

**MORE ABOUT ME:**

## Keyworker

Every child and young person living in Residential care has a keyworker. All of the people working in the Residential home will help and support you to live there. Your keyworker will take a special interest in making sure you feel supported, help you with any problems and answer any questions that you have. Your keyworker will usually be the same person for as long as you are living in the residential home unless there needs to be a change e.g. if the staff change in the home.

## Seeing your family (ACCESS)

- \* Your Social Worker will help you to see your parents, brothers and sisters and the rest of your family regularly;
- \* In most cases, a member of staff should bring you to see your family;
- \* For different reasons, sometimes it is difficult to make sure that you get to see your family;
- \* Some young people in care do not want to see their birth family. If that is how you feel, you should talk to your Social Worker about this.

Your Social Worker will talk to you about this.

## Living in your new home

- \* Every home has different rules. It is a good idea to **ASK YOUR KEYWORKER ABOUT THE RULES IN THE HOUSE** e.g. what time you need to be home by, bedtimes, doing jobs in the house or cleaning your room;
- \* Most young people in care told us they prefer living in care because:
  - You get good food instead of junk food;
  - You have a routine e.g. mealtimes and bedtimes;
  - You go to school more often and get a good education;
- \* Some homes allow you to have a small pet and some do not. You should ask your Social Worker if you can have a pet;
- \* You should tell your keyworker, or another staff member what food and TV programmes that you like.

You can write them down in the 'ALL ABOUT ME' pull-out section in the middle of this book

- \* Sometimes rules are broken. This might be because you are feeling upset or angry. If you break rules that have been set by the staff in your home, you might be grounded or not allowed have treats for a while. You cannot be made to miss a meal or not see your family because you were misbehaving;
- \* The staff in your new home are **NOT** allowed to slap or push you at **ANY** time.

### Some of the other things that young people in care thought you need to know about are:

**PRIVACY:** You will have your own room in your new home. People should knock on your door before coming in. Other people cannot go into your room unless you leave the house without permission and they need to check if you are there.

You are also able to have your own personal 'stuff', like a diary or photographs, that you do not have to show to anyone if you do not want to.

Everyone does not have to know your business. However, your Social Worker or keyworker might have to pass on some things you say to other people. If so, they should tell you who else they are going to tell.

The people in your residential home will also write down things about you and what you do each day in a book. This is called your 'file'. These files can only be read by people who need to know how you are doing e.g. your Social Worker or the people working in your home.

**YOU CAN ALSO ASK TO READ YOUR FILE.** However, there might be some parts of your file that you are not allowed to read as depending on your age, some things might be too upsetting. There might also be things in your file about other people e.g. your parents. As everyone's privacy needs to be respected, your Social Worker would need to get permission from your parents before letting you read that part of your file. You can talk to your Social Worker or your keyworker about this.

**LEAVING THE HOUSE WITHOUT PERMISSION:** You should not leave the house without telling an adult. You have to tell an adult where you are going and how long you will be gone for. This is just to make sure you are safe. It will not stop you from going places or from making last minute plans.

**MONEY:** You should get a small amount of pocket money every week. You should get the same pocket money as any other children in the house. You might also get money to join an activity you are interested in e.g. a football club or an art class.

**CLOTHES:** The staff in your home are given money to buy you clothes. You have a right to help choose the clothes you wear. There are limits on the amount and type of clothes you can buy!

**HEALTH:** Your keyworker will arrange for you to have a doctor, dentist, optician or whatever you need close to where you are living. Every young person in care has a Medical Card. Young people over 16 years can give consent for surgical, medical or dental treatment.

**SLEEPOVERS:** Most young people in residential care just have to get permission from their keyworker to go on a sleepover at a friend's house. For some young people in care, it can be more difficult to get permission. Sometimes you might need to have permission from your Social Worker and sometimes from your parents as well as your keyworker. This is only because everyone wants to keep you safe and they need to know where you are going and who you will be with.

You can ask  
your Social  
Worker and your  
keyworker for  
more information  
about this.

