



NEW INTO CARE

YOUR GUIDE



Hi Everyone,

I'm Jack from the Children in Care Council also known as the CiCC. The CiCC is a group that represents all children in care in West Sussex and acts as a way to get their voice heard on issues that affect them, and leads projects to improve some of the services we use.

We wrote this guide to help you to understand what is going on while you are in care and give you information that you may find useful.

When I came into care, I remember feeling upset and worried about my future. However, it worked out perfectly :) as I settled in with a great foster family and get involved in lots of new opportunities.

We hope you'll find lots of helpful information in this booklet – you don't have to read it all in one go, just come back to it and dip in when you want to know more. If you've got any questions you can always ask your social worker.

Thanks,

Jack



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“If you don’t know why you have come into care – ask your foster carers or your social worker”

CICC MEMBER

WHAT IS BEING IN CARE?

Hi! I’m Jack! I have been in care for just over three years.

Being in care, which is sometimes called ‘being looked after’, means you aren’t able to live at home with the people you lived with.

There might be a number of reasons why, and if you want to know why you are in care you can talk to your social worker. You might be in care for a short time, or longer time, depending on the reason you came into care.

I remember meeting lots of friendly professionals when I first came into care, this booklet will remind you who they are and how they can support you and shape your care experience.

THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CARE:

Foster care

When children first come into care they usually stay with foster carers. The length of time you will be in care will be different for different people. Your social worker will talk to you about long-term plans for you (sometimes called permanence plans). This might mean you going to live, at least until you are 18, with family and friend carers (someone you already know), or it might mean living with long-term foster carers who will look after you until you are an adult.

Sometimes, some younger children, might move to an adoptive family, which has to be agreed by a judge. A few older teenagers, may go to live in a home with other teenagers, cared for by residential staff, or in 'semi-independent accommodation' where you have your own room in a house and are supported by support workers.

So, while there are different possibilities...what's most important is that it is right for you. It can take time to work out what's best, but your social worker and your foster carers will talk with you to hear your views, and to let you know what is happening.

Residential Children's Homes

This is a place with adults who will take care of you. Other children who are being cared for will also live there.

Adoptive or long term foster carers

This means living with another family who will take care of you until you are 18 or beyond.



CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Children and Young People with disabilities can also be looked after children, some children who spend more than 75 nights away from their family, are also looked after. The overnight care is provided and arranged by West Sussex County Council. This means that they make sure this care is safe and appropriate.

Children will still spend time at home with their family, and their parents will continue to make decisions about their lives. Children and Young People will have an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and have the same rights and entitlements as all looked after children. Children may access overnight care at a specialist residential placement or with foster carer.

WHO DECIDES WHAT HAPPENS AND HOW LONG WILL I NEED TO SAY IN CARE?

Decisions about being in care are made by professionals whose job it is to keep you safe. They will support you to understand why you are in care and how long this needs to be, finding the best way to explain this to you.

They have lots of trained staff that will help communicate with you in a variety of ways.



WHAT WILL MY CARERS DO FOR ME?



When you are living in care, you can expect to:

- Have advice on pocket money and saving
- Understand why you are in care
- Feel part of a family group (if you are living in foster care) for example, doing activities together
- Be able to learn skills for later life
- Be able to express any cultural or religious needs you have
- Have any information about you/your family treated as confidential

- Be respected, helped and supported, according to your individual needs
- Be well looked after and to be healthy

- Have support in keeping in touch with friends and family and for going to meetings, for instance at school or with Social Workers

- Be encouraged and supported to take part in activities and education to do things you are interested in

MY EDUCATION

While you are in care you will have extra support at school or college to help you learn and achieve.

A Designated Teacher is someone whose responsibility it is to make sure you are getting the best from your education. They will meet regularly with you to review your educational support through a Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting to support your success.

You will be encouraged to share your views and ask for additional help if you need it.

They will help you go to college or university if you want to and also help you get a job or apprenticeship, depending on what's right for you.



"If your friends ask you questions about being in care, don't worry – you don't have to tell everyone. Just tell a really good friend"

CICC MEMBER

MY HEALTH

Your health and happiness is really important so you'll have regular health assessments with a plan to help you be fit and healthy.

