

All you need to know

Guide for Children/Young People Looked After by York
Children's Social Care services

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Introduction

If you are reading this guide you may have recently come into care. You will probably have lots of questions as you try to make sense of what is happening in your life

It might help you to know that children and young people come into care for many reasons. We know that everyone is different. While we are looking after you everyone involved in your care will respect and support you exactly as you are. We are glad to be part of your life at this time. We want you to have every opportunity to have your say in how you are looked after.

So what will it be like ? This guide is to try and help you understand some of the things that happen when 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. In this guide you will find information that we hope will help you to understand some of the things that might happen to you, to know what your rights are and to help you find out who else can help you. Also, the attached information about The Pledge tells you more about what you can and should expect when you become looked after by the City of York Council.

You can read this guide on your own if you want to. You are not expected to read it all in one go but to look through the parts you are most interested in. Or it could also be used with your social worker or carer. You will find that there are lots of people you can talk to as you get to know the people who will be working with you and looking after you.

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 are worried or concerned 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 Services (CSC) are responsible for making sure that you have somewhere safe to live. Being looked after can include staying with foster carers, living in a children's home or residential school, and sometimes with an adult you or your parents already know.

What is a Care Order?

A Care Order is made by a court. If there is a Care Order, the court has decided that living away from home would be best for you. You probably won't have to go to court if a Care Order is made. A Children's Guardian may go to court for you. They find out what you think and feel and explain your views to the court.

If the court decides to make a Care Order, CSC have to provide you with somewhere to live and make sure you are well cared for. Your parents and CSC are jointly responsible for you as long as the Care Order is in place. Your parents can't take you home unless CSC agree.

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. Your family may ask for you to go home at any time but it's best if this is planned and agreed with your Social Worker. Your views would always be listened to in any decisions made.

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 support you will get to help you do well, now and in the future (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.

The care plan is the main plan, that brings together your education plan, health plan and placement plan.

The placement plan gives the practical details about how the people in the place where you live will care for you. The health plan gives details about the support you will get to keep you as healthy and well as you can be. The education plan states what support you will get to help you do well at school, in college or in your training.

Before, or soon after you move, you will be asked to have a health assessment. The health plan will be written by the doctor who does this assessment. The plan will detail how you will be provided with medical and dental care and advice on health and personal care. You can refuse to have the health assessment if you are mature enough and understand enough to decide for yourself.

Things will change over time and your Care Plan needs to be looked at regularly to make sure that it is still working for you. This is done through Reviews.

Your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

You will be linked to an Independent Reviewing Officer as soon as you start being looked after. You should keep the same IRO for as long as you are looked after (unless they change job). The IRO chairs your review meetings. Their job is to check that CSC are looking after you like any good parent would and to make sure they are taking proper notice of your wishes and feelings when decisions are made about you.

The Independent Reviewing Officer will make sure that your plan is right for you. Before your review meeting they will want to meet with you to talk to you about this. They will make sure that you are able to say how you feel and whether you are happy about the way you are cared for. Your IRO has to explain to you what your legal rights are and make sure you have the right support to help get your views across (for example having support if you want to get legal advice or make a complaint).

Your Social Worker has to tell your IRO about any important changes in your life, and your IRO may sometimes want to check how you feel about these in between reviews. You can speak to your IRO at any time. The sheet in the back of this folder will tell you how you can get in touch with your IRO.

Your Review

Reviews are held to see how you are getting on, they are meetings that bring together people in your life who know you well. The review looks at day to day matters as well as plans that are there for your future (care plans).



Your social worker must not make any major changes to your care plan unless the changes have been agreed at a review (unless quick changes have to be made in an emergency, or to keep you safe).

Your Social Worker will meet with you to agree what needs to be discussed at your review meeting. They should ask you who you would like to be at the meeting. Usually this will be you, your carers, your parents, your social worker and your IRO. Your SW might sometimes suggest that someone else is invited if they think it is important, (for example a teacher). If you would prefer someone not to come to your meeting you should tell your Social Worker or IRO. The IRO could meet them on their own or could ask them to send in a report instead.

