

A Young Person's guide to **BEING IN CARE**

How will I
afford to buy
things I need?

What happens
when I leave
care?

Where will
I Live?

What if
I'm not
happy?

What are
all these
meetings
about?



West Berkshire
COUNCIL

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Hello

You are most probably reading this because you have very recently become a child in care. This can be a really emotional time when you might be feeling sad, angry, lost, confused, or actually pleased that your situation is being resolved, or a whole mix of all them.

Your social worker should have explained to you about why you're currently not able to live at home and why you are in care. If you haven't had this explained or you're still confused you can talk to your foster carers, social worker or someone else you trust.

There's lots of new things going on around you and you may have a lot of questions. This book aims to answer some of the common questions and provide you with contact details so what ever questions you have remaining you are able to contact someone to ask.

There are bits you can fill in so you can truly make this book yours, so when you're ready have a read. If you're struggling with reading it, please ask someone you can trust to help you.

About me



My Name:

My Foster Carer:

Name

Address

Phone number

My Social Worker:

Name

Phone number

Email address

In an emergency call

Their manager's

name

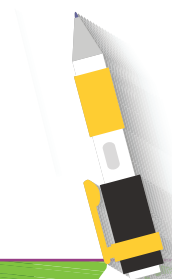
number

My Independent Reviewing Officer:

