



# A Children and Young Person's Guide to Being in Care



FOSTER  
*a future*



BUILD  
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## “The Newcastle Way”



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## Useful numbers of the people who help me

My Foster Carer is \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

My Social Worker is \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

My Social Worker Manager is \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

My Independent Reviewing Officer is \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_



## Introduction to the Welcome Pack



### Introduction from Voices for Choices

“Hi,

We are a group of children and young people from the Children in Care Council. We have put together some information that we think may be a good starting point. It is not meant to answer everything. We all have different experiences and feelings about coming into care.



Things will be better, but it won't be over night. All the workers and professionals are here to help, make sure you make use of them as they are here for you. Have a look at the contents and check out the various sections in your own time. There are some useful links and information about people who will be supporting you.

Remember you are important, and you matter. Your health, wellbeing, achievements, ambition and aspirations are too. You are not on your own. Come to Voices for Choices where you can meet us and others, make new friends and have a laugh.”



## **Our Pledge to Children in Care**

### **Being in Care**

We will work together to make sure that you get the best care possible. We will include you in this so you have the information you need, when you need it. We will find you the right placement and help you to be safe and active.

### **Having a say on what you think**

We promise to listen to what you say and will make sure you know what is happening. We will make sure you know all the ways your voice is heard and how you can help build your individual care plan.

### **Education**

We know that good education gives you the best opportunities in life. We will support you to reach your educational potential and plan for the future. We will shape education that helps you reach your aspirations.

### **Health**

Your health is important to us. We will work closely with you to help you access local services that will support your physical, emotional and mental health.

### **Leisure**

We will support you take part in hobbies and activities that you enjoy and help you to take part in new experiences.

### **Achievements**

We want to celebrate your achievements with you and help you to inspire other children in care and the people around you.

### **Time with Family/Friends**





Time with your birth family should be in your best interest and we will review this regularly, making sure we involve you in any discussions. We will also work to help you access your friends and communities wherever possible.

## Your Future

We have huge ambitions for you and want to match your aspirations on every step of your journey. We have teams dedicated to supporting you to make the right educational, training and employment options and will help you make the start to adult life you deserve.

## Social Workers

Our Social Workers will get to know you and will work to make sure you are happy.

**This is our promise to you, and we will work with you and support you.**

## Caring for You

When you are in our care we will do our best to keep you near to your home so that you can continue to see your family and friends and keep going to your own school.

Wherever you live it is the responsibility of Newcastle to make sure you are safe and well. Did you know that not all children and young people who are in care live in a foster home? Here are some examples of the different placements where they may live.

- Family or close family friends
- Foster carers
- Residential Children's Homes and Schools

The word "Placement" means where you are living.





## **Which placement are you in?**

### **Family and Friends**

Some children and young people are cared for by someone in their own family like their grandparents, uncle, aunty or a close family friend. These family or friends will be assessed like foster carers as they will need to show that they can care for you and meet your needs.

### **Foster Carers**

Foster carers look after children and young people in their own home. There are lots of foster carers who have been specially trained, assessed and approved to look after other people's children. They are responsible for looking after you while you live with them and you should be treated the same as any other member of their family and feel part of it.

### **Living in a Residential Home**

A residential home is when you live with other young people and you are cared for by adults on site. The adults are employed to work at the residential homes and will work as a team to offer you support during the day and night.

## **SECTION 1**

### **So...who does what?**

#### **Social Worker**

Every child and young person who is in care will have a Social Worker who will be responsible for their case. They are there for you and they will visit you to explain why you are in care. They will explain to you how long you may be in care for and will support you with the help of others, such as school and health workers, to put together your care plan.

Your Social Worker will ask you about your wishes and feelings. This will include asking you how you are feeling about the changes in your life, what you want to do, how you want things to happen and what support you need.



They will visit you every 4 weeks and talk to you about how things are for you. You can let them know how school is going, if you have been well, and anything else you may want to talk about.

## **Foster Carer**

Children and young people are fostered for different reasons. Foster care is a family home for children to come and live when they cannot live with their own families.

### **What are Foster Carers like?**

Foster Carers are carefully checked and are trained to make sure they can offer you a safe and comfortable home. Some foster carers live alone, others are married with or without children of their own or other fostered children may live with them. We will try and find families that share your language, culture and religion.

### **What do Foster Carers do?**

They listen to your concerns or worries and talk to you about how to keep you safe both at home and outside. They will talk to you about relationships and help you make choices. Foster carers help you to do well at school and college and help make sure that you are healthy.

