

Looked-after children and young people

Information for the public

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www.nice.org.uk

Care for looked-after children and young people

More than 80,000 children and young people in England live in care (and are described as 'looked after' children and young people). Many live with foster parents while some live in residential children's homes or schools, or in secure units. Most of these children and young people have a good experience and do well. However, children and young people in care are more at risk of social, emotional and mental health problems. They may be less likely to do well at school and are more vulnerable to problems such as bullying, substance misuse and sexual exploitation.

More can be done to keep looked-after children and young people safe and healthy. We want this guideline to make a difference to them by making sure:

- they see the same care staff over time who they know and trust
- changes to care placements are avoided, if possible, to help them feel more secure and stable in their home lives
- educational support is designed around their needs at all stages of their education and helps them through changes such as moving schools or starting further education
- children and young people at high risk, such as unaccompanied asylum seekers, get better joined-up support that meets their needs
- there is more support, training and recognition for carers of looked-after children and young people.

Supporting looked-after children and young people

Staff who support children and young people in care should always explain things clearly, listen carefully to what matters to them and make sure they have a say in decisions about their life.

Good support also means making sure children and young people:

- have enough one-to-one support from their social worker
- can start life story sessions as soon as they are in care to make sense of who they are and what has happened in their lives
- are always included in conversations about changes that will affect them
- know who to contact if they have worries or problems at any time, day or night
- are supported to carry on friendships and other important relationships they have made in their lives.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Adoption UK](#), 0300 666 0006
- [Carers UK](#), 0808 808 7777
- [CoramBAAF](#), 020 7520 0300
- [The Fostering Network](#), 020 7620 6400

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with staff and carers who work with looked-after children and young people, and using the views of people who have been in care. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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