

Looked After Children & Young People - Care Plan and Reviews

What is a Care Plan and is it important?

- A Care Plan is the plan for you, which the Judge has to see and agree with before a Care Order can be made.
- The Care Plan should state where you would be living.
- Your social worker, your parents and you will be involved in making the plan.
- Your Children's Guardian in the court case will also have a say. Your Children's Guardian was the independent social worker the Judge appointed to give him or her advice about what was best for you and to tell him or her you thought about the plan.

The plan will cover things like:

- what you need to be looked after properly
 - where you will go to school and
 - who you will see
-
- Before the Judge makes a Care Order, he or she will have to "OK" the plan and will want to know exactly what you think of it.
 - It is very important for this reason.
 - You may not always get what you want but if you don't, the reasons should always be carefully explained to you.
 - Social Care should then follow the plan once the Care Order is made.
 - Your care plan is reviewed at every looked after child review to make sure it still meets your needs.

Who will come and see you while you are under a Care Order?

Your social worker will come and see you regularly.

How often your social worker visits will depend on how you are getting on. If you want them to visit more or less often tell your social worker and you will also be able to discuss it at your looked after child review (care plan review) which will be at least every 6 months.

You may be asked whether you want to see an Independent Visitor.

- These are people who don't work directly for Social Care, but are trained and experienced in listening to young people who are not living at home.
- They can visit a young person on a regular basis and be around to discuss concerns or worries, or just be someone with whom you can spend some "time out".
- If you feel this would be useful for you, ask your social worker to arrange this for you.

Will you still have to see as many people as you did during the care proceedings now that a Care Order has been made?

- No, normally your Children's Guardian and solicitor will no longer be involved, unless there is another application to the court or some parts of your care plan are referred back to the Court.
- If you have been seeing other people (for example doctors) who have prepared reports for court, you may not see them again or if you do, you may not see them so often.
- You will probably not see your social worker as often, but you should see him or her every six weeks.
- You can ask to see your social worker more often if you want to.

What happens if you don't get on with your social worker?

- This can be a problem because you need to have very good reasons before a change of social worker might be considered.
- An example of a good reason might be that you are not able to talk to your social worker about things that are important to you.
- If you feel that you cannot discuss important matters with your social worker, you should talk about this at your Review or ask to speak to your social worker's boss, usually the Team Manager.

When can you tell someone if you want to change your social worker or if your Care Plan is not being followed?

- You will have a Review at least every six months and someone other than your social worker, usually an Independent Reviewing Officer, will run that Review meeting.
- You will talk to your Reviewing Officer before the meeting for your views and this is a chance to bring up important things.
- However, you do not have to wait for your Review to raise these matters with social care.
- You can ask to speak to your social worker's boss at any time.
- If you would like help to say what you want or how you feel or you feel people are not listening to you, you can also contact [NYAS](#) and ask for an Advocate who can help you to be heard and also come to your review with you, (Phone 0800 616101 or email help@nyas.net).
- You can also ask your social worker or carer to contact NYAS for you.

Where will you be living?

- Your Care Plan should say where you would be living.
- You may already be living with foster carers or in a children's home or you may be living with your parents or a relative.
- Your social worker decides where you live, although he or she should ask you where you want to live and talk to your parents about it.

If you are in a foster home how long will you stay there?

- There are lots of different kinds of foster homes.
- Some foster homes are called "short-term" foster homes because they only take children or young people for a few days or weeks (but it might be for longer). It might be "short-term" while other plans are made.
- "Long-term" foster homes will take children and young people for a much longer time, usually until they are ready to leave care. How long you stay may depend on what kind of foster home you are in.
- Your Care Plan should say which kind of foster home you are in or you are going to and how long you will be there.
- It may be that you will have to move somewhere else to live but you should know whether this is in the plan that is made for you when the Care Order was made and any change should be discussed with you.

What can you do if you are really unhappy in your current foster home?

- If you are really unhappy, you should talk to your social worker but sometimes it is hard if your foster carer is around.
- Ask to see your social worker alone because it is social care's job to make sure you are being looked after in the best possible way.
- If you cannot talk to your social worker, or the social worker has not agreed that you should move and you are still unhappy you should think things over and then perhaps try to talk to your social worker again.
- If you really cannot sort out the problem then you can request an advocate from [NYAS](http://www.nyas.net) (Phone 0800 616101 or email help@nyas.net).

What can you do if you do not want to be in care until you are 18?

- First talk to your social worker and ask for this to be discussed at your review.
- If you feel you need help to explain yourself contact [NYAS](http://www.nyas.net) and request an advocate.
- You may be able to stay with a carer without a care order as there are other legal arrangements that can be made.

What if you can't contact your social worker?

- If you have left messages for your social worker, and they have not returned your call or come to visit, you could telephone his or her team manager.
- Alternatively, you could make a complaint through our statutory complaints procedure.
- If you would like help doing this you can ask for an Advocate from [NYAS](http://www.nyas.net) (Phone 0800 616101 or email help@nyas.net).

Care Plan Reviews

What is a Review meeting?

- A Review meeting is your meeting, about you, which the law says Social Care should hold at least every six months for children who are looked after.
- At the meeting Social Care have to think about how you are getting on, how you are being looked after and who you are seeing.
- We also have to think about whether there should be any changes in how you are being looked after, and whether your Care Plan should be changed.
- The meeting will also look to see if your Care Plan has been carried out and if things are happening within the timescales that were set in the Plan.
- We need to ask your opinions and take them into account at your review. You may hear people call your review a "LAC review".

Who comes to the Review meeting?

- Usually you, your social worker and your foster carer or key worker, will be at the meeting. Other people may be invited like your parents, other close relatives or friends who may be important to your care plan and any other important people like your teacher.
- You will be asked who you think should be invited and we will take this into account.
- If you are worried about who will be there you should talk to your social worker.
- You can also talk to your Independent Reviewing Officer, (IRO), who is independent from your case and who will make sure people do everything that they should for you.
- If there are serious problems with your Care Plan and what is happening to you, the Independent Reviewing Officer will speak to your social worker's manager at first, and if necessary will refer your case to [Cafcass](#).

How will you be involved?

- We want you to come to your review because you will have a chance to tell people about anything you want to happen, or anything that you are not happy about.
- If you find it difficult to talk in front of so many people, you can write down what you want to say and give it to your social worker before or during the meeting.
- You can also ask for someone to come and support you and help you say things that are important to you.
- You could ask a friend or someone you trust or you can contact [NYAS](#) who are the National Youth Advocacy Service.
- All looked after children have the right to be supported by an advocate at their reviews. [NYAS](#) can provide you with an advocate to go to the meeting with you and either support you or speak up for you.
- Your Independent Reviewing Officer will contact you before your review and ask you how you would like your review to be held, for example where you would like it to be held and who you would like to attend.

- We would like you to fill in an online questionnaire called Viewpoint that is a good way for you to give your opinions to your social worker and Reviewing Officer before the review.

Can you see notes of the review meeting?

Yes - the notes are called the minutes and you will be given a copy unless there is a good reason why not and this will be explained to you.