

# healthy care briefing

## Healthy Care

This briefing is for a range of practitioners who are involved in Healthy Care Partnerships, including social care, health, education and other children's services. It:

- identifies what is known about the health and emotional well-being of young care leavers and how to promote their good health and well-being
- provides examples of how Healthy Care Partnerships are supporting young people leaving care to promote their health and well-being
- offers signposts to resources and other information.

The Healthy Care Programme is funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Care Services Improvement Partnership. It is a practical means of improving the health of looked after children and young people, in line with the Department of Health's guidance *Promoting the Health of Looked After Children* (2002), *Every Child Matters* and the *Change for Children Programme*, and *Care Matters: Time for Change* (2007).

Through partnership working, policy development and with the participation of looked after children and young people, the programme ensures that services are child-focused, provide a healthy care environment and support the National Healthy Care Standard.

## The National Healthy Care Standard

This standard is based on a child and young person's entitlement to:

- appreciation, love, respect and consistency
- a safe, protective and healthy care environment
- opportunities to develop personal and social skills to enable them to care for their health and well-being now and in the future
- effective healthcare, assessment, treatment and support.

Find out more at:  
[www.ncb.org.uk/healthycare](http://www.ncb.org.uk/healthycare)

**Young people leaving care are expected to live independently much earlier than their peers and have less support and help to do this. Care leavers identify personal relationships and feelings, skills for independence and safe housing as key issues for their health and well-being.**

# Promoting the health of young people leaving care

The poor health and well-being of children in care is well-documented (Department of Health 2002; Department for Education and Skills 2005; Healthy Care Programme 2005 and 2006; Howell 2008) and is often linked to pre-care experiences of abuse and neglect. Young care leavers' health and well-being is also identified as poorer than those of their peers who are not in care. This continues to impact on their adult health and future life chances. Care leavers are more likely to underachieve educationally, be unemployed or in unskilled and low-paid occupations; they are also more likely to have mental health difficulties and substance misuse problems and are over-represented in prisons and the justice system.

## Care leavers' health

The health and well-being of young people leaving care has been consistently found to be poorer than that of young people who have never been in care. In summary, research has shown that:

- In studies of care leavers, anywhere between 12 and 48 per cent identify themselves as having a long-term health problem (Horton 2005).
- Care leavers tend to eat poorly, often not eating enough because of lack of money (Blueprint Project 2004a), and not having the knowledge and skills to cook healthily (Stanley 2006).

- Care leavers are more likely to have mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, fears, conduct disorders and attachment disorders (Richardson and Joughin 2000).
- One study into the health of young people leaving care found that two-fifths had tried to take their own lives between the ages of 15 and 18 years (Wyler 2000); and another that over a third have self-harmed since the age of 15 (Saunders and Broad 1997).
- Care leavers are likely to have experienced the death of a close family member or relative – some of these deaths will have been traumatic – this can have physical, mental and emotional impacts on the young person (Penny 2007; Healthy Care 2007).
- Care leavers have higher rates of substance and alcohol misuse and are more likely to smoke (Save the Children 1995; Big Step 2002; Wyler 2000; Department of Health 1997; Williams and others 2001).
- One study found that two-thirds of care leavers smoked cigarettes daily (Ward and others 2003).
- Some young people who have substance misusing parents – and this may be one of the reasons they have come to be in care – may view substance and alcohol misuse as 'normal' (Ward and others 2003), but the same research also found that

many young care leavers were able to outgrow and reduce potentially damaging levels of substance misuse.

- Young women in care and care leavers have higher rates of teenage parenthood than their non-care peers (National Statistics 2007; Healthy Care 2006).
- One study found that it was twice as common for looked after young people to want a baby by the age of 20, as it was for young people who live with their families (Corlyon and McGuire 1997).

In addition, research has indicated that many care leavers experience social exclusion and other inequalities which are known to be associated with poor health outcomes.

