



Department  
for Education

# **Children in Care Council Newsletter**

**Issue 2 – September 2011**

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## Message from Tim Loughton, Children's Minister



To all Children in Care Councils,

I would like to thank you 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. Keep sending me your thoughts and ideas.

I also meet children and young people in care and separately care leavers on a quarterly basis to learn from them about their experience. The last care leaver group meeting focused mainly on health and there were some excellent suggestions put forward how to improve the way in which the health service supports you. We are now working with the Department of Health to review and

improve policy in this area.

The first round of regional CICC meetings were also a great success and we now have a second round of meetings scheduled, see page 3 for more information. Education is an issue which is being discussed at these meetings as I know this is a key priority for you. From this year the Government is providing extra funding to provide all children in care and care leavers at school or in further education with additional support. See page 5 for more details.

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.

Best of luck with all of your CICC's' work in the year ahead and I look forward to hearing from you soon!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Loughton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath.

Tim Loughton,  
Children's Minister

## Foster Carers' Charter

The Government launched the Foster Carers' Charter in March. We produced this with help from children in foster care, fostering organisations, and charities.

We are asking all local authorities and fostering agencies to talk to their foster carers and children in foster care about how they are meeting the principles in the Charter.

We hope that Children in Care Councils will work with their local authorities and fostering agencies to make sure they sign up to the Charter and to decide what should be done to ensure the Charter makes a real difference to children and foster carers. If you're not sure if your local authority or fostering agency has signed up to the Charter, or what's being done to make the Charter work in your area, you should ask your Director of Children's Services or the manager of your fostering service.

We would also welcome feedback on how you think the Charter is helping improve things or if your authority is refusing to sign up. You can tell the Minister how the Foster Carers' Charter is working in your area by getting in touch with him at Tell Tim:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childrenincare/telltim>

You can read the full charter here.

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/t/the%20foster%20carers%20charter.pdf>

## Independent reviewing officers

Hopefully, you'll all know your independent reviewing officer or 'IRO'. They are the people who often chair reviews for children in care. Their job is to make sure that your wishes are heard and considered. They should meet you before review meetings to listen to your views.

Like the Young Person's guide to care planning, we also thought it would be useful for you to have a guide to the IRO Handbook.

It's available here: <http://tinyurl.com/dyh5sbm>

The IRO Handbook was also put together by Roger Morgan, Children's Rights Director, with the help of young people's views, and it tells you what IROs should be doing for children in care.

**Remember - you have the right to make a comment or a complaint about services or accommodation you have received, or a local authority's refusal to provide these things. You might have a suggestion about how things might be done better. Don't be put off – it's your right to have your say.**

## CICC Regional Meetings- Round II

We hope that those of you who were able to attend the first round of CICC regional meetings – with the Children's Rights Director, Roger Morgan, and the charity, A National Voice – found them to be useful. We really appreciate all the work you do in your own CICCs and are grateful for you giving up your time to attend these meetings.

The dates and times for the second round are:

- **West Midlands, Birmingham** Thursday 10 November, 6-8pm
- **London** Thursday 24 November, 5.30-7.30pm
- **North West, Manchester** Thursday 1 December, 5.30-7.30pm
- **North East, Newcastle** Thursday 15 December, 5.30-7.30pm
- **East, Cambridge** Saturday 7 January, 2.30-4.30pm (TBC)
- **Yorks and Humber, Leeds** Wednesday 25 January, 5.30-7.30
- **South West, Taunton** Wednesday 15 February, 2.30-4.30pm
- **East Midlands, Derby** Thursday 16 February, 2.30-4.30pm
- **South East** Wednesday 21 March, 5.30-7.30pm

Your Participation officers should have all the details – if not please ask them to contact A National Voice - [info@anationalvoice.org](mailto:info@anationalvoice.org) - who are organising the meetings.

There will be an opportunity for you to raise the issues that matter most to your CICC's so you may want to think about these before the meetings.

## Tell Tim

The Minister wants to see you driving improvements in the care system, that's why he has set up a web page, Tell Tim, where you can directly send him your thoughts about the care system. He wants you to let him know your thoughts about what works and what doesn't, and the ideas you might have about changes that would make a difference, to you and others.

The second Ministerial video produced in response to comments received is now featured on the Tell Tim site. Go to the website below to get in touch and view the video:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childrenincare/telltim>

**Did you know that there is a national advocacy service run by the charity Voice who can provide you with an advocate within 48 hours (Freephone 0800 800 5792).**

## Joe Sutton: DfE Summer Internship



My name is Joe Sutton I am a care leaver from Basingstoke in Hampshire. I have just finished my first year at the University of Winchester where I am currently studying Childhood Youth and Community Studies.

I went into foster care when I was eleven; at the time I was very confused and didn't understand why I was

put into care or why I was having constant meetings with social workers, doctors and the police. As time went on I began to understand why I was in care but I felt alienated and different from my friends. The constant health assessments, PEP's and review meetings strengthened my doubts about my differences from my friends and their families. My foster carer suggested that I joined Hampshire's Children in Care Council. There I learned that I wasn't alone and that there were others just like me. At the Care Council I realised my own preconceptions about the care system were shared by others throughout the county. I received an email from my social worker suggesting that I apply for a new position at Hampshire County Council. In November 2009 I was successful in my application to become a Care Ambassador.

The Care Ambassador's objective is to take negative experiences and turn them into positives, so other children in care don't have to experience the same barriers and problems that I had in Hampshire's care system. We use our knowledge of the system and work alongside social care teams, foster carers, the reviewing service, senior managers, elected members and others linked to Hampshire County Council to provide training, advice and guidance about how they can improve services delivered to children and young people that are looked after. Through my role as a Care Ambassador I was invited to speak with the Children's Minister, Tim Loughton at the Department for Education. The meeting was successful and consequently a new group of care leavers was formed and scheduled to meet with the Minister four times a year. Through this group I was offered a placement for a summer internship at the Department for Education.



