

COMING INTO CARE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



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My information:

My Social Worker is:
My Social Worker is based at:
Contact details:
My Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is:
Contact details:

We know it can be a confusing time when you have to live away from your home. We created this booklet to help you to understand all the new things that are happening and to provide you with information you may need to know. This booklet was created with the help of our Children in Care Council who are a group of young people who are currently in the care of Leicestershire County Council.



Why do children and young people come into care?

As a Local Authority we have to ensure that all children are safe, happy and well looked after. The reason for you coming into care will be unique to you. Sometimes despite our best efforts we can not keep children and young people safe in their own home or family environment.

CALL DALLER

In some situations when the difficulties cannot be sorted out, a child or young person may need to leave their home and live somewhere else for a short or a longer period of time. We will always see if the child or young person can stay with a relative or family friend first rather than with people they do not know. In some situations children and young people are unable to remain living in their home country and need to claim asylum in the UK.

What happens if I have to go into care?

It can be quite an upsetting and confusing time when you have to live away from your home in different surroundings, with new people and new rules. No matter what the reason may be for you coming into care, we will try our best to help make you feel comfortable and your environment safe for you to live in.

The length of time you will be looked after in care will depend on a lot of things. It maybe for a few weeks or it may be much longer. The people looking after and caring for you, for example, your carers and your Social Worker, will help you and talk to you about what is happening in your life.



When you are in care we will consider how best to help you in the following areas of your life:

Health

It is important that the people caring for you make sure you are healthy and well and understand any special health needs you have.

Education

It is important that we try to make sure your schooling is not interrupted when you are in care. A school is not just for learning, but it is where you meet friends and learn how to do new things, e.g. hobbies. We want you to be able to achieve as much as you can whilst you are in care, not just at school but in out of school activities too.

Identity

This is all about you, who you are and how you think about yourself. We want to help you feel positive about yourself despite what may have happened to you.

Family and social relationships

This includes your family and friends and how to best keep in touch and see them, if it is safe to do so.

Emotional and behavioural development

How you are thinking and feeling, whether you are happy or sad can affect how you behave and how you get on with people. You may need some extra help because of the things you have been through and we will try to help you with this.

Self-care skills

This is something you begin to learn when you are very young and it is about how you are able to look after yourself. We want to help you to be able to look after yourself well, to feel confident and learn independence skills.



Why have I come into care?

The reason why you have come into care will be unique to you. However, there are two different ways in which you can come into care.

Firstly, your parents or legal guardian may have asked for you to be looked-after by the Local Authority because they are struggling to look after you and keep you safe. If we agree that this is the best thing for you then you will come into the care of the Local Authority. You might hear people refer to this as 'accommodated'. This is a voluntary agreement and it is called Section 20. If you are aged 16 or 17 years old you may have requested to be accommodated under Section 20 yourself. If you are seeking asylum in the UK you will be accommodated under Section 20.

The second way is if you have been harmed and/or neglected at home or someone has good reason to believe that you are in danger of being harmed and/or neglected. We will do an investigation and may 'look after' you until we believe that it is safe for you to go home. If it is not safe for you to go home, we may ask the Court to look after you 'full time'. If the Court agrees, Children's Social Care then has responsibility for looking after you and making sure you are safe.

We will continue to work with your parents and ensure that you see your parents regularly if you want this and it is safe to do so.

How long will I be in care?

This will depend on your circumstances and the reasons why you have come into care. We always plan for children go home as soon as possible if this is safe and in their best interests. The most important thing we will consider is what is best for you.

While you are in care, you will have a Care Plan which is based on your needs and what needs to happen to help and support you.

This Care Plan is reviewed regularly in a meeting with you (if you wish) and people involved in your care, such as your Social Worker, carer and Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and any other relevant people. Your views and wishes and very important and are taken into account.

All children and young people in care have a Social Worker who has a special responsibility for working with you and your family and is one of the people you can talk to if you have a problem.

Why do I have a Social Worker?

Your Social Worker's job is to make sure Children's Social Care are looking after you in the best possible way and to make plans with yourself and your family about how you will be cared for in the future.