Name

Text

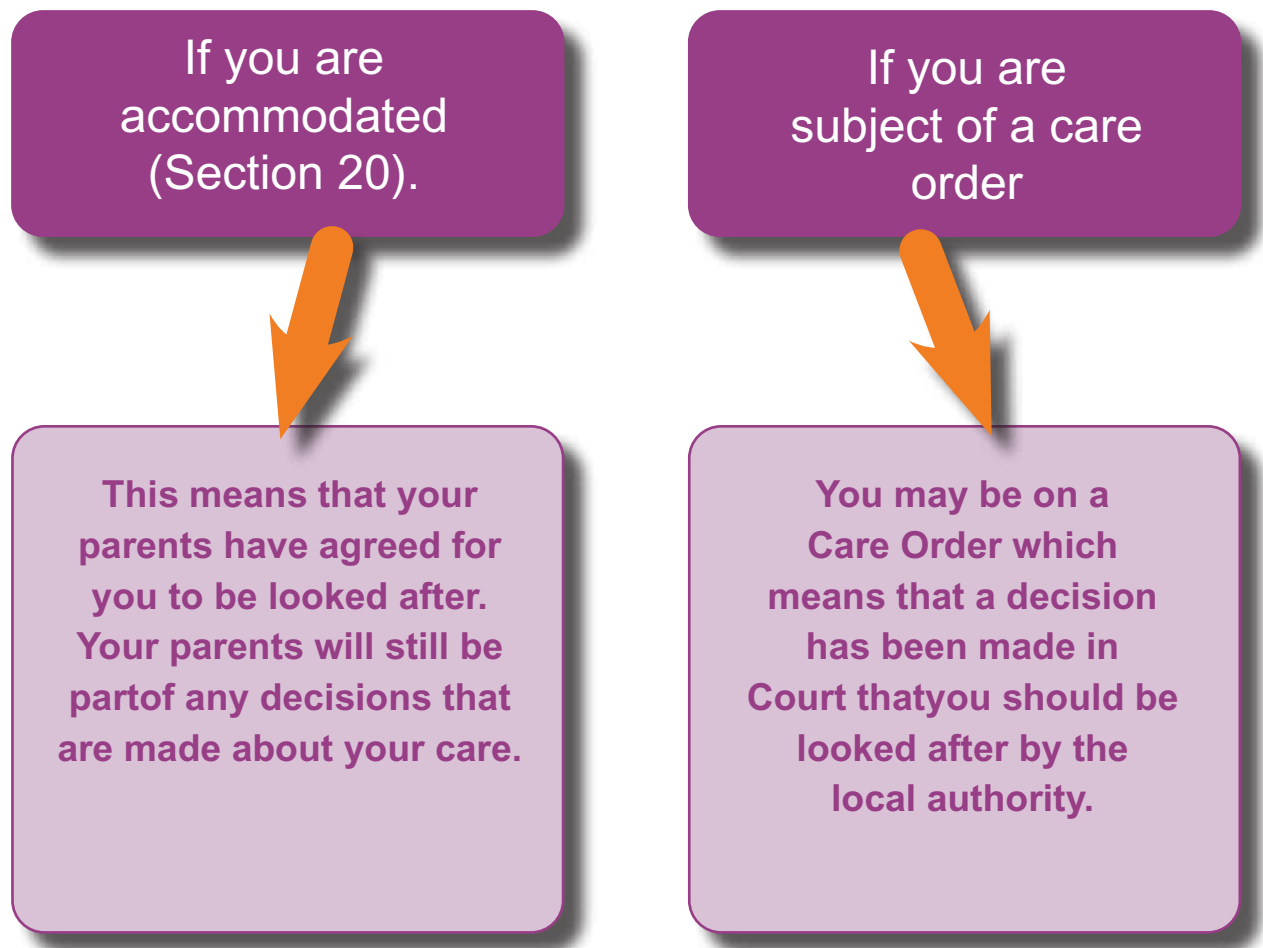
Phone



What does it mean to be in care?

This means children and young people who are looked after by the local authority

You might be 'accommodated' or subject of a 'care order'.



While you are in care you will have a social worker who will work with you, **get to know you and make sure you are well cared for**. They will create a care plan which they will ask your opinion about. They need to visit you regularly and you will have a review at least every 6 months to look at how well you are being looked after and to talk about plans for your future. You will always be offered to talk to someone independent to help speak up

Where will I live?



When you become a child in care you might live with

- Family or family friends
- Foster carers
- Or in a Residential home

Family and Friends

- May be grandparents, aunties or uncles or close family friends.
- They're 'assessed' just like foster carers to make sure they are able to care for you properly.



Foster Carers

- These are people who look after children and young people in their own home.
- They may have their own children or look after other foster children.
- They are all assessed to make sure they can care for you properly and have lots of training to help understand the things you may be going through.
- Foster carers can be from many different backgrounds, different races and religions, and may be single or a couple.
- Foster carers don't replace your parents whilst you live with them.
- You may stay with your foster family for a few days or you may stay for a longer period of time.

Living in a Residential Home

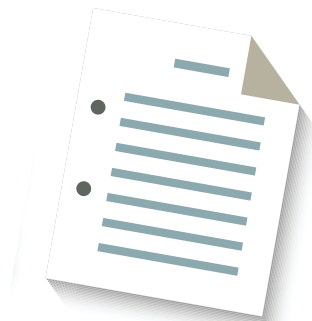
- You live with other young people and are looked after by a team of adult support workers.
- You should have a 'Key Worker' who will have a responsibility to look out for your needs and answer questions you may have.

Can I stay in my "home" town?

We will always do our best to keep you close to your friends and family. But sometimes we might not be able to do this. Sometimes it might be better for you to live further away. Your social worker should explain to you why you can't live nearer to home, but if you don't know why then you should always ask.

What you should have...

- ☐ Your own bedroom
- ☐ Your personal belongings
- ☐ Space to put your things
- ☐ Toiletries like shampoo, soap, toothbrush and toothpaste
- ☐ Pocket money - how much you are given is agreed between you, your parents, your social worker and your foster carer
- ☐ Someone who listens to you
- ☐ Help to stay in touch with your friends and family
- ☐ Help with education, employment or training if you need it
- ☐ Clothes and some money to buy what you need
- ☐ A place where you feel safe
- ☐ House rules, like how late you can stay up, watching TV, or for you to be in
- ☐ Help to look after yourself and take you to the doctor if your unwell
- ☐ Someone who understands your needs and takes into account your religion and culture.



