

**VOCABULARY OF YOUNG
PEOPLE IN CARE |**



FOR EW ORD

Lemn Sissay

New words and phrases can perfectly describe and be understood in one context but not in another. Corporate Parent, for example, is a term used to describe the responsibility of the Health and Social Care Trusts to children in care, and care leavers, in Northern Ireland.

But is it right to introduce the term 'corporate parent' to a child in emotional distress? Could the answer be to use more than one word to describe the same thing; so, one word or term used by professional, and another for the child? My own childhood in 'care' was trapped by words more suitable to others than me. So this book is a great idea. At least it will make us think about the language we use with some of the most vulnerable amongst us.

Northern Ireland knows how powerful words are. Some of the greatest writers in the English language are from here. Speaking to each other, and hearing from each other, words are on the front line of change!

Lemn Sissay

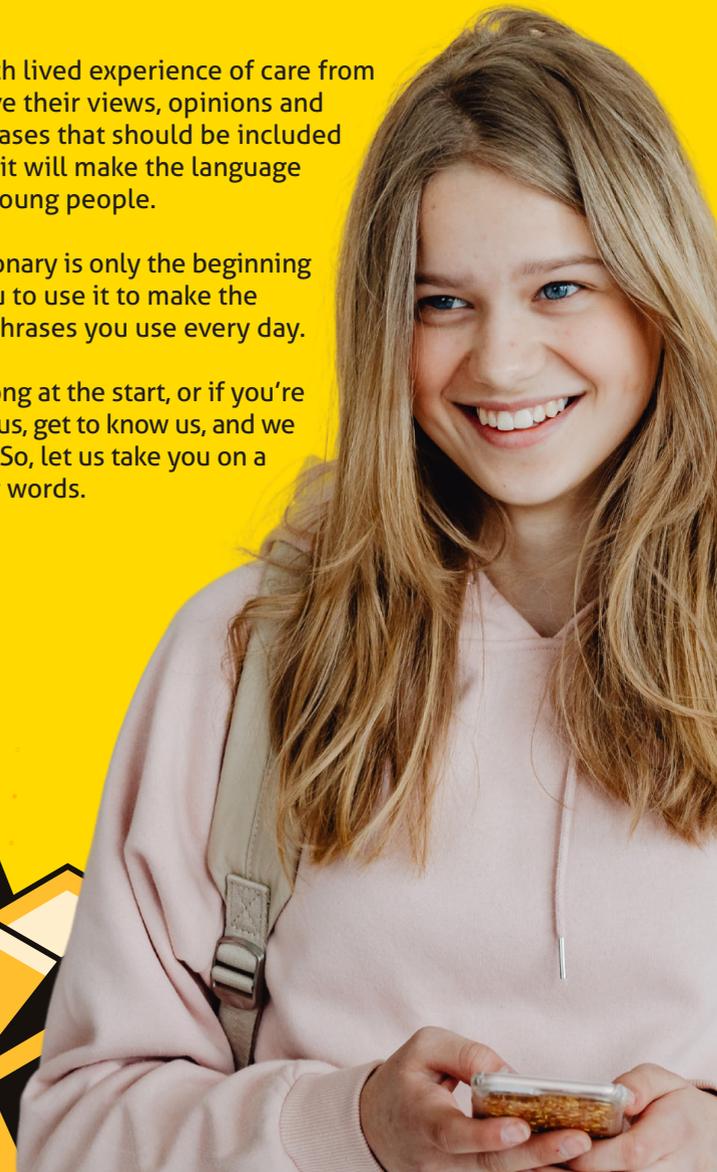
CARE IN OUR WORDS

We have created this resource to provide you, the adults supporting us, with the words that we feel need to change, and the words we would prefer you to use. We want to create a language of care that can be understood by people outside our world. We want to be able to chat with our friends, teachers and families about our lives, and not have to explain what the words mean. Sometimes we feel different because we are in care. We hope that by changing some words it will help make things more equal, and make us feel less different. We believe the best way to make life better for young people in care is to learn from the experts- us!

Over 150 young people with lived experience of care from across Northern Ireland gave their views, opinions and ideas on the words and phrases that should be included in this dictionary. We hope it will make the language used more welcoming for young people.

Please remember, this dictionary is only the beginning of the change. We need you to use it to make the changes in the words and phrases you use every day.

Don't worry if you get it wrong at the start, or if you're not sure what to say. Talk to us, get to know us, and we can show you how it works. So, let us take you on a journey through care in our words.



