



Department
for Education

Children in Care Council Newsletter

Issue 3 – June 2012

Message from Tim Loughton, Children's Minister



To all Children in Care Councils,
Thank you again for your feedback on the last Children in Care Councils newsletter and your comments on improving the care system sent via the Tell Tim website. Your comments are valuable to me and influence policy decisions that are made. Please do keep sending me your thoughts and ideas.

The third round of regional meetings is happening now. I am pleased to have attended the Birmingham event last November and I am attending the meeting in Cambridge this time round. I do hope representatives from each Children in Care Council continue to attend future events. It's a great way for me and my colleagues to listen to your views and thoughts directly.

It's also a really good way for Children in Council chairs and participation workers to find out about what's going on in other parts of the country. You get a chance to hear about what some of the best local authorities are providing.

That gives you the information you and your fellow members of Children in Care Councils need then to ask your Lead Member for Children to get your local authority to match what the most progressive authorities are providing.

One of the comments shared at every Children in Care Council meetings is that young people don't have the information they need about what support is on offer to help them and what their entitlements are. We have therefore recently produced two quick one page guides – one for children in care and one for care leavers – which summaries this information. The leaflets are available to download from the DfE website and are also included in this issue of the CiCC Newsletter (on pages 2 and 3).

We want this newsletter to be used to spread best practice so pass it on or cut and paste information from it into your own newsletters.

Tim Loughton,
Children's Minister

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Loughton". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line that serves as a decorative underline.

Tim Loughton,
Children's Minister

Entitlement leaflet for Looked after Children

Looked After Children's ENTITLEMENTS

Department for Education

CARE PLANNING

- When you start to be looked after, plans must be made for you to have a healthy, happy life. Your main plan is called your care plan and should say what your needs are now, how they will be met and plans for your future. This should bring together other plans - for health, personal education, and placement – and should say who is going to help you, and what support you will get, in every part of the plan.
- The plan should say the sorts of decisions that your carer is allowed to make, like on school trips and overnight stays.
- Within your care plan, you will have a placement plan which should take into account what you want. The placement plan will give you lots more detail about how you will be cared for, and how the people caring for you will help to meet your needs.

INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER

- The local authority must appoint an Independent Review Officer, or IRO, for you. This person's job is to make sure that the local authority does what is best for you whilst you are in care. Your IRO chairs your case reviews and they can also arrange for you to chair your own review if you want to. You should know who your IRO is.

CASE REVIEWS AND CASE RECORDS

- The law says that important decisions about you should not be taken without a review, for example, placement moves. Your case reviews are meetings, normally chaired by your IRO, to decide on your care plan, and to make any changes to it. Your IRO will check that your local authority does all the things agreed at your review. You should be asked about your wishes and feelings and these should be taken into account at your case review.
- Your local authority must also keep a case record for you, which will include your care plan, health and educational reports, social worker visit reports, your reviews and all other important information about you. Only the people with the right to see them can look at them – that includes you.

EDUCATION

- Looked after young people and care leavers aged 16-19 should get a £1,200 bursary if they stay in full-time education. Young people should get in touch with their education provider (e.g. school or college) to find out how to claim the bursary. For advice speak to student support services or your tutor, or go to www.direct.gov.uk/16-19-bursary
- There should be a designated teacher in the school to support your education - and you should know who that is, and what they are supposed to do.

ADVOCATES

- You have the right to an advocate to help you with complaints, or with any aspect of your care. Your social worker or IRO should tell you how you can get an advocate.

MAKING A COMPLAINT

- You have the right to make a comment or a complaint about your care. The local authority must say how they deal with comments and complaints, so there should be leaflets or posters for you to read.

Entitlement leaflet for Young People

Young People's ENTITLEMENTS

Department for
Education

EDUCATION

- Local authorities must pay the Higher Education Bursary of £2,000 to all eligible care leavers going on to university, or higher education.
- A new 16-19 Bursary scheme began in 2011. Looked after young people and care leavers should get a guaranteed £1,200 bursary if they stay in full-time education. Young people should get in touch with their education provider (e.g. school or college) to find out how to claim the bursary. For advice speak to student support services or your tutor, or go to www.direct.gov.uk/16-19bursary

ACCOMMODATION

- In deciding whether accommodation is suitable to meet a care leaver's needs, a council must listen to their views about the accommodation they want. What the local authority needs to consider are listed in the Regulations.
- If the council has itself arranged the accommodation for a care leaver, they must review it after 28 days – and at least every three months after that. The care leaver's personal adviser must visit them within a week, and at least every two months after that, or whenever their Pathway Plan is going to be reviewed.

STAYING IN TOUCH

- Alongside giving advice and support, and helping the care leaver to get services they need, a care leaver's personal adviser must also take part in any Pathway Plan reviews, stay in touch with the council about sticking to the Pathway Plan until the young person is 21, or older if they are still in education.
- A care leaver must be given a copy, and full explanation, of their assessment and Pathway Plan.
- Pathway Plans must be reviewed at least every six months. They must also be reviewed whenever the care leaver asks for one (their personal adviser or the council can also decide to call a review whenever they think one is needed).