Seeing your family

How often you see your family will depend a lot on why you are in care and how safe things are. We will always try and help you see your family if at all possible. If you're confused about when, where or how you can see your family, please talk to your foster carer or social worker about it.

Settling in...

You should be able to visit your new home before you move in. The only exception to this is if you are moved in an emergency you may not get a chance to visit but your social worker will try and make the move as easy as possible for you.

When you visit you'll have a chance to ask any questions and get to know them a bit before your move.

You'll probably be nervous moving somewhere new so here are a few questions you could ask before you move to help you find out a bit more.

What about meal times?

What are the house rules or routines?

What can I bring with me when I move in?

How do I buy clothes?

?

What about bedtimes?

Where are the nearest bus routes or train station?

Will I be able to carry on my usual activities/ hobbies?

Who do I tell if I need extra things for school?

What happens about my education & well being?

Education

Help in School

West Berkshire Council wants the children and young people it cares for to do well at their school or college. We know they can be amazing places, where hopes and dreams start to come true!

Our Virtual School team are responsible for helping schools to give you the best education possible. We are a team of expert teachers and social workers who are there to help you, and also the adults around you in school!

Our Virtual School team will:

- Ask you how you feel about your education... and listen to what you say!
- Help you to make the most of your education... and help you show your strengths and talents!
- Have high expectations of what you can achieve...and celebrate these achievements with you!
- Make sure your schools are helping you to succeed... and help them to understand how they can support you!

As part of your education journey, there are Personal Education Planning meetings, which we call PEPs. These meetings are your chance to say what is going well at school as well as what help you might need...and it is our job to make sure that your voice is heard and that your schools are helping you to succeed!

*"One child, one teacher,
one book, one pen can
change the world"*
Malala Yousafzai –
youngest ever Nobel Peace
Prize winner

Health and well being

Health Team

We are a team of nurses. When you first become a child in care a nurse from our team will get in touch with you.

What do we do?

- We can give you a health check when you first become a child in care.
- Your nurse can talk to you and give you advice about your health and about anything worrying you.
- We can put you in touch with other services if you need them.
- We will make a health care plan just for you see **page 14**.
- At 17 you don't have anymore health checks. Instead you are given a health summary that includes general health information like immunisations, relevant past medication history, diagnosis, current medication, current and past referrals.



How do I have my say and make a complaint?

You can have your say in various ways:

Your social worker:

Your social worker will meet with you on a regular basis and should give you time to talk without anyone else listening. You'll have an opportunity to talk about your views with your social worker.

An Advocate:

If you find it difficult to talk at meetings or to different workers and don't feel your voice is being heard then you can have a person who will be your advocate.

An advocate will:	An advocate will not:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● speak up for you● attend meetings with you and help you get ready for meetings● help you make a complaint● meet with you in a place where you feel comfortable● speak to different workers about things you are unhappy about and want to change● give you information about your rights● listen to you without judging you● help you make your own decisions● help get your voice heard if you don't agree with a decision made● If you have a disability or complex health needs an advocate can work alongside your carer to help you with whatever you need to have heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Try to persuade you to agree with others● Decide what is best for you.

Children in Care Council

The Children In Care Council (CiCC) which is called R:Vue, exists to provide Children in care and Care Leavers with the voice they need to be heard. They strive to achieve positive change and better outcomes for all young people by working in partnership with West Berkshire Council. It's for young people in care age 11-19 and is a good chance to meet others in similar situations to yourself. If you are interested in getting involved in the Children in Care Council contact the Participation Officer whose details are on the contact list.



The email ListenToMe@westberks.gov.uk is also available for you to use if you're not happy about something, or have any questions, or maybe you have some suggestions! Your email is forwarded on to whoever you would like your email sent to e.g. Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer or a Service Manager etc, who will then respond to you. Please note this is not registered as a formal complaint. There is a separate procedure for this.



