

Introduction:

Sometimes you can't live at home with your family. When this happens you may need to come into the care of Staffordshire County Council. This is called "being in care" or "looked after". You might be worried or anxious about being in care. This folder will help you to understand the looked after system.

Some of the words in this pack may be new to you so we've put a list at the end that you may find helpful. Use this if there is something you don't understand.

You can always talk to your Social Worker, Key Worker or a Carer if you don't understand any of the information in this folder.

Section 1: All About You!

Section 2: Being Looked After

Section 3: Living In Foster Care

Section 4: Living In Residential Care

Section 5: Lifestyle

Section 6: Your Health

Section 7: Education & Work

Section 8: Speaking Out

Section 9: Useful Links & Contacts

About Me:

My First Name

My Surname

My Date of Birth

My Place of Birth

My Key Worker/Carers' Names

.....

My Address

.....

My Telephone Number

Other numbers where I can contact my foster carers or residential care staff:

Mobile: Home:

About My Family:

Family members name

Telephone number

Address

Family members name

Telephone number

Address

Family members name

Telephone number

Address

My Social Worker:

Name of my Social Worker

Local office name

Telephone

Mobile

Email

Address

.....

If your Social Worker is not in their office and you need to speak to him / her urgently, ask for the duty officer or the Team Manager or you can leave a message for your Social Worker to telephone you back.

If the office is closed and the matter is extremely urgent, you can contact the Emergency Duty Team of Social Workers by telephoning 0845 6042 886 during the following hours:

Monday - Thursday - 5:00pm until 8:30am

Friday - 5:00pm until 8:30am on Monday

(This includes all of Saturday and Sunday)

My Independent Reviewing Officer

Name of my Independent Reviewing Officer:

.....

Telephone

Email

Office Address

.....



Dates To Remember:

You can use this appointment section to keep track of who's coming to see you and why!

Date?	Time?	Who?	Why?	Where?
21/05/2010	11:30am	Joe - Social Worker	To talk about going to school	Home

What Does Being Looked After Mean?

Being in care or looked after basically means that you don't live with your family for whatever reason. Everyone is different so they are in care for different reasons. Young people's experiences of being in care can vary; there are many exciting things and new experiences to have whilst being in care. Whatever type of care you live in; residential, family and friends, respite or foster care, you can always find the opportunity to have new experiences in everything that you do.

You might be worried or anxious about being in care. This section will help you understand how the looked after system works.



Where Will I Live?

Most young people who are looked after live in foster homes with a family. Some young people prefer to live in residential care homes rather than living with another family, and of course, it depends on which is most suitable for your needs.

What Sort Of Care Do We Offer?

Foster Care

It means you are going to live with foster carers who will look after you as part of their family until you can go home to live with your own parents, family members or live independently. You may live with your foster family for a short time or even just go at weekends. To find out more about foster care take a look at the foster care section of this folder.

Residential Home

A residential home is normally larger than a foster home. There are more adults in a residential home who are professional staff. They do not live in the home but work there on shifts. But there is always staff in the home. You will also live with other young people who are in care.

How Long Will I Be Looked After For?

It all depends on your own situation. Lots of young people go back and live with their birth parents or a family member once your Social Worker feels things have been sorted. Some young people only stay in care for a short time. Some young people stay with foster carers or live in residential care homes until they're older and they leave to live on their own. If this happens, you will get advice and support which will help you plan your future.

Does Everyone Go Home?

Lots of young people go back to live with their birth parents. Some young people stay in foster care or live in a children's home until they're older and they leave to live on their own.

Do You Have Any Questions You Would Like To Ask?

What Is A Social Worker?

Social Workers are people employed by the County Council who are responsible for looking after young people in the care of Staffordshire County Council.

What Will My Social Worker Do For Me?

Your Social Worker will be there to help you with such things as keeping you up to date with events in your family and plans for your future. They can answer any questions you might have about living away from home and keeping in touch with your family.

If you have any problems with your foster placement or residential home and you don't want to talk to your foster carer or the home staff about it, talk to your Social Worker. You can expect to be treated with respect and dignity. Your Social Worker will be there to listen to what you have to say.

Your Social Worker is the person who is responsible for:

- Making sure you're properly cared for
- Visiting you
- Keeping you in touch with your family
- Being there to help you if you have problems
- Making sure you're healthy

Visits By Your Social Worker:

Your Social Worker should come and see you regularly. Your Social Worker may not see you as often as you would like but they will do their best to see you as often as possible.

Making The Most Of Your Social Worker:

Your Social Worker will be able to help you better if you tell them the things that are important to you. Wherever you live whilst you are being looked after, it is your right to see your Social Worker alone every time they visit, if you wish.

Things That Are Important To Me Are:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Can I Change My Social Worker?

Most young people get on with their Social Worker, but sometimes they don't. If you don't get on with your Social Worker it is important to know why. You can always tell your Social Worker or adults who you are living with that you're not happy. You can ask to change your Social Worker to someone else, however this is not always possible, but your wishes will be listened to.

