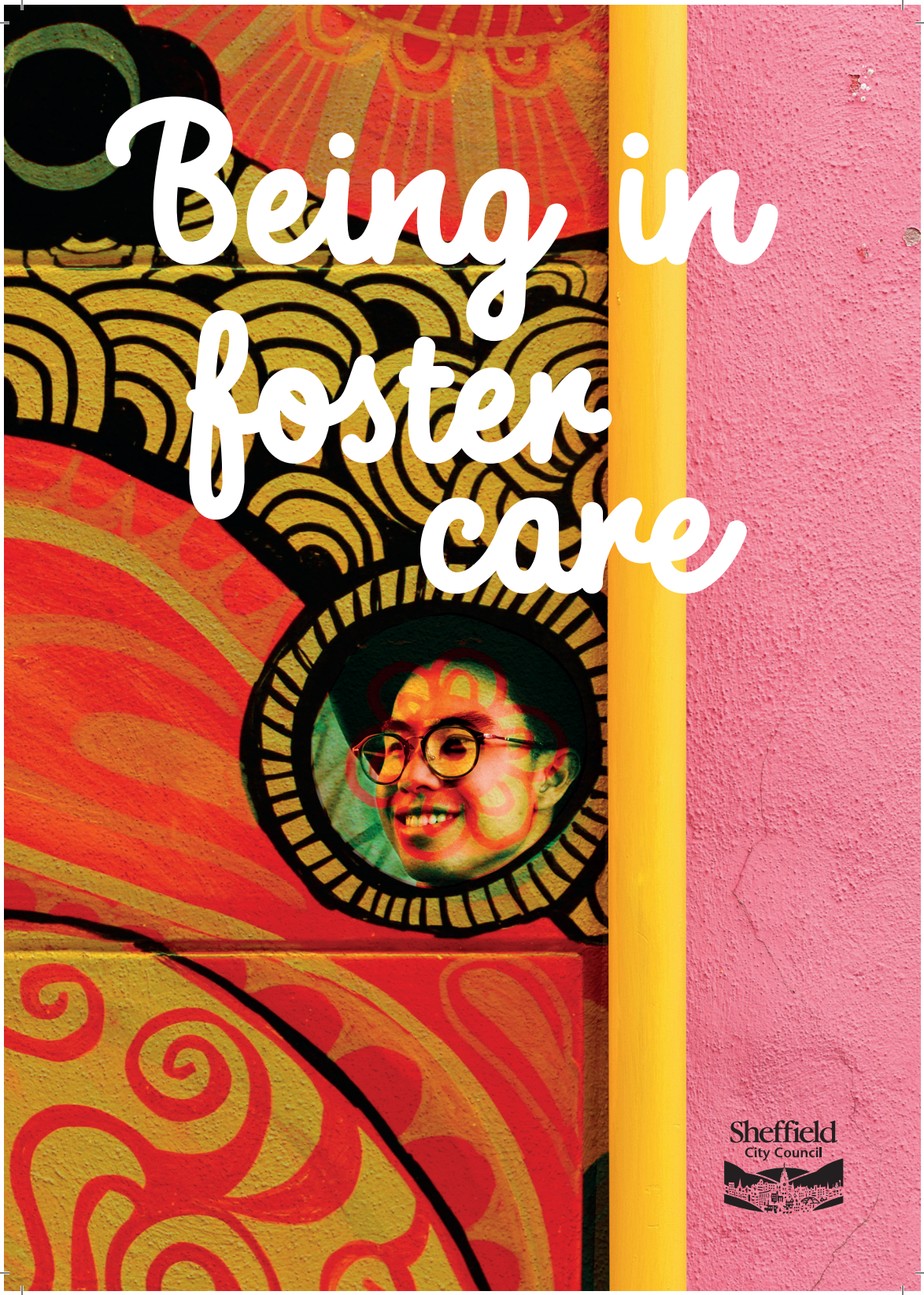
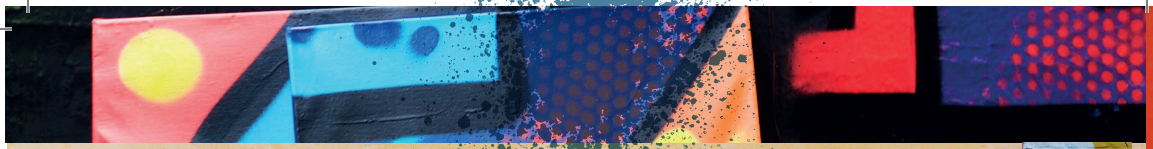
Being in foster care



Sheffield City Council



I went into care when I was 9. I found it hard and confusing at first. I've worked with other children in care to write this booklet for you because I'd like you to have the information I wish I'd had myself.

