



In partnership with:



stepping stones into care

secondary booklet

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Introduction

Hello



This pack has been designed by other young people to help you if you are being cared for away from home.

When you are cared for away from home it can be very different. You may want to know what will happen and what it will be like. We hope that this pack will answer some of your questions.

You may wish to read this alone or benefit from looking at the guide with your foster parents, key worker or social worker.

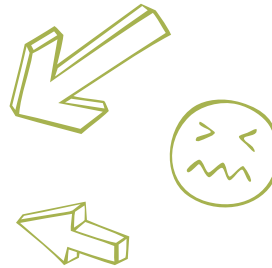
What does being looked after mean?

When you are 'looked after' this means the same as 'being in care'. There are different ways you might come into care, for example this could be where it has been decided through the courts or where your parents have asked for help taking care of you. You might be in care for a short time (short term) or for a long time (long term). Other young people may go on to be adopted. It really depends on your own personal situation. If you have any questions please talk to your social worker, carer or key worker.

How you may be feeling

We know you may be feeling a lot of different emotions, don't worry this is quite normal. Sometimes we have felt:

- Lost
- Sad
- Depressed
- Judged
- Afraid
- Confused
- Alone
- Grief
- Loss
- Awful
- Guilty
- Relieved



Things you can do if you are feeling sad

- Write
- Read
- Watch TV/movies
- Talk to friends, carers, family or your social worker
- Draw
- Get a hobby or join after school clubs
- You may want to take part in singing, drama, dance or play sport
- Find positive distractions

And remember it is important to tell people how you are feeling.



QUOTES FROM OTHER CHILDREN IN CARE

"When I first came into care, I didn't know what was happening and felt lost in my own world. I felt helpless and filled with grief at first. However, once I settled into care after a month or so, I built a relationship with my carers. I might have made mistakes along the way, but everyone makes mistakes. They made me feel like I was part of their family, and supported me through everything. I'm still learning stuff from being in care now, but the thing is you learn something new everyday, and that's made me a better person."

"When I first came into care I was scared but they made me feel safe at home and I felt part of their family. You might find it difficult to fit in but you will and people will understand if you don't like it."

"Care is what you make it; it is only a minor situation which can bring out your fears or your ambition depending on how you lead it."

"When I first came into care I was nervous, but my carer looked after me and made me feel safe"

"Care is something that you acknowledge and you either embrace or confront the affliction in which lays beneath it."

"When I first came into care I felt blank but I felt safe with my carers. I'm 18 but not quite ready for independence."

"Every little thing is gonna be alright."

"Coming into care for me was so difficult. If there was one thing I could tell you it would be that things are going to be okay, they will get better."

What is a social worker?

Your social worker is responsible for giving you the support you need. They will listen to your problems and try to help your family work things out if it's in your best interest. You should be able to meet your social worker somewhere you feel comfortable and able to speak.

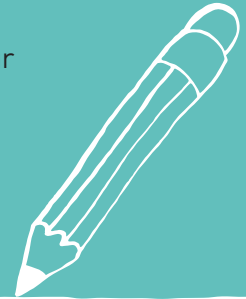


You have a right to see your social worker: 

- Within one week of your placement
- If there is a permanency plan at least every 6 weeks
- After this at least every 3 months
- If you need to see your social worker at other times let them know or ask at your review meeting

My social worker

My social worker is called:



Telephone number:

A woman with a braid is looking towards a child who is lying on a couch. The child is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and red pants, and is holding a patterned blanket. The woman is wearing a purple top. The background shows a window with a view of a body of water and hills.

Where will I live?

The place where you live when you are in care is called your placement. There are different types of placements you may live in because everyone's needs are different. Anyone looking after you should treat you as well as they would treat their own child and do their best to make you feel happy.

Foster Placement: This is where you live with another family in their home. The people who look after you will be called your foster carers.

Kinship Placement: Some children live with other members of their family or with close family friends.

Residential Care: This is where lots of children live in the same house and have a key worker that takes care of them.

