

York's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

City of York Council's commitment to children and young people in care, written by young people and endorsed by the Strategic Partnership for Looked After Children

The Government states that every Council should make a set of promises to all it's children and young people in care.

This is called a PLEDGE.

In York we asked children and young people what they thought were the kind of promises that should be made to children and young people in care. We have based this PLEDGE on what we were told.

You will be routinely asked by your Independent Reviewing Officer whether you feel the Council is keeping this promise to you. If not you can contact the Rights and Advocacy Service on 07769725174 and we will try and find out why this has happened and, most importantly, try to make sure things change for you.

This is the PLEDGE made by the City of York Council to all children and young people in our care or leaving care.



Cllr. Carol Runciman
Executive Member for
Children's Services



Kersten England
Chief Executive



Pete Dwyer
Director of Adults Children
and Education

1. Good quality placements will be found for all children and young people that need them.

What this means:

- **The right foster family will be found for you based on the care you need.**
- **If a placement in a residential home or school would be better for you then it will be as much like a family home as possible.**
- **Whenever possible, moving to a new placement will be planned with you and you will get the chance to visit and meet your carers before you move. If this can't happen then you will be told where you will be living and who will be caring for you before you actually move.**
- **Your placement will be close to your school, family and friends, wherever possible.**
- **Your placement will feel like a family home and you will be able to agree with your carers important things such as your friends being able to visit, having a set amount of pocket money and being allowed overnight stays.**
- **Your carers will help you to keep safe the things that are important to you, such as photographs and personal belongings, as we understand that these can be really important when looking back at your childhood.**
- **We will do our best to keep you placed with your brothers and sisters unless it's not safe to do so. If you can't live together we will do our best to try to keep you near to each other.**
- **If you need taxis to get to school or contact with family, we will make sure that they arrive on time and that the drivers are friendly. However, wherever possible you will be helped to travel independently or with your carers.**
- **You will only have to move placements if this is absolutely necessary. If you need to move from your carers for a short time, whenever possible this will be planned with another carer you know.**
- **We will listen to you if you are unhappy with your placement and do everything we can to make things better for you. If we can't sort things out and you are still unhappy, we will find you another placement.**

2. We will help you to keep in contact with family and friends wherever possible.

What this means:

- **We will make sure that you can stay in touch and regularly see your family and friends, as long as it is safe to do so.**
- **You will know when, where and how often contact will take place.**
- **We know that contact with brothers and sisters is really important and will listen to you about how this should happen.**

3. You will have your own social worker who is reliable, trustworthy and who will listen and treat you with respect.

What this means:

- **We will make sure that your social worker sees you regularly, that they are reliable and that they will take you out or speak to you alone when they see you. We will not change your worker unless it's absolutely necessary.**
- **You will know how to get in touch with your social worker or another member of their team if they are not at work. You will have a mobile number for your social worker and if you leave a message they will get back to you as soon as possible.**
- **Your social worker will support you throughout your time in care and they will act upon your wishes and feelings wherever possible.**
- **Your social worker will talk to you about why you are in care and will let you know what is happening throughout your time in care. You will have your chance to say what you think whenever any decisions are being made about you.**
- **If you don't get on with your social worker and ask for another one, we will listen and take you seriously. If it isn't possible to change your worker we will explain to you why.**

4. We will support and encourage you with your learning, education and training.

What this means:

- **Wherever possible, you will stay at the same school you were attending.**
 - **You will not be made to feel different from your friends and your school will have all your information but they will keep it confidential. This will be part of your Personal Education Plan, which will be looked at regularly to make sure you are getting the right support.**
 - **We understand that at times when things have been unsettled you may find it difficult to concentrate at school. You will be able to get support from a Designated Teacher or pupil support worker if you want this.**
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- **You will be able to use a computer and Internet services in your placement to help you with your learning.**
 - **Opportunities for work experience will be available within the Council, or we will try to set these up with another employer if you would prefer.**
 - **If you apply for a job within the Council and meet the essential criteria, you will be guaranteed an interview.**

5. We will respect difference and support you as an individual.

What this means:

- **Everyone has different needs because of age, ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation or any disabilities we may have. We will recognise and respect those differences and treat you as an individual.**
- **You will always be treated as an individual and not as a group of children and young people.**

6. We will arrange your child care reviews in a way that best suits you and covers the things that are important to you.

What this means:

- **You will be encouraged to come to your meetings and you will get a say in where the meeting is held, how it is run, who attends and what is talked about. You can chair your own meeting alongside your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) if you would like to do so.**
- **We will do our best to make sure that you are included as an equal in the meetings and that you feel comfortable and supported enough to have your say. You can ask for someone to come to the meeting with you to support you or talk on your behalf if you would prefer. An independent advocate can do this.**
- **Meetings will be held in a way that makes you feel comfortable, able to say what you want and understand all the things that are talked about. The meetings will not just focus on the things that have been difficult but also on the things that have gone well for you.**
- **You will be able to speak to someone before the meeting to discuss these things, either your social worker, IRO or an independent advocate.**

7. You will be made aware of your rights, choices and the things you are entitled to, including your right to complain if you are unhappy.

What this means:

- **You will be able to have your say when any decisions are being made about you and about the services you receive.**
- **You can contact the Rights and Advocacy Service if you want more information about your rights whilst in care, or if you want someone to help you to speak up or complain if you are unhappy about something.**

8. We will support you to lead a healthy and happy life.

What this means:

- You will be registered with a local G.P., dentist and optician to make sure that you are healthy.**
- We will make sure that you have all the advice and support that you need to lead a healthy and happy life, whether that be about fitness, healthy eating, or information about sexual health or alcohol and drug misuse.**
- If you want help in coping with any difficult feelings or memories that you may have, we can arrange for you to talk to someone about this (a specialist CAMHS worker).**

9. We will support any interests you may have and encourage you to take part in any activities that would be good for you.

What this means:

- We will help you to continue with any hobbies you enjoy and support any talents you may have. We promise to celebrate and acknowledge achievements you make on the way.**
- We will encourage you to take part in social and cultural activities or groups that may help you feel more confident and good about yourself and will help you make new friends.**
- You will be able to use the City of York Council's leisure services, free of charge.**
- We will help you to learn to drive when and if you want to.**

10. To help with your move into adulthood we will support you with training, housing, managing your money, and will make sure that you have someone to talk to about the things that are important to you.

What this means:

- **With you, we will put together your pathway plan to make sure you are clear about the support you will get with training, housing, finance and emotional support when it is time for you to leave care.**
- **You will be given support in deciding what housing option would be right for you, such as taster flats, staying put choices or help to find independent accommodation.**
- **We will support and guide you in developing your independence skills if you need this.**
- **We will help to prepare you and support you emotionally with managing to live on your own, we will ensure you always have someone to contact and know how to access this support.**

If you have something to say about the PLEDGE please let us know by contacting the Rights and Advocacy Service on 07769725174.

Children and young people have the right to complain if they are unhappy about any of the services they receive from the Council. You can contact the Complaints Manager on 0800 1380 133 and are entitled to the support of an independent advocate.