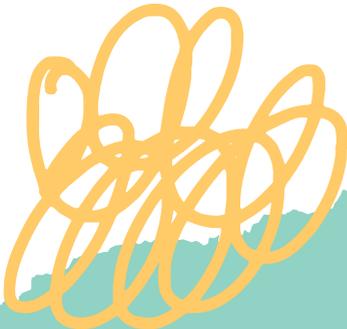
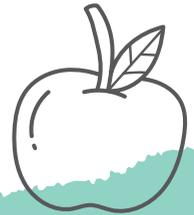
You'll get to see a doctor and/or specialist nurse, and you can see a dentist and optician regularly. There may be other health professionals they'll refer you to if needed.

You'll have a nurse specialist just for you and you can contact them if you want to talk about any health worries you may have.

You'll be encouraged to eat healthy food and exercise regularly.

You'll be supported with your emotional health and well-being and listened to if you want to share your feelings.

You can use the CHAT Health App to speak confidentially to your school nurse service. If you are being bullied, tell someone you trust so we can help you.



MY CARE PLAN

To make sure you're looked after properly there will be a care plan made with you. This explains why you are coming into care and what arrangements will be in place. From here you'll have a child looked after review (CLA Review) within a month (20 working days) of you coming into care, to talk through the plan with you.

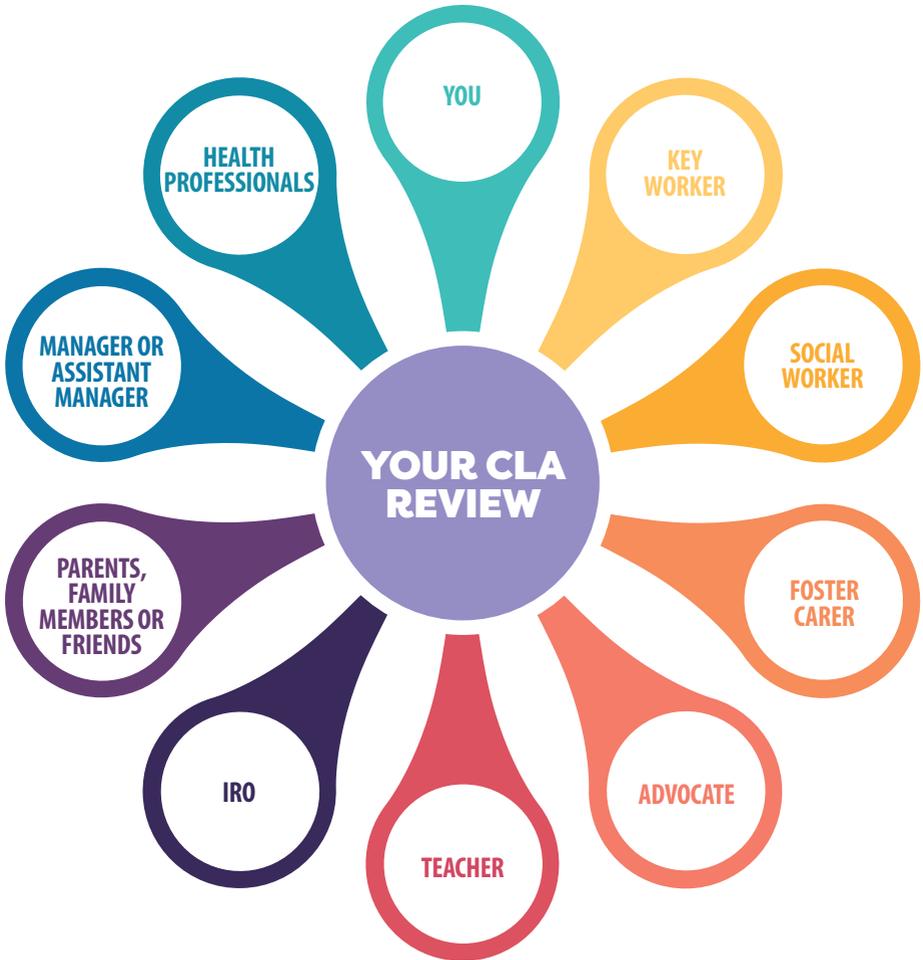
What is in a care plan?