- Thirty per cent of young single homeless people have been in care and 20 per cent of care leavers experience some form of homelessness within two years of leaving care (Stephens 2002).
- One study found that 78 per cent of sex workers who were also problematic drug users had been in care (Cusick and others 2004).
- The educational underachievement and lack of qualifications of many care leavers (Brodie 2005) leads to poor employment prospects as they compete with their better-qualified non-care peers. However, over the last five years there has been an improvement in the numbers of young care leavers engaged in education, training or employment (National Statistics 2007).
- Young people with low levels of educational achievement and who left school without qualifications are at a higher risk of becoming teenage parents – this is often the case for care leavers (Wellings and others 2001).

## Independence at a young age

Most young people today leave home when aged 24 years or over (National Statistics 2006) and have the support of their family to do so, including being able to go back in times of difficulty. Care leavers are expected to live independently at a much earlier age, with little or no family or 'corporate parent' support. Most young people will have left care by the time they are 18 and for some it will have been as early

as 16. In 2007, 25 per cent of care leavers were aged 16; those in residential care were more likely to leave care at 16 (National Leaving Care Advisory Service 2008). Only a very small number of care leavers go on to university – although this number is growing. It is very unusual for the vast majority of young people to be expected to be independent by this age and there is generally support and a return to home and family during the holidays. This is not usually the case for young people leaving care.

The implementation plan of the 2007 *Care Matters* White Paper (HM Government 2007) – *Care Matters: Time to deliver change for children in care* (DCSF and others 2008) – outlines government plans to give young people in care the option to stay on in care, or with their foster carers, after the age of 16, if that is what they want, and to give young people a personal adviser up until the age of 25, if required. These have been soundly welcomed by young care leavers, carers and professionals. The next challenge will be to find effective ways to put these into practice – and the findings of the Staying Put: 18+ Family Placement Pilots described in the implementation plan will be eagerly awaited.

## Care leavers' views about health

When young care leavers are asked about their views on what helps them to be healthy and what adversely affects their health and well-being, they are consistent in taking a more holistic view of health.

A study (Saunders and Broad 1997, p. iii) asked care leavers to identify the five *most* important factors affecting their health, which were:

- feelings about life (71 per cent)
- housing (60 per cent)
- close personal relationships (56 per cent)
- care experience (42 per cent)
- depression (42 per cent).

Far down the list were the more traditional health issues of concern to adults such as eating habits (17 per cent), physical health services (17 per cent), smoking (8 per cent) and alcohol consumption (6 per cent).

A 2006 report by the Office of the Children's Rights Director (Morgan and Lindsay 2006) noted that young care leavers listed the top ten factors that worry them about leaving care as:

1. being on your own – loneliness
2. not being able to cope
3. not being able to get help when you most need it
4. not having enough money to get by
5. cleaning up after yourself
6. leaving before being ready to do so
7. having nowhere/no one to come back to
8. being put in some 'dodgy' places
9. becoming homeless
10. not being able to settle anywhere.

More local studies about health services have identified that young care leavers valued supportive and friendly health professionals; would like to keep the same GP if possible; and liked young people's clinics, though not all were sure what they were. Some were not sure how to make a dental appointment; and some liked accident and emergency departments at hospitals because they didn't have to make an appointment. Young people also expressed concern about the cost of glasses – a common finding of many leaving care support services. All of the young people reported wanting easy-to-use and young-person friendly information about health and how to use health services (Calderdale 2008).

## Care leavers from ethnic minorities

Black children, especially those of mixed heritage, are over-represented in the care population. In recent years, more attention has been paid to supporting black and ethnic minority young care leavers to deal with issues such as their identity, coping with discrimination and reintegrating into their communities. Concern has been expressed that for black children and young people who experience several moves while in care this may add to their isolation from the black community (Barn and others 2005).

However, it should be noted that some recent studies have indicated that many black young people in care have a positive sense of their identity and cultural heritage – they were not in need of help with that but did want to be treated fairly.

The young people were proud of who they were. Their story was not one of negativity or 'victim status'. They did not want liberals to make it better for them – they just wanted to be treated fairly, equally and with respect. (Blueprint Project 2004b, p. 5)

There have been calls for the adults who support young care leavers to be more aware of the experiences and realities faced by all black and ethnic minority young people and to be trained in issues of race, ethnicity and diversity.