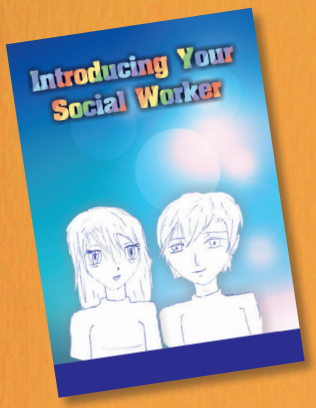
I hope you like it.

From Lily at Children in Care Council

I guess you feel there are lots of people coming to see you. Let's go through who's who:

YOUR SOCIAL WORKER:

They are employed by Sheffield City Council and their job is to visit you regularly where you are living, to get to know you and offer you help and advice. They will write a care plan. This is **YOUR** plan and will cover things like when you see your friends and family, where you'll be living and for how long and where you are going to school. Your Social Worker is the person to ask if you have questions about why you are in care, when you may get to see family and how long you are likely to be in care for. If you have anything good or bad to say about your Foster Carer you could speak to your Social Worker about this.



You should have a booklet that looks like this and this has the number and working hours for your Social Worker. If you would like to speak to a Social Worker at a time when yours isn't working at evenings and weekends call 0114 273 4855.

My Social Worker helped me move placements when I wasn't happy where I was living (Tyrone aged 15)

WHAT IS A FOSTER CARER?

A Foster Carer is someone who is paid and would like to look after you, be there for you and help you feel a part of their family.

Your foster carer should make sure you are well looked after, and help you feel part of their family.

We realise that being in care and away from your family may be a worrying time for you.

Your Foster Carer will understand that it might be a difficult and worrying time for you. They will also understand that you have your own family and will do all they are able to help you have time with your own family. You can speak to your Social Worker if you have any questions or worries about this.

- Did you know that your Foster Carer has their own Social Worker too? They are trained and supported to do the best they can for you.
- In your foster home, you should feel safe.
- You should feel well cared for.
- You should know why you are being fostered.
- You should know when you are going to see your family next.
- You should be able to enjoy your own religion and culture.
- You should feel able to talk to them about your worries and fears.

YOUR FOSTER CARER WILL

- Help you with school and college
- Make sure you have a healthy diet
- Make sure you can still do the things that you enjoy, like going to clubs and seeing your friends
- Give you pocket money
- Keep you safe
- Help you think about what you want to call them

YOUR INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO):

Once you are in care you have meetings called reviews that look at your care plan and how things are going for you. The Independent Reviewing Officer runs these meetings. They are independent which means they should make decisions that are best for you and will only make decisions once they have listened to what everyone has to say. They are there to make sure that plans about your life work for you, that things happen when and as they should and that firm plans are in place for your future. They should also make sure that the focus is on you and you get your say.

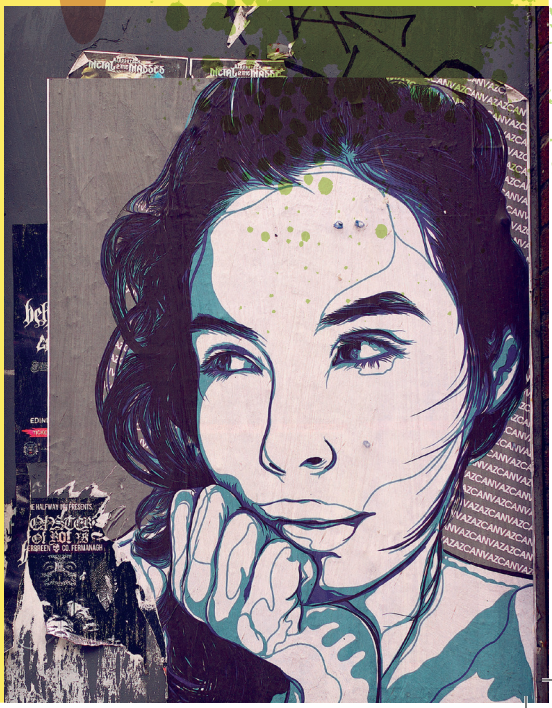
Your first review meeting will be within 20 days of you becoming looked after, the next review meeting will be within 3 months and after that Review meetings are every 6 months or earlier if there needs to be a big change to your plan.