Who will look after me and where will I live when I am in care?

There are several places where you might live, which is dependent on your care needs.

If you live in a Children's Residential Home you will live in a home with other young people and be cared for by care workers who do not live in the home. Some of the care workers will work during the day and some during the evening and night.

If you are fostered, you will be living with your foster carers in their home. There may be other children in the home as well as you. These children may be the foster carers' birth children or other children in care like you.

You may live with a family member or close friend who isn't your birth parent. This is called Kinship care.

If you live in a Residential school, this is where you live and study during the school year.

If you are over 16 years old you may live in Supported and Semi-independent accommodation. The support workers at the accommodation can help you build up your skills and confidence and get you ready for your own independent tenancy in the future.

If you are over 16 years old and don't feel ready to go out into the world alone, without any support. You may live with a Supported Lodgings Host, who offer a room in their home to a young person. They help with things like learning to cook, laundry, managing money and planning for your future.

Who do I talk to if I have other questions about being in care?

There are probably many more questions which you will want to ask, and it is important you do ask all these questions! This pack will be given to you when you come into care, which gives answers to the questions which we are usually asked and which children in care have said are important things for you to know about. You will be able to talk to your carer and your Social Worker about any things you are not sure about or are worried about.

Social Workers – who are they?

A Social Worker is someone who works with children and their families, to ensure you are safe, happy and that your needs are all being met. They will work with other people also to make sure you are safe, happy and secure. Social Workers are based all around the Leicestershire County.

Your Social Worker may visit you a lot in the beginning and then every 6 weeks when you have settled in. They will:

- See how you are and how you are getting on Find out if you have any problems
- · Make sure you are settled in your placement
- See if there is any support that you need
- · Update you on any changes
- Help with your education

- Maybe do some life story work with you. although your carer can also do this with you
- Arrange for you to see or speak to your friends and family
- Discuss your future with you

The Social Worker must try to see you alone when they visit at least every 6 weeks. If you need to see or talk to your Social Worker, you can phone them or ask them to visit.

Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) who are they?

IRO's check that children in care are looked after well and listened to. Every child in care has an IRO and they are independent of the child's Social Worker.

What an IRO must do:

- They must check the local authority is looking after you properly.
- They must make sure your wishes and feelings are taken seriously. This means they should get to know what is important to you.
- They must be involved in the review meetings of your Care Plan. They can chair your review meeting, or you can chair the meeting if you would like, with support from your IRO.
- They make sure your review is done properly and a written record is kept of decisions that were made.
- They make sure you are informed about your rights, access to independent advocacy and how you can make a complaint.
- They make sure any worries or concerns in your care are reported to a senior manager.

Introducing your Corporate Parenting Team

When you come into care, some of the people you may meet besides your Social Worker may be the Children's Rights Officers and Participation Officers. Together they make up our Corporate Parenting Team.

"Our mission is to make sure your rights are upheld, to advocate with you and for you, celebrate your achievements and make sure you are given opportunities in order to reach your potential."

Participation Service

Our Participation Officers make sure that you have lots of opportunities to have your voices heard and also to have fun! They organise the Children in Care Council (CiCC), Beacon Voices – our Children in Care Choir and Out In Care, our support group for LGBTQ+ young people.

As well as these they run other events for you to take part in throughout the year such as activity days, workshops, trips, summer play scheme and the annual Celebration of achievement awards.

If you want to get involved in any of the above activities or groups, you, your Social Worker or carer can contact us on: Email: corporateparenting@leics.gov.uk

Children's Rights Service

Our Children's Rights Officers are there to advocate for you (to be your defender). They can help you to make sure that people making decisions for you are listening to you, support you to speak out and be heard and help you to complain if you're not happy about what's happening to you. The law says that if you are in care you are entitled to have an advocate, but it's always your choice! You, your carer, your Social Worker, your IRO or anyone working with you can make a referral to the Children's Rights Service.

