

THE MAGAZINE
EVERYBODY
IS TALKING ABOUT!

Thrive

SPECIAL EDITION

FRIENDS AND
RELATIONSHIPS

BFF

Your
dilemmas
sorted

**TOP TIPS
FOR TOP
FRIENDSHIPS!**

Tweets 'n' Deets

What do you really
think about friendships?

**HOW DO I START
MAKING FRIENDS?**

I have to move to a
new foster home and
start a new school.
I hate feeling so alone!

- STOP WORRYING
- BE KIND TO YOURSELF
- FEEL-GOOD FIXES

The
Fostering
Network

Selena: *'She told me there was no rush to get a boyfriend. That good mates stuck around no matter what, even if they had boyfriends!'*



INCOMING MESSAGE

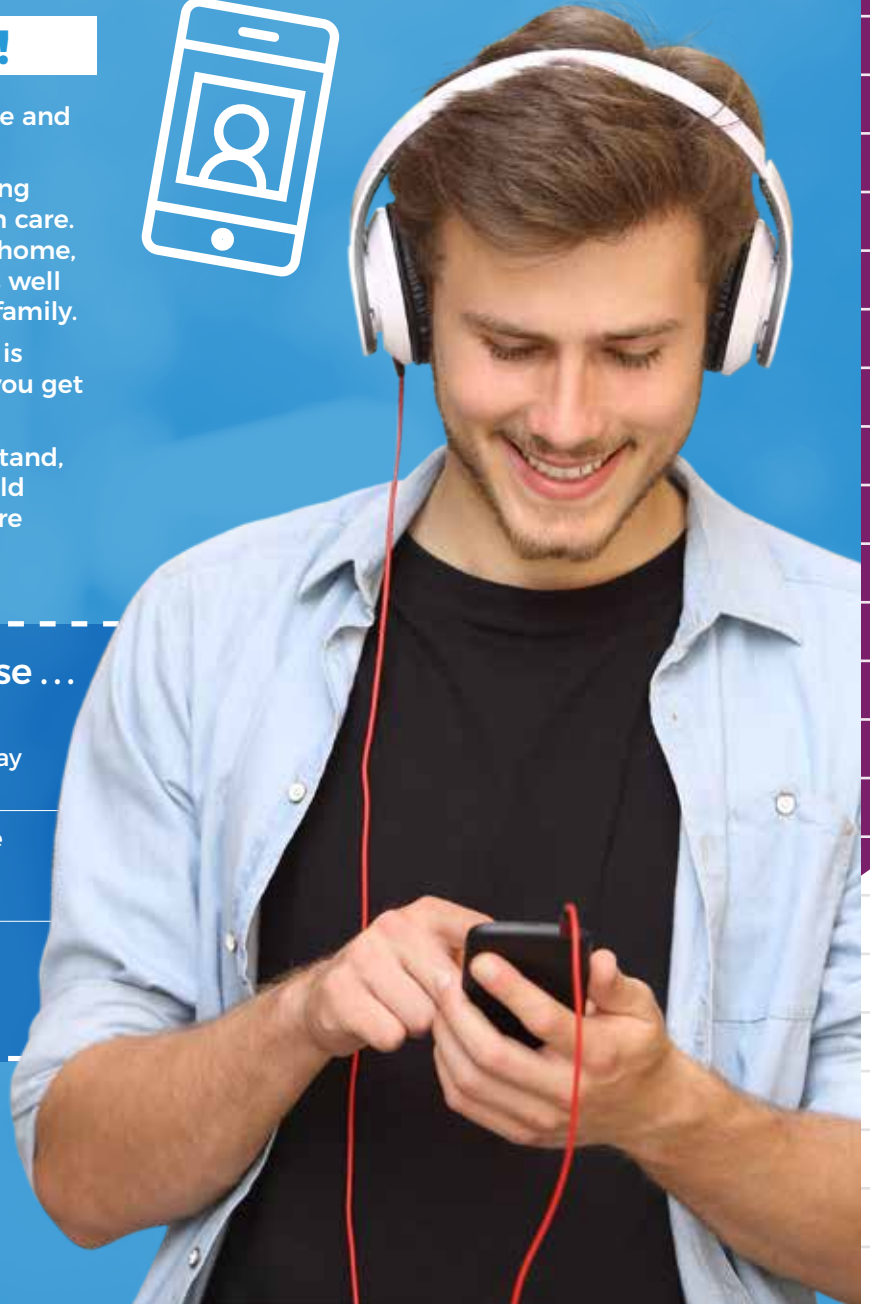
→ WELL HEY THERE!