## ADVICE FROM YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

Lots of the young people from the TACTIC group who helped to write this book have been in care for a good few years. They understand that going into care can be hard for some people. As well as all of the information so far, they wanted to give young people going into care this practical advice:

### Talk to someone about how you are feeling

#### FIND SOMEBODY THAT YOU FEEL THAT YOU CAN TRUST AND TALK TO.

Having at least one person to talk to and who listens to you is really helpful. This might be a:

- \* Key Worker
- \* Sister or Brother or other member of your family e.g. Grandparent
- \* Social Worker
- \* Friend or
- \* Youth Worker
- \* Teacher;

It is **GOOD TO MEET OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE**. You can ask your Social Worker to see if there are groups of young people in care that meet in your area.

### Your new home

- \* **GIVE YOUR NEW HOME A CHANCE** – you might think the people there are really different to you but you probably have more in common with them than you think;
- \* **TALKING TO PEOPLE ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE NOW** – It is ok to tell people about where you live and your new home. The **TACTIC** group advised that you should choose who you tell about being in care carefully as some people can be bullies.

You can get in touch with EPIC  
(see contact details on page 20)

## School

- \* The young people in care really wanted you to know that they think it is really important to go to school regularly, stay in school and do as well as you can.
- \* Lots of young people have problems with reading, writing or learning at school. Talk to your keyworker, another staff member that you like or Social Worker if you are having problems at school and they will support you to **GET THE EXTRA HELP YOU NEED**.

## Friends

- \* You might want to hang out with the friends you had when you lived with your family. Your keyworker or your Social Worker will help you to meet up with your old friends if you want to.
- \* You might also want to make new friends in the area you are living in now. You will make friends in school but you can also join any local groups or clubs to help you make new friends.

## Hobbies

- \* Get involved in 'stuff' e.g. **TAKE UP A NEW HOBBY** or join a youth group.

## Bullying

- \* Some people are bullies and say nasty things. This can be online, on your phone or in person. If you are being bullied, the most important thing to do is tell an adult that you trust.


## IT IS NORMAL TO FEEL...

- |            |                             |                       |
|------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| * Scared;  | * Lost;                     | * Confused;           |
| * Anxious; | * Sad;                      | * Relieved;           |
| * Worried; | * Down;                     | * All over the place. |
| * Unsure;  | * Curious about everything; |                       |

## WHAT TO DO IF...

### You are stressed or worried...

Moving into care can be a stressful time. As the young people living in care have said, it is completely normal to feel anxious or worried. Going through a stressful time can affect your mental health.



You might feel shy  
or like you don't  
want to join in  
when you first go  
into care

This might mean that you are not sleeping well, not eating well, feeling anxious, quiet, getting cranky or in a bad mood. If you have any of these problems or are feeling stressed in any way, the MOST important thing to do is to talk to someone about it.

You can talk to any member of staff or Social Worker, a teacher or a friend. There are also websites and organisations that help young people when they are worried about their mental health e.g. Reachout.com or Headstrong (see list of groups that work with young people in care on pages 20 and 21).

### You feel really scared...

It is completely normal to feel scared and again, the best thing to do is talk to someone about how you are feeling and why you are feeling scared. If you can, talk to your Social Worker, your keyworker or any other staff person that you like and they will help you.



## WHAT TO DO IF...

### Things go wrong with the people caring for you

Things go wrong in every family. Sometimes people make mistakes and say and do things that they wish they had not. Nobody does the right thing all the time.

This does not mean that the situation cannot be fixed. If somebody says or does something to upset you, you should talk to them about it, explain how it made you feel and ask them to apologise to you.

Again, if you feel that things are going wrong, the most important thing to do is to talk to someone about it. If you feel that things have gone so wrong that they cannot be fixed, it is very important that you talk to your Social Worker who will talk to you about what can be done.

If you do something wrong or say something that hurts or upsets someone, it is important to say you are sorry. It might help to explain how you were feeling at the time but you should still apologise and take responsibility for your actions.

### You want to make a complaint

If you are unhappy for any reason, you can arrange to talk to your Social Worker. You can contact your Social Worker anytime, even if it is just for a small thing; You can also talk to your keyworker or any other adult you trust.