### Disabled/special needs

Young disabled care leavers often experience difficulties with transition to adult services, including the disruption of contact with healthcare services and trusted professionals (Rabiee and others 2001); and need access to information and advice about health in a way that is both relevant and accessible to them. A new resource has been produced – *Transition: Moving on well* (2008) – to help plan transitions for young people with complex health needs (see Useful resources section).

### Young parents

Young people who are in care or are care leavers are more likely to become young parents than other young people. For many, the choice to become a parent is a positive one and can give young people a sense of purpose and direction (Chase and Knight 2006). They will face practical and financial difficulties and lack the support of family. In addition, many young mothers are wary of involvement with services that could help in case it leads to the child being taken into care (Chase and others 2004). One small study has suggested that children of care leavers are taken into care more often than children of non-care leavers (National Foster Care Association 1997). The Healthy Care Briefing *Supporting young parents who are looked after or leaving care* (2006) describes young parents' views and a range of approaches for supporting them.

### Housing

Housing is consistently cited as a key concern of young care leavers – its suitability, safety, location and affordability (Morgan and Lindsay 2006; Saunders and Broad 1997) – and young care leavers consider appropriate housing to have an impact on their long-term health and well-being. A 2007 report found that almost one in six in a sample of 1,244 young care leavers (16 per cent) were in unsuitable accommodation, with a number of interviewees in unsafe or completely inappropriate accommodation (Rainer 2007). Thirty per cent of care leavers interviewed by A National Voice for their publication, *No Place like Home* (2005), did not feel safe where they were living. Young care leavers also reported concern about the number of moves they had made since leaving care, which adds to their sense of insecurity (Blueprint 2004a).

Some commentators have pointed out that a lack of joint working, policies and protocols between social care and housing departments has led to a lack of choice and support for young care leavers – despite improvements achieved as a result of the Children Leaving Care Act 2000 (Broad 2005).

There is not enough suitable accommodation available for young care leavers. As a consequence some young people live in inappropriate places such as B&Bs and hostels without adequate support. (Centrepont 2006)

### Housing young care leavers – making policy work

Local Authorities should include a specific section on housing for care leavers within their housing and homelessness strategies and their Children and Young People's Plan. These should be agreed jointly between the Directors of Housing and of Children's Services (Director of the Children's Trust where these are in place). Strategies should cover the range of accommodation from high-support to independent living.

This recommendation is from the *Home Alone* report by Rainer (2007). The full report can be accessed at: [www.raineronline.org/gen/m7\\_policy.aspx](http://www.raineronline.org/gen/m7_policy.aspx)

### National Standards in Leaving Care

The eight standards update the 1996 First Key *Standards in Leaving Care* and include a standard on being healthy which states:

Every young person is entitled to good healthcare and to receive information and support to maintain a healthy lifestyle, which respects their right to confidentiality.

Each standard includes action and outcome criteria. A self-assessment tool is available to help local authorities to assess, review and improve their leaving care service. The new standards were developed by the What Makes the Difference? project (led by Rainer) and the National Leaving Care Advisory Service. More information on the National Standards can be found in the Useful resources section at the end of this briefing.

### Relationships and social inclusion

Many young care leavers experience loneliness and social isolation as they lose the supportive relationships they had while in care. Leaving Care services regularly report that sustaining friendships is very important for young care leavers and helps them to develop a supportive network. Young people who have had good relationships with foster carers and social workers have said they want to keep in contact with key people (Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber, 2008). Also, young people who have had contact with family members will want to continue that; this should be considered in planning for leaving care.

As one young person told the Children's Rights Director, 'The worst thing for me was moving out of the area away from friends' (Morgan and Lindsay 2006).

Leaving care can also reawaken issues for young people about their identity, their relationships with family, and the hurt and loss they feel about being in care. This is often a time when they have less support around them to help manage and understand their feelings. This can spill over into behaviour that affects relationships with those around them and makes it hard for young people to trust others and build relationships.



