

YOU SAID, WE DID



Your top priorities from the 2021 survey:

1. Pets
2. Access to support for emotional wellbeing
3. Involvement in decision-making
4. Foster Carer training and matching
5. School: not being made to feel different; a chance to be trusted; help with friendships and bullying
6. Understanding care history

And what we're doing about it...



Pets

Where we can we encourage workers to do activities with children that include their dogs. Some children have really appreciated this, and also knowing a little more about their worker. Children living in children's homes are encouraged to have pets. Workers also bring pets in and take pets out with kids

There is now a section on pets in foster carer training sessions; and also in foster carer matching forms. We will ask children if having a pet is important to them, and how we can help children have connection with animals and pets if there are none in their home.



The Independent Reviewing team now ask about pets in reviews to make sure that if it's important to the child that there is a plan for them to have a pet, or to see one regularly if that's not possible.

Emotional wellbeing

We train children's homes and foster carers in therapeutic parenting to make sure children and young people have warm, caring homes. We offer intensive support for teenagers in foster care when needed. There is a specialist CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) team for children in care called Thinking Allowed.

Bristol Therapeutic Support Service and Thinking Allowed run support sessions for staff and carers to help them care for children in the best way. Carers are able to access extra support if they need it. There is also emotion coaching available in schools - make sure to ask if you don't know how to access it.

The HOPE offers extra funds for schools to support children via counselling, music tuition, drama etc.

Other support includes Off The Record, Hope Creative, Football, Growing Futures, CYN, mentoring, The ARC, CREATE group and more. Ask your social worker if you want to find out more about anything,

We've also asked the Independent Reviewing team to keep up to date with support services available to make sure that they can help to signpost or refer you to support if you need it.

Involvement in decision-making

We always seek the views of children in the **home-finding process** to make sure that are given as much choice as possible on where they want to live. We do introductions and transition plans where possible before the move so that children can meet carers before they move in. We also hold detailed planning meetings to make sure we've thought about the things that are important for that child, for example what their new bedroom will look like, or what they like to eat.

For children and young people in **children's homes** we regularly check in to make sure the home is meeting their needs. We've been working with the **Children in Care Council** to make sure we are doing the best we can when we look for new homes for children and young people.

The Independent Reviewing team have worked with the Children in Care Council to look at how reviews are done, including encouraging children to **chair their own reviews**. After reviews the letters are always written directly to children and young people. Any questions or ideas? Contact alison.turner@bristol.gov.uk

We have set up a new group of care-experienced young people 16-25 to build links between services and children and young people and to find out what they are doing to **make life better** for children in care and care leavers.

The Children in Care Council is now linked up with Bristol Youth Council to make sure the views of care-experienced children and young people are heard. This includes working with the **Youth Mayor**, and together they are working on a project to recruit a more diverse group of foster carers.

We want to make it easy for you to tell us if something isn't right so we'll be trialling some new ways of doing that online....

Foster carer training and matching

We talk about identity for every child to ensure that we do what's needed to ensure the child's **identity needs** are met, especially where children live with a carer from a different ethnic or cultural background. We have developed an information pack for children and carers including a booklet giving information about hair and skincare for children from diverse ethnic backgrounds and where to buy appropriate products.

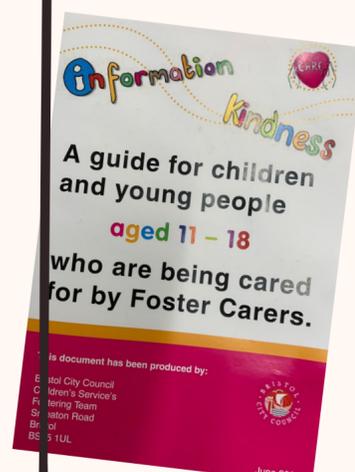
We will create more opportunities for children to be involved in **training for new carers**.

We always look for permanency and stability and we have invested in opportunities for children to live in Special Guardianship arrangements where appropriate to have a more typical family experience. All carers are now trained in attachment, trauma and therapeutic parenting.

We are running new **diversity and inclusion training** and many more topics available e.g. cultural awareness. We are planning a conference for foster carers and social workers with a focus on identity and culture in Autumn 2022. We are working with the Children in Care Council, the Youth Mayor, and our recruitment team to recruit a more diverse and bigger group of carers to be able to offer a better choice in matching.

We have put in place a better offer for our carers including increase in allowances, more support available, and **celebration events for carers** and children to help them provide the best care they can.

We hold reviews with our carers every year and will talk about any training needs.



Understanding your care history

Two groups of staff have done therapeutic life story training. A guide for Social Workers has been developed and further guidance is in development. More staff are due to be trained this year.

We always ask what life story work has already been done when children come into our care from the area social work teams. We also ask about life story work in reviews.

We've asked foster carers' social workers to support foster carers with life story work

As part of making sure the service is run well the Independent Reviewing team have challenged Through Care on behalf of children and young people about making sure children's plans are written directly to them, and in good time.

What we want to do next is review how we do life story work with a group of children and young people and make sure all staff complete the training.

School

New Designated Teacher training includes care-experienced young people as co-trainers, how to support children in a trauma-informed way, and emotion coaching. We will include the issues you raised (not being made to feel different, being given responsibilities) in the training so that Designated Teachers know what's important to care-experienced children and young people.

PEP (Personal Education Plan) meetings always cover bullying and ensure where there have been incidents it is addressed and followed up on. Please talk to your HOPE advocate or your Social Worker with any questions about that.

Wherever possible social workers no longer arrange routine visits in school time, apart from to attend PEP meetings.

From September 2022 the HOPE will be focussing on how to improve attendance, and for those who are struggling what would help them attend school more regularly.

What else...

We will make sure you know you can speak to your social worker on your own, and that you know who to get in touch with if your social worker is away.

For those of you who arrived in the UK as an unaccompanied asylum-seeker we are doing lots of work with Welcome Wednesday and their Young Leaders group to improve how we support you, including extra training, specialist workers, and improving welcome and integration opportunities. If you want to find out more check out Welcome Wednesday or Welcome Thursday at The Station.

Health and wellbeing for children in care and care leavers is one of the priorities for our local health service - if you want to be involved in shaping health services in Bristol check out www.barnardoshype.org