If you would prefer to talk to make a complaint to someone else, you can contact a senior manager in the Child & Family Agency, EPIC (a group that works with children in care), the Ombudsman for Children or the Gardaí. (All of the contact details are on on pages 20 and 21).

You should get something called 'Speak Up, Speak Out' when you come into care. This will tell you how to make a complaint if you want to.



## GROUPS THAT WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

Group	Contact details
<b>ALATEEN</b> is for young people aged 12-20 who have a family member who has a problem with alcohol.	<b>T:</b> 01 873 2699 <b>W:</b> <a href="http://www.al-anon-ireland.org">www.al-anon-ireland.org</a>
<b>BIG BROTHER BIG SISTER</b> is a 'mentoring programme' that matches an adult volunteer to a young person. The volunteer and young person spend about 2 hours a week together having fun, hanging out, chatting and doing things together. It is a really great way of 'having someone to talk to'...	Check out <b>WWW.BBBSIRELAND.IE/MAP.PHP</b> to find a Big Brother Big Sister programme in your local area.
The <b>CHILD AND FAMILY AGENCY</b> is responsible for all young people living in care. If you need to make a complaint, you can contact their 'YOUR SERVICE, YOUR SAY' team.	<b>T:</b> 1859 24 1850 <b>E:</b> <a href="mailto:yoursay@hse.ie">yoursay@hse.ie</a> <b>W:</b> <a href="http://www.hse.ie">www.hse.ie</a>
<b>EMPOWERING PEOPLE IN CARE (EPIC)</b> is an organisation that works with young people who are living in care or who used to live in care.	<b>T:</b> 01 872 7661 / 087 903 6598 (for text messages) <b>E:</b> <a href="mailto:info@epiconline.ie">info@epiconline.ie</a> <b>W:</b> <a href="http://www.epiconline.ie">www.epiconline.ie</a>

Group	Contact details
<b>EXTERN IRELAND</b> gives care and support to children and their families. A lot of young people in care are supported by Extern Ireland.	<b>T:</b> 045 878 720 <b>E:</b> <a href="mailto:externireland@extern.org">externireland@extern.org</a> <b>W:</b> <a href="http://www.extern.org">www.extern.org</a>
<b>FOCUS IRELAND</b> helps people who are homeless with a special service for young people under 26 years of age.	<b>T:</b> 01 881 5900 <b>E:</b> <a href="mailto:info@focusireland.ie">info@focusireland.ie</a> <b>W:</b> <a href="http://www.focusireland.ie">www.focusireland.ie</a>
<b>HEADSTRONG</b> is an organisation that helps and supports young people's mental health in Ireland.	<b>T:</b> 01 472 7010 <b>E:</b> <a href="mailto:info@headstrong.ie">info@headstrong.ie</a> <b>W:</b> <a href="http://www.headstrong.ie">www.headstrong.ie</a>
The <b>OMBUDSMAN FOR CHILDREN'S OFFICE (OCO)</b> can support you to find out more about your rights and help you with a complaint about services.	<b>T:</b> 1800 20 20 40 <b>E:</b> <a href="mailto:oco@oco.ie">oco@oco.ie</a> <b>W:</b> <a href="http://www.oco.ie">www.oco.ie</a>
The <b>YOUTH ADVOCATE PROGRAMME (YAP)</b> supports young people to return home after spending time away from their home and families. Each young person and their family will work with YAP to come up with a plan. The young person and their family will be given a YAP worker who will be in contact with the family every week and help them to put their plan into action.	You can ask your Social Worker to talk with you about YAP.
<b>YODA</b> is the Youth Drug and Alcohol Service based in Tallaght. YoDA provides help and treatment for young people under 18 who are having problems with their drug or alcohol use.	<b>T:</b> 01 466 5040

THINGS I WOULD  
LIKE TO ASK OR  
TELL MY SOCIAL  
WORKER ABOUT





An Roinn Leanaí  
agus Gníothaí Óige  
Department of  
Children and Youth Affairs



# GOING INTO RESIDENTIAL CARE

**INFORMATION**  
FOR WHEN YOU FIRST  
GO INTO RESIDENTIAL  
CARE

