



Smart future

Children and young people in care told us
about their time at school or college

The Government has listened

INSIDE, you can find out what we will
do to improve your education

Making the Grade?

Everyone deserves the chance to do well at school – but that doesn't always happen.

So when things go wrong at school who cares?

The Government wants to improve education for children in care and we have been listening to your views. In fact over 2,000 young people as well as parents, carers, teachers and social workers told us what they think.

In this booklet you can read what we found out.

At the  sign you can find out what we are doing to help.

You've told us there's a lot to do. We are determined not to let you down.



OFFICE OF THE
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER



Social
Exclusion
Unit



The Cares? Trust



Making a success!

Lots of people who have been in care have gone on to make a big success in life. Here are just a few.

‘You have to believe that you can do whatever you want to, there are no rules. Fight really hard and try your best, otherwise you’ll spend the rest of your life just wishing for what could have been’

Samantha Morton

Actress and star of *Minority Report*, who was in care from age 3 to 18, speaking in *Who Cares?*



‘While I can’t say that being brought up in a home was the best start in life, living with so many children and being supervised by a number of carers taught me skills that have been vital in my success as a public personality. I have learnt to look on the bright side of life and I would not change any of my experiences’



Kerry Katona

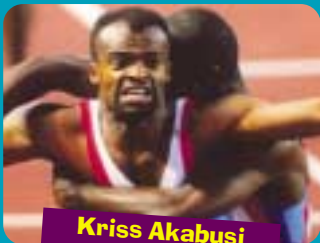
Prince’s Trust Ambassador and TV Presenter

‘As someone who was in foster care, I can really relate to the challenges that others face when coming out of care. People can be really judgmental, assuming that young people who’ve been in care are ‘trouble’ or stupid. Being in care made me even more determined to show what I was worth and that I could succeed. So can hundreds of other young people out there’



Sarah Bennett

Singer/Songwriter, Prince’s Trust Real Life Ambassador and winner at the *Mirror’s Pride of Britain Awards 2003*



**Kriss Akabusi
MBE**

World Champion in Tokyo, 1991

‘Childhood is meant to be full of good times, but my childhood was the blackest time of my life. I was taken into care when I was fifteen and prayed not to wake up every day. But, with the right support and a positive attitude, you can succeed. The Prince’s Trust guides people in the right direction, giving you unconditional time to help you look realistically at your future. You just need to believe in yourself and follow your dreams’

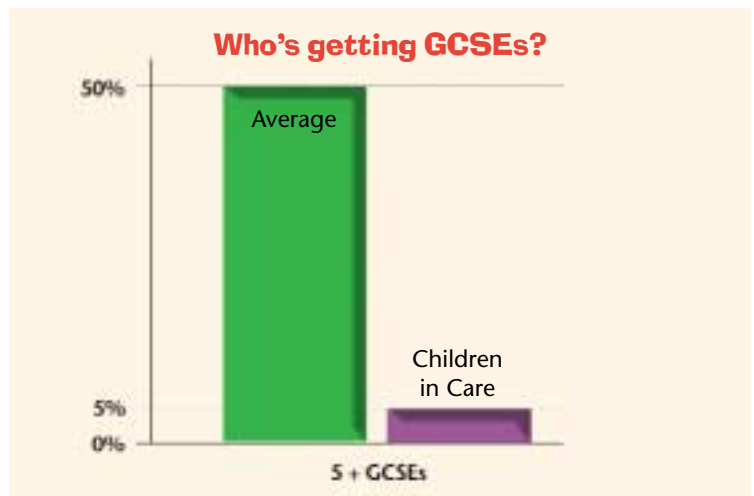
it's **WHAT** really **LIKE**

‘I am doing very well at school. I have done every piece of homework so far and I have got one of the main parts in the school play’
Boy aged 10

‘I like doing my lessons but I hate some of them ‘cause I can’t do them so I should get some support in my lessons’
Girl aged 15

You said that you think education is important. You want to do well at school and go on to get a good job. Jobs like vets or teachers or jobs in music, TV and sport.

But the fact is young people in care often don’t do well in exams and don’t stay on to go to college or university. That means you can’t get the jobs you want.



Amin's story

Amin went into care at the age of seven.

When he was nine, he moved back home but it didn't work out. He went back into care, and ended up moving eight times in one school term.

It was all a bit unsettling – so much so that he found it difficult to live in a family again, and went to live in a children's home. He has now lived there for two years.

While all this went on Amin stayed at the same school. All those changes at home meant Amin's studies suffered and he did less well in exams. However, being in the same school has been really good for Amin – it's the one thing that has stayed the same. Amin's been working hard and his results have been steadily improving as a result.