Young people who return to their family may well miss the supportive relationships they had while in care and there is evidence that these young care leavers receive little or patchy support to help them manage returning home (Social Care Institute for Excellence 2008).

Young people questioned for the Blueprint Project were asked to identify just one thing that would make their lives better – they focused on respect and support for their friendships and relationships (Blueprint Project 2004c).

## Preparation for independence

A common view is that preparation for independence should start early for all children so that they learn to value and care for themselves, develop relationships and learn skills to get on in life – from how to use a washing machine and cook a meal to making friends and sorting out problems. For young people in care this may be more difficult as they may have experienced many moves and interruptions and be dealing with the effects of abuse and neglect. Foster carers often express the concern in response to Pathway Planning – that should begin when a young person is 15 – that young people

are being expected to do too much too soon, but Leaving Care workers sometimes consider foster carers to be over-protective and are concerned with having as long a lead-in to leaving care as possible. Researchers have found that good preparation for leaving care tends to be associated with young people who have been settled in their care placements – those with more moves and more challenging behaviour tend to leave care earlier than those who are more settled (Dixon and others 2004).

The publication of the *Care Matters: Time to deliver for children in care* (2008) government implementation plan has firmly placed on the agenda discussion about the right time to leave care and the leaving care process, and takes the view that some young people will prefer to remain with their foster carers for longer and that leaving care should be a more gradual process.

There are many resources available to help plan a preparation for independence programme for young people leaving care (see the Useful resources and Useful websites sections of this newsletter). Many commentators have reflected that a balance needs to

be found between helping young people develop practical skills, such as cooking and budgeting, and interpersonal skills, such as managing relationships and getting on with others.

## Mentoring

Mentoring schemes are increasingly being provided for young care leavers to help provide support, encouragement, interest and friendship to young people as they make their journey into adult life. A study of the longer-term mentoring experiences and outcomes of young people leaving care found that most young people had some positive outcomes from the mentoring relationship – from achieving goals to sustaining relationships – and the longer the mentoring relationship continued the more successful it was. Young people reported finding mentoring helpful, even if they had not thought so at the time.

Mentoring was also highly valued by young people for helping them with relationship problems, building their confidence and improving their emotional well-being. The mentor's views of the impact of mentoring generally reflected the young people's views. (Clayden and Stein 2005)

# case studies

## 1. Arts activity group for care leavers run by a looked after children's nurse, Hull and East Riding

An arts activity group for care leavers and looked after young people that has been meeting for the last nine months is situated in a community venue in a local town. On average five to seven young care leavers, aged 14 to 21, attend each week.

The group was set up by the looked after children's nurse who was concerned that many young care leavers were engaging in risk-taking behaviour that was potentially damaging their health, and seemed to have poor self-esteem and experience low moods. An arts activity group was chosen because there is evidence to suggest that such activities can boost self-esteem, create a 'feel good' factor and be offered to young people as something enjoyable and non-threatening.



The group have engaged in a range of creative activities such as photography, arts and crafts, and have planned a series of visits to places of cultural interest. At the beginning a set of ground rules were agreed by the group: that they will be respectful of each other, listen to one other, be non-confrontational, refrain from using inappropriate language or behaviour, and that they will turn up every week or let the group facilitator know if they cannot attend. These rules are reiterated to new members.

The creative activities have provided opportunities for the young people to get to know each other, make friendships, talk informally with the looked after children's nurse and have a regular anchor point each week. Gradually, the young people have begun to see each other as friends outside of the group, to



ask the nurse for advice and information, and laugh and enjoy themselves at the group – laughter is a common feature of the group. It is fun to be there. The nurse has noticed a change in the young people as they grow in confidence. She has also noticed changes in behaviour, such as trying to eat more healthy food, improvements in appearance and personal grooming, and a reported decrease in risk-taking behaviour.

## 2. Young people's participation in developing health services for care leavers, North Lincolnshire

In 2007 North Lincolnshire Council involved young people in the review of the Children and Young People's Plan. The results of the survey identified that the most important things for young carer leavers were:

- staying safe (accommodation, accidents in the home and on the roads)
- being healthy
- for young parents – the health of their children.

