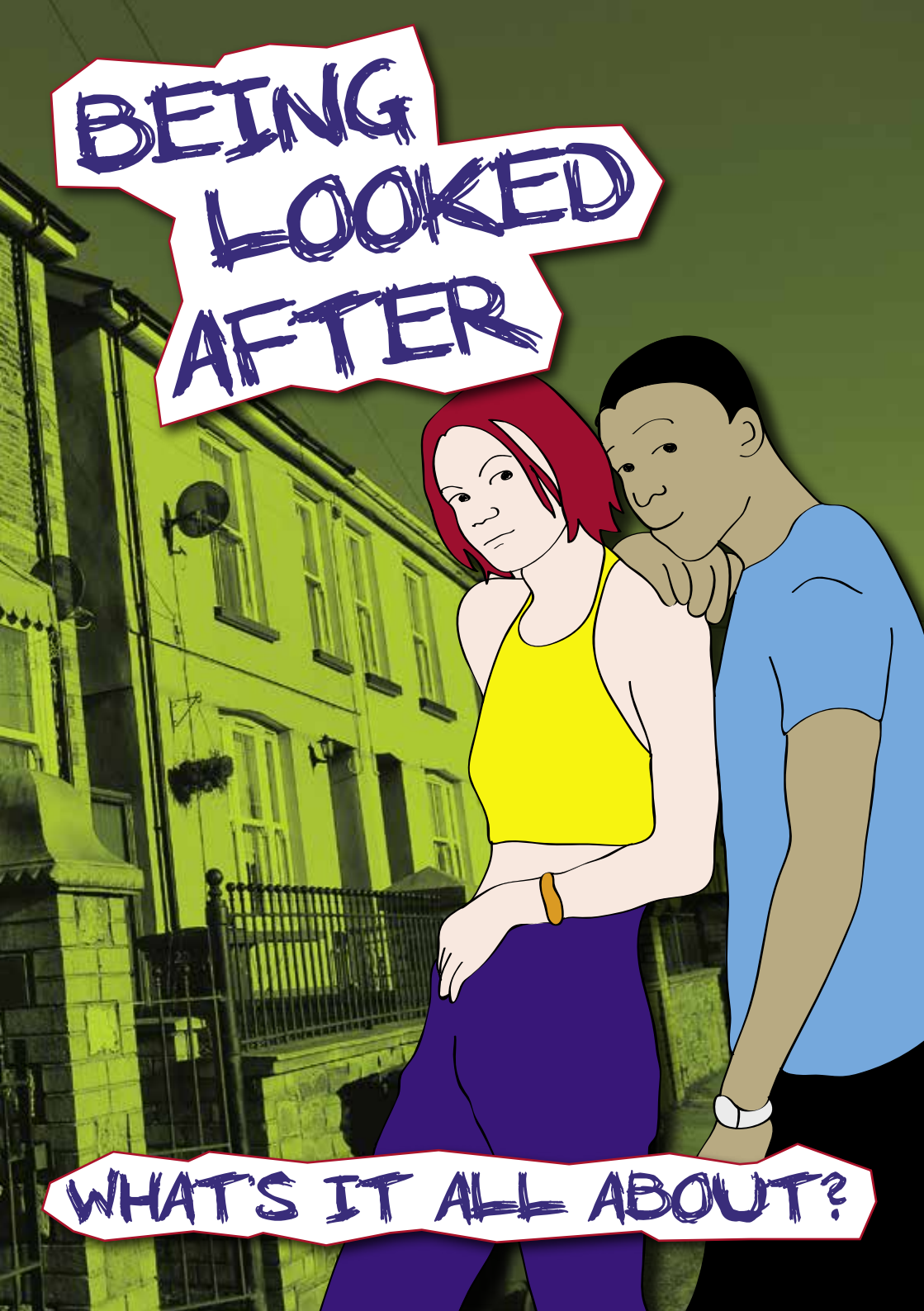


# BEING LOOKED AFTER



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

IF YOU ARE GOING TO LIVE WITH FOSTER PARENTS FOR THE FIRST TIME IT'S OKAY TO FEEL A BIT WORRIED - EVEN SCARED. AND YOU'LL HAVE HEAPS OF QUESTIONS.

