

# THE CHILDREN'S GUIDE

# My JOURNAL



Place your  
picture here

**This is me!**

Name ..... Age .....

I began my journal on .....



# Being looked after

## A NEW START

**THIS JOURNAL WAS PUT TOGETHER WITH THE HELP OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE MEMBERS OF VOICES OF CARE. IT IS TO HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR LIFE AND IS A PLACE FOR YOU TO RECORD THINGS AND WRITE DOWN THE THINGS YOU WANT TO SAY.**

**"When we first moved into care we wondered what would happen and where we were going. You have nothing to worry about. You will know where you will go and who will visit you. You will be safe."**

by Levana aged 12, Abi aged 10 and Ani aged 12



# Why am I in care?

These pages are for you and your social worker to do some drawings and writing together about why you are in care.



# Where will I live?

## Foster Care

**FOSTERING MEANS GOING TO LIVE WITH A FOSTER FAMILY WHEN YOU CANNOT LIVE WITH YOUR MUM AND DAD. SOMETIMES THIS IS CALLED 'GOING INTO CARE' OR BECOMING 'LOOKED AFTER'.**

Your social worker will explain why you need to be looked after away from your family home.

Your foster family will treat you as part of their family. If there are other children in their family, they will become your foster brothers and sisters. Being in foster care does not mean your parents and family do not love you and you may still see them.

Your social worker may arrange time for you to see your family.

## Foster Carers

**FOSTER CARERS ARE ORDINARY PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN TRAINED AND 'CHECKED OUT' TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE KIND AND CAN OFFER YOU A SAFE PLACE TO LIVE.**

Before going to meet your foster family your social worker will show you photographs of the family and their house.

Your social worker will take you to the foster carers home to meet everyone who lives there. You will be able to take your belongings with you.

You will be shown around the house, where you will sleep and where you can put your things. The house may feel strange and different at first but your foster carers will help you to settle in.

Every family has rules about what you can and can't do, your foster family will agree the rules with you.

## Statement of Purpose

Coventry Children's Services will always try to support you to stay with family, friends or other people connected to you. If we cannot do this we will do our very best to make sure you can live with a foster family.

[www.fosteringhandbook.com/coventry/statement\\_purpose.html](http://www.fosteringhandbook.com/coventry/statement_purpose.html)

## Children's Homes

**YOU MIGHT GO TO LIVE IN A HOUSE SHARED WITH OTHER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.**

This is called a children's home. It gives you a safe and happy place to live where grown ups will look after and help you.

You will have your own bedroom and share some rooms with other children and young people who live there such as play rooms, kitchens and gardens.



## Meet Ziad - aged 13

When I first came to live in a Children's Home, I thought it was scary at first, but over time I had more trust in the carers and now I am very happy living here. I live with another boy aged 13 and two older girls aged 15 who I get on really well with. We have three carers every morning and each night, with two carers sleeping in. All the adults at the home are lovely and care for me. If I am upset about something I can always talk to my carers who will sort things out for me. I have my own room that I try and keep tidy, but sometimes I have to be reminded to do this by my carers at the home. I have my own mobile phone and laptop which I use to play video games on during my free time. I get given pocket money each week and go out on activities too. We also go on holidays and I have been to Weymouth, Butlins and Blackpool this year!

# My new home

Draw a picture or stick a photograph of your new home and all the people you live with.



# The Voices of Care Council

## What is it?

**WHEN YOU ARE 8 YEARS OLD YOU CAN JOIN THE VOICES OF CARE COUNCIL. THIS IS A GROUP OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE YOU; WHO MEET TOGETHER AND TALK ABOUT THINGS THAT AFFECT THEM AND WHAT CHANGES CAN BE MADE TO MAKE THINGS BETTER.**

They are helped by adults that work in the participation service to share their experiences with professionals so that they can improve their work with children.

## What children and young people say about Voices of Care:

- "A place to make a change"
- "Anything you want it to be - share your feelings/make a change/take a stand."
- "A safe place to share your views"
- "Fun!"