The young people's support centre was refurbished in 2007, and when it reopened staff took the opportunity to have a consultation event to ask young people what health-related services they wanted delivered from the centre.

A group of young people organised the event and prepared the materials. The young people said they wanted:

- access to drug and alcohol services
- access to information on child development stages
- advice on contraception and sexual health
- advice on healthy eating
- weight, blood pressure, and hearing checks.

The young people also advised on how the room used for the health-related services should be decorated and furnished – and helped to do the decorating – and they advised about when services should be offered. The looked after children's nurse agreed to offer mini choices clinics at the support centre, including support and information for young parents and their children. The DELTA team provide surgeries for drug and alcohol advice, and surgeries are also provided on welfare rights and accommodation.

## 3. Leaving Care Service, Bradford

Two posts within the service have a brief for health. The Senior Care Manager in the Leaving Care Service has promoting health as part of her role, and one of the designated nurses for children in care has been appointed the Leaving Care Nurse and works closely with the Leaving Care Team. A study by Bradford University into the health needs of young care leavers helped to make the case for both posts.

This has resulted in a range of services that focus on promoting the health of care leavers including:

- **A weekly health drop-in** run by the leaving care nurse on two sites in the city – this gives young people the chance to have a chat with the nurse. She also does one-to-one work with young people outside the drop-in sessions.
- **A parenting group for care leavers** who are pregnant or are parents – the group runs for eight sessions and covers a range of topics to do with parenting, as well as practical life skills such as money and housing and how to continue education and training.
- **A cook and eat group** for young care leavers runs at a local youth cafe, in partnership with the youth service, so that the young people get a chance to practice healthy eating and be introduced to other inclusive activities.
- **A weekly football group** – for care leavers and young people who are unaccompanied asylum seekers.
- **A transition group for 15-year-olds** to start preparing for leaving care – the group focuses on life skills such as how to stay safe in your home, budgeting, etc. They also do activities together such as canoeing or bowling.
- **Training for the Leaving Care Service** on emotional health and well-being and self-harm has been provided, and Leaving Care Service staff and residential staff have been trained in sexual health and condom distribution.
- **A pilot sexual health mentoring project** is planned – young care leavers will be trained as peer mentors to talk to other care leavers and young people in residential homes about sexual health.

The mental and emotional health and well-being of the young people is a major concern for the service and there is much support offered to young people who are experiencing mental health difficulties. The service is acutely aware that it is hard for adult services to be aware of, or understand, the complexities of young care leavers.

## 4. Named nurses for looked after children working with care leavers, Derbyshire

The nurses in Derbyshire cover a large area – parts of it rural. The nurses are employed by different health authorities and there are several providers of after care services including those provided by the voluntary sector – NCH and Barnardo's. The nurses have become very skilled at working in partnership with other services and keep in close touch with each other and others' services to ensure coordination.

Young care leavers are encouraged to stay in contact with nurses until they are 21, or 25 if they are in higher education. The health services have identified this as important for providing consistency of support to the young people and so work to the same age limits as the after care services. Many young people send texts to get in touch with the nurses.

The nurses have been involved in a number of initiatives to help support young care leavers on health including:

- **A regular drop-in** provided at an after care service – nurses provide advice and support on issues to do with well-being and health. This often leads to more one-to-one support on health issues too.
- **A healthy eating workshop** was provided at a recent multi-agency event for care leavers – the nurses prepared healthy snacks at the workshop including smoothies, offered height, weight and body mass index checks, talked to young mums about healthy food for babies and toddlers, gave advice on shopping for healthy food on a limited budget, and ran a very popular competition to win a healthy food hamper.
- **A group for young men** is being planned, which will focus on sexual health and relationships and be facilitated by a male worker and supported by a nurse from the team.

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## Useful resources

*A New Tomorrow* by Nicky Oakes.