It is a good idea if you go to your Review meetings as it is important that you have your say and hear what other people think. Your Social Worker should talk to you about the meeting taking place at a time and place that makes it easy for you to go.

If you decide that you'd like to have a say about your Care Plan, but you don't want to go to the meeting, your Social Worker will talk to you about how you would like your views to be shared. You can do this in whatever is the easiest way for you, this could be in writing, text, art or by talking to your Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer or an independent advocate, (this is someone who will help put your views across).

When will Your Review Meeting Take Place?

The rules say that Reviews must take place

- 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, or if there is a problem with your Care Plan, Reviews may be held more often. This will be decided by the IRO. You can ask for extra Reviews if you think they are needed.

You should always have a review before you stop being looked after to make sure that everything you need to keep you safe and well in the future is properly planned for.

What happens at the Review Meeting

Before the Review the Independent Reviewing Officer will look at any information sent in by you, your social worker or other people, and they will want to meet with you hear your views and to agree what needs to be talked about at the meeting. If you don't want to meet with your IRO you don't have to, although it will be important that they hear what your views are. If you prefer them to just talk to your social worker and carer about this, that is OK.

At the Review Meeting, there will be a discussion about your care plan to make sure everything is going well for you and to check that everything that should happen has happened.

The Care Plan can be changed and updated if that is what is agreed.

If there is any disagreement at the review meeting the IRO will try to sort this out. If you are not happy with the decision made the IRO will talk to you about your right to make a complaint and to have an advocate to help you do this, if you want.

After the Review Meeting

Your Independent Reviewing Officer will decide, with those at the meeting, who is best to talk to you about the decisions made. This will usually be either the IRO, your social worker, your carer or someone else who you have suggested yourself. They will go through the decisions with you and check that you understand them. If you don't agree with what has been decided, they will talk to you about the steps you can take to challenge the decision, to try to change it, or to help you better understand why your wishes have not been acted on.

If your IRO is not satisfied that your care plan is being followed or does not think that the best is being done for you they must try to sort this out with the senior managers in Children's Social Care. If the IRO is still not satisfied after doing this they can make a referral to the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service, who could take the council to court to challenge their actions.

Forms and Files

What are 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 case-file, which can be a paper file or an electronic file.

The records have to be kept until your 75th birthday. They have to be kept safe and secure, so that only the people with the right to see them can look at them. This is people who need to know so they can give you better care and support.

Lots of other information goes into this file such as:

- Reports
- Plans and agreements
- Records of Reviews
- Important decisions made about you

You have the right to see your files and read the information written about you. You cannot see information kept about other people such as members of your family, unless they agree and you can only see things written by other people, like doctors and teachers, if they say you can. You can talk to your Social Worker about seeing your file.

Part two – Where you live

You and your foster carers

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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. Foster carers are approved by CSC or a fostering agency. We work with Foster carers to make sure that they know how to take good care of you. You live with foster carers in their own home. York's fostering service has a Statement of Purpose, which is written information about what it does and the help and support it provides. Ask your Social Worker if you would like to see a copy of this.

What do foster carers do ?

Your foster carers will do all they can to look after you. This means doing things like:

- making sure you have enough to eat
- keeping you safe
- making sure you have decent, clean clothes to wear
- encouraging you with school, college or work
- helping you to find things to do in your spare time
- talking and listening to you
- explaining what is expected of you
- helping and supporting you

There will be an agreement, called a Placement Plan, about how you will be looked after day by day. You, your foster carers, your Social Worker and your parents decide on this together.

A foster carer may look after you for a short time, for example a week or so, or it can be for a longer time, for example, until you are eighteen. It all depends what has been decided by the Courts, CSC or your parents.

Who can be a foster carer?

All sorts of people can be foster carers. They can be married and unmarried couples or they could be single. Some foster carers have other foster children living with them. The foster carers' own children might live with them as well. Your foster carer could be a relative or friend of your family.

