

# The care review

Consultation with children and  
young people 2020





In November 2019 the Conservative party said that it would “review the care system to make sure children get the support they need”

We asked Children in Care Councils and Care Leaver Councils across the country what the Government needs to consider.

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**What is the  
care system  
doing right?**

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**What needs  
to change  
about the  
care system?**

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We found 8 key themes from our conversations

Carers

Family

Professionals

Support

Freedom

Choice

Stability

Attitudes

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# Carers and family

What did children feel mattered the most?

Carers who make them feel they belong

Living with brothers and sisters

Being properly matched with carers

More time spent with families

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# Children's experiences

## Belonging

*"It was only 4 months ago that I moved out into my own accommodation that my foster carers helped me with. My foster carers became my parents in all but blood"*

*"I moved from my carer 6 years ago but I still see her every week. She's the nan to my son"*

*We heard about children enjoying going on holiday with their foster families*

*"I'm compared to my foster sisters"*

*"They only cared about other people in the house and not me. Like I'd be in lounge and the carers would talk to other person but ignore me"*

*"I'm constantly asked to show my bank statements"*

*"My foster carers go through my room"*

*"Change how foster carers talk about children but not behind the child's back"*



## Matching

*"I've heard people paired with awful carers, the exact wrong match. Like being matched by a robot"*

*"Don't match children with old foster carers who don't have the mobility to go out and do activities with you"*

## Siblings

*"My local authority made a perfect decision in regards to me and my siblings in that me and my sister were kept all together until she became an adult"*

*"When I went into care I was 10 and I got split up from my 2 younger brothers at the time. They were 6 and 4 and it has ruined our lives"*

WHAT  
NEEDS  
TO  
CHANGE



*"Match up the young people and respite carers on their personality and always ask the young people if they think they have done a good job"*

*"Don't split siblings up"*

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## Seeing family

"My foster carers built a relationship with my family, not just me. Like, she asks me if I want to see my brothers. That wasn't just her job - she took own initiative. If she just let the social worker arrange it I'd just see them at contact every 3 months"

"Social services should make more of an effort to make sure you see grandparents and siblings more, like on a weekly basis. Siblings are the most important as they're the ones that are gonna be there when you're older"

"We don't see our family enough"

"We don't have contact at Christmas or birthdays"

"The contacts are a bit boring as they are inside a centre"



# Freedom and choice



Having the same freedoms as other children do

Not having added rules or restrictions because of being in care

Having choice over the main things in their lives like where they live and their school

Having control over who knows what about them

# Freedom

*"I think that children in care should have more freedom like other kids. For example, if I want to stay at my friend's house they need to have a police check and their parents need a police check, so that means that more people who I don't want to know I'm in care will know and they might tell people"*

*"There are lots of constraints which friends who live with their families don't seem to have"*

*"We do not get to sleep over at our friend's house without a lot of checks which I think is ridiculous because it is not very necessary to get a check from a friend that you have known for a long time. It also invades your privacy if you do not want people knowing your business"*

*"I think that kids should be allowed to choose what clothes and shoes they buy because like I feel like you shouldn't have to wear shoes and clothes you don't like just because you're in care"*

## Choice and control

"Improvements like listening and taking in young child/children's views is what is improving the care system. The let down is that it has taken so long to listen to the people who have to ensure the care system every day"

"I got to choose my school but some people don't"

"Children's views need to be addressed more often. I wish I had been addressed in regards to my care plan a couple of years after I was placed as I would have asked to have been adopted by my foster carers"

"When introducing a new social worker / IRO / foster carer they need to introduce themselves beforehand, not show up at personal meetings and share their own opinions on your life"

"I think we should be able to choose our social workers and carers and chose what things we do"

"Young people should get to choose who is at their LAC review"

"Personal information about a foster child should not be shared out so easily"

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TO  
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# Professionals and support

Social workers not changing all the time

Easy-to-access information about rights and entitlements

Professionals who they can trust

Professionals who invest in building relationships

Financial, practical and emotional support – which is there when needed

Professionals who stay in touch and are easy to contact when needed

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# Professionals

"My PA is always texting on the regular. They just say 'are you ok, what're you up to?' and have a genuine interest in you. They're not just asking for information."

"I like it when my social worker uses colloquial language, I prefer it when it's not formal, not like an interview"

"Social workers always ask the same questions and they're boring"

"You make a complaint and it never goes anywhere"

"Never make a promise - it's only going to be broken"

"When I first arrived in England, somebody didn't come on time to take us from the police station. There wasn't a translator so it was horrible"

We heard that IROs can be hard to contact and only seen at LAC reviews

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NEEDS  
TO  
CHANGE



Social workers to "not just ask you questions, but actually do stuff with you, like bake a cake or something"

"Social workers need to say sorry if they've done something wrong"

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## Support and information

*"There are loads of resources available"*

*"There are education opportunities – tutoring, funding for books, laptops etc"*

*"By having the local offer, it makes it easier for young people to know what they're entitled to and it helps to know we can use this to hold our 'corporate parents' to the local offer and make them accountable"*

*"The same way that foster carers get information packs about the children they are taking in, the children need the same because they are living in a stranger's household who knows everything about them and they don't even know anything about the carers they are staying with"*

*"Some schools take the money and they don't spend it on the children that are in care. You are told that school will fund a laptop for you and they the school says, oh we use that to fund trips"*

WHAT  
NEEDS  
TO  
CHANGE



We were told you want more support once they turn 18 in terms of financial support, help with housing, finding work, and managing their health.

In semi-independent placements *"make sure the one-to-one sessions happen"*

*"Better regulated placements"*

*"Teachers should have training in fostering"*

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# Stability

Far fewer moves and changes

Moves and transitions being less abrupt and better managed

Living closer to home areas and family

Consistent allowances and rules across different homes and areas

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# Stability and consistency

*"I have been extremely lucky in my 14 years in the care of my local authority. Despite the many years I have only had to move placement once"*

*"Having to move out on your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday (when in semi-independence) is absolutely unacceptable. Whilst all my friends will be partying, I will be packing my bags to leave my home. Do something about this!"*

*"It's not right that young people get shipped off – out of their area – with no notice or explanation"*

*"There needs to be more consistency with the support semi-independence providers for example ensuring the basics are available - duvet covers, crockery, pans etc; ensuring key working hours are being used correctly; making sure staff are adequately trained"*

*One young person told us she found her bedding packed into bin bags outside her room as she had not been given any time to pack her own things*

WHAT  
NEEDS  
TO  
CHANGE



*"Don't have social workers for each team because it complicates things more than needed"*

*"There needs to be a central place for young people's savings so things aren't lost"*

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# Attitudes



Not being treated differently because of being in care

Not being having their world described with acronyms and jargon

# Attitudes and stigma

One child talked about wanting children to know and understand that he was in care

We were told that the language can make you feel like people are treating you like a "piece of paper" not a person

We were told that acronyms and jargon like 'LAC', 'CIC', 'contact', 'respite' can be upsetting and frustrating. You said "we're not lacking in anything"

WHAT  
NEEDS  
TO  
CHANGE



*"Don't take young people out of classes for meetings"*

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# What next?

This consultation has shaped the Children's Commissioner's vision for a better care system.

Across November the Children's Commissioner's Office is shining a light on the care system and how it can be improved through a series of reports and its event on the care review.

Please see our website for more information:

[www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

Please get in touch via [info.request@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](mailto:info.request@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk) if you wish to discuss further.