Email: [voices@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:voices@coventry.gov.uk)

Find out more on the web: [www.coventry.gov.uk/voices](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/voices)

Tel: 024 7697 1841

Ask your social worker about joining Voices of Care

# The Participation Service

## What is it?

**THE PARTICIPATION SERVICE WORK TO ENSURE THAT ALL PROFESSIONALS WITHIN CHILDREN'S SERVICES WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR OWN CARE AND ABOUT SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES IN COVENTRY.**

Members of the participation service attend the Voices of Care Council meetings so that any ideas or issues raised are shared with important decision makers within Coventry City Council.

If you have an issue to raise or feel that you are not being involved in decisions made about your life please contact the participation service at: [voices@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:voices@coventry.gov.uk) or call: 024 7697 1841

**"Your Rights are our concern"**



Look at all the fun we have!

## Fun to be had!

**THE PARTICIPATION SERVICE ORGANISE LOTS OF FUN ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR THAT YOU WILL BE INVITED TO.**

You can contact them on:  
[voices@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:voices@coventry.gov.uk)

Tel: 024 7697 1841



# Who will visit me?

## Guardian

### **A GUARDIAN MAY VISIT YOU.**

The court will ask them to find out how you feel about your care. Your Guardian does not work for children's services. Their job is to tell the court how you feel and talk for you.

Other children who have been in care said this about Guardians:

"They talk about what life is like for you."

"They want to know how you feel."

## Independent Reviewing Officer

### **PEOPLE SOMETIMES CALL THEM THE I.R.O.**

They check that grown ups are doing what they should be doing to make sure you are ok.

They will be at your Looked After Review meeting every six months and will come to see you before each meeting so that you can tell them how things are going.



## Social Worker

**SOCIAL WORKERS WORK FOR THE COUNCIL. YOUR SOCIAL WORKER WILL CHECK ON YOU EVERY 4-6 WEEKS TO MAKE SURE EVERYTHING IS GOING WELL.**

If you are in a long-term placement, visits will be every 6-8 weeks. They work for the council and are like your 'legal' parents. Their job is to make sure you are cared for, safe and happy. You can talk to them about any worries you might have and you can ask to speak to them at any time if you need to.

If you are in foster care, your carer will also have a social worker they can speak to.

## Independent Visitors

**THESE PEOPLE ARE VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE CHOSEN BECAUSE THEY LIKE THE SAME THINGS THAT YOU DO.**

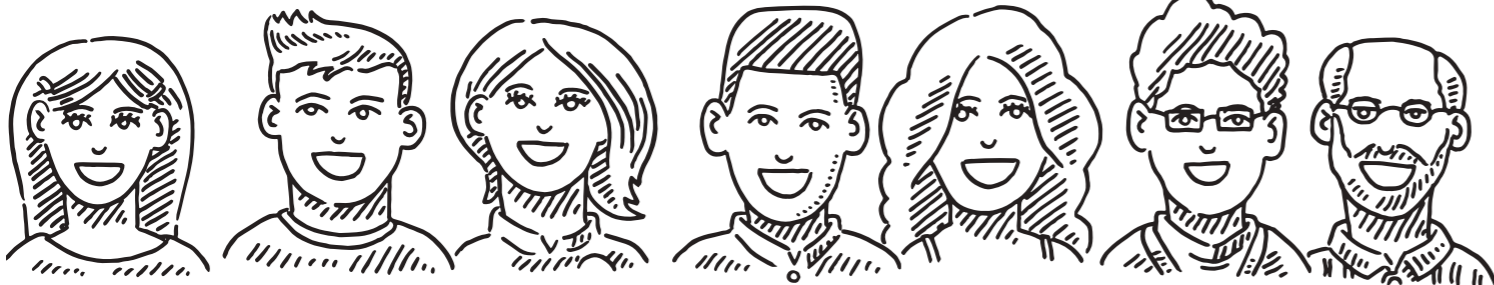
They will meet with you once a month to do fun and interesting activities with you.

"An Independent Visitor is someone you can talk to and spend time with".