How Do I Get In Touch With My Social Worker

Call the office where your Social Worker is based to talk to them. You should have written your Social Workers contact number at the front of this folder.

If your Social Worker is not in their office and you need to speak to him / her urgently, ask for the duty officer or the Team Manager or you can leave a message for your Social Worker to telephone you back.

If the office is closed and the matter is extremely urgent, you can contact the Emergency Duty Team of Social Workers by telephoning 0845 6042 886 during the following hours:

Monday - Thursday - 5:00pm until 8:30am

Friday - 5:00pm until 8:30am on Monday

(This includes all day Saturday and Sunday)

You may have your Social Worker's mobile number but your Social Worker does not work 24 hours a day so he or she may not answer their phone. If this happens try to ring one of the above.

Your Care Plan

When you first start to live away from home, your Social Worker, foster carers or your residential worker, and on some occasions, your family, will sit down and meet with you.

This meeting is to start making plans for your future and agree a care plan for you.



What Is A Care Plan?

It's important that everyone who is involved in your life knows what is happening and what plans you have for the future. This is called your care plan.

Your care plan will cover everything to do with you, from contact with your friends and family, to school, to health and hobbies, to what food you like and what activities you enjoy doing.

Your plan will be updated when changes happen and sometimes it will change at your review.

What Is In Your Care Plan?

Your Care Plan will contain lots of different things which matter to you. Things Like:

- Where you're going to live
- How you're going to keep in touch with your family
- How long you are going to be looked after for
- Your School and your health
- Your friends and what you like doing in your free time

Your Review

A review is a meeting with you to discuss how you are getting on and how you feel about where you live. It is a chance for you and those people who are responsible for you to share what has been happening and to plan for your future. Whilst you are looked after you will have regular reviews. The first one will be within 28 days of coming into care, then another review within 3 months and then at least 1 every 6 months or more often if needed. In the review you and the people who care for you can decide how best to meet your needs and to agree how to improve your care plan.

What Is An Independant Reviewing Officer?



The review is organised by your Social Worker with the Independent Reviewing Officer. The Independent Reviewing Officer must make sure that you and the people who care about you are involved in the plans for your care and that your wishes and feelings are known. The Independent Reviewing Officer will usually be the same person at each of your reviews, an Independent Reviewing Officer works for Staffordshire County Council. But they are not one of the people who usually cares or visits you. This is so they can check that you're getting the best care possible from people who look after you.

The people who will come to your review are those who know about you and those who play a part in your life. This may include the people you will live with, your Social Worker, and his or her boss, your parents or other family members and any adults who are important to you.

Your Review

The Independent Reviewing Officer will lead the review. You can always ask your Social Worker about who will be attending your review.

Your review is about you, so it's really important your wishes and feelings are taken into account.

It is best if you are at the review meeting so that you can hear what is said, put your own views across and take part in decisions that are made.

If you decide not to go to your review you can provide your views by completing a booklet that your Social Worker should provide. Or you can decide with your Social Worker how your wishes and feelings will be provided to the review. After the review your Social Worker should tell you about the decisions that were agreed.

Before your review you will be given a booklet to complete. The booklets are personal and can help you decide what you may like to be discussed at your review. To try and make the best plans for you we still need you to answer the questions in the booklet.

What Does Being Fostered Mean?

Young people live with foster carers because they can't live with their parents and other family members at that time.

It means you are going to live with foster carers who will look after you as part of their family until you can go home to live with your own parents, family members or live independently. You may live with your foster family for a short time or even just go at weekends.

You may also stay with them until you are an adult. It all depends on what is needed to make sure you are safe, happy and well cared for. Foster families are all different but every foster family wants to care for children and young people who need to be looked after.

What Is Foster Care Like?

Foster carers are carefully chosen and trained, and they are supported by their own Social Workers who are specially trained to work with carers. Some foster carers have their own children living with them which means whilst you're getting used to living with them, they are also getting used to you. Everyone will be helpful and friendly, but it can take time, effort and understanding to settle in. Some young people may stay in touch with their foster carers even after they have left care.

Who Are Foster Carers?

Foster carers are adults who have been specially trained to provide you with the care you need. Foster carers know that not everyone is the same. Some young people have particular needs because of their background or religion. Your Social Worker will make sure that your foster carers are aware of any needs you may have.

Don't be afraid to ask your foster carers anything you need to know and don't be afraid to tell them about how you are feeling about things. Remember, your foster carers are here to help you, and whilst you are being looked after by your foster carers, you will still have a Social Worker.

Will It Be Like Living With My Own Family?

All families are different. They each have different house rules and expectations, and it will take a little bit of time to workout what you can and can't do in your new home. Your foster carers will spend time with you showing you round your new home and explaining how the house is run.

If you are not sure about anything or your nervous just ask the carers to explain what normally happens. Foster homes come in all different shapes and sizes. Foster families range from being just one person on their own to large families with other foster children and they may even have children of their own.

Will It Be Like Living With My Own Family?

Every house has rules and living in foster care is no different. At some point you should ask your foster carers to go through their house rules and you could write the rules below.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.

What Is It Like Living In a Residential Care Home?