Your Foster Carer will welcome you into their home, want to find out about you and hear what questions you have, so you can get to know each other. They will spend time talking to you about some of the basic household rules in your foster home, like, bedtime and dinner time, the times when you can watch TV or use the computer. You can discuss these things together.

### **Supervising Social Worker (SSW)**

Supervising Social Workers (SSW) are social workers for foster carers. SSW's assist, support and monitor foster carers when they are looking after children and young people. They are there to ensure that you are receiving good quality care.

### **Independent Reviewing Officer**

Independent Reviewing Officers lead your review meeting and discuss with you your progress in care; this will help to decide your long-term plan.





## **Play and Youth Support**

The Play and Youth Support services will help you to sort out if you are unhappy or worried about decisions being made about your life.

## **Designated Teacher**

The Designated Teacher ensures school staff help you to enjoy school life and support you to learn and achieve.

## **LAC nurse**

The Specialised Nurse for Children in Care or 'LAC' Nurse will help you to keep well and stay healthy by making sure you see a doctor, dentist and optician regularly. The LAC Nurse will also support you to take care of yourself in areas such as personal hygiene, eating healthily, taking enough exercise and having enough sleep.



## **SECTION 2**

### **Meetings and Plans**

**Information for you about different meetings and the plans that are developed to help you.**

#### **Placement Planning Meeting**

When you come into care, you may feel that there are lots of meetings and people talking to you about your life. These meetings help to make sure that you are listened to as well that you understand what is happening in your life.

Your Placement Planning Meeting should happen within **5 working days** of you coming into care.

The meeting will be attended by your Foster Carer and their Supervising Social Worker. The meeting will be all about you and your day to day care; things that you like to eat, activities that you like to do, as well as things that



you don't like will be discussed in the meeting. The aim of the meeting is to ensure that all the people involved in your care are clear about your needs and how these can be met.

## Care Plan

Your care plan has information about how the different services will support you and what should happen in the future for you.

This plan should include **your views and wishes and should be agreed with you**. The plan will allow you to see what is happening in your health, education, identity and the views of your parents or carers. Your Social Worker will talk to you and explain how you can keep in contact with your friends and family, if it is safe for you to do so.

There is a section that will talk about your interests and hobbies and how these can be continued. Your care plan will also look at your personal development. These are things that help you to develop talent, potential and skills.

## Health Plan

Your health is very important. Being healthy does not just mean eating lots of vegetables and not being sick. It's keeping your teeth clean, regular eye tests, keeping your immunisations up to date. When you are in care, you will have what is called a "Health Assessment" by a Doctor or the LAC Nurse. We will help you to keep well and stay healthy by making sure you see a Doctor, Dentist and Optician regularly.

Your Health Assessment should happen before your Child in Care Review. If you are 5 years old or over your assessment will take place once a year, if you are under 5 it will be every 6 months. Remember you can also ask for advice or talk about any health worries with the LAC Nurse.

**You do have a right to refuse any part of the health assessment.**

With your co-operation the Nurse draws up a health assessment summary and future health plan for you. This is an opportunity to discuss any health concerns you have. You may also want to discuss problems at home or school, or friendships and relationships which may be affecting your health and wellbeing.



## Case Review for Children in Care

Case Review is a review meeting, **for you** and everyone to talk about how you are getting on and the plans that are being made with you while you are in care. You, your parent/s (if appropriate), Social Worker and Carer will be at this meeting. There may be times that other people are invited, like your teacher or advocate if you need someone to support you.

There is always an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) at reviews. It is their job to lead the discussion at the meeting and help decide your long-term plans. They will make sure that you understand what is happening. They will talk to you before the meeting starts. They will ask you if there is anything you would like to talk about at the meeting and tell you exactly what will happen in the meeting so that there will be no surprises.

You will have your first review when you have been in care for **28 days**. The next review meeting will be three months later. The review meeting will then take place every six months. You will be appointed an IRO within five days of coming into care. Your IRO will contact you soon after the 5 days.

### Do I have to go to my review?

No, but it is best to go to meetings that are about you. Your review gives you an opportunity to talk about your Care Plan and help make changes to it. It is very important that you get the chance to go to your review and talk about your views, what you want and what is important to you. If you cannot attend, make sure you speak to your IRO or fill out your consultation form to make sure your views are included in the decisions that will be made.

## Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel (CPAC)

Newcastle Councillors act as Corporate Parents to children in the care of Newcastle. The role of the Corporate Parent is to ensure that the services provided by the Council support all children in care.

Newcastle's five top priorities for children in care:



- Enabling children to have the best start in life and tackling children and young peoples' problems
- Enabling children and young people to be safe and promoting their well being
- Enabling children and young people to make good progress in education
- Enabling young people to make a successful transition to adult life ensuring the children and young people of Newcastle receive high quality services
- To exercise this responsibility, Councillors must:
  - Be well informed about the children for whom they are responsible
  - think about how they are affected by Council decisions
  - Listen to what children and young people say
  - be a champion for children and young people

In Newcastle, this corporate parenting responsibility is carried out by the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel (known as CPAC). The Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel meets with children in care so that they can say what they think about the care that they are receiving.



## SECTION 3

### Your Voice, Rights, Entitlement and Participation

**In Newcastle we have a Children's Rights Charter**



## **Newcastle Children's Rights Charter**

This charter has been developed by children and young people from all around the city and agreed by the Council and Children's Trust. It reflects the issues and ideas that are important to children and young people living in Newcastle.

You are entitled to know about your rights. Everyone under 19 should be able to live according to these rights and take part in an open and honest dialogue about rights and responsibilities.

## **Voices for choices and Care Leavers Group for Children in Care Council (CICC)**

Voices for choices and Care Leavers Group are a group of children in care and members of the Children in Care Council for Newcastle upon Tyne. They help us understand the views of children and young people who are in care.

Are you:

- Living with a foster family?
- Receiving short break foster care?
- Living in a residential children's home?
- Cared for through the supported lodgings scheme?

If the answer is YES, then Voices for Choices or the Care Leavers Group is a great opportunity for you.

They:

- Help to develop our mission statement and child friendly mission statement
- Support consultations and questionnaires and respond on behalf of children in care from across Newcastle
- Review and update the Pledge to children in care
- Speak up for children in care.
- Work hard to help improve the future for children in care.
- Use their experiences to help Newcastle City Council make important decisions and changes to services.



## To join them:

Call or text 07787 691 236 or email [voices.choices@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:voices.choices@newcastle.gov.uk)

## The role of an Independent Visitor

An Independent Visitor (sometimes called an IV) is an adult who volunteers to spend some free time regularly with a young person like you. They are not paid to do this - they do it because they like to help and support young people. They are carefully chosen to make sure they are safe and matched to young people, for instance they often share the same hobby as a young person.

They usually visit the young person once or twice a month. Young people and their Independent Visitor spend time talking; they sometimes go out together to places like the cinema, park or football, depending on the young person's interests.

If you would like an Independent Visitor, you can ask your Social Worker or Independent Reviewing Officer for more information.

## Savings

Your Social Worker and Foster Carer will help you open a savings account in your name. Your foster carer will regularly pay in an agreed amount into your savings account. This money is not pocket money, so it won't be available to you on a day to day basis. You will receive regular bank statements which should be kept safe by you and your carers and be available for viewing when requested.

Savings are built up over the time you are in care to enable you to have a 'pot' of money when you leave care to set up your own place. If you move from one foster carer to another, the savings amount will also move with you and the new foster carer will continue to add to your savings.





## Pocket Money

Every week your Foster Carer will give you pocket money. The amount will depend upon your age and what was agreed in the Placement Planning Meeting with your Social Worker. Sometimes you might get small amounts throughout the week, or a weekly amount to last the whole week; you might want to talk with your foster carer about what suits you best. You can choose to have some of your pocket money put aside if you want to save for something. You can talk to your Foster Carer or Social Worker about how they can help you. This money is separate to your savings.

## Your Records

Every child and young person in care will have a record which will keep the information of all the meetings and visits that have taken place. These will include your:

- Care plan and all changes that have been made to them
- Visits by social worker
- Contact agreement
- Health assessments and reports
- Personal Education Plans and school reports and copies of your achievements
- Review Meetings documents
- All legal documents.

This will be different for each child or young person. It may include a Court Order, immigration papers etc.

**You have the right to see your records.** Your social worker and Independent Review Officer will be able to tell you how to do this. Your records are confidential and are kept safe and secured. The records are usual kept until your 75th birthday as it may be something you may want to look at in the future.