MY IRO MADE SURE THAT SCHOOL GAVE ME EXTRA LESSONS IN SUBJECTS THAT I WAS STRUGGLING IN (EMILY AGED 15)

DESIGNATED TEACHER IN SCHOOL

You will have a teacher in school that will be there for you if you need to speak to them or need any extra help. It's their job to work with children in care and make sure that you are happy in school and achieving all you can and want to.

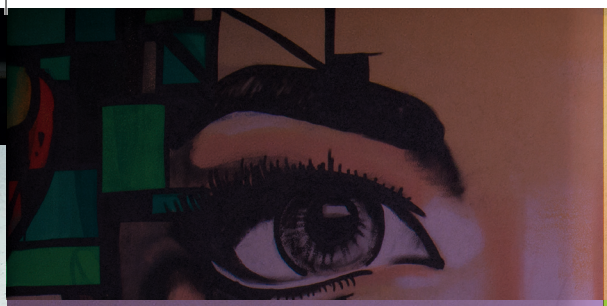
You will also have regular personal education plan (PEP) meetings that will look at your work and your dreams for the future. Your Social Worker, IRO, Designated Teacher and Foster Carer will come to these meetings to make sure you are achieving all that you want to for the future and are getting all the support you need.



AN INDEPENDENT ADVOCATE:

If at any point you don't feel that you are being listened to, you have a right to an Independent Advocate. This is someone that is totally independent of Social Care and can help you have your say. This means they would listen to what you're asking for and help you come up with ways to change things. This could be arranging and helping you to have a meeting with a Social Worker, preparing and attending one of your review meetings with you or making a complaint. You can ask for an Advocate yourself at any time by calling 0114 228 8553 or calling/texting 07971 312457. You can read more about Advocates at www.sheffkids.co.uk

My Advocate helped me get my citizenship and passport sorted as it was taking years (Linh aged 14)



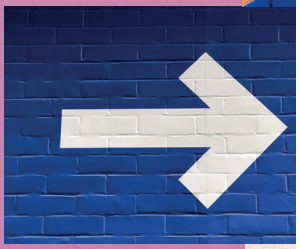
AN INDEPENDENT VISITOR:

As a young person in care you can have an Independent Visitor if you would like one. This is a volunteer who is not paid who wants to be in your life as a friend and will go out and do something fun with you once a month. It's a long term friendship and they should stay with you. If you would like one then speak to your Social Worker.

You can also email:
childrens.involvement@sheffield.gov.uk

or call the children's involvement team on 0114 228 8522

I WENT TO DO HIGH ROPES AND ROLLER BLADING WITH MY INDEPENDENT VISITOR. WE HAVE BEEN MEETING UP FOR OVER A YEAR NOW AND I REALLY ENJOY IT (SARAH AGED 13)



A PERSONAL ADVISOR:

When you are 16 you will get a Personal Advisor to help you think about your future. They will help you write a Pathway Plan for you to plan what you will do in the future once you are 18. Your Personal Advisor should be with you until you are 25 if you'd like them to.

I've started seeing my personal advisor each month and am getting to know her better. We are making plans for my future

(Jack aged 16)

THE CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL:

We are a group of 13-18 year olds that are in care. We meet every other Thursday from 5-7pm and work to try and make things better for children in care. We work on different projects to make things better and have made award winning films and do fun trips too. If you'd like to join or find out more check out our website www.sheffieldcicc.org, call the children's involvement team on 0114 273 5500 or email childrens.involvement@sheffield.gov.uk

IT'S FUN, YOU MEET NEW PEOPLE AND YOU HAVE THE SATISFACTION OF HELPING OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE THAT YOU HAVE NEVER MET AND CHANGE THEIR LIVES FOR THE BETTER. COME JOIN US!

You will be offered a health assessment (sometimes known as an ‘initial health assessment’)

HEALTH CHECK

Within a month of moving into care. This usually involves seeing a doctor and a specialist nurse. During the health assessment you have the chance to talk about any aspect of your health with the Doctor or Nurse. You can choose to have an adult with you that you trust, if you like. This could be your Foster Carer, Social Worker, family member or a friend.
It’s up to you!