# My Social Worker

Draw a picture of your social worker



# What I want to tell my Social Worker

Use this page to draw or write about things you want to ask or tell your social worker





# My Plans



## Going to court

**THERE WILL BE TIMES WHERE EVERYONE GOES TO A FAMILY COURT.**

In court your social worker will say what they think should happen to make sure that you are safe and happy.

Your Guardian will say what they think is best.

Your Mum or Dad also get to say what they think is best.

The judge in the court will think about everything everyone has said and decide the best place for you to live to keep you safe and happy.

Your social worker will spend time with you and explain what is going to happen and you can tell them how you feel and what you think. During this time you will put together your care plan. This is a plan about what will happen to make sure you are happy.



Family court

## Life Story Work

**YOUR SOCIAL WORKER WILL HELP YOU TO MAKE YOUR OWN LIFE STORY BOOK.**

This is a book about your life and family background. It can help you to understand why you came into care and enable you to explore your cultural or religious background.

This is your choice if you want to do it. You can ask your social worker to do this with you at a time when you are ready.

# Looked After Children Review

## About I.R.O.'s

**AN INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (YOU WILL HEAR THEM CALLED AN I.R.O FOR SHORT) IS A PERSON THAT CHECKS THAT EVERYONE IS DOING WHAT THEY SHOULD DO TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE OK.**

Meetings will happen with all the people who help to keep you happy and safe. Your I.R.O will come to see you before each meeting to find out how you are.

The people that might come to your meeting are:

- ★ You
- ★ Your social worker
- ★ Your school teacher
- ★ Independent reviewing officer
- ★ Your carer
- ★ Your parents
- ★ And any other important people in your life

## Working with I.R.O.'s

**YOU CAN WORK WITH YOUR I.R.O TO DECIDE HOW YOU WOULD LIKE TO TAKE PART IN YOUR MEETINGS.**

You can share what you think and feel about your life in this meeting. This is really important.

You can say, draw or write down what you think, or ask someone else to share your views for you.

Your I.R.O will meet with you before your first meeting and will then stay in touch with you to see how you are getting on. They will also keep checking that what people say will be done, gets done.



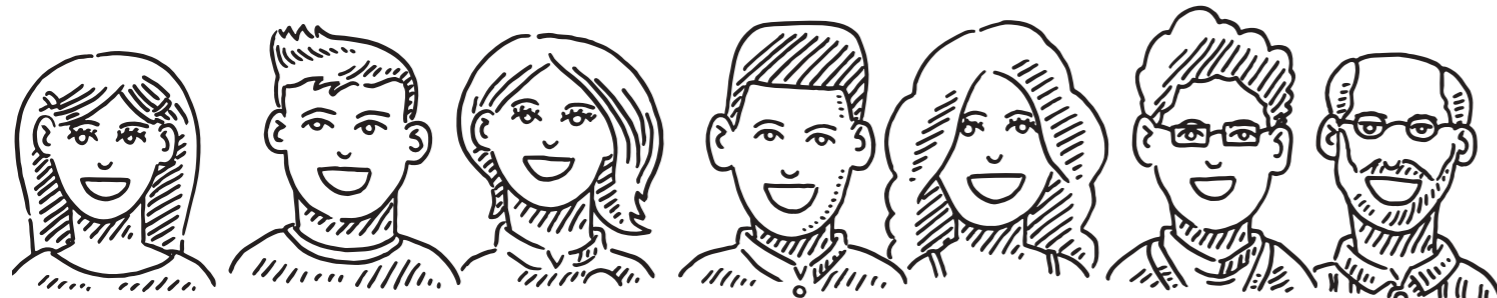
# My I.R.O

Draw a picture of your Independent Reviewing Officer

# What I want to tell my I.R.O

Use this page to draw or write about things you want to ask or tell your Independent Reviewing Officer

**Ask your I.R.O for a copy of their worker profile**



# Things I want to say

Use this page to write your thoughts and feelings so far

Things I am happy with...  
**What's working well?**

Things I want to change...  
**What needs to happen?**



# Signs of Safety



## What is it?

**SIGNS OF SAFETY IS THE WAY THAT YOUR SOCIAL WORKER AND I.R.O WILL TALK ABOUT HOW YOU ARE DOING.**

They will want to know:

- ★ What is going well for you
- ★ Anything you are worried about
- ★ What needs to happen now for you to stay safe and be happy

Your social worker and I.R.O will talk with you about this and will also talk to the grown ups who are looking after you and your parents, to see what they think.

