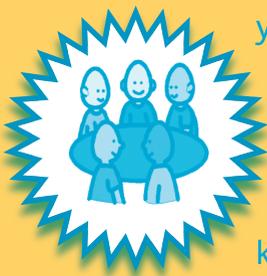
see what you want and the things that are important to you, they will also talk to other people who know you well.

Your Independent Reviewing Officer

Your Independent Reviewing Officer is in charge of your review meeting they will check that the right plan is made for you, and that the plans do happen. The IRO will want to meet with you to hear what you think about the plans being made for you.

If the IRO thinks that your plan is not being followed or that you are not getting the best care they will take action to try to sort this out.

If you are not happy about the plans being made for you the IRO will help you to understand what you can do to try and change this.



Your Review

Review's are held to see how you are getting on, they are meetings that bring together people in your life who know you well.



When will Your Review Meeting Take Place ?

Your Care plan needs to be looked at regularly to make sure it is still working for you.

There are some special times when a Review should be held:

- Within four weeks of you being looked after.
- Three months after your first Review.
- After that Reviews should take place at least every six months.

If there is a lot happening in your life your Reviews may be held more often, and there should always be a review before you stop being looked after.



What happens at the Review Meeting

The meeting is about you to make sure you are looked after and that you are listened to. You can choose if you want to be at your Review meeting or if you prefer you can tell someone what you think, or

send a picture, photos, text or message to help describe your views.

After the Review Meeting

Your Independent Reviewing Officer, Social Worker or Carer will talk to you about the decisions made at your review. If you don't agree with the decision, it is important that you tell someone. The IRO would then help you to decide what to do about this.



Forms and Files

While you are being looked after, information about you and your family or carers will be written down. This information is kept in a confidential file.

You have the right to see your file and read the information in it, unless people feel it wouldn't be good for you to do this until you are older.

Part two – Where you live

You and your foster carers



What is a foster carer ?

A foster carer is someone who looks after other people's children when they have to live away from home. You live with them in their home with their family.

What do foster carers do

Your foster carers will do all they can to look after you.



This means doing things like keeping you safe, making sure you have clean clothes and enough food and helping you to enjoy school and your spare time.

Who can be a foster carer?

All sorts of people can be foster carers. They can be married or they could be single. Some foster carers have other foster children living with them or they might have their own children. Sometimes it is possible for a relative or friend of the family to be your foster carer. Your foster carer could be a relative or friend of your family.

Will I get my own room ?

In some foster homes, you will have a bedroom of your own, in others you may share a room with other children and young people.

How is fostering different from adoption ?

If your Social Worker thinks that you will not be able to

go back to your family, they may start looking for a family you can stay with until you are grown up. This may be a family who can adopt you, or it may be a family who will foster you for a long time.

Do foster carers get paid for what they do ?

All foster carers get some money from CSC. This is to make sure that they have enough money to pay for your clothes, food, outings, pocket money, things you may need for school and holidays.



Rules and Where You Live

All homes have rules, they are there to help you and the people you live with get along together. They are a way of making you all feel safer. Your carers and Social

Worker will go through the rules with you so that you understand them and there is no confusion.



Your personal belongings

You will have somewhere to keep your clothes and other things that are important to you. If you have anything of value you need to let your carer know so that they can help you to keep it safe.



Pocket Money

If you are old enough, you will get pocket money. This is for you to spend on extra things for yourself.

You and your Children's Home



What is a Children's Home ?

A Children's Home is where there are staff employed to look after you. The staff work in shifts taking turns to look after you.

Some Homes are quite small with only a few children, some are larger and others may have a school as part of the building. Most of them have a mix of boys and girls but some have just girls or just boys.

York CSC runs one Children's Home in York, for young people aged 13 to 18.

What do Children's Homes do for you ?

The staff at your Children's Home will do all they can to look after you.

This means doing things like keeping you safe, making sure you have clean clothes and enough food and helping you to enjoy school and your spare time.



What is a Keyworker ?