IF YOU ARE READING THIS IT'S PROBABLY BECAUSE YOU - OR A FRIEND - IS LIVING WITH FOSTER CARERS OR IS ABOUT TO BE PLACED IN FOSTER CARE.

THIS MAGAZINE WILL ANSWER A LOT OF THEM BUT IF THERE'S ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO KNOW - ASK!



## MOVING INTO FOSTER CARE

Sometimes, children and young people can't live at home for all sorts of reasons. It doesn't mean that you have done anything wrong.

If you can't live at home, we usually arrange for you to live with foster carers.

This might only be for a short time - perhaps because your family needs time to sort things out or it might be because someone is ill.

Your social worker will help you understand why you are being fostered – this is also called being 'looked after' or 'being in care'.



## FOSTER CARERS

The people who look after you are called foster carers. Some foster carers live alone, while others have partners.

Sometimes they have children of their own, or foster other children.

All foster carers have one thing in common – they want to help young people.



**YOUR FOSTER CARERS WILL:**

- HELP YOU SETTLE IN AND MAKE YOU FEEL WELCOME
- TREAT YOU WITH RESPECT
- BE THERE TO LISTEN TO YOU
- SUPPORT AND CARE FOR YOU
- TRY TO UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL

**YOUR FOSTER CARERS WANT YOU TO BE HAPPY WITH THEM, BUT THEY WILL NOT TRY TO TAKE THE PLACE OF YOUR FAMILY.**



## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

When you first go to live with your foster carers, you will probably want to tell them lots of things about yourself . . .

*What my favourite foods are*

*Which television programmes I like watching*

*What sports, hobbies and interests I enjoy*

*People and friends I'd like to see*

*. . . and ask them lots of questions.*

*What time must I be home in the week and at weekends?*

*When can I use the phone or computer?*

*What household tasks can I help with?*



Jot down anything else you want to say or ask:

## DAY TO DAY LIFE

### **Where will I live?**

You'll be living with your foster carers in their home. You will live somewhere that best meets your needs.

### **Will I get my own bedroom?**

Yes.

### **Can I see my family?**

Your social worker will sort out the arrangements for you to see your family. If you can't see your parents for any reason, he/she will explain why. It may be okay for you to keep in touch by letter or telephone.

### **What about my brothers and sisters?**

If it's not possible for your brothers and sisters to live with you, your social worker will probably be able to arrange for you to see each other.

### **Can I go to the same school?**

Yes, if it's possible. However, if you will be living with your foster carers for a long time and they live a long way from the school you go to, you might have to change schools.

If this happens, everyone will help you to settle in your new school.



### **What about seeing my friends?**

Everyone will do all they can to help you stay in touch with your friends and to help you make new ones.

### **Can I do sleepovers?**

Plans for overnight stays should be agreed in advance so your foster carers know where you are and can make sure you will be safe.



## Who decides what happens to me?

Social workers will work with your foster carers, your parents and other people to make decisions about your future.

Your wishes and feelings will be taken into account. If you feel you are not being listened to, you can talk to your social worker or advocate (more about this later).

## Will there be loads of rules?

Your foster carers will probably set some ground rules for you, maybe about things such as meals, times for you to come home and maybe some other things. But they will also have things they have to stick to.



## What about meals – will I have to eat things I don't like?

Foster carers will ask you what like to eat. Sometimes it's fun to try new foods but if you don't like them or don't want to try them, no-one will mind.

## What if I feel unsafe?

If you feel unsafe when you are in foster care, tell your social worker or someone you trust – it's important that you have support.