HOW TO COMPLAIN

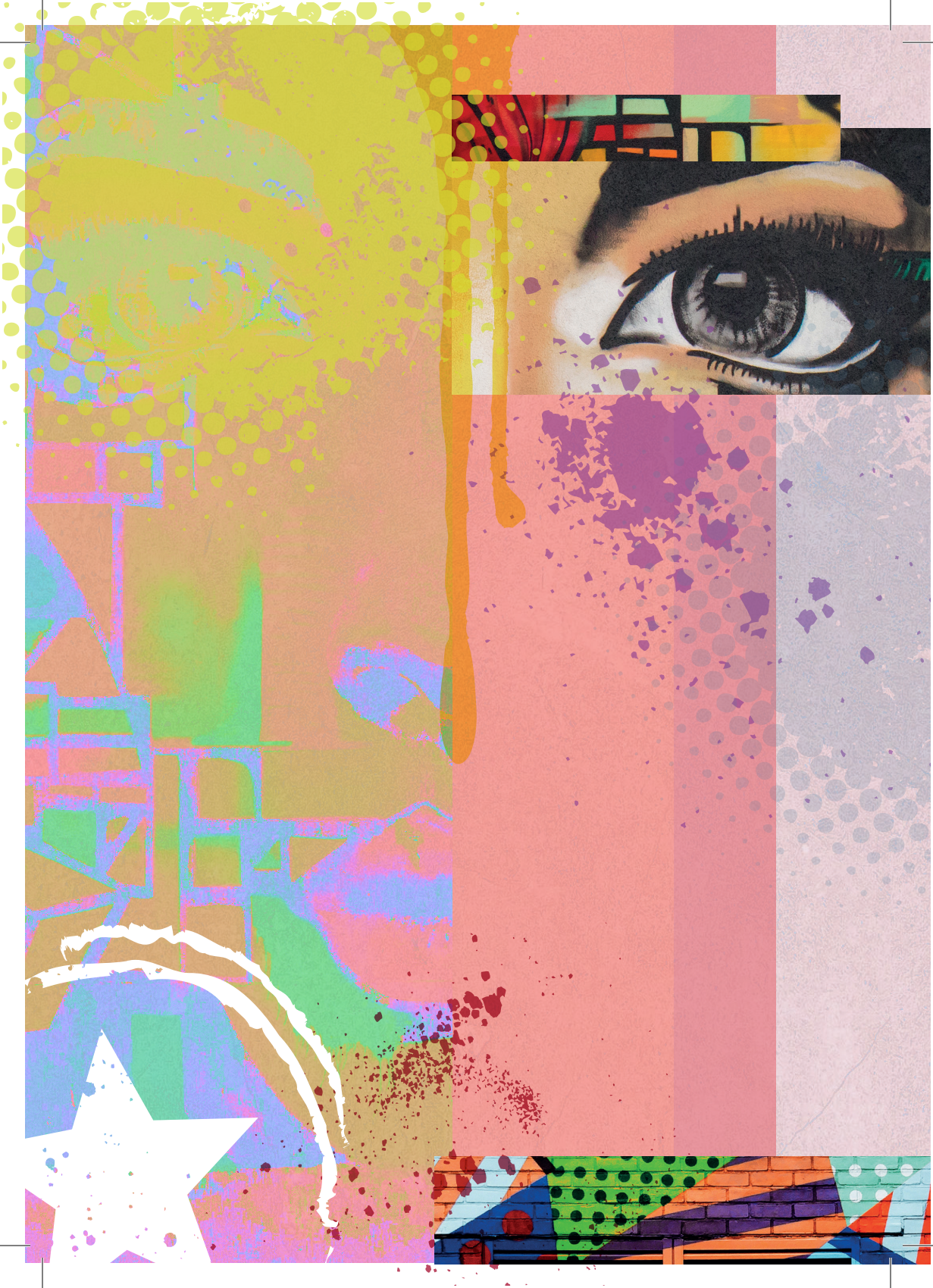
You could speak to someone you know and trust like your Social Worker, a Teacher or someone in your family. If you are still unhappy, or none of these people can help you or you'd like some help complaining, ask an Advocate from the Children's Involvement Team to help you.

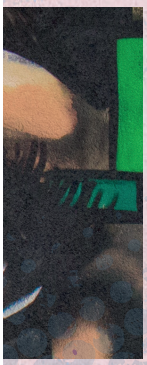
Call **0114 228 8553** or **07971 312457**
or email **advocacy@sheffield.gcsx.gov.uk**

Personal message from Carly Speechley, Director of Children's Services.

I'm Carly and I'm the Director of Children's Services, some of the young people that designed this leaflet like to call me the 'Boss' of Children's Services! I am the manager of your Social Workers and their managers. I am always wanting to make things better for children in care like yourself. I am interested to know what you think of how you are being looked after, that can be bad or good. Please feel free to get in touch with me anytime you would like to and I'll always get back to you.

My number is 0114 293 0063
or my email is carly.speechley@sheffield.gov.uk





YOU NEED TO ADD USEFUL NUMBERS

My own social worker is called

.....

Their phone number is

.....

My foster carer is called

.....

Their phone number is

.....

My IRO is called

.....

Their phone number is

.....

My teacher in school is

.....