Your Key worker is a member of staff who has special responsibility for you. They will arrange things for you like seeing your family, Social Worker and doctors appointments. Your Keyworker will attend your meetings with you and will help the people in the meeting to understand your wishes, needs and point of view.

Young People's Meetings

Children's Homes should have regular meetings for all the young people living there, to make decisions about

things in the Children's Home and sort out any problems.



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Living outside of York?

Sometimes children are placed in a Children's Home or Residential School outside York. This will be run by a different organisation. If this happens, you will still have a Social Worker from York and you can still ask to speak with York's Rights and Advocacy Service.

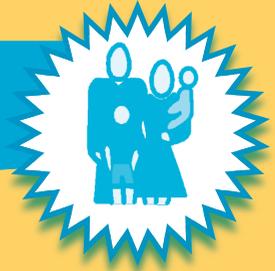


What if I am not happy with where I am living ?

Your Social Worker must do their best to find you somewhere to live where they think you will be happy.

Your views about where you are going to live are very important and your Social Worker has to listen to what you have to say. It is important that you talk to your Social Worker about how you are settling in and any problems you may have.

Part three – Contact with your family and friends



Keeping in touch with your family and friends is really important. Social Workers call it ‘having contact’. It can include seeing members of your family, speaking to them on the telephone, writing to them or receiving letters, presents or e-mails.

Your right to contact



Unless there are very good reasons why not, you should be able to have regular contact with your family. You should also be able to see your friends. You, your carers and your Social Worker should agree a plan about how often you should see each other and where it should happen.

What is ‘supervised contact’ ?

Sometimes the court or Social Workers decide that it is better for you to see your family with another adult present. This may be because they are worried that you may become upset or that you may get hurt during the visit. This is called supervised contact.

What if you can’t see someone?

Sometimes it may not be a good idea for you to see someone. Social Workers can ask the Court for an order to stop people from seeing you if they think it will be harmful to you.

Even if you can’t see someone, you may still be able to get photographs, letters or cards from them.

What if you don't want to see someone?

If you are worried about having to see anyone, including your parents, then you do not have to. You must tell your carer or Social Worker if you don't want to see someone.

What if you don't like the amount or type of contact you are getting?

It is important that you let someone know what you want, how contact is going or if anything is upsetting you about contact. You can talk to your Social Worker, Carer or someone from York's Rights and Advocacy Service.



How can you keep in touch with your friends ?

CSC should try to find you somewhere to live as near to home as possible. That way you can keep in touch with your friends. Sometimes this may not be possible.

If you do have to move away from your friends your Social Worker and carers should help you to keep in touch if they can. If you have friends who are really important to you, you need to tell your Social Worker how important this is to you.

Am I allowed to stay overnight with friends ?

It is important for you to be able to join in with things your friends are doing, like having sleepovers. If your carers are happy for you to take part in a sleepover, and believe you will be kept safe, this will usually be OK.

Part 4 – Getting people to listen



What you want and how you feel

Whenever plans are made about you your wishes and feelings must be listened to carefully. You may find it hard to talk about this but it is really important to find a way of letting people know how you are feeling and what you want.

There may be some things that you want but which may not be able to happen. However, the reasons for this should always be explained to you.

Understanding what's going on

It may be hard to understand what is going on. Part of your Social Workers job is to make sure that you understand what is happening to you. Keep on asking if you don't understand.

If you feel you are not being listened to, or you don't understand what is going on, you can contact York's Rights and Advocacy Service who can help you to get people to listen. The people who work there are called Children's Rights Workers.

Finding Out More about Making A Complaint

At the back of this guide is a leaflet called , "Have Your Say". If you have lost this leaflet ask your Social Worker or York's Rights and Advocacy Service to get you another one.

Part five – You and your education



The law says that all young people from 5 to 16 must have the chance to get a full time education and for most people this means going to school.

Support from Children's Social Care Services

Your Social Worker, keyworker or foster carer, should help you as much as they can. They can help by making sure you have all the things you need for school and that you get the help you need with your homework.

They should also come along to any meetings at school and make sure everything is going well and help to sort out any problems.