## Confidentiality

When you share information with professionals they should not tell anyone else what you have told them. There are, however, some situations where they would need to share this information with others. The professional will explain to you why they would have to share with others and who these other people may be. Examples of these situations may include, you have been hurt



by someone, if you intend to hurt someone or yourself, or you intend to commit a crime or have committed a crime. It is everyone's responsibility to keep children safe and for this reason information will need to be shared. If at any time you feel things you wanted to be kept private have been shared with others you do have the rights to raise this.

## **Bullying**

Bullying can be anything from name calling because of your race, culture or disability or for any reason, making things up deliberately to get you in trouble, hitting you, taking or damaging your belongings or stealing your money.

If any of these things ever happen to you, "please tell someone" about it. Don't be scared by threats. If you don't tell someone things may get worse. You should speak to someone you trust such as your Carer, Social worker, the School Nurse or your Designated Teacher.





## SECTION 4

### Education

#### **Your Education and School**

Your education is very important to us and we will do our best to make sure you are supported to do your best. Your Carer, Social Worker, and your teachers all know how important education is for you and they will give you whatever help and support you need. In every school there is a special teacher called the Designated Teacher for Children in Care.

Similar to review meetings, you also have meetings to talk and plan for your education. This is called a Personal Educational Plan (PEP) meeting, the PEP has information on how you are doing and what you need to help in your education.

If you are having any problems or difficulties at school, you must talk to your Foster Carers and Social Worker who will help you. You will also be able to get support at school from the Designated Teacher. The details of who the Designated Teacher is can be found in your PEP.

#### **The Virtual School**

The Virtual School is an additional resource which is there to support and challenge all those involved in the education of children in care. All children and young people who are in education, post 16, including university are part of Newcastle's Virtual School.

The Virtual School Team is working to raise the educational achievements and attendance of children and young people in care. The Virtual School tracks educational progress, supports, monitors work with children and young people to help them achieve their full potential, and supports and advises those who care and work with them.

The Virtual School is there to ensure that children and young people in care have access to good quality education, providing them with improved life chances.

We expect that every child in care will:



- ✓ Have a school place
- ✓ Have a current Personal Education Plan
- ✓ Attend a full time educational placement
- ✓ Achieve their potential

It is our responsibility to:

- ✓ Promote the attainment of children in care
- ✓ Raise awareness of the importance of education and lifelong learning with all people associated with children in care
- ✓ Help create opportunities for children in care to achieve success in their chosen careers
- ✓ Work closely with all agencies to improve educational opportunities for children in care.

## SECTION 5

### Becoming Independent

#### Pathway Plan

Your Pathway Plan starts when you are 15 years and 9 months old, which sets out your journey from being 'In Care' to being a 'Care Leaver' and the support and knowledge you will receive as you move towards being an independent adult.

You will be helped by your carer and social worker to develop life skills to live on your own. This will include support for learning useful skills like how to cook, manage your money, where you will live, your health and further education.

You will also plan with your social worker your move to the Leaving Care Team when you are 18.

#### What is the Leaving Care Support Team?

The Leaving Care Support Team is part of Newcastle Children's Services and their job is to prepare you to become independent. Connexions Personal Advisers are available to support your future education or employment plans.



They help you when you are thinking about leaving care or when you have left. When you leave care it will either be from a family or foster placement or from a residential home. Leaving care can be an exciting but also uncertain time as you may feel there is no-one to help you when you leave. They will meet with you to talk about your future and to plan your aftercare support.

They normally talk about where you may live, training and employment, your health, money, personal support and your needs. They stay in contact with you until you are 21 years old or until you finish higher education (24 years old in special circumstances). They believe that your future is important and that with help you can live a happy and successful life when you leave care.

### **Compliments and Complaints**

We want to know all the good things about you too! We want to know that you are happy and that the Council and staff have done a good job caring for you. If you are not happy about something, you should talk to your Foster Carer, Social Worker or Independent Reviewing Officer whose details are listed in Section 6.

If the issues are not resolved, you can consider making a complaint. You can do this by contacting the Complaints Team. The team is available to listen to any comments, complaints, or suggestions you may have about the service you receive from Children's Services. You can find the teams contact details in the 'Key Contacts and Information' section at the end of this guide.

If you make a complaint, the complaints team will contact you to find out more about your complaint and how we can help sort it out.

### **Emergency Duty Team (EDT)**

The Emergency Duty Team provides an 'out-of-hours' response in times of crisis or emergency for you and other children and young people. This means after 5pm on weekdays and all day and night at weekends. This service is available to you and other children and young people that are in a unsafe or worrying situation that cannot wait until the start of the next working day. There is always a social worker available by phone who will decide whether the situation needs a quick response or not outside of normal office working hours (Monday to Friday - 9am to 5pm).