Short Break Care: Some children need a lot of special care and may have a disability. They will have short breaks away from their home at different times.

Some questions you may want to ask



Do I get to keep my things?

Will I get pocket money? How much will I get? When will I get it?

Am I allowed to use the phone?

Who will buy my clothes?

Can I stay over my friend's house? Can I have friends to stay with me?

What time do I have to be home?

If I want to see my family will I be able to?

Contact with your family will happen if it's safe, if you want it and if your family wants it. If you are not allowed to see your family your social worker should explain why. The kind of contact you'll get depends on your situation. You might be left alone, or a social worker or someone might have to be there. (This is known as supervised contact).

Ways of staying in touch:



Phone



Email



Facebook - If you are old enough and allowed to use this



Skype - You will have to get permission to use this



Letters



Visits



My arrangements to see my family and friends are:



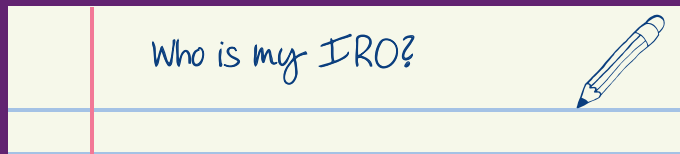
People you may meet while you are in care

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

Your IRO is the person that runs your review meetings and makes sure that you are getting the service you should. You can contact your IRO at any time – not just before and after review meetings.

You should have:

- An IRO within five days of being in care.
- The same IRO throughout your journey in care – even if you leave and come back.
- The same IRO as your brothers and sisters – even if they are in different placements.



Advocate:

- An Advocate is an independent person who is there to represent you and give you advice about your rights.
- They can speak on your behalf at your LAC reviews or help you with a complaint.

An Independent Visitor:

- An Independent Visitor (IV) is an adult who has volunteered to spend time with young people who are in care.
- They will do fun activities with you and give you support.
- You can have one if you are lonely, far from home or if you don't see your family much.
- If you would like to get an independent visitor please ask your carer or social worker to contact the IV coordinator whose details can be found on the useful contacts page.

Targeted Youth Support Worker (TYSW)

Your TYSW is a friendly face to talk to if you need a helping hand with things at school or college or are concerned or worried about something. In addition if you need help when it is time to move on from school or college then we will contact you to help you find the right job or training opportunity. If you are bored we can also let you know what activities are available in your local area.

Plans and reviews

Care Plan

When you are in care you will have a care plan. The plan will say what needs to be done to care for you and who should do it. It is important that you say if you don't agree with your plan. The plan will cover different areas of your life including: why you are being cared for, how long you will be cared for, and how you will be supported with growing up etc.

Placement Plan

Your placement plan is part of your care plan and says:

- Who you are and what your likes and dislikes are.
- How you get on with your carers.
- Where you will live and who will look after you.
- How long you are expected to live there.

Permanence Plan

One of the biggest complaints children in care have is that they are moved too often. So lots of work goes into avoiding it as much as possible. A permanence plan means that your social worker has to try to find a placement you can stay in for as long as you need. This means you can build a relationship with your carer and settle in at school.

LAC review meetings

- LAC review meetings are normally led by your IRO.
- This is where all the people involved in looking after you check your care plan.
- Your IRO should talk to you by yourself before every review meeting to make sure you are happy and to check how things are going.
- If there are to be any changes that need to be made these will be discussed at your Looked After Child (LAC) review.
- Two weeks after the review you should get a written record of all the decisions that were made.
- REMEMBER this is YOUR meeting so make sure your opinions are heard!

When do they take place?

1st review: within 20 working days of coming into care



2nd review: three months later



After that: at least every 6 months



Personal Education Plan (PEP):

A PEP is a way of making sure you get the best from your education and it forms part of your care plan. This will involve a meeting with you and the key people involved in your education. Your first PEP needs to take place within 20 days of coming into care, then following that every 6 months. You and your carer will be given a copy of the PEP.

What will be discussed at your PEP meeting?