‘I don't want to be treated differently. I just want to be me’
Girl aged 14



**WHO CARES?
LINKLINE**

0500 564570
Free phone for young people in care

**KIDSCAPE
08451 205 204**

Free confidential advice for you on lots of problems like bullying and abuse

**VOICE OF THE
CHILD IN CARE
0808 800 5792**

Free advice for any child in care that needs support or wants to make a complaint

That is unfair. In our poll children in care told us why you think things are going wrong. You mentioned things like:

- having to move school in the middle of term
- not getting the right help with lessons
- being bullied by other children
- being treated differently by school staff
- not getting the right support to stay on at college and pass the exams you need for the job you want
- not spending enough time in school



Being treated DIFFERENTLY

“People expect you to do badly in exams because of your ‘problems’. But I did well in GCSEs. People put you down, but you get praised when you do well”
Girl aged 16

Nearly all children who are in care are there because they are at risk, not because they have done anything wrong.

It is important that you are treated fairly and equally.

Most of you said you were treated the same as others in school. A few of you said that you did suffer unfair treatment – mainly from other children but sometimes from teachers too.



Other children and adults need to understand you better - and we have come up with ways to help them do this:

- teachers will be helped to understand what life is really like living in care
- we will also improve training and support for all staff and foster carers who work with you
- we'll get the different people involved in your care and your school, such as teachers, social workers and your carers, talking to each other
- and we'll be telling other people that children in care can do just as well as other children

What might this mean where you live?

Your area might do as Manchester did. Here some young people set up their own group after they left care. They now train social workers, the police and teachers. They use their experience to help others understand what it's like in care – and stand up for children in care when others get it wrong.

Delroy's story

Delroy – in his own words:

'I want to be a policeman and I am planning to apply next month. I love helping people and I have got good common sense, even if I do say so.'

'The leaving care service put me in contact with Connexions and they printed a lot of information off the internet. It was all about what I need to join the force, what they were looking for. That helped me out a lot.'

'My personal adviser is brilliant. She is very friendly and she goes out of her way to help.'

'The workers are there to give you pointers if you get stuck. Also you can go down there and say "I need help, I'm not dealing well with this." All the staff, even when they are rushed off their feet, they make the time for you.'

Teachers need to stop assuming that people in care are worse than anyone else. They should try and understand our situation'

Girl aged 15



**DEPARTMENT FOR
EDUCATION AND
SKILLS**

**www.
dfes.gov.uk/
youngpeople**

A website with information for all young people in the country

SKILL

**www.
skill.org.uk**

Help if you have got any sort of disability and jobs advice for the over 16s



Getting THE RIGHT Help

• **My foster carer helped me a lot ... she made me more confident in my school work**
Girl aged 11

• **I wanted my mum to get involved but the foster carer took over. They had all school letters, but they never went to anything at my school. They only went to their own children's occasions**
Girl aged 12

In our survey most of you said you got the help you need to do well at school. You said that you got advice from staff you can talk to. And there's lots of after school activities, books and computers.

But not everyone's getting all the help they need. More needs to happen to give everyone a fair share of up-to-date equipment and support.



More help for more people - the Government will:

- set up more after school activities and give you more help with lessons in things like arts, music, sports and science. You'll find it all at school and other places that are easy to get to
- encourage schools and others to support your homework and learning from home
- make sure your carers know what they need to do to help you at school – like going to parents evenings and understanding what SATs are.



Eva's story

Eva came to this country alone. She was placed with foster carers just after her 15th birthday. She settled well and was very keen to get into school. But, finding a place took time – the local school lost her first application.

Her carer and social worker helped her to join a group where she could meet young people from her own culture. And they arranged for her to attend another school and get work experience.

However, she was very concerned about her future. She sometimes finds it hard to concentrate when she worries about what might happen beyond her 18th birthday next summer. Her carer, social worker and personal adviser also struggle to help her with her uncertain future.

Eva gained GCSE's and is studying hard for AS levels (she is fluent in 4 languages) enjoys school and has ambitions to go to university (she would like to be a lawyer).

‘I'd like more after-school clubs in a building that is accessible to me, where I can use the equipment and be understood’

Boy aged 16



BBC

**www.
bbc.co.uk/
schools**

Help with school,
revision tips and
lots more

**NATIONAL DRUGS
HELPLINE**

0800 776600

DRINKLINE

0800 917 8282

SANELINE

0845 767 8000

Help for anyone
with a mental
health problem

Moving School

Over half of you said you had to **move school** at least once because you had moved home.