PERSONAL ADVISORS

- The law changed last year to say that care leavers up to age 25 who tell their council that they have returned, or want to return, to education or training, will also be able to get support from a personal adviser while they are on their course (if the course is agreed in their pathway plan).

CARE LEAVERS GRANT

- Setting up home allowances (also known as 'leaving care grants'), that are given out by local authorities, will be crucial in helping young people establish their identity and independence. These should be used to make sure that care leavers have what they need to set up safe, secure and stable accommodation. You can ask your authority for £2,000 for the setting up home allowance. This was the amount that young people agreed, at the regional meetings for Chairs of Children in Care Councils, to ask their local authorities for.

What your representatives have said at CiCC meetings

We have run two rounds of Regional CiCC Meetings since June 2011, and were pleased to meet with many workers and CiCC representatives from around the country. As a result we were able to gather some really interesting views from both the workers and the young people who came along.

Some of the recurring messages we were given were:

- Young people would like better contact with IROs; many only get a brief meeting just before their review.
- Both workers and young people felt there was a need for better training for IROs.
- Designated Teachers need training in discretion, as young people are often pulled out of lessons, which draws attention to them, and leads to questions being asked of them; young people don't like having attention drawn to the fact that they are in Care.
- Review booklets aren't good – young people feel they are too limited and don't allow them to report how they're feeling.
- Young people often discussed the stigma surrounding being in Care.
- Young people are largely unaware of the amount of financial support they are entitled to when it comes to education support.

Another main purpose of these meeting is to share good practice occurring around the country. Some of the examples we heard about included:

- In Stockton, the Virtual School Headteacher visited the CiCC and gave a quiz on their role to make sure young people were aware and understood the purpose of the VSH.
- Wokingham's CiCC had managed to get their Leaving Care Grant raised to £2,000.
- In Staffordshire, all young people immediately receive a 'You Pack' giving them full details of their rights, the procedures to follow and the Local Authorities responsibilities towards them when they enter Care.
- Many Local Authorities reported having homework clubs available for young people.
- A few Local Authorities said that their CiCCs were consulted when budget cuts were being made.

Next Steps

We think these meetings can help young people from CiCCs to gain ideas about the sort of work they can get involved in, and things they could ask their Local Authorities to provide. For example:

- Improved training for both Designated Teachers and IROs. We believe this could be designed and delivered by CiCCs themselves.
- CiCCs to re-design review booklets. They could also ask their Local Authority about using the Viewpoint system or other interactive technology such as an iPad to complete this work.

- CiCCs to design campaign promoting positive messages about young people in Care to reduce stigma.
- Young people to request that Local Authorities set a time limit on how far in advance of review meetings IROs meet with young people e.g. to meet 1 week beforehand for at least 30 minutes.
- CiCCs to ask Local Authorities for more involvement on budgetary decisions for services which affect young people in Care

We are now into our third round of meetings and feel they are going well; it's really great to get young people coming along with so many great ideas and opinions. So far, we are seeing the issue of Pathway Plans being raised as a common concern; sometimes these are being filled in late or not at all, and are seen as a 'box-ticking' exercise with little value for young people. However, it's positive to see the differences in Leaving Care Grants getting smaller, and to hear some good examples of the support that young people are receiving when Leaving Care.

Let's Get Cooking!

Does your school run a Let's Get Cooking Club?

The School Food Trust runs the scheme and there are around 4,000 clubs in schools across all local authorities in England.

Eating a healthy and balanced diet is really important to maintain our health and wellbeing. Getting the right nutrition by eating a range of foods helps us feel better and to concentrate when we are studying. And it doesn't need to be boring!

So why not investigate whether your school has a cooking club and how you can get involved?

To find out where all of the clubs are go to: <http://www.letsgetcooking.org.uk/Ourclubs>

Children in Care & Adoption Performance Tables

The Children in Care and Adoption Performance Tables are available on the Department for Education's website. They were updated in May and show how each local authority is performing.

We want the tables to help generate debate, discussion and, above, all action.

CiCCs should use the information from the tables to compare their local authority against others and talk to their local authorities about their performance.

We'll be updating the tables as new data becomes available.

The tables can be found here:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childrenincare/a00199753/children-in-care-and-adoption-performance-tables>

Don't suffer in silence

The Children's Care Monitor 2011, published in March 2012, told us about the experiences of children and young people in care regarding bullying. Previously there had been a steady improvement. Last year 27% of you said you experience some form of bullying, a 3% rise from the previous year.

Being bullied is a difficult thing to talk about. It can be scary because those who do the bullying may have threatened you, or may be in a position of authority over you. You might think "who will believe you over them". But all bullying is unacceptable. It should never be tolerated and it is important that you talk about it to someone you trust as soon as you can.