A care plan will tell you:

- Why you are being cared for
- If there is a court order in place for you
- How you will be supported in school
- How your health needs are met
- How you keep in contact with family and friends
- Who will help you if you have any difficulties



YOUR MEETINGS AND WHO MIGHT BE THERE





WHAT IS A CLA REVIEW?

The meeting is where you and the main people involved in your care get together to make sure that your care plan is working for you; that you are being looked after well, enjoying your life as much as possible and doing well in your education.

These meetings are led by somebody called an Independent Reviewing Officer, who you may hear being called an IRO. This person is independent from Children's Services.

It is their job to -

- Make sure that the care plan in place is right for you
- Make sure that everyone listens to what you have to say and considers your views carefully when making any decisions, for example, what you think about contact with your family
- Check that everyone is keeping to their part of your care plan
- Check that there are clear plans for your future

Your IRO will want to meet with you before the meeting to make sure you understand what the meeting is all about and to hear what you have to say.

This will give you a chance to say what you want to talk about and if there are things you do not want to be shared at the meeting. Your IRO will want to hear about what you have done well or any problems you may have so that they can help you get the support you need.

You have a say about who is invited and who you do not want to be at your meeting. Your Social Worker or IRO will talk to you about this.

If you are worried about talking in the meeting you can ask someone you trust to speak for you. You do not have to stay for all of the meeting and you can take a break at any time.

You can also have an advocate whose job is to make sure that you are listened to. You can talk to your social worker, carers, keyworker or IRO about this and they will make sure it is arranged. After your first review, the next one will be three months later, and then every six months after that.

LET'S PLAN FOR THE FUTURE!

At some point around your 16th birthday you will sit with your social worker and other adults who play an important role in your life to write a pathway plan for your future.

A Personal Advisor (PA) will work alongside you and your social worker and begin to think about your plans for the future. Your PA will help you decide what support, help or advice they should give you to help you to prepare for adult life.

WHEN WILL I SEE MY FAMILY?

Your social worker will work really hard to enable you to keep in touch with your family and friends, as long as that is what you want and is in your best interest.

If you have brothers and sisters, you may be placed in the same house. If this is not possible, your Social Worker will arrange for you to see each other, if you want to and it is safe to do so.



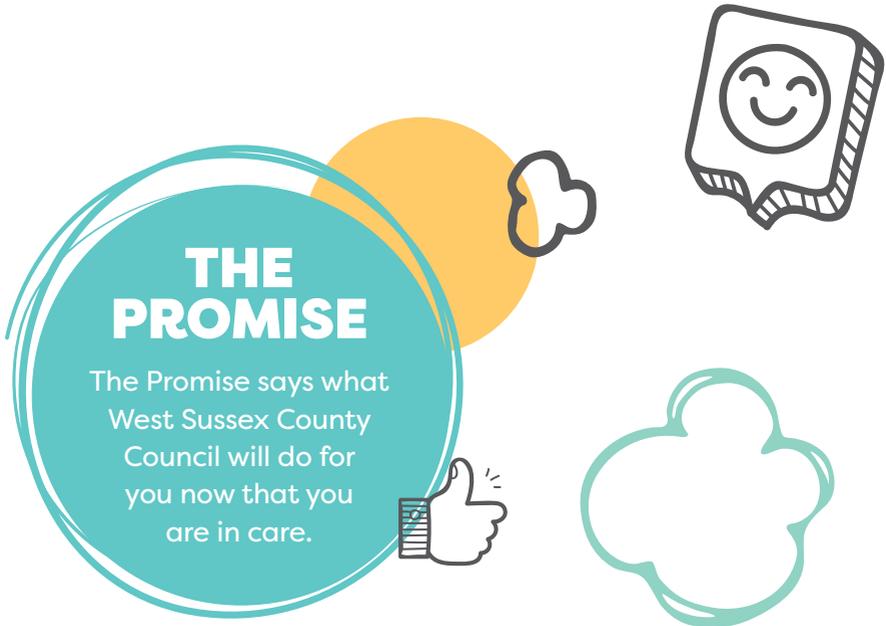
SEEING FAMILY AND FRIENDS

I know how important it is to keep in touch with family and friends who you are close to. Keeping in touch can be visits, letters, emails and phone calls.