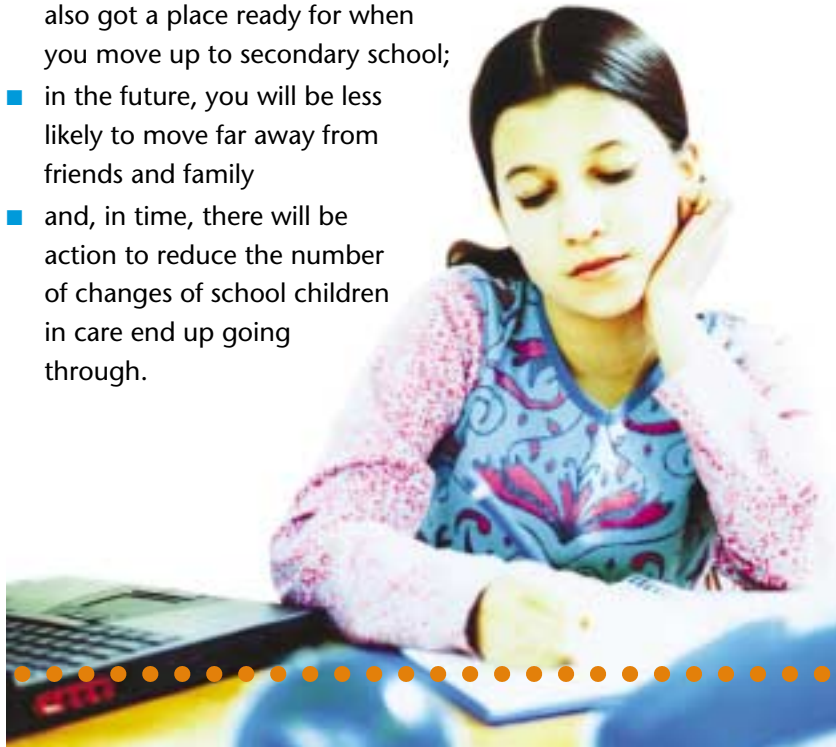


What's happening to help you settle down?

‘I went to seven primary schools. This had affected me because I’ve never been able to settle down’

Girl aged 16

- if you move home when you are in school your social worker will have to plan ahead. They will make sure you’ve also got a place ready for when you move up to secondary school;
- in the future, you will be less likely to move far away from friends and family
- and, in time, there will be action to reduce the number of changes of school children in care end up going through.





CONNEXIONS
'Let's talk
about you'

**www.
connexions.
gov.uk**
080 800 13219

**Text:
07766 413219**

Confidential
advice for anyone
aged 13-19 – support
and information on
learning, careers,
health and
relationships

**“In the space
of a year, I went
to three different
schools. Despite
the disruption,
I got eight GCSEs
and my grades
weren't bad”**
Girl aged 18

We asked:

**How many times have you changed school places
as a result of a change in care placement?**

You said:



Stuart's story

Stuart went to live with Carole, a foster carer, in his final year at primary school.

Carole's social worker told her that she needed to find Stuart a place at secondary school. She arranged for him to attend the same school as the other children in her care.

A week before the start of term, Stuart's own social worker arrived with his new school uniform – for a completely different school! Although Carole's social worker thought finding a school place was the carer's responsibility, Stuart's social worker insisted it was the opposite.

Stuart's social worker insisted that he went to the school she had chosen, as she had already paid for the uniform. Stuart was very confused and upset, as he had been looking forward to attending the first school.

Being picked on

Most of you said that you had been bullied at school. Bullying affects many people, but children in care are five times more likely to have suffered at the hands of a bully than other young people.

‘I was bullied because they knew I was in foster care and my family was falling apart’
Girl, aged 16

The good news is that most people who had been bullied found someone to tell – and the bullying has stopped.



Case study

Children in Hampshire have found things get better when other people understand what it's like to be in care. In Hampshire 15 young people run things their way for other children in care. They organise events, school projects and help the council decide how to plan things better. And some get paid £150 a week to help. Young team members also run training sessions for teachers and school governors on what it's really like to be in care.

If you have been bullied and find it difficult to talk to anyone at school or at home, ring **ChildLine freephone 0800 1111**, or call their special line for children in care freephone 0800 884444. Or write: Freepost 1111, London N1 0BR.

The phone call or letter is free it's confidential and won't appear on the phone bill.



**Calling
time on
the bullies**

The Government is tackling bullying to stop this happening to any other child:

- all schools now have to take action
- teachers are learning how to spot the signs and stop the bullies
- there are more mentors and advisers to give you someone to talk to
- schools will have to listen to you more and act on what you tell them about bullying in and out of school

‘Pupils take the mickey out of me and ask why my mum can't take care of me’
Girl aged 12



CHILDLINE

0800 1111

Free confidential advice if you need someone to talk to

**HELPLINE FOR
CHILDREN LIVING
AWAY FROM HOME**

0800 8844 44

A special phone number run by Childline

**DON'T SUFFER
IN SILENCE**

Government web site with advice if you are being bullied

**www.
dfes.gov.uk/
bullying/
pupilindex**

Being KEPT OUT of school

‘I’ve been out of school for a year and a half and I’ve realised how important it is’

Boy aged 15

Most of you – nearly eight out of ten – said you **go to school regularly**. But a few said they **never** go to school.