Anyone who is a foster carer, has to be approved by a fostering panel. A fostering panel is a group of adults that meets to decide whether people who want to be foster carers can do it properly. The fostering panel would ask that a social worker does lots of checks to make sure that someone wanting to be a foster carer can provide good care. If the social worker thinks the answer is yes, and the fostering panel agrees, they tell CSC and the foster carers are approved.

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.

If you are adopted, it will mean that your adoptive parents will be your new legal parents and you will not

be in care or looked after any more. CSC have to get it agreed in court before you can be adopted.

Do foster carers get paid for what they do?

All foster carers get some money from CSC. This is called a fostering allowance. 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 will have rules that they want you to stick to. Your carers and Social Worker will go through the rules with you so that you understand them and there is no confusion. This can stop you from getting into trouble or putting yourself and others in danger.

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.

Arrangements for pocket money and how much you get should be sorted out when you move and should be part of your Placement Plan. You may get different amounts in different places.

If pocket money is stopped and you are unhappy about the reasons for this, you should talk to your Social

Worker. If you are still unhappy, you can talk to York's Rights and Advocacy Service.

Clothing Allowance

There is a certain amount of money your foster carers must make sure is spent on your clothes. This depends on how old you are.

If you are old enough, your carers can give you the money to spend on your clothes. This is an important way for you to start learning about how to manage money.

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 do not live with you all day every day, but work in shifts taking turns to look after you.

Some Children's 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 up to six young people aged 13 to 18. If you are to live here, you will be given a separate leaflet explaining how everything is done there.

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:

- making sure you have enough to eat
- keeping you safe

- making sure you have decent, clean clothes to wear
- encouraging you with school, college or work
- helping you to find things to do in your spare time
- talking and listening to you
- explaining what is expected of you
- helping and supporting you

There will also be an Agreement, called a Placement Plan, about how you will be looked after day by day. You, Children's Home staff, your Social Worker and your parents decide on this together.

What is a Statement of Purpose?

Every Children's Home has to have a Statement of Purpose. This is written information about what the Children's Home does and what help and support it provides. If you want to see it, you can ask the manager of your Children's Home for a copy.

What is a Keyworker?

Your Keyworker is a member of staff who has special responsibility for you. They will meet with you on your own regularly to see how things are going. They will make arrangements for you for things like seeing your family, Social Worker and doctors appointments. Your Keyworker will also attend meetings and Review Meetings with you and will then 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. This is where you can help to decide some of the things you all do together, such as trips out. It is also a way of sorting out any problems you may have about where you live and the way things are done.

Other things to expect in a Children's Home

If you are living in York's Children's Home, you will get your own room. If you are somewhere else you may get your own room or half a double room.

Although you can lock the doors of your bedroom, bathroom or toilet, staff at Children's Homes can open these from the outside in an emergency.

Wherever possible, arrangements will be made for you to see your family and friends. There will be a private room where you can see people who visit you.

There will be a telephone you can use privately to ring family, friends and those you are allowed to have contact with.

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 will have rules that they want you to stick to. Your carers and Social Worker will go through the rules with you so that you understand them and there is no confusion. This can stop you from getting into trouble or putting yourself and others in danger.

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.

Arrangements for pocket money and how much you get should be sorted out when you move and should be part of your Placement Agreement. You may get different amounts in different places.

If pocket money is stopped and you are unhappy about the reasons for this, you should talk to your Social Worker. If you are still unhappy, you can talk to York's Rights and Advocacy Service.

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Clothing Allowance

Your Children's Home will make its own arrangements about how much is spent on clothes.

If you are old enough, your carers can give you the money to spend on your clothes. This is an important way for you to start learning about how to manage money.

Living outside of York?

Occasionally children are placed in a foster placement, Children's Home or Residential School outside York. This will be run by a different organisation, not York Children's Services. If this happens, York is still responsible for you and your care. 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 fit in and settle down well. They should make sure that you know

as much as possible about your carers and have the chance to meet them before deciding that you will live with them. Your views about where you are going to live are important and your Social Worker has to listen carefully to what you have to say.