Making a complaint

If you are not happy about the way you have been treated, talk to someone you trust. This could be your social worker, their manager, your foster carer, a teacher or another adult involved in your care. Try to explain what the matter is and what you would like to happen to make it right.

If you feel you need help to explain what is wrong, we can put you in touch with an advocate. Contact the complaints manager via:

ccsc@westberks.gov.uk

01635 519787

What happens next?

The complaints procedure has three stages:

Representation means a young person can ask questions, share thoughts, or give feedback about a service. They can make a comment, suggestion, or even a compliment to help improve things.

1. Talking to someone who can help

Hopefully, by talking to an adult involved in your care, you will be able to sort things out together. We expect to resolve matters quickly within 20, maximum, working days.

2. Formal Investigation

If you are still not happy, you can ask the Complaints Manager for an investigation. This means that a senior manager from another part of the service, or an external investigator, will look into your complaint on your behalf. We aim to send you a full response, within 65 working days maximum.

3. Review Panel

If, after receiving the reply from the formal investigation, you are still unhappy, you can inform us that you want to have a review of the complaint. Contact the Complaints Manager within 20 days of receiving your reply. ccsc@westberks.gov.uk

We will set up a Panel of three independent people within 30 days, who will look again at what has been done so far to sort things out for you. You will receive a copy of the Panel report within 5 working days and the Director's response will be sent to you within 15 working days.

What we expect from our foster carers

Takes time to understand me

Helps with school work

Has lots of fun!

Treats me the same as their own children

Listens to me

Friendly

Helps prepare me for independence

Keeps calm and relaxed

Makes me feel part of the family

To be loving and supportive

To be nice



Discuss any other expectations you might have with your foster carer and add them here:

What we expect from our social workers

Limit the number of questions they ask me

Keep things as brief and to the point as possible

Non judgemental

Helps us through tough situations

Keep promises

Visits us regularly

Give me and my family good notice of when meetings are

Keep things confidential

Explain timescales e.g. when they say short term, what does this mean?

Takes action

Never lies

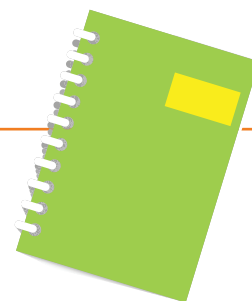
Discuss with me when and where I'd like to meet

Finds us a suitable home

Keep to appointments

Discuss any other expectations you might have with your social worker and add them here:

Your plans



As a child in care, you will have various plans. These will be written by your social worker and, if you are old enough, you will have a say about what's in them. The plans should be linked together and reviewed on a regular basis. The plans you are likely to have are your education plan, your placement plan, your health plan, your pathway plan (if you are over 16), and your care plan which ties all of these together.

Care Plan

Your Care Plan will include:

- Why you are in care
- What is the plan for your care
- How and when you see your family and friends
- How things have been
- Aims for returning home or if this isn't possible, what the long-term plan is
- What you hope and wish for
- Your health
- Education and training
- Any extra help or support you need
- How you wish to follow your religion, beliefs and culture
- Hobbies and interests

Where possible, if you are old enough and can understand what is happening you should be involved in developing your Care Plan. Your social worker may need to talk to other people like your doctor or teacher about the best way to look after you. You should see your Care Plan and have a copy of it.

Your parents or guardians should also contribute to your Care Plan and Placement Plan.