## What will my foster carers pay for?

Foster carers will pay for your food, clothes, toiletries and other things like having a haircut – all the things you'd expect really.

## Do I get any money to spend?

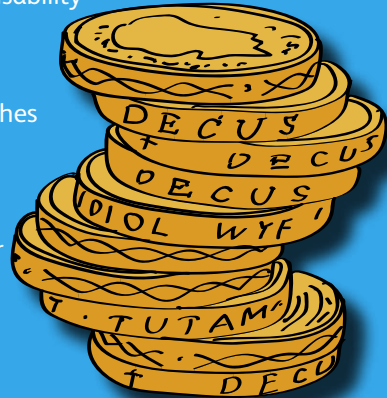
Yes – the amount depends on your age. You will also get a birthday and Christmas allowance.

If you have a disability, you might also be entitled to Disability Living Allowance.

## Can I pick my own clothes?

Your foster carers should let you have a say in what clothes you buy and wear, but sometimes they may offer some guidance.

If you are old enough and your foster carers think you are responsible, they might let you go shopping on your own or with friends.



## YOUR RIGHTS

Children and young people have no rights – right?

Wrong.

All young people – including young people who live with foster carers – have the right to have their say about decisions that affect them.

Young people's rights include:

- saying what you think, being listened to and being taken seriously in all matters that affect you
- being protected from harm, abuse and violence
- having your best interests put first when decisions are made about you
- not being discriminated against
- having a good enough standard of living, including a place to live, food and clothing
- having an education
- growing up healthily
- having your cultural background and identity valued.

Young people in care have extra rights. These include:

- seeing people who are important to you (unless there is a good reason not to)
- seeing your file
- making a complaint
- having pocket money
- seeing an independent visitor
- as a care leaver (age 16+), help with housing, money, education and training



## BULLYING

Sometimes young people are bullied. It's not a nice thing to think about but just being a little bit different can mean you get a hard time.

If you think you are being bullied, don't suffer in silence.

Bullying is never okay so don't keep it to yourself.

Tell your foster carer, teacher or social worker.

If you prefer, talk to your advocate.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT  
BULLYING AND DEALING WITH IT, VISIT  
[WWW.ANTIBULLYTORFAEN.ORG.UK](http://WWW.ANTIBULLYTORFAEN.ORG.UK)

## WHO'S WHO IN SOCIAL CARE?

Sometimes it might seem as though there are a lot of new people in your life. Just remember that they are all there to help and support you.

### **Social worker**

Social workers have been trained to work with you and others to keep you safe, make sure you are listened to and to sort out any problems in your life.

You will have your own social worker who will look out for you. They will listen to you and will help you to make decisions. They will also talk to other important people in your life.

What you tell your social worker is confidential unless you tell them something which suggests you or someone else is in danger or at risk of harm. If this happens, your social worker must let other people know.

### **Advocate**

An advocate is someone who will help you to speak up for yourself so that your views are heard, your rights are met and your problems are sorted out. An advocate can get something stopped, started or changed.



All young people who are looked after have the right to an advocate.

If you feel unhappy about anything, an advocate can help you to sort it out.

You will be given a separate information pack about advocacy.

If you want to talk to an advocate, ASK NYAS on:

Phone: 0808 808 1001

Email: [help@nyas.net](mailto:help@nyas.net)

### **Independent visitor**

An independent visitor is a volunteer who will befriend and support you. They don't work for social services either.

### **Guardian**

(sometimes called a Family Court Advisor)

Sometimes, a family court is involved in resolving family-related problems.

In these situations, you will have a guardian to represent you.

### **Independent reviewing officer**

An independent reviewing officer is the person who runs your review meetings (more later). It is their job to make sure you have the opportunity to have your wishes and feelings heard, even if you don't want to attend.

They will visit you on a regular basis to confirm that your needs are being met.

### **Clinical nurse specialist**

This is a specialist nurse who will look after your health needs and will provide you with information and advice on issues like sexual health, smoking and alcohol. You can talk to them in confidence about any health concerns you may have.