There are times when you may have to move quickly. There might not always be time for you to know whether you are going to like your new carers. 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



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Keeping in touch with your family and friends is really important when you are living away from home. Social Workers call it 'having contact' with family and friends. 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 parents. Contact with other members of your family and friends should also be encouraged. This means that you, your carers and your Social Worker should agree a plan about how often you should see each other and where it should happen. Everyone should stick to this plan.

What is 'supervised contact'?

Sometimes the court or Social Workers may 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 during the visit or that your family may do something that harms you. This is called supervised contact.

Sometimes another adult will come along just to see how the visits are going, to make sure that they are taking place in a way that is alright for you.

What if you can't see someone?

Sometimes it may not be a good idea for you to see someone. Perhaps they have hurt you or harmed you in the past, or said hurtful things that upset you. 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. That way, you can still remember them and know that they remember you.

What if you don't want to see someone?

If you are worried about having to see anyone, including your parents or relations, 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?

All contact arrangements are discussed at your Reviews and are one of the things included in your Care Plan. It is important that you let someone know what you want, how contact is going or if anything is upsetting you about contact, so that the right arrangements can be made. 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, keeping in touch with them can be part of your Care Plan. You need to make sure that people understand 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, this will usually be OK. They must, however, be happy that you will be safe and if they are not, they can say no. If they do not want to make the decision, they can ask your Social Worker to decide instead.

If you are accommodated and your parents are partly responsible for you, they may also have to give permission before you can stay overnight with friends.

Part four – Getting people to listen

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What you want and how you feel

Whenever plans or decisions are made about you by CSC, 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.

You may not always agree with decisions that are made but your views should always be taken seriously. There may be some things that you want but which may not be able to happen. The reasons for this should always be explained to you.

Understanding what's going on

Everything that has happened to you and all the changes around you might sometimes make it hard to understand what is really going on. Part of your Social Workers job is to make sure that you understand as much as possible about 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.

York Rights and Advocacy Service

The Rights and Advocacy Service can provide you with an advocate. An advocate is someone who can help you speak up so that your views are heard, your rights are met and your problems sorted out.

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

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The law says that all young people from 5 to 16 (or at the end of year 11 you may be 16 but still have to go to school) must have the chance to get a full time education. A good education is your right, and for most people this means going to school.

Support from Children's Services

CSC will support you all the way through your education. This means supporting you at school and helping you if you decide to go on to college or university.

The people you live with, for example, your keyworker or foster carer, should encourage you as much as they can. They need to know what is expected of you at school and whether you have homework or projects to do. They should make sure you get the help you need with your homework, a place to do it and also some peace and quiet. They should also come along to any meetings at school.

Your Social Worker should do their best to support you. This includes making sure everything is going well and helping to sort out any problems if there are any.

CSC should make sure you have all the equipment you need for school. This includes books, pens, paper and

anything extra you might need for projects. They also try to make sure that as many children as possible have a computer where they live, so that they can use it for homework.

The Virtual School for Looked After Children

Children and young people who are looked after by CYC attend many different schools, both in and outside of York. To help ensure that you receive the same level of support that we would want for our own children we have created a 'virtual school', where there is a 'virtual head teacher' and a multi-agency senior team, who work together to track your progress and ensure that appropriate support and opportunities are made available to you.

So, what does a Virtual Headteacher do?

- works closely with other head teachers and school governors to ensure that there is a good understanding of what is important to children in care and to avoid you being excluded from school.
- provides training for Teachers, Headteachers and social workers,
- works with School Improvement Professionals to raise the standards in schools
- Works with the Admissions and Access Team to help ensure that moves between schools are reduced and you have fair access to your chosen school

Support from Designated Teachers

All your teachers are there to support you in your education. Schools also have people called 'designated teachers' who are there for young people who are 'looked after'. They are there to make sure that you get all the support you need at school, help sort out any problems

and make sure you get the best out of your education.

Designated teachers will also help you and your Social Worker to complete your Personal Education Plan (PEP).

What is a Personal Education Plan?