Just under half of you who answered our survey said that you had been **excluded** from or kept out of school at some point. But many of you said that with the right help it need not have happened.

One boy of 13 said that just **‘not acting like a prune,’** might have stopped him being excluded! But another boy aged 10 said he would have been helped by **‘more support from the teacher.’**



What could have stopped you being sent away from school ?

51% said more support would help

9% said nothing would help



SCHOOLZONE

www.schoolzone.co.uk/students/studentpage

School and revision help direct to your computer



Help to get back to school

- social workers, carers and teachers will have to listen more to what you think about your school
- if you do get excluded and think it's unfair someone will appeal for you if you've got a case
- there will be more catch-up lessons and summer schools to give help if you fall behind at school or if you need extra help on specific things like languages

Case study

Will it stop the hassles?

In Leeds, children in care who are close to getting excluded get help from their school to stay in class. Money was paid for an extra lunchtime supervisor for a child who kept running away, another child got extra teaching to help. It works. None of the children who have been helped by the scheme have been excluded.

‘I have not been in mainstream school for three years because social services couldn't be bothered to look. Now I have missed out on my GCSEs’
Girl aged 15⁶

‘I think all children who have missed out on school should have a tutor’
Girl aged 13

Life after SCHOOL

‘I’m going to be a lawyer, and I’m going to work for the Crown Prosecution Service. I’ve been saying that since I was three years old - and that doesn’t change just because I’m now in care’

Girl aged 18



Like you, the Government believes children in care can achieve just as much as anyone else, given the right support. After getting the right education we'll be helping you into a good college, university or job.



The changes coming mean that:

- you'll get more information about going to college or University
- more things like 'taster days' and summer schools to let you see for yourself what it would be like at college and university
- there'll be extra help to find the right courses and to stick with it. More help with travel costs – or just somebody to talk to in confidence
- if you want to study away from home – a place to stay in the holidays



Case study

The future – support and a college place

In Brighton, the city college offers school children help through Connexions personal advisers. The personal advisers give extra help to care leavers before they start college, and keep in touch with them during the summer holidays. They offer help with things like travel costs once term starts.



CARE LEAVERS ASSOCIATION

0161 881 5510

The organisation for you when you leave care

AIM HIGHER

0800 587 8500

Tips to help you into University or college

www.aimhigher.gov.uk

Get your free magazine

OPENDAYS.COM

All the University and college open days from across the country

www.opendays.com

Will it make things BETTER?

You told us that sometimes you feel that the social workers, teachers, carers and all the other people meant to help just don't work together. And that they don't listen.



**It's time for the adults
to learn from the children
in care:**

- we will be making sure that local councils, social workers, carers and teachers talk to you more before they make a decision about your future – and more importantly they should act on your views;
- working together will be a really important part of making all of our plans work.

We have put all of these things and much more in place to make sure that you have the best chances at making your future what you want it to be.

Rachel's story

Rachel went into care when she was 13 years old. She had a hard time at school and did not have many friends. She ended up taking an overdose and spent the next three years in a range of children's homes and foster families. Rachel found this time a real struggle, got in with the wrong crowd and turned to drugs.

Whilst living in a young people's hostel she started volunteering with the Prince's Trust. She managed to get herself off the drugs and got back her confidence and self-respect.

When she left care she got more help from The Prince's Trust and her local authority who matched her with a mentor.

Rachel's now studying for a degree with the Open University and is working part-time to help other children in care.

£ £ £ £ £ £ £ £ £ £

Putting the Cash into Children's Services

There's new money to help - over £252 million over the next three years.

That could mean more books, teachers or educational activity.

And the promise to improve care placements is backed by cash - another £113 million.

£ £ £ £ £ £ £ £ £ £

Find out more

The full details of our ideas to improve your education are contained in a new Government report. It is called *A Better Education for Children in Care*.

You can get your copy at

www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk

or by calling **020 7944 8133**

The report includes the full results of the questionnaire filled in by around 2000 children and young people in care.

Names of most of the young people in this magazine have been changed.

This publication refers to Government activity in England only.

**What do children in care
really think about school?**

**Are you getting the education
you need to get the job you want?**

Is school fair?

Who is listening?

The Government has been listening to 2,000 children in care and using their views to start improving life at school for children in care. This leaflet includes highlights from the research plus the real-life stories of children in care telling it like it is. And it tells you what the Government plans to do to make things better.

If after reading this booklet, you want to find out more, you can get a copy of the full report at www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk or by calling 020 7944 8133



OFFICE OF THE
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