Their phone number is

.....

USEFUL NUMBERS

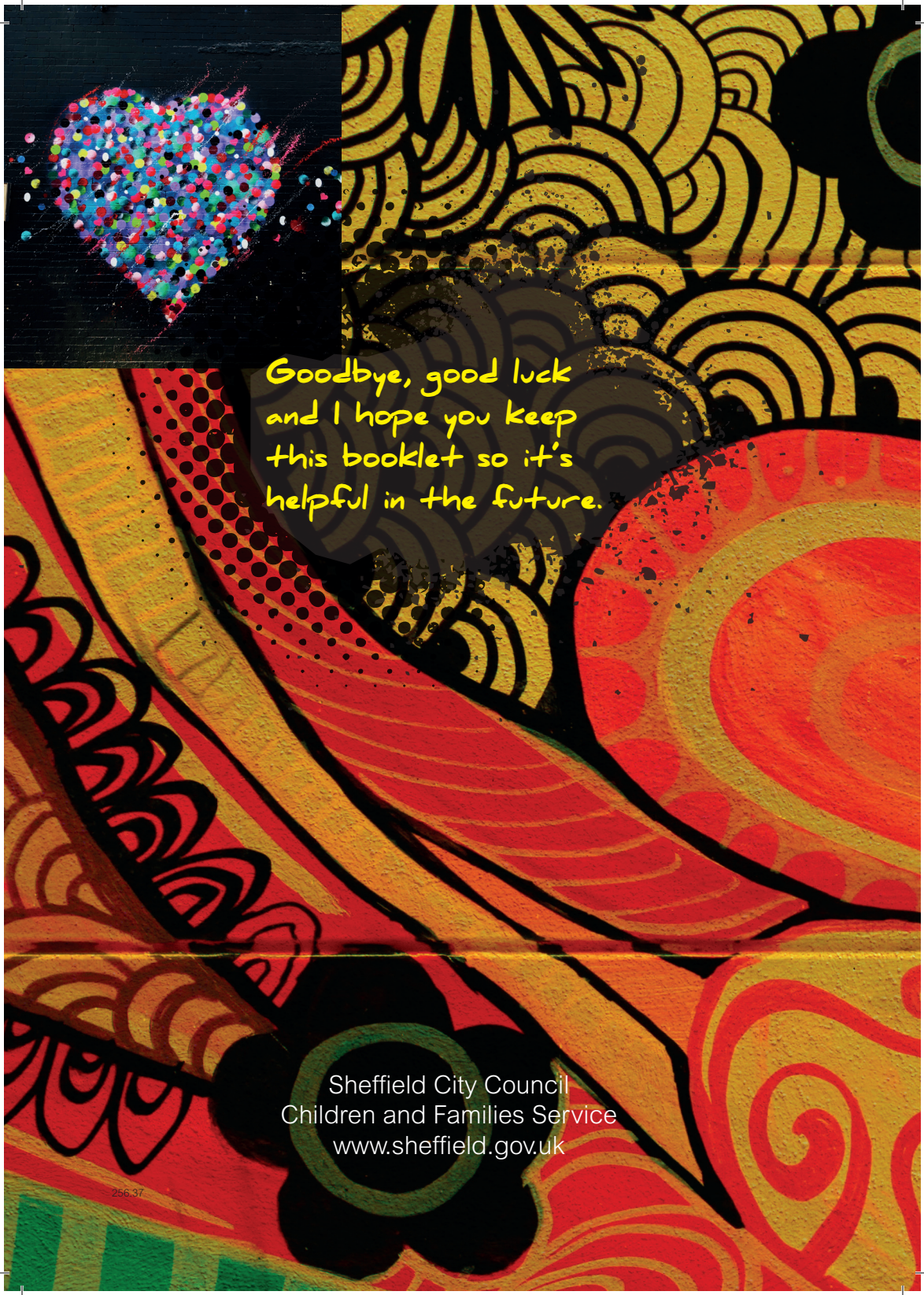
Below are some useful numbers for you to have

Ofsted
An organisation called Ofsted checks the work of fostering agencies in England and Wales. Their contact details are:

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
T: 0300 123 1231
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office of the Children's Commissioner
The role of the Children's Commissioner is to "promote awareness of the views and interests of children". the office of the children's commissioner is:

The Office of the Children's Commissioner, Sanctuary Buildings,
20 Great Smith Street,
London, SW1P 3BT
T: 020 7783 8330
www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk



Goodbye, good luck and I hope you keep this booklet so it's helpful in the future.

Sheffield City Council
Children and Families Service
www.sheffield.gov.uk

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