



# Education and Care



A resource for young people



By Charmaine Orchard, Jade Ward and Nikki Luke



# Introduction to us

Charmaine Orchard is a care experienced psychology graduate who completed a Masters degree in 2017 at age 25 and has since gone on to use the Masters degree in organisational learning & development.



Jade Ward is a care experienced researcher and a member of staff in a residential children's home. Jade started her undergraduate degree at 23 and has since started her Masters degree in child and adolescent developmental psychology at age 30.



Nikki Luke is a researcher who has been part of a fostering family. Nikki did a psychology degree through distance learning while working as a travel agent, and has since done a Masters and a PhD focusing on the well-being of children in care.



# Using this resource

This guide was put together following two research projects completed by the University of Bristol and the Rees Centre at the University of Oxford, funded by the Nuffield Foundation. The projects looked at the educational journeys of children in care and children in need in England.

In a conversation with a care leaver about the interview findings from the first project, we were told, “I wish I had known there were other people who felt like I did.” So for the second project, we decided to produce this guide for children in care. It is important to know that you are not the only one in this situation and there are lots of people to help you. Talking to other young people with similar experiences might help.

The guide includes quotes from our interviews with children in care and some tips about what can help. There are spaces for you to fill in information about yourself and ideas for conversation starters. We encourage you to talk with your carers, social workers and teachers about your educational experiences. You might want to ask for the information in this guide to be used as part of the regular meetings you take part in so that everyone understands how they can best support your education.

If you want to know more about the research project, visit <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/policybristol/briefings-and-reports-pdfs/PolicyReport58BerridgeCICEduOutcomes.pdf>

You can find an online copy of this guide and give us feedback on it at <http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/research/the-educational-attainment-and-progress-of-children-in-need-and-children-in-care/>

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# 1: Who's who and what's what



Young people  
said they don't  
always know...

## **PEP**

Personal Education Plan: This is a meeting where lots of people will come together to talk about how you are getting on at school and see if you need any help or support with anything. You can also attend this meeting or ask for a report if you don't want to go.

## **VSH**

Virtual School Head: This person is responsible for the education of all young people in care. They make sure you are getting the right education you need and can get you extra help if you need it.

## **IRO**

Independent Reviewing Officer: This person leads your child in care meetings, and they make sure everyone is doing what is right for you. They will normally come and talk to you before all of your meetings to find out how you are feeling and ask you if there is anything you would like to include in the meeting.

# Who is Who?



## Household members -

- Carer/Parents
- Foster carers
- Residential staff
- Siblings & other children

## Other people supporting your education -

- Social workers
- Teachers
- Designated teacher
- Education lead

## Who to talk to when -

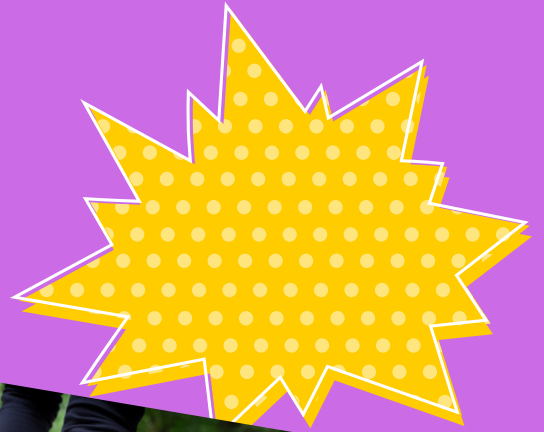
(fill these in for yourself)

- I'm feeling upset \_\_\_\_\_
- I'm having difficulties at school \_\_\_\_\_
- I want to talk about friends \_\_\_\_\_
- I want to find new interests & activities \_\_\_\_\_
- I want to discuss my care leaver status \_\_\_\_\_





## 2: Moving school & moving home



Young people  
told us...

### **When moving school having the opportunity to go and visit the school before moving day really helped when the first day came**

"I've lots of friends. The teachers were all nice and helpful. The headmaster promised us and he opened the school in the middle of the holidays so (we) could go and see it."

### **Moving to a new home can be hard**

"When I first got here... I can remember the first day I got here um I was just overwhelmed and I thought I was literally being stared upon and being judged or something."

## What can help

We know that children in care sometimes have to move to another home, and with that move sometimes young people have to change schools. When we spoke to young people as part of this research, we found that those who had moved home and had to change school had some important tips.

For some of them the move was a good experience but for others they had a more difficult time. Some of the things that made the move easier for young people were being able to go and see the school before their first day or meet with their teacher.

Ask if you can go and see the school on a weekend or in the holidays so it isn't busy.

Meet your form tutor before your first day, maybe go in one day for lunch with them so they can get to know you.

Find out what other things the school offers like sports and clubs.