ASK your social worker for more information.

### **Complaints Officer**

If you are unhappy about the services you are receiving or feel you are being treated unfairly, you have the right to make a complaint.

The complaints officer works for social services and will listen seriously to what you say and try, where possible, to sort things out for you.

Phone: 01495 742164

Email: [corporatecomplaints@torfaen.gov.uk](mailto:corporatecomplaints@torfaen.gov.uk)



## PLANNING AND REVIEW MEETINGS

These are meetings where people get together to talk about your needs.

When you first come into care there will be a meeting to decide how best to meet your needs and to make plans for your future.

After this, there will be regular review meetings when your social worker, foster carer and an independent reviewing officer will talk about how you are getting on in foster care and make plans for your future.

Everyone gets a say – including you – before any decisions are made.

If you don't want to go to the meeting, you can talk to your social worker, foster carer or an advocate, and they will pass on your thoughts and feelings.



## LOOKED AFTER FORUM

It's important that you tell us what you think about children's services as this is the only way we can improve things.

The Looked After Forum gives young people in foster care an opportunity to meet up and share their ideas and views on issues that affect them and have a say about services they use.

Why not come along and learn new skills, socialise and have fun?

ASK your social worker for more information.

# USEFUL NUMBERS AND WEBSITES

There are lots of other people you can turn to for advice and help when you are living in foster care. The following are independent, which means they don't work for social services.

## Care Inspectorate for Wales (CIW)

CIW encourages the improvement of social care services and makes sure that young people being cared for are well looked after.

Phone: 0300 7900 126

Email: [CIW@gov.wales](mailto:CIW@gov.wales)

## Children's Commissioner for Wales

The Children's Commissioner for Wales has a team that stands up and speaks out for children and young people.

Phone: 01792 765600

(9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Freephone: 0808 801 1000

Email: [post@childcomwales.org.uk](mailto:post@childcomwales.org.uk)

[www.childcom.org.uk](http://www.childcom.org.uk)

## Children's Legal Advice

Free legal advice for children and young people

Child Law Advice Line:

Freephone: 0300330 5480

[www.childrenslegalcentre.com](http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com)

## ChildLine

Free 24-hour helpline. Contact ChildLine about anything – no problem is too big or small.

Freephone: 0800 1111

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

## MEIC (pronounced MIKE)

An advocacy helpline for young people.

Phone: 08088023456

Text: 84001

Email: [help@meiccmru.org](mailto:help@meiccmru.org)

Online chat: [www.meiccmru.org](http://www.meiccmru.org)

## NYAS

To talk to an advocate:

Phone: 0808 808 1001

Email: [help@nyas.net](mailto:help@nyas.net)

[www.youngpeople.nyas.net/](http://www.youngpeople.nyas.net/)

## Voices from Care

Support for young people in Wales who are, or have been, looked after.

Phone: 02920 451431

Email: [info@vfcc.org.uk](mailto:info@vfcc.org.uk)