- How you are doing at school
- What your attendance is like
- Anything you need help with
- The progress you are making and setting future targets

Virtual School Head Teacher

You may not meet the Virtual School Head but they are people who check that schools are supporting looked after children and give advice about how to help you.

Designated Teachers

They are teachers who support children in care. Every school should have one. Designated teachers receive training to support children in care. They are there to make sure you're ok and get the most out of school.

My designated teacher at school is:



Your Health

Part of your care is your health plan. This involves checking whether your health and dental needs are being met, and can also involve speaking with the Nurse for Children and Young People in Care. When you first come into care you will have an Initial Health Assessment. Then you will have a Review Health Assessment once a year whilst you are in care.

If you need to see a doctor or have other treatment the Nurse for Children and Young People in Care will oversee your Health Care Plan to ensure the health advice is done. The nurse can come and meet with you where you feel comfortable to give out advice or answer any questions you may have. You should get a copy of your health assessment but if you don't you can ask for one. For the nurses details please see the useful contacts list.

Your Rights

I have the following rights:

- To a stable placement
- To be happy
- To be listened to
- To have a say in every decision made about me
- To be cared for with my brothers and sisters whenever possible
- To see a social worker regularly
- To be treated with respect
- To an education
- To have regular health check ups
- To treat my space like my home
- To feel safe where I live
- To speak up if I think I am being unfairly treated
- To have my own opinions



The Pledge

The Pledge is a set of promises made by the London Borough of Bromley to all their children in care and care leavers. We have a responsibility to make sure that you are safe, healthy and achieving your goals. The pledge spells out how we promise to help you and what your rights are. A film about the pledge can be viewed at <http://vimeo.com/33960216>. If you would like to see a printed copy please ask the Active Involvement Officer (email: LinCC@bromley.gov.uk)



IF THERE IS SOMETHING YOU ARE NOT HAPPY ABOUT

If you want to complain and there is something you are unhappy about please:



Speak with your family, social worker, foster carer, your teacher or Independent Visitor



If you are still upset about something tell your Independent Reviewing Officer



If they can't help they can support you in getting an Advocate



If you are still not happy please contact the complaints officer whose details you can find in the useful contacts on page 20

But remember to make sure you have followed all the **right steps first.**

Our tips and advice

"Tell people how you are feeling"

"Try and see the positives even though it may difficult"

"Don't let the past get you down"

"Don't be forced in to anything you don't want to do"

"If you don't ask you don't get"

Come and join us at the Living in Care Council



We are a group of young people in care in Bromley. We know what you are going through and that sometimes it can feel like everyone else is making decisions for you. We meet together to make care a better place and get our voices heard.

- You get to make friends and share advice.
- You can increase your confidence.
- We get to do lots of fun activities like making films, going on trips and eating out.
- We help organise events like the celebration of achievement awards.
- We get the chance to meet managers and members of Bromley Council.
- It looks really good on your CV.

If you would like to know more about the group please contact the Active Involvement Officer:

Tel: 020 8461 7869 Text: 07932 707262

Email: LinCC@bromley.gov.uk



What will happen when I leave care?

When you go from being 'in care' to living independently this process should be gradual. Like any good parent we will do our best to help you. Throughout your time in care your social worker, key worker and carers should be teaching you life skills so that you know how to clean and budget etc. They will help prepare you for independence and support you so that you feel more confident about what lies ahead.

Age	What happens
16	When you reach 16 your social worker will complete a pathway plan with you. Your pathway plan covers your health, accommodation and education. It helps you make the transition from care to independent life and regularly gets updated.
18	At some point after your 18th Birthday you will become a care leaver and no longer have a social worker. You will however be entitled to a Leaving Care Service. You will be supported by a Young Persons Advisor (YPA) who will review your pathway plan with you and make sure that you are receiving the services you need. They should meet with you every 2 months but if your needs are greater they will see you more frequently.
21	By 21 you will have been supported in getting your own accommodation. At this point your case will close unless you are in education. If you still need a bit of extra support they will make sure that you know who to get in touch with.
25	Care leavers up to the age of 25 who tell their local authority that they have returned, or want to return, to education or training, may be entitled to continuing support. So this means that even if the Leaving Care Team close your case when you are 21 you can still return provided that you are in education or training.