The brand new issue of *Thrive* is here and it's all kinds of awesome.

You've told us that making and keeping friends can be harder when you are in care. Family changes can mean losing the home, school and friends you are used to, as well as seeing less of one or more of your family.

We are here to help you - this edition is packed full of tips and ideas to help you get the best out of your friendships.

You might feel like they won't understand, but friends can surprise you. You would definitely want to help people you care about, so why wouldn't they feel the same about you?



Friends are awesome because ...

- ✓ They spend time with you. Just being around your mates helps you to feel way more connected.
- ✓ They can talk things through. If you are stressed or feeling low, they can help and support you.
- ✓ They can spot changes in your mood. Mates that know you well will know you are not feeling your best.

This magazine has been written for you! What can we say?

Thrive is life! Enjoy!

Thrive xxx

GET IN TOUCH

The Fostering Network Wales

1 Caspian Point
Pierhead Street
Cardiff Bay
CF10 4DQ

☎ 029 2044 0940

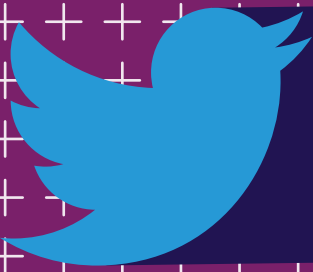
Editor: maria.boffey@fostering.net



A big up to...

...all the young care-experienced at NYAS and Whitchurch High School, Cardiff who shared their ideas and experiences with us.

When it comes to writing *Thrive* we try to share your smart ideas for solving problems. Who better to ask? You all live with the realities of being in care day in, day out. There's no doubt that without you, we wouldn't have the same understanding - we just couldn't do it. Thank you.



Tweets 'n' Deets

What do you really think about friendships?



Joe says: 'Try getting used to being in care. Talk to your foster carer and let them know something about the real you. You might be surprised if you give them a chance.'



Ellie says: 'To the bully who made my life hell because you found out I was in care, I'd like you to know how your nasty names made me stronger. You tried to make sure I felt left out but, hey, you didn't get to me. I didn't let you. I didn't want to be part of your 'gang'. Why would I want to be like you?!'



Tegan says: 'If you're fostered, don't forget there's lots of help out there. Don't ever feel alone.'

People can only help you as much as you let them. Reach out to your foster carer, or perhaps your favourite teacher and explain how you're feeling. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness.'



Tom says: 'Be a good friend to yourself and to others. It's good to get help, but even nicer to give it. Real friendship takes effort, but it's well worth it. My mates mean the world to me. We've been through a lot.'



Maddie says: 'Being fostered was the first time I felt I really belonged. I was part of something special. My foster family spoke to me, not at me. They want the best for me and they stand by me no matter what. It's a good feeling!'



Jason says: 'Listen to your true friends and tell them if something is bugging you. Think about any advice they give you, but always make your own mind up.'

TOP TIPS for top friendships!

▼ BFF goals!

- 1** Always be there for them. Look out for your mates.
- 2** Don't gossip about your bestie - you want to be trusted!
- 3** Keep your promises.
- 4** Be a good listener. There's nothing worse than someone checking out Instagram when they are also trying to share something important with you!
- 5** Have loads of fun! Do crazy stuff - making memories is so worth it!





Ask Cara!

Cara spills the tea on friendships!



Cara, 17, has lived with three different foster families and she has a lot to say about what makes a good mate.

What makes a good friend?