The people who look after you have a duty of care and whether what happens to you takes place in the home, at school, or on the street, the first step is to talk to someone you trust and who can help. This can be your carer, social worker, teacher or some other trusted adult. Talking about it is the first step to getting it to stop.

Staying on in the sixth form or going to college next September?

Accessing the 16-19 Bursary

The Department for Education has published guidance on the 16-19 Bursary for 2012/13. Looked after young people and care leavers get £1,200 (or a smaller amount if the course lasts less than 30 weeks).

To access your Bursary, your school, college or education training provider will want written confirmation of your current or previous looked after status from the local authority which looks after you or provides your leaving care services.

Here are some useful things to know

- Bursaries cannot be used by institutions to pay for block provision of equipment materials or books.
- Schools, colleges and education training providers are free to decide on how often they make payments. They can make cash or 'in kind' payments. But they should look at what is going to work for an individual.
- It is good practice for them to have talked to local authorities and to looked after young people and care leavers about how to make payments in ways that gives these young people maximum help with completing their course.
- Ask about what how your schools, colleges and training providers are helping looked after young people and care leavers to access this entitlement.

For more information please visit:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople/studentsupport/funding/a00203061/16-19-bursaries>

Information on...Junior ISAs

You may have seen that the Government recently announced details of a scheme to provide Junior Individual Savings Accounts (Junior ISAs) to looked after children. Those who did not previously benefit from a Child Trust Fund, and have been looked after for 12 months or more, will receive a £200 Government payment into a Junior ISA.

We're now in the process of seeking the best supplier to administer the scheme, with the aim of making the first payments in early summer 2012. We'll be able to update you on the scheme soon.

What are Junior ISAs?

Junior ISAs provide a tax-free way to save for under 18s. The money in a Junior ISA belongs to the child, but they can't take the money out until they are 18. They can then decide what they want to do with it. Because savings are locked into the account until the account holder's 18th birthday, Junior ISAs are for building long-term assets, rather than day-to-day savings.

Who can pay money into Junior ISAs?

Anybody can put money into a Junior ISA. The total limit for payments into Junior ISAs is £3,600 in each tax year. For eligible looked after children, the Government will open the accounts, making a one-off initial payment of £200 (or pay this into existing accounts already held by looked after children). Additional payments could then be made by carers, local authorities or young people themselves.

The Government is also hoping to be able to raise further contributions from people or organisations that want to support looked after children. These contributions would be added to accounts.

Children over the age of 16 are responsible for managing their own accounts. Once their account is opened they will be able to make decisions about how best to look after their money for themselves, though they still won't be able to access their savings until they are 18. The scheme will provide financial education to help looked after children make the best choices about what to do with their savings.

Which looked after children will be eligible?

All children in the UK who have been looked after continuously for 12 months or more and who were not eligible for a CTF (i.e. were born before 1 September 2002 or after 1 January 2011) will be eligible for the scheme. This includes children who are subject to a care order and who are voluntarily looked after, whether in residential care, with a foster carer or at home.

Looked after children born between 1 September 2002 and 1 January 2011 have previously received support for their long-term savings through the Child Trust Fund (CTF). They will keep their CTFs until their 18th birthday, when they can access their savings. Junior ISAs were designed to replace CTFs following the end of the CTF scheme. No one can hold both a CTF and a Junior ISA

When will the first accounts be opened?

The first payments under the scheme should be made around early summer 2012.

infor4carekids.com

Please take a look at the info4carekids site which was developed and tested by looked after children and care leavers and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) (with help from a number of our voluntary sector colleagues, including Voice, ANV, Fostering Network and Who Cares? Trust).

If you are a looked-after child or young person, this website is designed to help you with information, advice and useful links to further resources. It is important that you know what care and support you can receive and what choices you have and this site offers useful suggestions and advice to those looked-after young people who are preparing to live on their own.

It is very easy to navigate around, and has a range of short, informative videos as well as written information - all aimed at children. In fact, the cartoon characters in the video clips are all based on the young people who helped to design and test the site!

<http://www.info4carekids.org.uk>

Upcoming Events

25-29 June

DfE/ LGA Corporate Parenting week

Useful Links

- [Department for Education's website](#)
- [A young person's guide to the Munro report](#)
- [Foster Carers' Charter](#)
- [Know Your Rights About Independent Reviewing Officers \(IROs\)](#)
- [Rights 4 me website of the Children's Rights Director for England \(CRD\) – Roger Morgan NEW](#)
- [Tell Tim- Tell Tim your views about the care system](#)
- [Ten Point Guide for CiCCs to monitor](#)

- [Voice](#)
- [Young people's guide to the IRO handbook](#)
- [Young people's guide to the National Minimum Standards \(NMS\)](#)

Feedback

Have you found this newsletter helpful? How would you improve it?

Please send any comments you'd like to make or details of articles you would like to see in the next issue to xane.panayiotou@education.gsi.gov.uk



Department
for Education

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