If you would like help or support to make sure people are listening to you, you can contact the Children's Rights Service

Text: 07909 893541

Phone: 0116 305 6500

Email: childrensrights@leics.gov.uk



Clothing

When you first come into care, if you don't have all the clothing you need, such as the list below, we will support you to get them.

- Pair of shoes
- School uniform
- Trainers
- Coat/Jacket
- Nightwear
- Sets of underwear
- Socks
- T-shirt

- Jumper
- Dressing gown
- P.E. kits
- Slippers
- Tops
- Jean/Trousers/Skirts/ Shorts
- Suitcase

We will make sure you have all of these things. Your carers will make sure you continue to have all the clothes you need.



Review of Arrangements Meetings

What is a review?

It is where your general life at that present time is discussed. The review will talk about where you are living now and any plans for the future. There will be a section on health, education and identity – which can include contact with your family and anything else that might be important to you.

How often do have a review?

At least every 6 months but more often when you first come into care or move to a new home.

Do I have to attend my reviews? No, you don't if you don't want to, but we usually encourage you to attend so you know what is being discussed about you and so you can voice any worries or concerns. Also, you don't have to attend by yourself. You can ask one of our Children's Rights Officer to attend the meeting with you, or they can attend on your behalf to voice your views at the meeting.

Who attends the reviews?

Most importantly YOU (if you wish), your Social Worker, your carers, your Independent Reviewing Officer, your Children Rights Officer, your Dedicated Teacher from school or college, and maybe your parents. You have the right to say who you want at your review meeting if you

attend, it's important that you know you have the right to voice any concerns you have and talk about any worries related to your care.

Who do I put my views to?

You can put your views to your Social Worker, your Independent Review Officer, your carers, or your Children's Rights Officer before the meeting. You can also have your say in the meeting. Before the meeting you will be asked for your views, and if you want to put these in writing. If you don't quite

know what you want to say, or need support to put your worries on paper, your Children's Rights Officer can support you with this. You can also arrange to meet with the chair (IRO) of the meeting before the meeting starts or a few days earlier by phoning, texting or emailing them.

Our Children in Care Council have worked on the Review of Arrangements Expectations to ensure all of our children and young people in care are aware of what to expect and their rights when having a Review of Arrangements meeting.

Leicestershire Children in Care Council

Review of Arrangements Expectations

Wherever possible, we will always be given the opportunity to chair our own review meetings.

We will receive meeting dates well in advance and our views will always be considered regarding time and location. We should always know who will be attending and present in our meetings. This includes us understanding their role and responsibilities.

No review meeting will ever take place without the young person who wishes to attend not being present.

Sometimes
we are asked to leave
part of the meeting.
This often makes us feel
anxious and time should
always be set aside to

explain why.

We will always be encouraged to attend our meetings, but understanding will be shown when we choose not to. There should never be any surprises in our meetings and we should be told in advance what is going to be discussed.

The correct professionals should always be present in our meetings. This will ensure any worries or concerns can be quickly resolved.

We will also receive the notes from our meetings.

Always use young people friendly language that we can understand.

Never talk about us in the meeting and make us feel like we are not there or part of the discussion. If needed, there will always be time for a short break. Our review meetings should never feel rushed. We should be supported to prepare for our meetings and contacted afterwards to check that we are feeling ok.

Attending large meetings can often feel intimidating and very scary. Therefore, meetings will always be as informal as possible and held in a comfortable environment. We understand that our review meetings will sometimes be difficult and challenging. However, we must never be left feeling that we are not being properly listened too.

For younger
Children in Care, where
it may not be appropriate
to attend meetings, creative
ways will always be
found to ensure that their
voice is being effectively
represented.

Jane Moore, Director Children & Family Services p. Taylar

Clir Deborah Taylor Lead Member for Children & Family Services





Spending Time with family and people who are important to you - sometimes called Contact

What is contact?

A time for you to meet up with family members and people who are important to you, if everyone agrees. It can be called whatever you want it to be called.

Who makes decisions about contact?

Decisions about contact can be made by the Court, your Social Worker, your family and you.

How often can I have contact?

It varies depending on what's been agreed is best for you. If you are not happy with the amount of contact you have, you can talk to your Social Worker about this.

