

Our Pledge

Bristol working together
for children in care
and care leavers





The Bristol Pledge

The pledge is a promise made by Bristol City Council and the Children and Families Partnership to all children in care and care leavers. All adults who work for and with the council have a responsibility to make sure that you are safe, healthy and achieving your goals. This pledge spells out how we promise to do that.

We promise to do our best to help you achieve your full potential. We are committed to involving you in any decisions that affect your life, asking you what you think, listening to you and taking your views into account. This is part of our commitment to making sure that all children are valued in every aspect of their lives.

You said...

Health assessments at home are great

Access to talking therapies is really beneficial

The Children in Care nurse is a really good source of support

Physically and emotionally healthy so that you feel good about yourself

We promise to...

- make sure that you get opportunities to meet other young people, have fun, and enjoy your experience in care
- help you keep in regular contact with your family members if it is in your best interest
- encourage you to have regular health and dental checks
- make sure that there is always someone you can talk to about your emotional and physical health and well-being
- give you access to high quality sexual health information, advice and support
- provide you with information and advice on healthy eating and encourage you to make healthy choices and keep fit
- provide you with the advice and support you need if you do anything that is harmful like smoking, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, or harming yourself in any way
- work with you to make health assessments as easy to attend as possible
- provide services that can support your emotional health and wellbeing where appropriate.

Safe from harm, valued, cared for and supported



You said...

We need someone who will believe and value us, independent visitors are really important.

We'd like to have a say in who our social worker is and see them regularly

We think we should be supported into independent living by our foster carers, and encouraged to stay in care if that is what would be best for us

We promise to...

- make sure that you know your social worker well, see them regularly and can contact them when you want. We will agree with you how often you can expect to see your social worker, and will explore other ways to stay in touch
- not change your social worker unless it is absolutely necessary. If we do change your social worker, we will ask you about yourself and your interests to help us find a social worker who's right for you
- make sure you feel safe in your home and are happy where you live
- support you if you return to your family or move to another home
- try to keep you safe from bullying and to take action if you tell us that you are being bullied
- make sure there is an up-to-date care plan that is clear about your needs and how we will support you
- involve you in planning services and explain our decisions fully
- make sure that you have an independent reviewing officer to help plan with you what you need and check that those plans are carried out at least every 6 months. Involve you in planning your review so that you feel part of it and feel confident raising any issues
- make sure you have access to a telephone and computer, and that you have all the contact details you need including your social worker, your advocate, emergency services and Childline
- make sure that you have access to an independent visitor if appropriate
- work with your foster carer or another adult to represent you well in your review
- provide you with information about advocacy services who are independent from the council and can represent you, when you go into care.

The best education

We promise to...

- make sure that you have a good education
- make sure that pre-school children in care are able to receive early years education
- draw up a regular Personal Education Plan with you to encourage you to have high ambitions and help you get the best results you can.
- make sure that your voice is captured through the Personal Education Plan process
- make sure everyone does what they say they will do in your Personal Education Plan
- work with your school or college to help you do your best
- help you learn English if it's not your first language
- make sure you have your own reading material at home
- support you to attend and do well at school
- give you support to access activities which take place outside normal lessons and to make sure you have somewhere to study and do your homework
- make sure you get extra study support if you need or want it
- talk to you about where you would rather go to school. Support you to stay in your current school unless there are good reasons not to, and avoid moving you during important educational periods wherever possible
- make sure that you have access to a computer, and explore options for accessing one if you currently don't
- make sure you can access good work experience placements, even if your school doesn't offer them and commit to asking you about your work experience plans through your Personal Education Plan

- make sure that you are part of the decisions about what your pupil premium is spent on
- make sure you have someone you can talk to about careers and education.

You said...

Work experience is hard to access; we need your help to find placements

It's important to have someone to talk to about careers and education, and who pushes us to do our best

Promises in our Personal Education Plans must be kept and we would like to be involved in deciding what our pupil premium is spent on

It's important to have someone to talk to about careers and education, and who pushes us to do our best

Stability during important educational periods like exams is really important

Have a voice and take part

We promise to...

- encourage you to go to museums, libraries and youth clubs and to get involved in sports you enjoy
- celebrate your achievements
- give you opportunities to do volunteer work
- listen to you and tell you how your views influence what we do
- provide you with other opportunities to come together and represent your views and the views of other children in care and care leavers
- meet your religious and cultural needs, and ensure you have the opportunity to meet with other people who share your way of life or background
- involve you in the recruitment of staff and train our staff to listen well to young people
- support the R Voice magazine, which is created by and for children in Bristol's care
- seek your views through the R-Voice website
- refresh the R-Voice website so that you can access news and information as well as the pledge and other information easily
- introduce you to the R Voice website when you first come into care
- make sure that an independent advocate is available to talk to if you need to
- make sure you have the opportunity to contribute to your review
- give you an independent visitor if you need one
- continue to arrange events and opportunities for looked after children to come together
- extend the care leaver's ambassador programme to implement a buddying system between looked after children and care leavers
- recognise your achievements and support you to achieve your goals
- make sure that all Council owned policies consider children in care where appropriate.

You said...

It's really important to support us to have our voice heard. Awards and recognition are also really important

We would like a buddying system with older looked after children and care leavers

We'd like to receive a copy of the pledge when we come into care

We want to have a say in our Looked After Child review

We want to get together with other looked after children



Know who you will live with

We promise to...