Support from Designated Teachers

All schools have someone called a Designated Teacher. This is a Teacher who understands about you being in care. You can talk to your Designated Teacher at school if you have any problems in school.



What is a Personal Education Plan?

All children and young people who are in care will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) You, your Social Worker and Teacher will sort out your PEP.

Problems at school: what if I need extra support?

If you have any problems at school or are worried, it is important that you talk to your social worker, carers or designated teacher who will help you.

What if I am not in School ?

If you do not have a school place then your carers should contact the Education Access Team so that they can help and advise you.

School exclusion

Everything should be done to try to avoid children being excluded from school. Your teachers and carers should give you as much support as possible to prevent you getting excluded. Exclusions should only be made for very serious things. If you are excluded arrangements for you to receive good quality education should by another means should be made within 6 days.

What about getting permission for school trips and outings ?

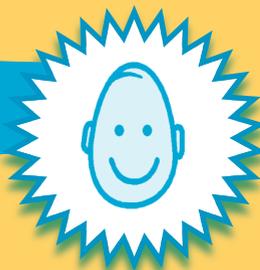
Sometimes an adult who is responsible for you has to sign a form to say that you can get involved in special activities, such as school trips and outings. It will normally be your carer or your parents. Whoever it is, it should be easy to sort out so that it is easy for you to join in with things.

What happens after I am 16 ?

CSC will carry on supporting you in your education right up to the age of 24 if you need it.

If you need help and advice with finding training or a job, CSC will also support you.

Part six – Your health and happiness



Being healthy and happy is very important. CSC are responsible for doing all they can to make sure you are as healthy and happy as possible.



How should your carers help you to be healthy ?

Your carers should get a lot of information about you and your health. They will need to know if you have been ill before and what things make you better. If you are disabled, there may be things that need particular attention. If you have to take any medicines regularly, or have any special injections, your carers will make sure this happens.

Your social worker will find out everything that is important and make sure there is a plan for looking after your health.

Why do I have to have health checks ?

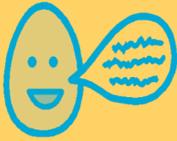
You will have a health check with a doctor or nurse when you first become looked after and every year after that. This is an extra way of making sure that you are healthy. If you are old enough to understand why, you can refuse this and any other medical checks if you really do not want them.



Eating Well

Food is an important part of everybody's life. The right food and the right amount of it goes a long way towards health, fitness and looking good.

You have some rights about what you eat. You should expect a good diet. This should fit in with your culture, be right for your religion and be good for your health. You should be able to ask if you can sometimes have your favourite foods while you are in care. You should not be forced you to eat things you really do not like.



Your Happiness - Talking things through

Staying healthy also includes not letting things that are bothering you build up until you feel ill.

Finding someone to talk to is really important. Try to find someone you trust. For some people, it is useful to talk to someone called a counsellor, who listens and helps you to sort things out.



Your Happiness – Bullying

Sometimes children can be bullied by other children. This is not right and the people looking after you – your social worker, carers and teachers, are responsible for finding ways to stop it from happening.

Bullying is where anyone tries to upset you on purpose and can include:

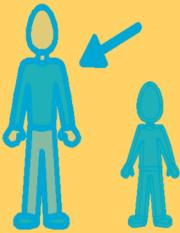
- Hitting and kicking.
- Stealing things from you.
- Threatening you.
- Calling you names.
- Stopping you from making friends.

You should always try to tell someone if you are being bullied.

Part seven – Your spare time



Your Social Worker and your carers should help you to find things to do in your spare time. This includes finding clubs, activities and hobbies that you enjoy.



Independent Visitors

An Independent Visitor is someone who can meet with you regularly, take you out, spend time with you and support you. If you would like more information on the Independent Visitor Service you can ask your Social Worker.

Participation Groups



I Matter 2

Monthly meetings for children and young people aged 11-14. The meetings give young people the chance to talk about the things that are good or how things could be improved for looked after children and young people in York.

Show Me That I Matter

Monthly meetings for young people aged 15-18. This is York's Children in Care Council and meet with members of the Council to improve things for looked after children and young people in York .