I have recently completed my first week of my summer internship where I learnt a great deal about how children in care policies, procedures and regulations are made. I also found out about extra support which children in care and care leavers are entitled to for example: The Pupil Premium, 16 -19 Bursary and the Higher Education Bursary. The department has published their Foster Carers' Charter which sets out what is expected from your foster carers and the

support in which you can expect to get from them. I have also learnt valuable information about how the government runs the care system; this will help me in my current Care Ambassador role and my future career.

I believe it is vital for different local authorities' children in care councils to work out the common flaws in order to improve the service for everyone.

## The New 16-19 Bursary

From September 2011, young people who need some financial support to help them stay in education or training after 16 can apply to their school, college or training provider for

the new 16-19 Bursary Fund (EMA replacement). However for children in care and care leavers, this is an automatic entitlement and you should receive £1,200 per annum.

For advice speak to student support services or your tutor, or go to [www.direct.gov.uk/16-19bursary](http://www.direct.gov.uk/16-19bursary)

## The HE Bursary

If you are a care leaver who started university on or after 1 September 2008 you are entitled to a higher education cash bursary of £2,000 from your local authority as part of the package of support it provides to its care leavers. Information about this entitlement is better in some areas than others and some care leavers who should get this Bursary have found it hard to get information about how to access it. To make sure care leavers know about the Bursary Children in Care Councils should let young people know. You should also ask your local authority to:

- Put in their written financial policy about what care leavers are entitled to information about the HE Bursary entitlement and how the Bursary can be accessed?
- Ensure that Personal Advisers know about it and make sure they tell young people who are about to go to university about it?

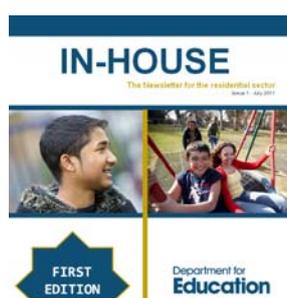
## Education Support

### Are you getting the support you need to do well at school/college?

Every local authority has a responsibility as a corporate parent to make sure looked after children are given the help they need to do well in their education. Children in Care Councils can make sure that promoting the education of children in care is seen as important by social workers, councillors and the Director of Children's Services.

- As members of the Children in Care Council do you know about the Virtual School Head in your local authority and what he or she does?
- What information are young people given about how to get support to do well in school and deal with any problems they have?
- Do social workers do everything they can to avoid making a young person change school at really important times such as in the two years when they are studying for their GCSE exams?
- What plans has the local authority got to do more to support young people with their education?

## Children's Homes Newsletter: In- House



The “In House” newsletter is here! This newsletter aims to help the children’s homes sector share best practice and provide a forum for discussion of topical issues. Regular features will include information about the latest research as well as information about good practice. This newsletter is aimed at all those living in and involved in leading, managing and working in children’s homes and is published quarterly.

We are interested in your views on what you would like to see covered in the newsletter, and your responses to particular articles.

We are particularly keen to hear from young people currently living in or who have recently lived in a children’s home. So, if you’re a young person living in a children’s home please write in and if your work involves supporting young people living in children’s home please encourage them to send us ideas or contributions.

Please contact us at: [reply.newsletter@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:reply.newsletter@education.gsi.gov.uk)

## Top 10 list of what makes a good CICC

- Meet the Director of Children’s services and Lead Member monthly.
- Hold surveys / meetings with LAC who are place outside of the local area to ensure the CICC represents as wide a range of LAC voices as possible
- Review outcome indicators twice a year, including placement stability and educational achievement, holding officials and councillors to account
- Ask that the local authority undertake regular audits to ensure legal entitlements/duties are being met
- Involve looked after children in checking and monitoring the council's services for looked after children
- Reward young people appropriately for attending CICC meetings
- All CICC Councils to have a budget to: consult YP; to raise profile of CICC; hold regular achievement events
- Use websites or social networking tools to help reach children and young people
- Activity days for all looked after children
- CICC council training of councillors and officers

# Care Leavers and young people's entitlements

## Education

- Local authorities must pay the £2000 Higher Education Bursary for all eligible care leavers. A new 16-19 Bursary scheme will begin from the start of the 2011/12 academic year. Looked after young people and care leavers are guaranteed a £1,200 bursary if they continue 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](http://www.direct.gov.uk/16-19bursary)

## Accommodation

- In deciding whether accommodation is suitable for a care leaver to live in, a council must take into account the care leaver's wishes and feelings about their accommodation, as well as whether the accommodation suits the care leaver's needs and what the landlord is like. Matters of suitability for the local authority to consider are listed in the Regulations.
- If the council arrange accommodation for a care leaver, they must do a review after the care leaver has lived there for 28 days – and at least every three months after that. The care leaver's personal adviser must visit them in the first week of living there, and at least every two months after that, and also whenever their Pathway Plan is going to be reviewed.

## Staying in touch

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

## Personal Advisers

- From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011, a change in the law means 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 have the support of a personal adviser while they are on their course (if the course is agreed in their pathway plan).

## Care Leavers Grant

- Local authority allocation of setting up home allowances will be crucial in helping young people establish their identity and independence and should be used to ensure that they have appropriate equipment and household items to set up safe, secure and stable accommodation. Many local authorities pay up to £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.

## Upcoming Events

### 26 October – 2 November

- Care Leavers 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](#)
- [Tell Tim- Tell Tim your views about the care system](#)
- [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 [shreena.patel@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:shreena.patel@education.gsi.gov.uk)



Department  
for Education

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