You have the right to see your friends and family if you want to and it is safe to do so. Your social worker and carer will sort out how often this will happen and organise this with you.

If you have brothers or sisters who are also looked after but living in a different place from you, your Social Worker and carers must also help you to keep in regular contact with them as long as it is safe for you.

If you are not happy with the arrangements talk to your social worker or carer. If you are still not happy there is a service called West Sussex Advocacy Service you can talk to.



MY RIGHTS AND ADVOCACY

All young people have the right to:

- Have somewhere to live
- Have an education
- Be safe
- To be treated as an individual
- To be listened to and have a say about decisions in your life*



*All rights are outlined in United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

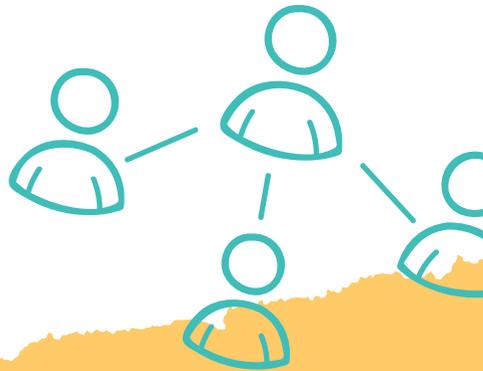
Young people in care also have the right to:

- See people who are important to you (unless there's a good reason not to)
- Ask to see their file
- Make a complaint/give feedback
- Have pocket money

If you feel unsafe, talk to your Social Worker, or another professional that you trust.



"My advocate did a really good job and they cared about what happened [to me] in the future"





YOU HAVE A VOICE, BE HEARD

If you are in care or a care leaver you can request support from an advocate.

How will an Advocate help?

- An Advocate is a person who works for you so you can get your point of view across about the care and services you receive
- They start by listening to you to understand what you want help with
- They will ask you what you want to do yourself, and what you prefer them to do

An Advocate can:

- Prepare for and go to meetings with you (or go for you)
- Ask questions/get information
- Talk to people with you/for you

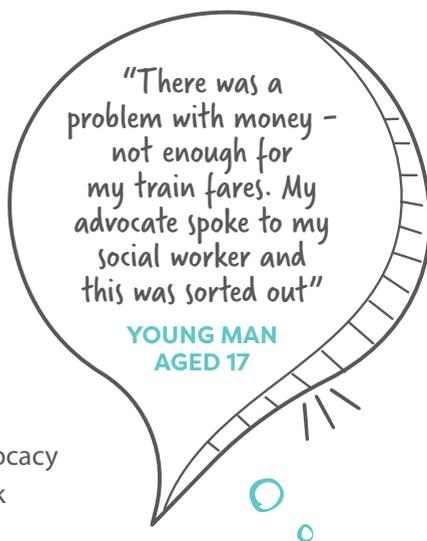
How to request advocacy:

If you would like to request help from an advocate you can complete the online form or contact the team.

Visit: www.yourspacewestsussex.co.uk/advocacy

Email: Advocacy.Service@westsussex.gov.uk

Speak to one of the team: 0330 222 8686



Comment, compliments and complaints

The Customer Relations Team, are the people to contact if you're unhappy with the service you're getting from the council. You can also let us know what is going well. If you are unhappy with any part of the service, please let the staff you normally deal with know. They will try and settle the matter straight away. If you are still not happy, you can contact the Customer Relations Team:

Visit: www.westsussex.gov.uk/complaints

Email: feedback@westsussex.gov.uk

Speak to one of the team: 01243 777100



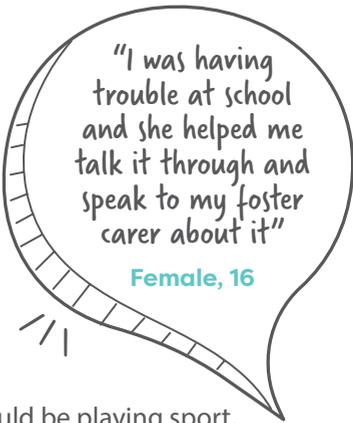
WOULD YOU LIKE AN INDEPENDENT VISITOR (IV)?