Can I stay in contact with my friends?

Yes, as long as this is safe for you and supports you in being happy.

Can I see my brothers and sisters?

Yes, we will always do our best to encourage contact with brothers and sisters.

If I am not living with my brothers and sisters, will I be told where they are?"

Yes, in most circumstances. If this information is not shared you will have an explanation why this is not possible.

Our Children in Care Council have worked on The Contact Expectations Statement to ensure all of our looked after children and young people are aware of and know what to expect when it comes to having contact with the people who are important to you.

Leicestershire Children in Care Council

Contact Expectations Statement

If possible, after coming into care, contact should be arranged to take place at the earliest opportunity

At contact there should be no surprises e.g. unexpected people or issues that we do not know about or are prepared for

Whenever possible,

we will always have contact

for special occasions e.a.

family celebrations and

birthdays etc

Young people should have a say in who is involved in contact and the wider family should always be considered

If any changes are made to our contact arrangements, these will always be explained to us

> During contact all mobile phones and devices will be switched off and only used in an emergency

Regular contact does not replace the opportunity for other additional family activities also taking place Other than for an emergency, contact should never be cancelled with less than 24 hours notice. Any cancellation will always be followed up and new arrangements made quickly

Our privacy and the location of contact are really important to us Future contact dates will always be confirmed at the end of each meeting A young person should never feel pressured to have contact Staff who accompany us to contact should always be discreet e.g. not wear ID badges when meeting in public areas etc

Our carers need to be supported, not to feel undermined or threatened by our contact with family members Carers should be supported to understand how important contact is to us, but also how it can impact upon us and sometimes our behaviours After contact has taken place, our Social Worker will always check how things went and we can discuss any worries or concerns

Jane Moore,
Director Children & Family Services

D. Taylar

Clir Deborah Taylor Lead Member for Children & Family Services





Worry and Concerns: Who Can I Talk To?

If you are worried it's important to:

- Let people know how you are feeling and why
- Don't bottle it up inside

Who to go to if I want to talk to someone?

- Social Worker
- Your carer
- Your Independent Reviewing Officer
- Children's Rights Officers

How do I resolve my worry?

You can speak to any of these people and ask them why something has been said or done. If you still feel you aren't being heard, you can ask to meet with a Children's Rights Officer to support you to speak out and ensure the people working with you are listening to you.

To contact the Children's Rights Service, you can either phone or email at the details below

Phone: **0116 305 6500**

Email: childrensrights@leics.gov.uk

Virtual School

What is the Virtual School?

The Virtual School is not a building or virtual as in online, but a group of people who work with you to support you with your education. It does not replace your current school or college, but is there as extra support.

The Virtual School helps all children in care and care leavers make the most of their education.

To help with this we will:

- make sure you are listened to and have a voice
- help you get the best education possible
- recognise your individual strengths and talents
- ensure that your particular strengths and talents are recognised, supported, encouraged and celebrated

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- do our best to make sure you get extra support if you need it
- help you plan for a good career.

Designated Teachers

At school you may have someone called a Designated
Teacher. Together with your other teachers they will ensure
your needs are met, you are encouraged to do your best
and that you are receiving any support you need.

Personal Education Plan

When you come into care you will have something called a Personal Education Plan. This is personal to you and is there to ensure you reach your full potential at school and college.

Why do I have a Personal Education Plan?

Your Personal Education Plan will make sure that nothing gets in the way of what you want to achieve.

When will my Personal Education Plan happen?

You will have a Personal Education Plan meeting when you first come into care. School age children will then have a Personal Education Plan meeting every school term to see how things are going. It usually happens during school time, but you can ask your social worker if you would like it at another time.

Who will be there?

You (if you want), your teacher, your social worker, your carer and your parents (if this is appropriate/safe). This meeting is all about your education so it would probably be useful to attend so everyone can work towards your goals, and not what they think is best for you.





What happens at the Personal Education Plan meeting?