A Personal Education Plan is about what you need to get the best out of your education. It will say what support you will get at school and at home. It is your plan and it is important that the plan includes your views on what you need. Your Personal Education Plan forms part of your Care Plan and will be looked at and updated at your Reviews.

Problems at school: what if I need extra support?

If you have any problems at school, are worried about anything or think that extra support would help you at school, it is important that you talk to your Social Worker, carers or designated teacher who will help you decide what to do next.

If you are provided with extra support in school then the school should have a written plan for you, this is known as an Individual Educational Plan (IEP). This plan describes what you need to learn and how school are helping you; the plan is reviewed every 6 months. Your views are important and the school will make sure that you, your carer and social worker are involved in writing and reviewing your plan.

What if I am not in School?

The Local Education Authority has to provide full time education for all children and young people aged 5 to 16. 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.

What happens if I move home?

If you have to move home the people working with you should do everything to try to make sure that you can continue to attend the same school if possible. This is even more important if you are in Year 6 or completing your exams in Years 10 and 11. If you do have to leave a school then the local education authority should find you a school place as quickly as possible, ideally within 20 days.

If you do have to change schools, your last school will send your school records onto the new school so that they know what you are good at and whether or not you need any extra help or support.

School exclusion

Everything should be done to try to avoid exclusions. 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 you should be provided with alternative good education no later than the 6th day after the exclusion began.

If you are excluded and think that it is unfair, or you don't understand why, it is important that you talk to your carer or Social Worker who can explain things to you.

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. Your Placement Plan should say who can sign these forms. 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. Many young people in care go on to get good jobs and many go to University - there will be advice and support all along the way.

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

Part six – Your health and happiness

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Being healthy and happy is very important. There are many things you can do to make sure you are healthy, eating healthy food, playing and taking part in games and exercise and keeping yourself clean.

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.

It is really important to be registered with a doctor so

that you can see a doctor whenever you need to. This should be done as soon as you become looked after. Your carers or Social Worker should sort this out for you.

Your carer will also make sure that you are registered with the opticians and a dentist so that you can have regular check ups and treatment when you need it.

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, that your health is being looked after properly and that you are getting all of the advice and support you may need about health and personal care issues. If you are old enough to understand why, you can refuse this and any other medical checks if you really do not want them.

Am I allowed to see a doctor or nurse without my carers knowing about it?

You are allowed to get medical treatment on your own if the doctor (or nurse) thinks you are mature enough and understand enough to be able to decide for yourself. If they agree to see you without the permission of your carer, they should normally keep this private and not tell anyone else. The only time they can tell other people about seeing you is if they are worried that you or someone else are in danger of being seriously hurt.

Giving consent to medical treatment or examination

You can give your own consent to being examined or treated if you are 16 to 18 years old. The doctor or nurse does not have to ask or see your parent or carer as well. If you are under 16 you may still be able to give consent for yourself as long as you are able to understand what is involved in the proposed treatment. If you are able to give consent for yourself, the doctor or nurse will not tell

your parent or carer without your permission except in exceptional circumstances to protect you or someone else from serious harm.

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. Your carers should ask you what you like and don't like. They will have their own views and might suggest you try new food or be careful about food that is not good for you. They should not however, force you to eat things you really do not like.

When you get older, you will become more responsible for making your own meals. Your carer should give you the chance to help prepare meals or make your own now. You should also be given the chance to take part in shopping for food.

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 things through with is really important. Try to find someone you trust. For some people, it is useful to talk to someone who has been specially trained to listen to you and helps you to sort things out. There are people at Lime Trees who work specifically with children who are looked after, who you may find it helpful to meet with. This might be at Lime

Trees, where you are living, or somewhere you feel comfortable. They may also work with your foster carers or other people involved in your care.

Speak to your foster carer or social worker if you think you would like to see someone, or see contact details.

Your Happiness – Bullying

Sometimes young people can be bullied by other young people. 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.

Where can I get information and advice about my health?