WHO I AM

You might know me by different terms, or even just letters. To you, I might be a case, or a stack of forms and reports. How you talk about me, and how you talk to me, shapes how you see me. And, in some ways, how you make me see myself. Remember, the best word to use when talking to or about me is my name.

LAC / LOOKED AFTER CHILD YOUNG PERSON IN CARE

According to the law, I am a 'Looked After Child'. But, aren't all children looked after by someone?

Sometimes, people say I'm LAC. What am I lacking? Are we all lacking? Please don't describe me as a 'looked after child' and never as 'LAC'. Instead, call me a child or young person in care. First and foremost, I am a child or young person. I am also in care. So, the best way to describe me is a child or young person in care.

CARE LEAVER YOUNG PERSON LEAVING CARE

When I reach a certain age, I will move on from care. Leaving care is a process, not a one off event. Even after I've left care, I still need support and guidance to make my way in the world.

Please don't call me a 'care leaver'. That makes it sound like I've changed into a different person overnight. Instead, as I move on from care, I become a 'young person leaving care'. In time, I become a 'young person who has left care'

LIVED EXPERIENCE OF CARE

Even though those of us who are in care, who are leaving care, and who have left care all share a common experience, we are all different. We are all unique.

It's not right to think of us as one group, all with the exact same experience of growing up. No matter what age we are, or what stage of our care journey we are at, we are all 'young people with lived experience of care'.

By saying I am a young person with lived experience of care, you show that you see me as an individual, whose life story includes time spent living in care.

MY SUPPORT

As a young person with lived experience of care, there are lots of adults in my life. Their job is to make sure I am cared for properly. They are there to make sure I have the opportunities to live my best life, to do the things that will help me grow and develop. Their job is to do the best for me.

LAC REVIEW YOUNG PERSON'S (CARE PLANNING AND REVIEW) MEETING

When you say I'm having a 'LAC Review' it sounds like you're reviewing what I'm lacking in.

The purpose of the meeting is to make sure I'm being cared for as I should, that I have what I need, and that this will continue. This meeting is all about me- it's my meeting. So, let's talk about it in a way that shows that.

It's the meeting where my care is planned, and then reviewed. So, it's my care planning and review meeting.



SOCIAL WORKER

I have a Social Worker. I know that's their job, and that's what they want to be called. And I will call them by the term they want to be called. But, I would like to call my Social Worker by their name. Not everyone has a Social Worker, so when I talk to other people, like my friends, I might not use that term. I might say they are 'someone who helps me.'

SOCIAL WORK FILE YOUNG PERSON'S INFORMATION

Always remember that I am more than what it says in that file. When you call it a 'social work file' you make it about you and your job. But, that file is mine, and it's all about me. It's my information.

When I'm older, I might want to see my file, to help me understand my life in care. So, be careful with what you write about me and my life- it might have a big impact on me, even years from now.

CARE PLAN MY PLAN

My plan is all about how the adults in my life will keep me safe and help me to grow. It includes things like where I'm going to live, about my education, which dentist I'll go to, when I'll get my eyes tested, and lots more. It talks about my hobbies and interests, and the activities I'm taking part in. It also talks about my family, and when I'll get to spend time with them.

PATHWAY PLAN MY PLAN

My plan is all about how I'm going to move on from care. It includes things like where I'm going to live, about my education, my health and wellbeing, and lots more. It helps me set goals and ambitions, and what support I need to reach them. It's all about me and my life beyond my time in care.

WHERE I LIVE

Young people in care live in different types of homes, with different people caring for them. It's important that how these homes and people are described make us feel welcome and valued.

PLACEMENT WHERE I LIVE / MY HOME

Do you live in a house? Or maybe in an apartment? Is it a bungalow, or a cottage, or a flat? Is it a placement?

You don't talk about where you live as a placement, so why talk about where I live as a placement?

It's the place I go to sleep every night, and where I wake up every morning. It is where I do my homework, play games, and have my dinner. It's where my toothbrush and pyjamas are. It's where I live.

FOSTER PLACEMENT WITH MY FOSTER FAMILY

Some children in care live with a family they aren't related to. This is their foster family.

When talking about where I live, it helps to talk about who I live with. So, instead of saying I live 'in a foster placement', talk about how I live 'with my foster family'.



KINSHIP PLACEMENT >>> **WITH MY ...**

Kinship is a really old-fashioned word. Most people only say 'kin' when singing that song at Christmas! And most don't know what it means. Instead of saying I live 'in a kinship placement', talk about how I live 'with my grandparents' or 'with my aunt and uncle', or whoever it is that I live with.