You can have an IV if you:

- are looked after and aren't going to be living with your family
- are aged between 8 and 17 years old
- don't have much contact with your family
- would like to have a friendship with an adult who is outside of the care system

An IV will:

- visit you regularly, normally once a month
- take you out
- have fun with you doing things you choose, it could be playing sport, going to the cinema or a museum, having a chat and a hot chocolate - it's up to you
- listen to you
- can advise you and help you speak up if you need support



"I was having trouble at school and she helped me talk it through and speak to my foster carer about it"

Female, 16

IV's are:

- volunteers who want to help you get the best out of life
- adults who are safe to be with and are good listeners

To get an IV:

- Talk to your social worker, your carer or Independent Reviewing Officer.
- Get in contact with the person who works with the IV's: Email: Independent.Visitors@westsussex.gov.uk
Speak to one of the team: 0330 222 8990

JARGON BUSTER

This explains some of the words we have used in this guide.

Advocacy

An independent person or organisation who works for you to get your viewpoint across.

Care Plan

A document that explains the help and support a child or young person in care will receive.

Children in Care Council

A group of children and young people living in care who talk to decision makers about what is important to them and represent the views of other children and young people.

CLA

Short version of the term 'Children Looked After'

CLA Review

Regular meetings with you to make sure that everything that is in your care plan is happening.

Complaint

Making people in charge aware of when you are unhappy about something.



Designated Teacher

A teacher at your school you can talk to, who is trained to support your education and success.

Independent Visitors

Trained volunteers who are there for you and visit you regularly to do fun things that you choose.

The Promise

A list of what West Sussex County Council will do for all young people and children.

Social worker

A trained professional who supports you and has responsibility for you.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

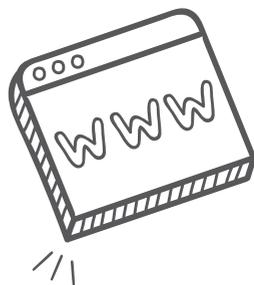
A document that explains the rights that all children and young people have, to keep them safe, healthy, happy and respected.

West Sussex County Council

The local government responsible for managing services in your area.



USEFUL CONTACTS AND NUMBERS



Mind Of My Own One

Mind Of My Own One is an app that helps young people communicate their views in a way that suits them. Young people create their own account, which can be used on any device at any time. This means that young people can use the app to say how they are feeling, what support they need and tell their worker about things that are important to them. You can download it from the App Store or Google Play Store or online here: <https://one.mindofmyown.org.uk/>



Children in Care Council

Find out more about the CiCC and how you can join
www.westsussex.gov.uk/cicc

A website designed by young people for young people. Find information, advice and guidance about health, relationships and more.



Chathealth

Tel: 07480 635424

School nurse text messaging service for 11-19 year olds



Childline

www.childline.org.uk

Tel: 0800 1111

Free 24-hour helpline for children and young people in trouble or danger.



NSPCC

www.nspcc.org.uk
Tel: 0808 800 5000
24-hour helpline

If you need help/advice or you are worried that you/another child may be at risk.

NSPCC

Coram Voice

Voice for the Child in Care
<https://coramvoice.org.uk/>
Tel: 0207 833 5792

Confidential help and advice for children/young people who are in care/leaving care.

coram Voice



getting young voices heard

Anti-Bullying Alliance

Bullying Online
www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk
Support/advice for young people and adults

[Anti-Bullying Alliance]

LGBT+ Switchboard

<https://switchboard.lgbt/>
Tel: 0300 330 0630
Email: chris@switchboard.lgbt



Switchboard

LGBT+ helpline





Other useful websites

www.111.nhs.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.sexualhealthwestsussex.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk/change4life





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