If you would like to join one of the participation groups contact York's Rights and Advocacy Service

You can also get lots of information about things to do in York by contacting Yortime.

Part eight – Leaving care



Some children and young people are only in care for a short time and others can stay with their carers until they are older.

Your Social Worker, Carers and Reviewing Officer will all make sure that you are involved with any plans and that your views are heard and you know what is going on.

Part 9 – Useful addresses and phone numbers



Social Services

Social Workers in York work across the city and are based at different locations. You can contact your Social Worker on their direct number or mobile number which you will be given or you can contact the General number.

York City Council

General Number for anyone working for the Council.

Tel: 01904 551550

Emergency Duty Team

To contact a Social Worker in an emergency in the evening, nighttime or weekends.

Tel: 01609 534039 (1st Choice) Or 0845 034 9417

Getting People to listen

York Rights and Advocacy Service

The Rights and Advocacy Service is here to help you get your views across; both in relation to decisions about your life as well as the decisions about your life as well as the decisions that affect all children and young people in care in York.

29 Castlegate
York YO1 9RN

Talk or txt: 07769725174

Complaints Manager

Get in touch if you think the way you are being treated is unfair.

PO Box 402

George Hudson Street

York YO1 6ZE

Tel: 01904 551550

Minicom: 01904 554120

E-mail: community@york.gov.uk

Freephone: 0800 1380133

Education

Education Access Team

Contact if you have not got a place at school or are having problems getting an education. Ring the York Council number below and ask for the Education Access Team.

Tel: 01904 551550

Library Service

Is there to make sure that you have plenty of chances to read. Staff will help you use the library service to get the most out of your leisure, interests and education.

Health

Family Health Services

Can give you a list of local doctors, dentists and other health services in York.

Tel: 01904 825110

NHS Direct

Provides general advice about any health matter you may be worried about.

Tel: 0845 4647

Website: www.nhsdirect.uk

York NHS Walk-in Health Centre

Place where you can get advice from a nurse about health issues and minor illnesses. No appointment needed but it is a good idea to ring in advance to check opening times.

31 Monkgate
York.

Tel: 01904 674557

Monkgate Health Centre, Young Persons Clinic

For sexual health advice and contraception.

31 Monkgate
York

Tel: 01904 630352

COMPASS

Offers a range of services on all drug matters including information, advice and help for people having problems with drug use.

15 Bridge Street
York

Tel: 01904 647474

Spare Time

Yortime

Information about activities, leisure and things to do in York. www.yortime.org.uk

YorOK

Information and events for children and young people in and around York.

www.yor-ok.org.uk/youngpeople

Useful Websites

A National Voice

An organisation run by and for young people who are in or leaving care.

Tel: 0160 237 5577

www.anationalvoice.org

Rights 4 me

A national website where you can say how you feel about being in care.

www.rights4me.org

Get Ready for change

An organisation all about Children's Rights

www.getreadyforchange.org.uk

Carelaw

A good web-site if you want to know more about your rights in care.

www.carelaw.org.uk

Children's Legal Centre

Advice about your rights and any aspect of the law that affects children and young people.

www.childrenlegalcentre.com

Youth Information Website

Loads of information about lots of different subjects relevant to young people.

www.youthinformation.com

Childline

Free and confidential helpline for children and young people Freephone 0800 1111

www.childline.org.uk

Castlegate

A place for young adults aged 16-25 to get information, advice and support on a number of different issues.

www.29castlegate.org

PACT

Provides direct services, training and participation in projects for disabled children and young people up to the age of 25.

www.childrenssociety.org.uk

Personal names and numbers

Social Worker



IRO



Your comments...



If you would like to contact the Children's Rights Officer to talk about anything or ask advice, or if you have any comments about this guide, you can fill in this form and send it in the attached envelope.

Your Comments...

Your name and contact details, if you would like the Children's Rights Officer to get in touch...

If you would like this information in an accessible format (for example in large print, on CD or by email) or another language please telephone
01904 551 550.

This information can be provided in your own language.

我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim własnym języku. (Polish)

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

 **01904 551550**