

# Introducing the care experience to your students

## The Care Dictionary

### What is the care system?

The 'care system' refers to the system and structures in place to support children and young people who are in the care of their Local Authority.

Children in the care system might be 'placed' by the Local Authority to live with another relative, a foster carer, or a children's home.

The care system is often referred to as a 'corporate parent'. This means it is the collective responsibility of the Local Authority to provide the best possible care for a child they look after.

### What does it mean to be 'in care'?

Children and young people are taken into the care of the Local Authority when they cannot remain at home. This is because their parents are unable to look after them.

A child or young person may be taken into care because their parents may be unwell, temporarily unable to look after them, or it may be unsafe for the child to stay in the home. It is never a child's fault that they are taken into care.

## **'Care-experienced'**

Anyone who has been in care is 'care-experienced'. Being care-experienced is challenging, but with the right support, care-experienced people can thrive.

## **'Looked After' child**

The technical term for an individual in the care system, and a label we try our best to avoid as many children and young people prefer 'child in care'.

## **Social worker**

The individual professional from a Local Authority who a young person in care should have regular contact with and receive regular support from. Visits should be at least every 6 weeks, but it could be more depending on the young person's needs and wishes. Young people's social workers often change frequently throughout their time in care and young people often tell us they haven't seen them enough.

## **Care leaver**

Many young people in care become 'care leavers' at age 18 when they are made to leave the care system and, often, leave their placements. This can happen earlier for some young people, who 'leave care' at 16 or 17 and live in independent or semi-independent accommodation.

## **Care Cliff**

Together with young care leavers, we coined the term 'Care Cliff' to describe how placements and support abruptly stop when young people are made to 'leave' the care system - at a crucial time in a young person's life when they need stability the most. Since 2020, we've run a campaign to #EndTheCareCliff.