## Conversation starters

**When i think about going to a new school  
i think .....**

**When i think about my new teachers  
i think.....**

**When i think about new children  
i think .....**

### Who can you ask?

Parents/carers or Foster carers  
Residential staff  
Social worker





# 3: Adults



Young people  
told us...

## **They don't always feel like they understand what's been said**

"Well, um... 'cause I only know the stuff that they talk about like... about me but I don't know things that... I know some things that they're gonna do but not like loads of things."

## **Things that happened before they came into care still affect their education**

"Because of my step mum. She wasn't very nice to us and I couldn't really concentrate that well with everything going on."

## What can help

We know that when you are in care you will be meeting lots of different adults.

At school, some of the adults will be more involved than others and will be able to help you learn.

In your meetings at school that everybody attends, it might help to have a filled in table that helps you understand everyone's role and how they can help with your learning.

You can talk to the adults at home and at school about anything you might be worried about but also any good news you might want to share.



## Conversation starters

**Some of the things that worry me are....**

**I would like it if my teachers did...**

**My carers can help me learn by....**

**The main people that I can go to to talk at school are...**

**The main things I struggle to discuss with adults are...**

**I find it easier to talk (to adults) when...**

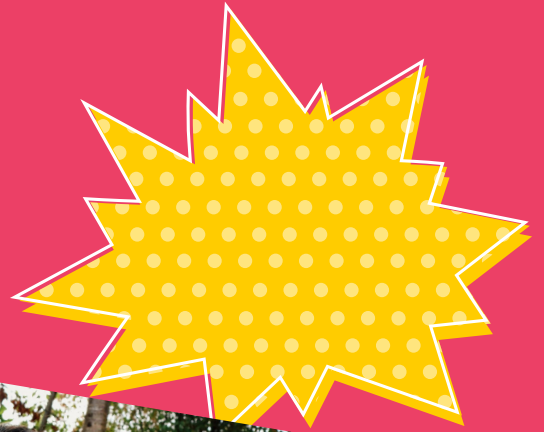
### Who can you ask?

Parents/carers or Foster carers  
Residential staff  
Social worker  
Teachers





## 4: Other children



Young people  
told us...

### **They've struggled to speak to friends about being in care**

"I wasn't able to tell my friends for a little bit, that I'm in care. It literally took about five months to tell her and then I told my other mates and they were like, 'Oh okay. Yeah, cool.' Then it was iffy on that but... there was still people in year 11 who didn't know that I was in care and maybe that's one reason why they weren't taking on board that I was always anxious of going to class but I don't know, honestly."

### **When they've experienced bullying at school..**

"Probably the fact that no one handled the bullying that was happening so I didn't want to go into the lessons. Then it started going off the rails and I would never get into school, I would never get into the lessons."

## What can help

It will help to discuss this in meetings held that involve someone from the school. You could perhaps speak about any challenges you are facing and think about ways the adults at school could help you tackle the challenges, in a way that makes you feel comfortable.

As part of your meetings, you can use an information sheet to tick off any points that you would like to discuss. This is where you can talk about your relationships at school.

Some Local Authorities run a Drop-In group for young people & this helps in meeting others with similar stories.

You can also ask if there are any local evening clubs that are on for children in care.



## Conversation starters

**The days that I like to go to school are when...**

**The times I most enjoy my classes are when...**

**The times that I enjoy being around other children are when...**

**i don't like it when other children say....**

**Some days i don't want to go to school because ....**

**It would help me know how to talk to other children about being in care if....**

### Who can you ask?

Parents/carers or Foster carers  
Residential staff  
Social worker



## 5: Who else can help you to learn?



Young people  
told us...

### **Other children can help with your homework**

Yeah because [foster sister's name] which is the oldest in the house and she gives me a lot of tips so it's quite nice of her and I would work it out like with her homework she shows on the laptop what she does. She doesn't show me everything but she shows me what she's meant to do on the laptop and stuff for her homework so I'm normally okay."

### **There are also adults who can help you**

"Well, I've got a key worker [at school]... Every Thursday we have a little meeting, like meet together to chat about the week and stuff".



## What can help

Talking to other young people with similar experiences might help. It is important to know that you are not the only one in this situation and that your school will be able to support you.

Some young people have had support with their education from other children they live with. If you live with other young people, you can speak to them about how you're feeling with your carer there, too.

Some children also have key workers at school who can help with your learning. This is someone you can talk to about other things as well as your time at school.



## Conversation starters

It would help being able to talk to other children about...

I find it easier to learn around other children when...

I would like to share experiences with other young people about ...

### Who can you ask?

Parents/carers or Foster carers  
Residential staff  
Social worker





# **All About Me**

My interests are...

My favourite meal is...

My favourite subject is...

My worst subject is...

I find it easier to learn when...

I struggle to learn when...