A good friend is someone who stands by you whatever. You can share your problems with a good friend and you can trust them.

How did you start making friends?

I met my best friend way back in primary school. I was so upset when I had to move twenty miles away in my teens to my new foster family. We still text and Skype all the time and try to see one another when we can. My foster carers were really good in helping us keep in touch and made sure that I spoke up at my reviews to ensure we could keep in contact.

That must have been hard! How did you go about making friends in your new place?

Finding someone with the same interests as you is always a good start. You can build from there. Sometimes the opposite is true though, as one of my very good friends is someone I took an instant dislike to at first! A frenemy!

I always try to make people think the best of me. I smile, take an interest in other people and include them in what's going on.

You have to be a friend to make a friend.

How do you know how far to trust friends?

Sometimes we make mistakes! (laughs)

Seriously, it's hard when you're in care to learn to trust people.

A good friend who I lent my fave jacket to never returned it. It was a hard lesson to learn. I also told a friend in confidence about the reason I was in care and she told others about it.

Choose your mates wisely and take time before you tell anyone important stuff about yourself that really matters. My foster dad always told me that saying no is okay.

Social media today, like Snapchat and Instagram, means that news travels fast! Make sure any news about you is good news. If anyone posts anything bad about you, ask advice on how to stop it straightaway. My foster carers were really good - I felt I could chat to them about anything without them judging me.

Did you ever have problems making friends?

Yeah, sure. I was always moving around a lot and got so fed up I stopped trying to make friends.

I shut down, but I realised that if I didn't make an effort to make friends neither would anyone else.

I thought that it was only me who had problems because I was in care. I'm no different to anyone else though!

So Cara, any top tips to share?

Feel good about yourself. Laugh - people want to talk to happy people. Look sour and you'll stay on your own.

Any last words?

Casual friends come and go. You learn who your real friends are. Good friends last a lifetime.

Talking to a good friend about your problems is always better than facing things on your own.



Making friends is easy. Keeping them is tough! Good friends are like gold.

Don't say: 'I can't.'

Say: 'I can't YET!'

Don't be too hard on yourself and give yourself a break. If you don't believe in yourself, how do you expect others to? Try these things to boost your confidence. They'll help in so many ways.

Need to know

Top Tips

Be yourself



- Don't try to be something you're not. People will see through you very quickly.
- Be positive. Give it a go!
- Don't worry what other people think about you. Most of the time they're thinking about themselves.

If at first you don't succeed



- Don't give up at the first hurdle. Keep trying until you get what you want.
- Act positive and you'll feel positive.
- Relax! Sometimes trying too hard makes things worse.
- Don't worry; there are lots who feel just like you!

Looking good, feeling good



- Make the best of what you've got. A winning smile goes a long way.
- Stand tall and be proud. Back yourself.
- Have a word with your foster carer and find clubs in your area that you'd like to join.

Your biggest worries



- Talk about your problem to a trusted friend. Don't ever suffer in silence.
- Being scared is understandable. Talk to your foster carer, teacher or school counsellor and say what is bothering you. Explain that it is in strictest confidence.
- At your review, if you don't feel you can talk, write it down, to help you.
- Use ChildLine for free and confidential support on 0800 1111.

Your first day in a new school



- Don't try too hard. Act naturally.
- Ask for a visit before you start, to show you around.
- Look out for people who look worried - just like you. Everyone has first day nerves.
- Listen and learn. It'll all seem strange at first, but will make sense eventually.
- Respect those around you. You'll earn respect back.
- Be the best you can be.

A Problem Shared



→ Ask Matt...

Got a PROBLEM?

Get an answer you can trust, right here.



Dream on

Q: All my friends have sleepovers. My foster carers says I can't go because she can't get my social worker to give her permission. I am so losing out and I feel very sad. What can I do?

Matt says: Being in care isn't always easy, but to feel that you are losing out and feeling sad, doesn't help you feel on top of things.

Remember, you should, as far as possible, be allowed to do (as long as your foster carers are happy) what your friends do.