Published by Shelter. Addresses vulnerable young care-leavers' emotional development when moving to independent accommodation for the first time. The pack offers a range of individual and group activities. Available from the Shelter Bookshop at: [www.England.shelter.org.uk](http://www.England.shelter.org.uk)

*Care Leaving Strategies – A Good*

*Practice Handbook (2002)* by Department of Health, DTLR and Centrepoint.

[www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/childrenincare/leavingcare/](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/childrenincare/leavingcare/) (accessed 15/04/2008).

## *Get Ready for Adult Life Pack (2007) and Trainers' Pack*

By Rainer, National Leaving Care Advisory Service and The Fostering Network.

Designed for use by young people and with workers who have been on the Preparation for Adult Life training course, but can also be used as a stand-alone pack. Addresses health, relationships and looking after yourself.

[www.leavingcare.org/professionals/products/get\\_ready\\_for\\_adult\\_life\\_pack/](http://www.leavingcare.org/professionals/products/get_ready_for_adult_life_pack/) (accessed 13/03/2008).

*Healthy Care Programme Briefings* on:

- Mental health (2005)
- Sexual health (2005)
- Play and creativity (2005)
- Healthy eating and physical activity (2005)
- Substance misuse (2005)
- Arts in partnerships to promote health and well-being (2006)
- Supporting young parents who are looked after (2006)
- Secure attachments promote health and well-being (2006)
- Supporting and training foster carers to promote health and well-being (2007)
- Bereavement, loss and children and young people in care (2007).

London: National Children's Bureau.

Download from:

[www.ncb.org.uk/healthycare](http://www.ncb.org.uk/healthycare)

*Independence Toolkit* by NCH.

A filofax-style workbook that covers managing money, health, relationships, setting up home for the first time and legal rights. Information is presented in an accessible way with quizzes and exercises. The loose-leaf format enables local information to be added. Available in hard copy and as a CD-ROM. Available from: [www.nch.org.uk/information/index.php?i=94](http://www.nch.org.uk/information/index.php?i=94) (accessed 15/03/2008).

*Moving on from Foster Care: A policy paper (2007)* Fostering Network

[http://www.fostering.net/resources/documents/leaving\\_care/moving\\_on\\_policy.pdf](http://www.fostering.net/resources/documents/leaving_care/moving_on_policy.pdf) (accessed 15/03/2008).

*National Standards in Leaving Care*

These eight standards update the 1996 First Key Standards in Leaving Care and include a standard on being healthy. The self-assessment tool is designed to help local authorities to assess, review and improve their leaving care service. [www.leavingcare.org/professionals/national\\_standards\\_in\\_leaving\\_care/](http://www.leavingcare.org/professionals/national_standards_in_leaving_care/) (accessed 13/03/2008).

*Sorted & Supported* Welfare rights guide for all young people leaving care, designed and written for young people. All the information you need regarding financial support and young people's rights under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2002. Free for young people, priced for others; order from A National Voice [www.voiceyp.org](http://www.voiceyp.org)

*SuperSonic (2007)* Video by A National Voice about successful adults – including some famous ones – talking about being brought up in care. View it at: <http://video.google.co.uk/videoplay?docid=47298935698384510&eq=a+national+voice&total=1389&start=0&num=10&so=0&type=search&plindex=> (accessed 13/03/2008).

*Transition: Moving on well (2008)*

By the Department of Health and Department for Children, Schools and Families. A good practice guide on effective transition from children's to adult health services for young people with complex health needs. Download from:

[www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_083592](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_083592) (accessed 22/04/2008).

*WOW World of Work CD-ROM (2007)*

Activities and information about exploring skills, career choices and work experience. It provides help with applying for jobs by giving advice on decoding job ads, writing covering letters and CVs, and preparing for interviews. Also features film clips from young people and employers. Order from: [www.thewhocarestrust.org](http://www.thewhocarestrust.org)

'*Young people leaving care*', *Highlight, 240* (2008) by Mike Stein. London: National Children's Bureau.

*Young People's Views on Leaving Care*

(2006) Report of the Office of the Children's Rights Director By Morgan, R and Lindsay, M. [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/childrenincare/leavingcare/](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/childrenincare/leavingcare/) (accessed 13/03/2008).