You will need to know about other health matters that may affect you as you grow up. Things you may need to know about could include sexual health, relationships, drugs, alcohol or what to do when you feel really worried and upset. There are a lot of organisations around who can give you help and information. The List of Addresses and Phone Numbers at the back of this guide would be a good place to start.

Part seven – Your spare time

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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 . They also represent the views of the I Matter 2 group.

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.

Youth Support Services

There are workers at York Youth Support Services with experience in supporting looked after young people to take part in social and leisure activities. They will get to know you first and learn about what's important to you, or what you'd like to try. Some activities are open to all young people, and others are only open to looked after young people.

Let your social worker or foster carer know if you'd like to know more about what support is available, or see contact details.

Part eight – Leaving care



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Sooner or later you will leave care. It may be possible to return to your family. However this may not be possible or it may not be what you want.

If you do not return to your family, you will leave care to live independently. This may happen at any time from the age of 16, although it is important that you do not leave before you feel ready to go it alone. You need the best chance possible of feeling settled and making a success of your adult life. If you and your foster carer agree that is best for you to 'stay put' after you turn 18, arrangements can be made for this.

The Leaving Care Act says what should happen when you leave care to live independently and what help you should continue to get from Children's Services.

Who does the Leaving Care Act help?

Children's Services must offer the following help to care

leavers who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since their 14th birthday and are still looked after at 16.

Needs Assessment

Children's Services should carry out what is called a Needs Assessment. This is to help you to plan for your future - to work out and agree those things you may need most help with and who will provide this help. Before you reach 16, a Personal Adviser from the Pathway Team will arrange to meet with you, your carers and other people who know you well, to begin thinking about and planning for your future.

Pathway Plan

A Pathway Plan will then be worked out. This will set out everything that is important to you, what help you will be given and when things should be done. The sorts of things that should be covered include:

- What support you need
- What practical skills you have and need help with
- Your health
- Your leisure interests
- Your finances
- Your accommodation
- Your education, training and/or employment.

CSC will look at your Pathway Plan with you every six months to see what has changed and agree any changes that may be needed.

The Pathway Team must keep in touch with you, review your Pathway Plan and provide you with a personal adviser until you are 21 (or 24 if in education).

Staying Put

Staying Put is your opportunity to stay living with your foster carers after the age of 18. Staying put can give you time, support and stability to achieve your goals in education, training and employment. It is an opportunity to plan and move towards independence at your own pace with support from the people you know and trust.

For further information talk with your Pathway Worker or Social Worker who will be able to answer any questions you may have.

What help will you get with money?

Up to the age of 18, the Pathway Team will pay for your housing wherever you are living. Your basic living expenses are also paid for although this money may go to your carer.

When you are aged 18 and over, you can claim benefits, if you are not already working, including Housing Benefit. You will therefore stop getting help with living expenses and housing costs from the Pathway Team.

You will be entitled to a Leaving Care Grant when you move into your own housing, to help you set up home. This is to buy essential things like furniture, a fridge and cooker.

Up to age 21 (or 24 if in education) you should get help from the Pathway Team with special costs to do with your education, your work, counselling and things like that which are set out in your Pathway Plan.

Help with Housing

Until you are eighteen, Children's Social Care must make sure you are in "suitable accommodation". This is a place which is right for you at the time and is safe and

secure. You must have your views taken into account about this.

Once you are ready to leave care, and you have discussed and agreed the sort of accommodation you want to move on to, your Pathway Worker should help you to find somewhere suitable. They can also help with the move and settling in.

Who else can the Pathway Team help?

You can get some help if you have been in care for less than 13 weeks from the age of 14. If you are between 16 and 21, CSC must give you advice and support in dealing with a range of things when you leave care. They must make sure that they keep in touch with you to do this.

They may also be able to give you financial help, particularly in connection with your education, training or work.

In some special cases, CSC may find you somewhere to live. If you are 16 or 17 and they agree that you are seriously at risk they must accommodate you. This gives you the same rights as if you were in care. The law also says that homeless 16 and 17 year olds should be provided with somewhere to live by the Council.

Part nine – 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.

[illegible]

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**