RESIDENTIAL UNIT >>> **(CHILDREN'S) HOME**

Some children and young people in care live together in a children's home. Each home is different, but usually there are a small number of children, who are cared for by a team of adults who work at the home. Remember, while there are people who work there, for the young people who live there it is their home. Does 'residential unit' sound very homely? Better to call it a children's home, or just a home.

SECURE CARE CENTRE >>> **SAFE PLACE**

Sometimes I need extra help to keep me safe. I might be doing something that is dangerous, that might cause hurt to me or others around me. When this happens, I need to stay somewhere where I can be kept safe and supported.

RESPITE >>> **TIME AWAY / BREAK**

Respite doesn't mean much to anyone who hasn't been in care. When I tell people I'm going 'on respite' they have so many questions that I don't always want to answer. So, instead of calling it respite, I prefer to say I'm 'having time away' or I'm 'going on a break'.

SUPPORTED LIVING >>> **MY FLAT**

Supported living sounds like a place old people live. I'm just setting out on my own, but I need a little help where I live. But, it's just my flat.



MY FAMILY

Everyone has a family. Often, we think of families as being a mum, dad and children who all live together in the same house. But families are changing, and who we think of as our family is changing too.

Children and young people in care have lots of different families. Sometimes we have good relationships with our mum, dad, brothers and sisters. Sometimes we grow up seeing people we're not related to as part of our family. What we call them is up to us and them. If you're confused, just ask.

CONTACT FAMILY TIME

Contact is a strange word. Being 'in contact with someone' could mean anything from a daily phone call or text, through to a postcard once a year.

For you, Contact might be just a date in the diary for when I meet up with people I know. For me, this is my time with my family. It's my Family Time.

It's a time when I can see my mum, my dad, my brothers and sisters, and my grandparents.

I really look forward to seeing them and spending time with my family.

Contact sounds boring, but Family Time is fun and exciting.



SUPERVISED CONTACT SUPPORTED FAMILY TIME

I understand that, sometimes, other adults need to be there when I am spending time with my family. But, calling it Supervised makes me feel like I'm being watched and makes me worry about doing something wrong. I would rather think of it as Supported Family Time. You're there to support me to build better relationships with my family.

CONTACT WORKER FAMILY TIME VISITOR

A Contact Worker doesn't sound very friendly. Instead, I would prefer to call you a Family Time Visitor. You're there to visit with me and my family during our Family Time. That would make me feel more comfortable and happier to have you there when I'm spending time with my family.

FOSTER MUM / DAD / FAMILY CARER(S)

What I call the people I live with who care for me is up to me and them. Sometimes, I might call them my foster carers, or my foster parents. I might say foster mum or foster dad. But, I might just refer to them as my carers, my parents or my mum or dad. I might not call them anything other than their name. Using the word carers is a good start, but what words I use might be different to what other young people you support use. Just ask us and we'll keep you right.

CHILDREN'S HOME STAFF CARER(S) / THE ADULTS WHERE I LIVE

Where I live is a place of work for some people, but calling them staff makes it sound cold and unfriendly. The adults where I live are there to care for me, so calling them carers better describes what they do. I might use lots of different words and phrases to talk about them. A good place to start is talking about the adults where I live, but be sure to ask me what words I want to use.

SIBLINGS BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Siblings is a strange word. No one else in my class talks about their siblings. They're my brothers and sisters.

BIOLOGICAL / BIRTH PARENTS / FAMILY ASK US

Young people come into care for lots of different reasons. Sometimes it's because we weren't being treated right at home, and sometimes it's because our parents weren't able to look after us and keep us safe. Sometimes, it's because our parents have died and there's no one else to care for us.

Why we come into care can have a big impact on how we see whoever cared for us before coming into care. And, that can change what words we want to use to talk about those people.

Because all our experiences are so different, it's best to talk to us individually about how we want you to talk about our biological/birth parents and families.

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Remember, the best word to use when talk to or about me is my name. We need you to make changes to the words and phrases you use every day. Don't worry if you get it wrong at the start, or if you're not sure what to say.

As time moves on, the words and phrases will change again. We need to keep looking at what we say, and how we say it, and keep changing it up to make sure everyone feels included and welcome.

“ Above all, remember to talk to us, get to know us, and we can show you how it works. ”

For more information on VOYPIC's Language of Care project, visit www.voypic.org/languageofcare



NOTES



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POWER OF
WORDS

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Get in
touch

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