- have a wide range of foster carers that reflect the diverse needs of young people in care in Bristol
- match you to foster carers who best meet your needs for as long as you need
- make sure that your foster carers are trained and supported to care for you
- involve you in the recruitment and training of foster carers and listen to your views about what makes a good foster carer
- talk to you about your interests and hobbies before placing you with foster carers wherever possible.
- try to match you to a placement as near to your home as possible, but definitely within twenty miles
- only offer you a home outside the city if we really need to
- make sure that children and young people who need to or choose to live in a children's home, are placed in homes that meet their needs
- when a long term placement is not immediately available, and we offer a shorter term placement, we will work with you to identify a longer term placement. This will include making sure that you see a profile of the families we are considering for you to live with and make sure that information about other children you will live with is included.

You said...

We'd like to meet carers before moving in with them so that we can get to know them

We would like to meet other children living with foster carers as part of our induction to their home

We want to have fun with our foster carers, and would like to be matched with our carers based on our interests and hobbies

Becoming independent – A good standard of living and opportunities to develop and prepare for your future

We promise to...

- hold high aspirations and help you to achieve your goals. If things don't work out, we will support you to try again
- make sure you have a named worker who stays with you throughout your time as a care leaver
- provide you with the information that you need at every point in your journey, from care to adulthood
- make sure you have support to start thinking about leaving care when you're ready
- plan with you about when to leave care and identify what support you will need and who will provide it – this is called your Pathway Plan
- help you prepare for independence and practice your independence skills by helping you to budget, cook, clean and experience what it might be like to live independently
- make sure you have somewhere safe and suitable to live with the right level of housing support
- provide you with an education, employment or training offer that's right for you. We will match your aspiration and ability to an opportunity, whether that's work experience or an apprenticeship with the Council, working in

retail or pursuing performing arts. Whatever you're interested in, we'll do our best to link you with the right opportunity and provide you with the support to help you achieve

- give you the practical, financial and emotional support you need to progress to further or higher education
- give every young person a health passport so that you have your health record and know where to go for help
- make sure you have a bank account and all identification documents before you leave care
- support you to stay in touch with family and friends
- provide you with information about your history and support to access it when you want it
- provide you with the financial assistance and practical support to set up home
- make sure you can get support from the people who can help you best, at the times you need it
- celebrate your achievements.

You said...

We need support to move out of care and to successfully start living independently

We'd like to have a say in who our social worker is and see them regularly

We think we should be supported into independent living by our foster carers, and encouraged to stay in care if that is what would be best for us

Glossary

Care plan A plan about what the young person wants and needs during their time in care. The care plan includes important information like a health plan and a Personal Education Plan. At 16 this becomes a Pathway Plan and focuses on transition to adulthood.

Children in care All children being looked after by a local authority, including those subject to care orders under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 and those looked after on a voluntary basis through an agreement with their parents.

Care leavers All young people who have been looked after by Bristol for more than 13 weeks between their 14th and 16th birthdays (excluding short respite care placements) and who are still looked after on their 16th birthdays will receive support from the Care and After team, and are considered to be 'care leavers'.

Children in Care Council The Children in Care Council gives young people a chance to have their say and gives young people the chance to talk to the people who run the care system.

Designated Teacher A teacher whose job is to help young people in care to do as well in school as other young people. Each school and educational setting has a designated teacher who knows who is in care and looks after their best interests.

'Everyone Active' Card A card that allows you to get involved in an extensive range of activities including sporting FUNdamentals, swimming lessons and other organised activities across the city.

Health Care Assessment An annual check of your physical health and emotional wellbeing for any child in care and care leaver over five years old. This can take place either at the doctor, or with a specialist nurse. A list of any actions needed to make sure you stay healthy will be agreed with you and will be shared with your social carer, foster carer and other professionals who are responsible for looking after you.

Independent Advocate Advocates can help young people know their rights and make sure that their views and wishes are heard at all times. If you wish to get in contact with an advocate, please ask your social worker or contact Reconstruct directly.

Independent Reviewing Officer A professional who co-ordinates the review meeting between a young person and care professionals in order to improve the care plan for the young person.

Independent Visitor An independent visitor is a trained volunteer who visits a child in care, talks to them, becomes their friend and gives them support when they need it. If you are interested in getting a visitor, please talk to your social worker.

Pathway Plan A plan that outlines the services and the practical and emotional support that young people aged 16 and over (care leavers) require, so that they are able to make a successful transition from living in care to a more independent lifestyle.

Personal Education Plan Often called a 'PEP', this plan is an agreement between the child, their social worker, their school, carers and parents. The plan will include what needs to be done in order for you to reach your full potential at school.

R-Voice A Bristol magazine designed and written by children in care and care leavers from across the city. Two magazines are published every few months, one for those aged under 12, and one for children aged 12 and over.

R-Voice online The website designed by children in care and care leavers, for children in care and care leavers. The web address is www.rvoice.co.uk

We The Pledge is a promise from all of the agencies represented across the Children and Families Board.

Your feedback

We welcome your feedback on the pledge and are very interested in hearing your views, whether they are positive or negative. If you wish to share your experiences please get in touch with either the R Voice magazine/website or the Children in Care Council. You can also give your views on how we are performing on the Pledge during your review.

This document is available in other languages. Please visit the R Voice website for more details www.rvoice.co.uk

Want to get in touch with or join the Children in Care Council?

The Children in Care Council aims to reflect the views of all children in care and care leavers in Bristol, and strives to achieve change and better outcomes for all children and young people in care. Contact www.rvoice.co.uk/contact

Want to write for the R-Voice magazine/website?

The website and magazine is written by children in care, for children in care. If you would like to contribute, contact www.rvoice.co.uk/contact

Need an Independent Advocate?

Advocates can help young people know their rights and make sure that their views and wishes are heard at all times. If you are making a complaint, advocates can help and support you through the process.

Want to meet an Independent Visitor?

An Independent Visitor befriends a young person in the care system. They spend a few hours a week together, sharing interests and activities.

How to make a complaint

You can make a complaint or provide feedback through Bristol City Council's complaints procedure www.bristol.gov.uk/complaints