*Young People's Transitions from Care to Adulthood: International research and practice* (2008) by Stein, M and Munro, E. London: Jessica Kingsley.

*Your Starter for Ten*

Ten things the law says young people are entitled to when leaving care. View at: [www.anationalvoice.org/rights/starter.htm#](http://www.anationalvoice.org/rights/starter.htm#) (accessed 13/03/2008).

## The National Healthy Care Standard

Contributes to the achievement of the five outcomes outlined in *Every Child Matters* (HM Treasury 2003):

- being healthy
- staying safe
- enjoying and achieving
- making a positive contribution
- economic well-being.

*Care Matters: Time for Change* (HM Government 2007)

This White Paper sets out the steps government and local partners will take to improve the outcomes for children and young people in care, including:

- every local authority setting out its pledge to children and young people in care, covering the services and support children and young people should receive
- consideration of a new indicator on emotional and behavioural difficulties of children and young people in care
- more focus on supporting relatives who could care for children and young people

- setting standards for foster care and improving training and specialist support for foster carers
- issuing statutory guidance to local authorities and healthcare bodies on the health of children and young people in care
- improving school experiences and attainment of children and young people in care
- ensuring children and young people can access positive and enjoyable activities outside school, and that this is included in care planning
- continuing support for care leavers for as long as they need it and introducing a more gradual and prepared move from leaving care
- piloting young people remaining with foster carers until they are 21
- introducing a national bursary, requiring local authorities to provide a minimum of £2,000 for all young people in care who go on to university.

*Care Matters: Time to deliver for children in care. An implementation plan* (DCSF and others 2008)

The implementation plan sets out the practical steps that local authorities need to take to make the plans outlined in the Care Matters agenda a reality for children in care, including:

- considering friends and family care first
- placing children and young people close to home so they can stay in touch with friends and family, where that is in their interest
- ensuring that a child's education is not disrupted by unnecessary change of placement and school place
- giving young people in care the option to stay on in care or with their foster carers after the age of 16, if that is what they want
- keeping pathway plans for young care leavers under regular review
- giving young people a personal adviser up until the age of 25, if required.

## Useful websites

### A National Voice

[www.anationalvoice.org](http://www.anationalvoice.org)

An organisation run for and by young people who are or have been in care.

Also includes information on 'Your Starter for Ten' – see Useful resources.

### Bryn Melyn Group Foundation

[www.brynmelyngroupfoundation.org](http://www.brynmelyngroupfoundation.org)

A charity that makes modest but vital grants to care leavers aged 18–29 who are in crisis, or who want to take control of their lives and develop new skills.

### Care Leavers' Association

[www.careleavers.com](http://www.careleavers.com)

For all care leavers, campaigning, networking and information.

### Every Child Matters website

[www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/childrenincare/leavingcare/](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/childrenincare/leavingcare/)

Links to many key resources and reports on leaving care.

### Fostering Network

[www.fostering.net](http://www.fostering.net)

Provides practical support, training and resources for foster carers, social workers and other professionals.

### Get Connected

[www.getconnected.org.uk](http://www.getconnected.org.uk)

Finds young people help by providing a free and confidential signposting service and working with others to ensure that appropriate help is available.

### Healthy Care Programme

[www.ncb.org.uk/healthycare](http://www.ncb.org.uk/healthycare)

Information and resources to promote healthy care for looked after children and young people.

### National Leaving Care Advisory Service

[www.leavingcare.org](http://www.leavingcare.org)

Information for young people, professionals and carers about leaving care. Also includes a database of practice and links to networks and forums.

### The Prince's Trust

[www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)

Young people leaving care are one of the four target groups for the Trust, which provides programmes (and mentoring in some areas) to help young people succeed in their lives.

### Voice

[www.voiceyp.org](http://www.voiceyp.org)

Voice is one of the UK's leading voluntary organisations working and campaigning for children and young people in public care.

### The Who Cares? Trust

[www.thewhocarestrust.org](http://www.thewhocarestrust.org)

Offers resources and information on looked after children and young people.

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