Famous people who have been fostered



Marilyn Monroe is the biggest female Hollywood icon of the last century. She grew up in an orphanage and a series of foster homes.



John Lennon was part of the Beatles, one of the biggest bands of the 20th century. He grew up in what we would now call kinship care. He lived with his aunt and uncle throughout most of his childhood and teenage years.



Eddie Murphy is a very famous American comedian and actor. Although he was only in foster care a little while, the experience had a big influence on the rest of his life.



Fatima Whitbread is a former javelin world champion. She is also known for appearing on 'I'm a celebrity get me out of here'. Fatima spent the first 14 years of her life in childrens' homes.



Kerry Katona is a former singer from Atomic Kitten and she is also well known for a number of reality TV shows. As a young girl she was placed in care and brought up by four sets of foster parents. During that time, she attended eight different schools.

Did you know...



- **In March 2012 there were 67,050 children in care in England!**
- **At any one time there are around 300 young people in care in Bromley.**
- **You are allowed to bring your own personal things to your new home (within reason).**
- **If you're in year 10 or 11, the local authority can only move you once they've proved that it's definitely not possible to keep you in your current school.**
- **Records are kept about each young person in care. You can request to see these at any time, right up until your 75th birthday. These are also held by the complaints officer who can provide these, their details are in the useful contacts.**



Glossary of care related words

Word	Meaning
The Local Authority (Bromley Council)	Looks after your local area. It's like a mini government, with its own politicians and staff. Every local authority has a children's services team who look after children and their families. They are the people that employ social workers and foster carers.
Care Proceedings	A process that children's services go through while everyone decides if you need to go into care.
Corporate Parent	Before you go into care, a court has to give parental responsibility to your local authority (Bromley). When they do this, they are known as your corporate parent, meaning they have to make the most of the decisions about your childhood and do the best for you.
Care Order	A judge has decided who should look after you and everyone has to stick to that. It's all written down on a piece of paper called a care order.
Emergency Protection Order	This is when the local authority is given parental responsibility for you in an emergency and you have had to leave your family in a hurry.
Emergency fostering	Sometimes foster families may look after a child or a young person on an emergency basis as they have had to leave their birth family in a hurry.

Notes:

Useful contacts

For The Living in Care Council contact The Active Involvements Officer

Tel: 020 8461 7869

Text: 07932 707262

Email: LinCC@bromley.gov.uk

Bromley Youth Support Programme

If you would like to find out what fun activities are taking place in your local area and you would like to contact a targeted youth support worker you can by:

Tel: 020 8466 3080

Email: YouthActivities@bromley.gov.uk

www.Bromley.gov.uk/youthsupport

Looked after Children Team

Tel: 020 8313 4016

Leaving Care Team

Tel: 020 8313 4108

Disabled children's social work and short break team

Tel: 020 8313 4511

Designated Looked After Children's Nurse And Health Advisor

Tel: 020 8461 7874

Children in Care Education Team

Tel: 020 8313 4179

Ofsted:

General helpline: 0300 123 1231

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street,
Manchester, M1 2WD

Bromley Mentoring Initiative

Tel: 020 8461 6240

Independent Visitor Coordinator

Tel: 020 8690 3636

Email: lewishambbb@family-action.org.uk

Family Action, Independent Visitor Service, 219
Stanstead Road, London, SE23 1HU

CYP Advocacy Service:

Tel: 020 8899 6555

Complaints Officer

Tel: 020 8461 7644

Education & Care Services Complaints
Department (children's services) Complaints
Officer, LB Bromley, 3rd Floor Stockwell Building,
Stockwell Close, Bromley, BR1 3UH

Organisations for children in care

www.anationalvoice.org

www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk

Childline

Childline has a special line for children living away
from home.

Freephone: 0800 884444

Open Mon to Fri 3.30pm-9.30pm and
Sat and Sun 2.00pm to 8.00pm

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