They will use signs of safety to talk about how things are going in your life during your review meetings.



*Your social worker and I.R.O will use different ways to help you to say what you think and feel from drawing, playing, writing or talking. You can decide how you want to tell them!*

# How to make a complaint



## Let us know!

**COVENTRY CHILDREN'S SERVICES WANT TO KNOW IF YOU ARE NOT HAPPY!**

We want to help explain decisions that have been made about your life.

To make a complaint you can:

- ★ Contact your social worker
- ★ Contact your independent reviewing officer
- ★ You can request an advocate to help you give your views by emailing: [Coventry&WarwickshireCRS@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:Coventry&WarwickshireCRS@barnardos.org.uk) or call: 08000 272 118
- ★ Email the children's complaints officer: [CLYPCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:CLYPCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk) or call: 08085 834 333
- ★ Speak to the participation service who can help your voice be heard by emailing: [Voices@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:Voices@coventry.gov.uk) or call: 024 7697 1842

Not feeling happy?

Not feeling listened to?

Being treated unfairly?

# My School

## We can help!

**SOMETIMES IN SCHOOL YOU MIGHT NEED HELP WITH YOUR LEARNING, MAKING AND KEEPING FRIENDS OR BOTH.**

To help you, a special meeting will be held once every term. This is called a Personal Education Plan meeting (P.E.P) which will be supported by the Coventry Virtual School who is responsible for planning your learning. Before the meeting, you will be asked your thoughts about school, so that people know how you feel.

## Who can I talk to?

There are lots of adults in school who you can talk to if you want to, about anything that might be bothering you. Of course, you can also talk to them about good things too! One of these people is called the Designated Teacher (D.T). Part of the D.T's job is to make sure that your school is doing everything they can to help you with your education.

Do you know the name of the D.T in your school? If you do, write it below:

.....

## At the meeting...

**AT THE MEETING YOUR TEACHER(S), SOCIAL WORKER AND CARER WILL DISCUSS HOW YOU ARE DOING IN SCHOOL.**

They will talk about what's going well and any areas where some extra help might be useful.

Targets will be set for the next term to help you make extra progress. Your school may get extra money from the Virtual School if it's needed to help you reach these targets and be successful.



# Looking after my health

## Check ups

**WHEN YOU BECOME LOOKED AFTER YOU ARE GIVEN A CHECK UP BY A DOCTOR TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE FIT AND HEALTHY.**

After this you will see a nurse twice a year if you are under age 5, and once a year if you are older. We try to make sure you see the same nurse each time. Your nurse might not wear a uniform like you see on the TV.

## Where will it happen?

**YOUR FIRST CHECK UP WILL BE AT A CLINIC BUT AFTER THIS IT CAN BE WHEREVER YOU CHOOSE LIKE YOUR OWN SCHOOL OR HOME.**

Wherever you are most comfortable. Your nurse will want to know how you are feeling in your mind, as well as your body.