If you are about to go into a residential home, you may be feeling scared. Everybody feels like this at the start so try not to worry. A residential home is normally larger than a foster home. There are more adults in a residential home who are professional staff. They do not live in the home but they're on shifts. You will also live with other young people who are in care.

In the home there is a big kitchen, a television room, a laundry room and you will usually have your own bedroom with a key.

Who Can Stay In a Residential Home?

Residential homes are sometimes known as assessments homes which look after young people aged between 12 -17. Both boys and girls can stay in the Residential home.

How Long Will I Stay There For?

You will normally stay in a Residential home for up to 12 weeks. If you're worried or want to know more about how long you will be staying for you can speak to your key worker, Social Worker or a member of staff at the home.

Who Looks After Me?

When you are living in a residential home you will have a key worker who will regularly spend time with you. Your key worker will also make sure that you feel happy and safe living at the home. If you have any problems your key worker where possible, will try and sort them out. As well as your key worker there will be other staff to look after you and make sure you are safe.

What Happens When You Arrive?

Your Social Worker will usually take you and do their best to make you feel as comfortable and as happy as possible about staying at the home. You will then be shown around the home and introduced to the staff and other young people.

The staff will ask you to write a list of all your clothing and possessions. You will not be allowed to keep aerosols. This is for safety reasons. You will be asked to keep any razors in the office. In some homes you will not be allowed to use razors but special arrangements will be made for you to shave.

Will It Be Like Living With My Own Family?

Each home has different house rules and expectations, and it will take a little bit of time to workout what you can and can't do in your new home. Your key worker and other staff will spend time with you showing you round your new home and explaining how the residential home is run.

If you're not sure about anything or you're nervous just ask your key worker or another member of staff to explain what normally happens.

Can I Have Visitors?

During your first meeting after arriving at the home we will try to decide who you can and can't contact. Guests are welcome to come and visit but they must be approved by your parents, Social Worker and agreed by the Manager of the home. Visits to the home must be pre-arranged. Your visitors will only be allowed to stay a limited period of time.

Where Will I Sleep?

You may have your own bedroom with a key, TV, radio and DVD player and your own shower and toilet.

Your room will be checked daily to ensure that everything is ok. Staff will not go through your belongings without your permission.

You can organise your room and personalise it with posters, photos etc, as long as they are suitable for your age and not likely to cause offense.

If you have electrical equipment it needs to be tested for safety before you use it.

Friends

Like any young person you deserve the right to have friends who you trust and you can spend time with. Sometimes it can be difficult to make new friends if you have moved away from home but your Social Worker and carer will help you meet new people.

If you have moved away from where you previously lived your carer and Social Worker will try their best to make sure you still have contact with your friends. It is not always possible to meet your friends because they live so far away but your Social Worker will do their best to make sure you don't lose contact.



Can I See My Friends?

Yes, of course. Your carers and your Social Worker will want you to have friends like all of us do. If you have a really good friend they might ask you to stay over at their house. Your Social Worker and your carers will need to make sure you'll be safe there, like any family would.

My Family

It is really important that you stay in touch with your family if that is possible and this is what you and your family want. So your Social Worker and the people caring for you will help with the arrangements and do whatever they can. Sometimes young people don't want to see their families at that time or it may not be safe.

We want you to stay in touch with your families. Your Social Worker will be sorting out visits, telephone calls and so on.



EXPLORE YOUR STAFFORDSHIRE

YOUTH BOX

Youthbox is the new website for young people in Staffordshire. Visit www.youthbox.info for help & advice, activities and fun.

www.youthbox.info

Staffordshire Young People's Service

Never be bored again!

There are loads of fun activities and projects for you to get involved with at your local Young People's Centre including:

- The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- Holiday activities
- Music projects
- Youth clubs
- Community and volunteering Projects
- Youth Achievement Awards
- Sports activities

Whether you want to try something new, make new friends, get recognised for out of school achievements or just simply want somewhere to hang out... your local Youth Worker will be able to help. Visit www.youfind.me.uk to find your nearest Youth Club and get in touch with a Youth Worker today.

Alternatively visit www.youthbox.info and find out more about the projects you can get involved in.

Exercise and Wellbeing:

Modern life can be pretty comfy – sofas, TVs, computer games – there's just so much to keep you sat down. Bodies weren't designed to sit down all the time – they need to walk, jump, run and MOVE to be healthy, grow properly and use up the right amount of energy.

Of course it's important to relax, but there's a difference between chilling out and vegging out. The fact is that young people who are inactive don't burn off enough energy and store up fat in their body. Simply being up and about and moving burns calories and helps fend off diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease or cancer.

And if you can walk to school, or anywhere else you need to go, then do that instead of the car – it's better for the environment and for you.

Why Do It?

Activities raise your heartbeat and helps pump blood around your body. It's like a mini workout for your lungs and muscles! It also decreases the chances of getting life-threatening diseases. A good dose of fresh air and exercise also helps us all to sleep better.

So tiring yourself out with an activity every day will help you nod off at a good hour and make you feel alert for the next day.