We will talk about:

- how you are doing at school
- the progress you are making
- · anything you need help with
- any out of school activities you want to get involved with and how we can support this
- set goals you can work towards

What happens after the meeting?

You and the people involved in the Personal Education Plan will make sure all the actions are carried out so that your goals can be achieved. If you move school or change carers your Personal Education Plan will be passed to your new school and new carers. If you have any concerns you can speak to your social worker, teacher, or the designated teacher for children in care at your school.

Health Assessments

The Looked After Children's Health Team (LAC Team) aims to promote the health and well-being of children and young people who are in care, including unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

When you first come into care you will have an Initial Health Assessment undertaken by a Paediatrician (child doctor) within 28 days.

Following this, children under 5 years old will have a review health assessment at least every 6 months by a Health Visitor.

For children aged 5 to 18 years old will have a review health assessment at least every 12 months by the Looked After Children's Nurse.

Who can come with me?

Usually, it's your carer who comes with you, sometimes you may also be accompanied by your Social Worker or sometimes you can come on your own if you are old enough to do so



INDEPENDENT VISITORS SCHEME

HELPING KIDS IN CARE

WHAT IS THE INDEPENDENT VISITORS SCHEME?

It is a scheme where adult volunteers provide independent, one to one support to young people in care, offering friendship and advice during their time in care and often beyond.

Any young person in care can request an Independent Visitor, if it is thought to be in their best interests.

Independent Visitors are chosen by the young person to be someone that they can talk to and get along with

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WHO ARE INDEPENDENT VISITORS?

Independent Visitors are all volunteers who have been carefully checked, trained and approved.

Our Independent Visitors are all different ages and have different backgrounds and interests, so you can tell us the sort of person you would like to be linked up with, and we will try and find the right person for you to have as your Independent Visitor.

An Independent Visitor is NOT a Social Worker or carer.



WHAT IS THE ROLE OF AN INDEPENDENT VISITOR?

An Independent Visitor is there to give you support and friendship outside your foster / residential home. It is hoped that this friendship will continue throughout your time in care and into your adult years.

The main aim is to have fun and chill out. This is your visitor and you do not have to share this person with anyone else. They are there for you to talk to and ask for advice and support – perhaps with your review or at school meetings.



HOW MUCH CONTACT WILL I HAVE WITH MY INDEPENDENT VISITOR?

Most visitors will have contact with you once a month, this is your time to enjoy an activity of your choice. This could be for a few hours or a special day out. You can also keep in touch with your Independent Visitor between visits through phone calls, letters, postcards and in other ways.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

If you would like an Independent Visitor contact:

0116 305 0505 independent visitors@leics.gov.uk

Language that Cares - Simple Language Toolkit

This toolkit was developed by young people in care about how important language is.

This means that your social worker or allocated worker, when you come into care, should ask you about what kind of language you want used for

- · the place you are living
- what you call your carers
- what you call the time you spend with your family
- any other important language or words that you would prefer workers to use

This should be reviewed with you often, in case it changes. It should also be talked about within your review of arrangement meetings.



There are also a list of bottom lines for workers to follow:

- Don't use acronyms or abbreviations that we may not understand.
- We will always have agreed the language and wording that our workers use when they are supporting and working directly with us.
- Workers will always check our understanding of language and words, particularly when supporting us in meetings with other services and professionals.
- Our preferred language and words will be recorded and shared with all workers who support us.
- Sometimes our circumstances and feelings may change. Our choice of language and words will be reviewed and changed as needed.
- We will not have to keep reminding workers about our preferred language and words.
- We should not have to explain our choice of language and words.

Glossary

When you come into care you may hear lots of words and terms that you may not have heard before. This guide can help you understand what some of these things mean.

If you have preferred words or terms you like to use, then please let your Social Worker know.

If you're ever unsure about anything, please speak to your Social Worker or carer to explain anything you are unsure about.

Accommodated

A young person in the care of the Local Authority, however your parents have a say in decisions about you.

Advocacy/Advocate

Someone who helps another person share their views and wishes. An Advocate will 'speak up' for you and ensure you are heard.