Placement Plan

This is part of your Care Plan but will give more practical details about how the people you live with should be supporting you. It will include:

- Your living arrangements
- Getting to school
- Who you will be able to see, or not see
- How much pocket money you'll get
- What time do you have to be in
- Your travel arrangements

Education Plan

When you are in care the local authority must make sure you get the best education that meets your needs. It should include:

- Where you go to school
- Your achievements
- Any particular educational needs you have
- Details of any additional help given to you to help you do well, like one-to-one support
- Any support you need for out-of-school activities
- Progress you're making
- Personal targets to help you progress
- Discussion about how the Pupil Premium is being spent to further your achievements

Health Plan

When you first come into care you have a health assessment (this is just a regular checkup). This is completed by a doctor who will ask you some questions about your health and any worries you may have. The doctor will check your:

- Height, weight and eyesight
- Ask about your hearing
- Ask about your visit to your dentist
- Ask about your overall health



Reviews and meetings

As a child in care, you are likely to experience a number of meetings that you wouldn't otherwise experience. This is because the people working with you want to ensure that you're receiving the best possible care and chance of succeeding in life. A good way to do this is to talk to everyone involved.

The meetings you're likely to be involved in are:

Reviews, Education Plan, Health Assessments.

Name of Meeting	How often does it happen?	Who's involved?	What happens?
Review	This depends how long you have been in care and how settled you are, but they are usually at least every 6 months.	You Your Social Worker Your Carer Your family if appropriate* Independent Reviewing Officer Others you would like to have there	Review your care plan Agree any changes Discuss any further support you may need You get to share your views and say what you'd like to have happen
Education Meeting	Termly	You Your Social Worker Your Carer Virtual School team member Designated Teacher	Review progress at school and identify achievements Identify areas of special need and extra support required Set targets for the next 6 months
Review Health Assessment	Every 12 months	You Foster Carer (if required) School Nurse, Nurse or GP Maybe your social worker	Discuss your physical and emotional health and identify any areas you may need support with. This is an opportunity to talk about anything you would like in confidence.

*If this is not possible, it will be explained to you

Moving on and 16+ leaving care



Pathway Plan

From the age of 15 years and 9 months it is important to start making plans and getting ready for when you leave care at 18. We all have different things going on and we need to make sure that you have the right support, advice and guidance. Sometimes you may need extra help, especially if you have a disability.

Your social worker will help you to think about the future and to map out a pathway plan. When you are 16 and at a time which is suitable for you, you will transfer into the 16+ team. The Social worker in the 16+ team will help you work on your pathway plan to identify where you would like to be at 18 when you leave care and become a care leaver.

Pathway Plan

Your pathway plan will set out what you need. It will help identify

- What type of accommodation will be best suited to you.
- Your relationship with the people around you and your community.
- What support could be available to you.
- Education or training opportunities.
- Advice you on finances and what you will need to do to afford your accommodation and general daily living.
- Your cultural and identity needs and sign post to services.
- Who can help you to develop and grow and to be a responsible healthy adult.

As you develop we would encourage you to stay with your foster carer for as long as possible. This can also be beyond 18 in what we call a staying put arrangement, your Social Worker can explain what this looks like.

When you may feel ready to move into independent living, our first option for you is a supported lodging scheme. This is lodgings in someone's house where you will get help and support from them or the other option is to live in a supported living environment where you will have your own room but live with a larger group of people where you will be supported by staff. You can stay in these supported services for a maximum of one year following your 18th birthday.

At 18 you will have a Personal Adviser allocated who can offer support, advice and guidance to you up until the age of 21. Your PA will be keen to help you to get into employment, education or training so that you can become financially independent and will encourage you to look after your health and develop your leisure interests.

Some young people move on to University and others into employment which gives them a chance to live independently. If you are working, then you will be able to consider moving into your own private rented property or house/flat share, your Personal Advisor or support worker can help you look at what is available.

We have an extended duty and can also support from 21- 25 if you ask us to, have a significant need identified or you are at University. You and your personal adviser will review your pathway plan every 6 months and more often if you would like. The IRO can also carry on supporting you until you are 21 and will offer this to you, should you wish.

Access to your file- Care Leavers

If you are a care leaver and aged over 18 you can ask to see your file at any time. You can do this by asking your Personal Adviser or emailing the request to **childrenincareadmin@westberks.gov.uk**

Children's Services will acknowledge your request in writing within 10 days. We are allowed to take 40 working days to get your file ready for you to read. We will contact you and arrange a time for you to come and see your file and go through it with a worker, you will be provided with copy if you wish. You can also ask for a copy of the file to be sent to you if you do not want to meet a worker.