# Will I see my family and friends?

## Who to ask?

**YOU CAN TALK TO YOUR SOCIAL WORKER ABOUT WHETHER YOU WILL BE ABLE TO SEE YOUR FAMILY AND WHEN.**

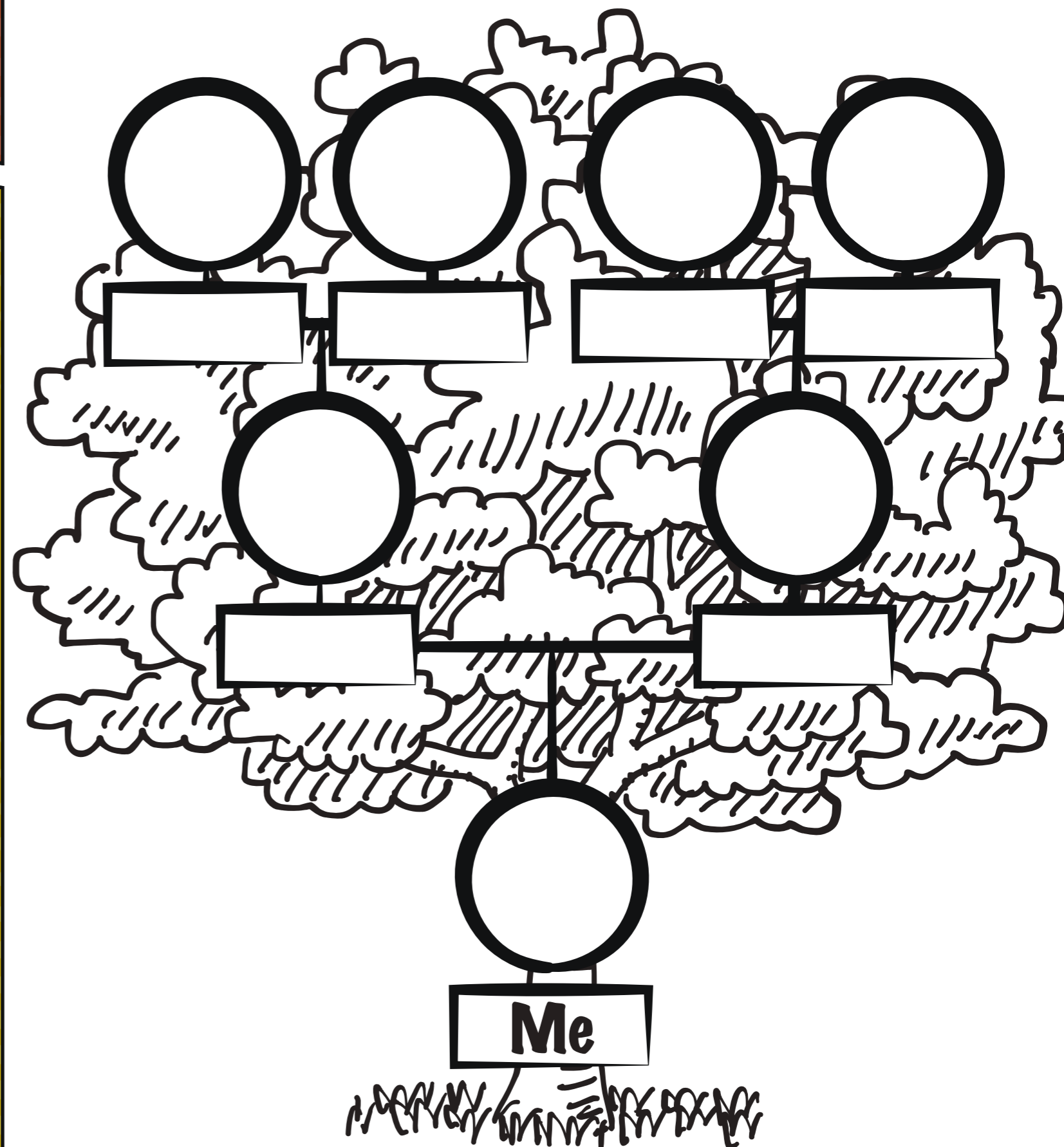
There might be other people that were important in your life that you have lost contact with. Maybe a friend from your local area or a neighbour.

Lifelong Links has support workers who can help you to think about any family and friends who used to support you. They will help you to talk about any family you know of and would like to make contact with. You can talk about places you have lived and any schools and clubs you went to as well as friends that you might not have seen for a while.



*Lifelong Links can help you to understand why you became looked after. They will help you at anytime before you turn 18. Ask your social worker to put you in touch with Lifelong Links.*

You can draw or write the names of your family onto the family tree. Put yourself in the circle at the bottom, your mum and dad above you and then your grandparents. You can add circles for brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and anyone else that is important in your life.