The working hours of the EDT are -

**Weekdays: 5pm to 8.45am.**

**Weekends: 5pm on Friday until 8.45am on Monday.**



The EDT contact telephone number is **0191 278 7878**.

## **Advocacy**

If you do not want to talk to us yourself, you can ask an advocate to do this for you.

### **What is an Advocate?**

An advocate is someone who will speak on your behalf and promote your interests. If you would like an advocate, you could either:

- Talk to your foster carer about this
- Talk to a Customer Relations Officer about an independent advocate or
- Talk to your social worker about an independent visitor.
- Talk to the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) – see contact details in the ‘Key Contacts and Information’ section below.

## **Key Contacts and Information**

### **Complaints Team**

You can contact the complaints team in writing at:  
Complaints and Customer Relations Team  
Children’s Services Directorate  
Freepost RSXR–YG CJ–KKHK  
Newcastle City Council  
Civic Centre  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 8QH

Or by email: [complaintschildrens@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:complaintschildrens@newcastle.gov.uk)

Or by phone: 0191 2777427 (weekdays 9.30am to 3.30pm)

### **National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)**

If you need to talk to someone or if you want some advice, then NYAS can help. Your feelings and wishes are important, and the team will listen to your thoughts or ideas. They will speak for you, on your behalf if needed too. You can contact NYAS by phone: 0808 808 1001 or email: [help@nyas.net](mailto:help@nyas.net)  
Or find out more about NYAS





Or visit their website at: <https://youngpeople.nyas.net/>

### **Rachel de Souza, Children’s Commissioner for England**

The Office of the Children’s Commissioner Sanctuary Buildings,  
20 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT.

Phone: Freephone 0800 528 0731 Email:

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

If you have an enquiry about Help at Hand, our advice service for children in care, living away from home or receiving social care services, visit **Help at Hand** <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/>

or freephone 0800 528 0731.

### **Child Exploitation Online Protection - Thinkuknow**

Provides advice on how to keep safe online. Find out what’s good, what’s not and what you can do about it. There’s also a place which anyone can use to report if they feel uncomfortable or worried about someone they are chatting to online.

Website: [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

### **Childline**

A free 24-hour counselling service for children and young people up to the age of nineteen. It is a private and confidential service where you can contact a counsellor about anything - no problem is too big or too small.

Tel: 0800 1111

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

### **Voice for the child in care**

Voice for the Child in Care provides advocacy services for children and young people in care, including specialist visiting services to children’s homes and for fostering agencies. This is supported by a legal adviser and free phone for children and young people in care.

VCC also provides an advocacy service for runaways; YRU Running.

VCC has a network of volunteer visitors to secure units throughout the country, runs independent person services for complaints and secure review panels, provides training, consultation and publications including a book for young people in care – Shout to be Heard.

Tel: 0114 267 9389

Website: [www.voiceyp.org](http://www.voiceyp.org)



Speak to an Advisor on: 0116 298 2613  
or email: [info@voiceyp.org.uk](mailto:info@voiceyp.org.uk)

### **Kidscape**

For children and young people from 6 to 19, anyone who has concerns, specifically to prevent bullying and child sexual abuse

Email: [info@kidscape.org.uk](mailto:info@kidscape.org.uk)

Website: [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

### **NSPCC**

Offers a combination of services to help protect children, support families and work together with services to safeguard children.

Phone: 0800 11 11 Website: [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

### **The Children's Society**

Works directly with the most disadvantaged children.

Website: [www.childrenssociety.org.uk](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)

### **Become (previously Who Cares: Trust)**

We are a voice for children in care. We work to improve the day to day experience of children and young people in care - and their future lives.

In care or a care leaver? Looking for help and advice? Talk to us in confidence – online or over the phone.

You can call us on **0800 023 2033** between 10:30am and 3pm, Monday to Friday, or email us at [advice@becomecharity.org.uk](mailto:advice@becomecharity.org.uk)

Website: <https://www.becomecharity.org.uk/for-young-people/>

### **Local Government Ombudsman and Ofsted**

You can also contact the Local Government Ombudsman and Ofsted about your concerns and complaints.

#### **Local Government Ombudsman**

PO Box 4771

Coventry

CV4 0EH

Phone: 0300 061 0614

#### **Ofsted North**

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD



Phone: 0300 123 1231

E-mail: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)