If you are in care and under 18 and want to see your file, we will consider this carefully and make a decision about whether this is the right thing to do based on your understanding and circumstances. We will always explain to you why, and how any decision was made.





Jargon buster

ABUSE - There are four different types of child abuse. These are neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse:

1. Neglect - When you are not given the things that are important to meet your basic needs, for example food, shelter, clothing
2. Physical abuse - This is when physical harm is caused, for example hitting, burning, suffocating and drowning
3. Sexual abuse - This is when a child or young person is forced to take part in sexual activities, for example touching or watching sexual activities
4. Emotional abuse - This is when a child or young person is constantly ill treated emotionally. As a result of this emotional development can be affected. Emotional abuse includes not being given love and affection by care givers, being constantly criticised, threatened

ACCOMMODATION - This is somewhere you may live or stay

ADOLESCENT - This is a young person aged between thirteen and nineteen

ADVOCATE - An Advocate is a person who can speak up for you and support you with things that are important to you

AGENCY STAFF - Temporary staff that are called in when there are not enough workers

ASSESSMENT - A collection of information about you, which can be used to help make an important decision

CARE PLAN - This is a plan for children and young people in care. It includes information such as how long they will be looked after for, what type of placement they will have etc

CHAIR - The person in charge of a meeting

CIC - Children/Child in Care

CHILD PROTECTION - Steps taken to cut down risks, report any worries and take action when someone has said that a child has been abused/harmed

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES - This is the part of the Council that helps you and your family when you need support

CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN - A person who works for the Court. They make sure your views are heard in court when there are proceedings relating to you

COMPLAINT - A complaint is when you tell someone that you are unhappy about something. Example - Tell someone when you have a problem

CONSULTATION - This gives children and young people the chance to put their views forward to adults about services

CONSULTATION FORM - You are given this before a review. It asks you if you are happy with the way things are, and lets you put down what you want to keep or what you want changed

DESIGNATED TEACHER - This is a teacher who works in a school and has the job of supporting and helping children and young people in care

FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCE - This is a meeting between you and the people close to you, e.g. parents, relatives, friends etc to discuss who can help look after you

INDUCTION - This is advice and training given to people who are new to the group home e.g. a young person or a new worker

VIRTUAL SCHOOL - Education Service for children in care

LOCAL AUTHORITY - The Council that is in charge of your care

MINUTES - A record of things discussed in a meeting

MISSING - running away

OFFENCE - A crime or wrongdoing which involves the Police. Or **Offensive** - A comment or action that you do not like

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY - This is the power that a mother, father or both parents have to choose what's best for a child or young person. If a child or young person is under a Care order, Children and Family Services shares parental responsibility with the parents

PATHWAY PLAN - A plan of what will happen when you leave care

PEP - Personal Education Plan

PLACEMENT PLAN - This is a plan that says how the needs and problems of a child or young person will be met in the Child's home

PSYCHOLOGIST - A person who looks at the way people think or behave

REPARATION - This is what you do after you have caused damage to something. It might include paying some of your pocket money or doing extra chores around the house

RESTRAINT - When a worker physically holds you to stop you from seriously injuring yourself or causing serious damage to the property

RESIDENTIAL - A place designed to live in

RESPIRE - A short break

RISK ASSESSMENT - This contains information on any risks and says what actions need to be taken to reduce them

SLEEPING-IN - Workers who are responsible for children and young people through the night. It is called 'sleeping in' but if the child or young person needs anything the staff can be woken

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) - This is used to describe someone who needs additional support in school as they are not able to learn in the same way as others

VULNERABLE - when a child or young person is at risk of abuse or harm

YOUTH JUSTICE AND SUPPORT TEAM - This is a team that tries to stop children and young people from taking part in criminal activities.

My notes