# Barnardo's

## What is Barnardo's?

**BARNARDO'S ARE NOT PART OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES.**

They can help you if you feel you have been unfairly treated or not listened to. Barnardo's has advocates who can help you to share your feelings about what should happen to you.

Your social worker should talk to you about what an advocate is and whether you would like one to help with something.

### Children's Rights and Advocacy

## Advocates!

**WHAT IS AN ADVOCATE AND HOW CAN THEY HELP ME?**

An advocate is someone who speaks up for other people. They can go to meetings with you or speak for you if you don't want to go to the meeting.

Your advocate will visit you to find out about your wishes and feelings and anything that you want them to say for you. They can talk to professionals about how you want to share your views in the meetings that are about you or organise who you want at your meetings.



## Privacy

**THE THINGS YOU TELL THEM WILL BE PRIVATE.**

They will only tell someone else if you agree, or if they think that you or someone else may be seriously hurt.

## Barnardo's Participation Group

**BARNARDO'S HAVE A CHILDREN'S GROUP CALLED P-PALZ.**

They meet in school holidays to share food and fun activities. The group is for children in care to discuss things that affect them and find ways to make things better.

If you would like to join this group contact Barnardo's by phone or email.



*It is your right to have an advocate.  
If you would like to find out more just email:  
**coventry&warwickshirecrs@barnardos.org.uk**  
Or visit: [www.barnardos.org.uk/coventry\\_and\\_warwickshire\\_crs](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/coventry_and_warwickshire_crs)  
Or call: 08000 272 118*

# Things I want to say

Use this page to write your thoughts and feelings

Things I am happy with...  
**What's working well?**

Things I want to change...  
**What needs to happen?**





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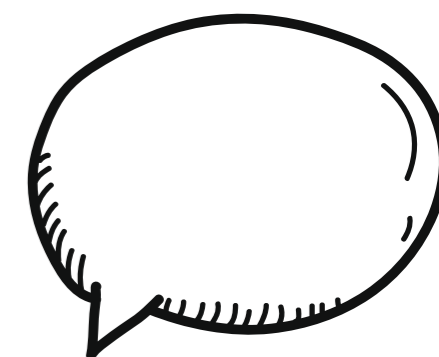
# What I want to tell my Social Worker

Use this page to draw or write about things  
you want to ask or tell your social worker



# What I want to tell my I.R.O

Use this page to draw or write about things you want  
to ask or tell your Independent Reviewing Officer



# Money matters

## YOU WILL RECEIVE POCKET MONEY FROM YOUR CARERS

Coventry City Council will also put money into an account for you to help pay for things like:

- ★ Clothes and things you might need for school
- ★ Presents for your birthday and other special occasions
- ★ Hobbies or interests you have

If you have been looked after for longer than a year then a special bank account will be opened for you by something called the Share Foundation. The council will add money to this every week and when you become 18 or leave care, you will receive a letter telling you how and when you can access your savings.

If you want to know more about money, then you can ask your carer or social worker.



## Useful contacts

### THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER FOR ENGLAND

This person speaks up for children and young people so that policymakers and the people who have an impact on their lives take their views and interests into account when making decisions about them.

If you have a general enquiry, or to get in touch with the Commissioner, please email or call:

✉ [info.request@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](mailto:info.request@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

☎ 020 7783 8330

**Help at Hand is an advice service for children living away from home or receiving services for children.**

If you have an enquiry about Help at Hand, visit:

#### Our address

📍 Children's Commissioner for England  
Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3BT

☎ 0800 528 0731

### OFSTED

This organisation checks the work of children's services in England and Wales. Contact them:

✉ [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

☎ 0300 123 1231

#### Her Majesty Chief Inspector

📍 Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate, Store Street  
Manchester M1 2WD

### CAMHS - CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

CAMHS provide services to support children and young peoples mental health and wellbeing.

#### Where are we?

📍 Paybody Building, Byron Street  
Coventry CV1 4FS

☎ 024 7696 1442