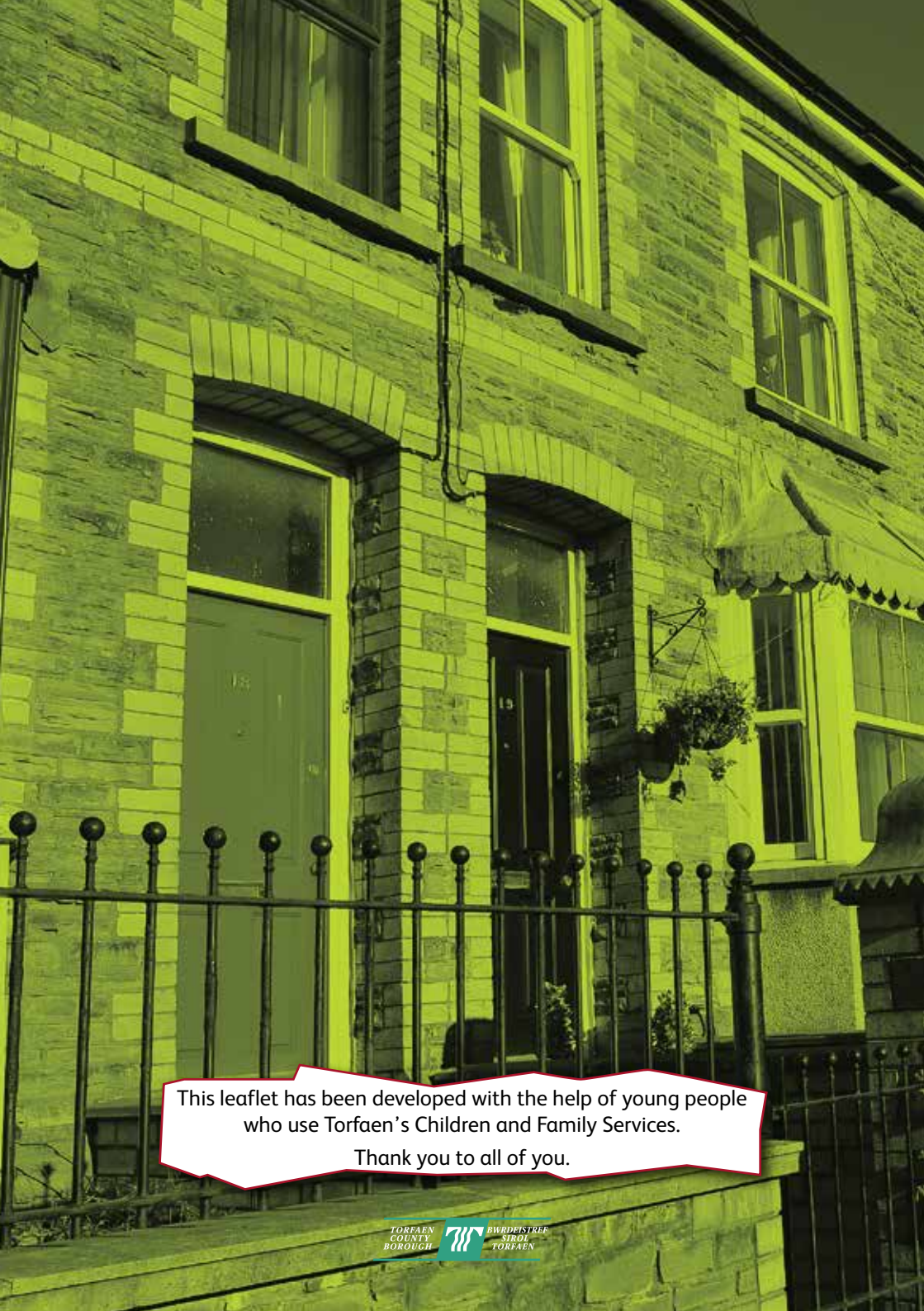
[www.vfcc.org.uk/](http://www.vfcc.org.uk/)

## Wordsearch

See if you can find the following words:

Fostering	Open	Forum
Care	Child	Meet
Complaint	Team	Opinion
Rights	Teacher	Safe
Review	Fun	

A	F	O	R	U	M	Z	B	E	S
C	O	M	P	L	A	I	N	T	F
A	S	S	T	J	T	A	E	M	U
R	T	E	A	C	H	E	R	L	N
E	E	R	X	H	V	L	O	O	F
M	R	E	V	I	E	W	I	K	P
H	I	N	M	L	M	N	Q	T	E
B	N	J	S	D	I	A	C	O	F
E	G	D	P	P	P	V	E	U	A
N	E	P	O	R	I	G	H	T	S



This leaflet has been developed with the help of young people  
who use Torfaen's Children and Family Services.

Thank you to all of you.