Care Leaver

A care leaver is a young person aged 16-25 who was in care at some point since the age of 14 and was in care on or after their 16th birthday for at least 13 weeks.

Care Plan

The plan covers everything about your life and it is looked at and discussed in your Review of Arrangements meetings.

Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)

Mental health services for children and young people up to the age of 18.

Children's Rights Officer

Someone who listens to you, advocates for you and ensures your voice is heard.

Child in Care

Children in care (CIC) previously referred to as Looked after children (LAC) are children who are living with and cared for by foster carers, kinship carers, residential homes or secure units. This includes unaccompanied asylum seeking children and also some children can live with their parents and also be in care.

Contact

It is time set aside for you to meet up with or speak to family members and people who are important to you, if this is agreed by everyone involved.

Contact Centre

A contact centre is a safe place where you can enjoy contact with your parents and sometimes other family members, in a comfortable and safe environment.



Designated Teacher

This teacher is trained about the care system; every school usually has one. They are there to support you and your educational achievements. They will often attend your Personal Educational Plan (PEP) meetings and Review of Arrangements Meetings.

Foster Carers

Someone who takes on the role of a parent for a period of time.

Fostering Social Worker or Supervising Social Worker

This is your foster carers or kinship carers Social Worker.

Full Care Order

A court has decided that you will be looked after and cared for by the Local Authority until you turn 18 years old. The Local Authority also has parental responsibility for you which means they can make decisions about what is best for you.

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

This is someone who checks that you are being looked after properly by the Local Authority, that your wishes and views are heard, and they also chair the important meetings such as your Review of Arrangements meetings.

Initial Health Assessment

Your first health assessment of your physical, emotional and mental health needs to help you stay healthy.

Kinship Carers

A member of your family or a family friend who takes on the role of a parent for a period of time.

LAC Nurse

Looked After Children Nurse is a Specialist Nurse who will ensure that a high quality health assessment is offered to children in care and can offer information and support around a range of issues such as; stopping smoking, healthy eating/healthy weight, relationships, safe sex, drugs and alcohol awareness.

Life-story work

This is about helping you create a personal or family history by gathering and talking about information (such as photos and letters) about your life now and before you came into care, to help you develop a sense of identity.

Moving Home

Moving to live in a new home for a fresh start or a new chapter.



Not in Education Employment or Training.

This is sometimes referred to as NEET for short

Pathway plan

A Pathway Plan is a written plan of how Children's Social Care are going to support you to live independently.

Permanence

A plan for a child in care about where they will live in the long term

Personal Advisor (PA)

Your social worker will introduce you to your PA when you turn 16 years old. They will get to know you, find out what you would like to do in your life and help you to achieve it when you leave care.

Personal Allowance

If you're 16 or 17 and live in semiindependent or independent accommodation then you will be entitled to a weekly allowance.

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

A document and plan to meet your educational needs and help you reach your full potential in education and afterwards. It forms part of your care plan.

Residential Homes

This is a house where children and young people live together as a group, with professional staff to look after them this is sometimes referred to as a children's home.

Respite

Respite care is when children and young people in care have a temporary stay with other foster carers.

Reunification

This is sometimes called rehabilitation or rehab home where a child or young person returns to live with their birth parents or legal guardians with the support of children and family services.

Review Health Assessment

Depending on your age, your physical, emotional and mental health needs will be reviewed every 6 or 12 months to help you stay healthy.

Review of Arrangements meeting

A meeting or meetings with you (if you wish) and key people in your life to look at how things are going, whether your care plan meets your needs and whether there needs to be any changes for the future.

Social Worker

Social Workers are there to protect children and young people from harm. When you come into care they will support you with any difficulties and promote your rights and wellbeing.

Therapy

Therapy helps you with difficult feelings and emotions. You may go and see a therapist to talk about feeling sad or angry and learn how to manage your emotions in a healthy way.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker

An Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker is a child or young person who is under 18 years of age, and who travels to a new country alone without a parent, carer or other adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for them.

Your Home

The foster, kinship or residential home where the child or young person is living. This is sometimes referred to as a placement.



Notes