Your local authority needs to agree with your foster carer on what's called a 'delegated authority statement'. This means that your foster carer can decide with you the who, what, when and where of any overnight stays.

To get things started, you could:

- Ask for a meeting with your social worker, asking why a delegated authority statement has not been agreed.
- Prepare a simple statement and send it to your IRO (aka Independent Reviewing Officer) saying you want this issue to be discussed at your next review.
- Ask your advocate to take this up with social services. If you do not have an advocate, you could contact Voices from Care on 029 2045 1431.
- Ask your foster carer to get in touch with your social worker to ask for a delegated authority statement to be agreed.

Way too hard to make friends

Q: How do I start making friends? I have had to move to a new foster home and new school. I hate feeling so alone!

Matt says: OK – everyone is new at some time in their life so stay chilled. Start with a smile! Try to show people that you want to be involved. There's plenty of things that can help. You're already in school so what about joining a club or team there? You don't have to be an expert, just show willing.

There are plenty of activities you can join that aren't connected to school, like youth clubs, drama groups or sports clubs. It's good to join in! Go for taster sessions. Just turn up and watch first of all, you never know you might really like it!

Once you can identify what is keeping you from making new friends, you need to work through these concerns. This can be painful because you will need to put yourself outside your comfort zone to see any real differences.

Find someone who shares the same interests as you and start talking. Remember other people are shy too and sometimes need you to make the first move.



Cash crisis

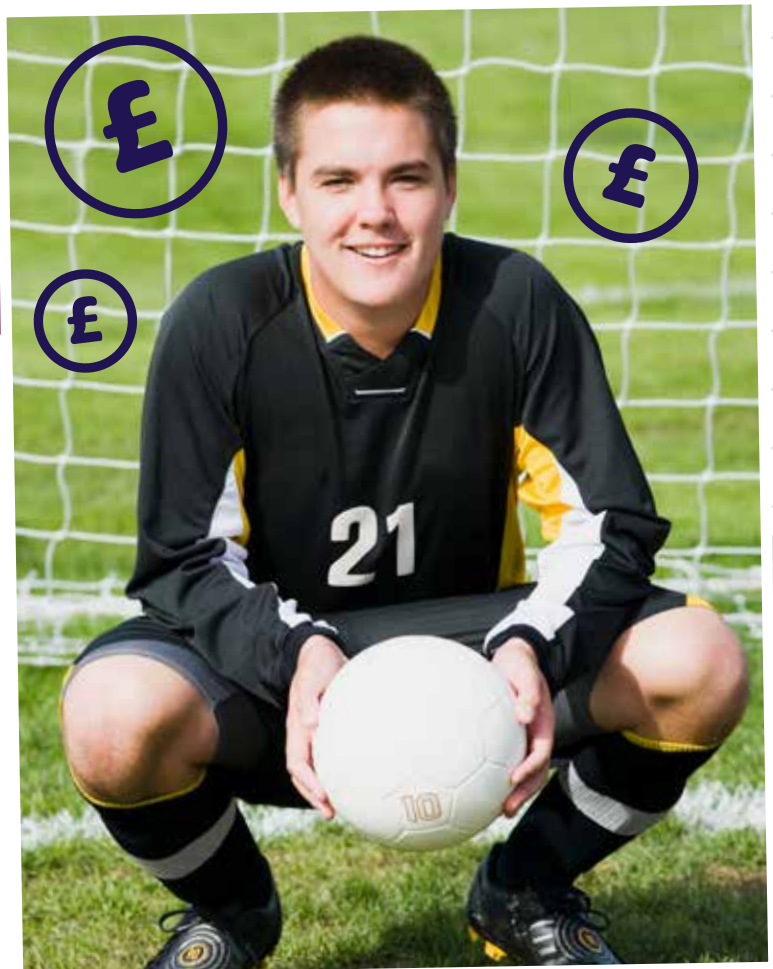
Q: I'm really good at football. All my friends say so. How do I go about joining a local club that doesn't cost too much? I feel guilty asking my foster mum for money to buy new kit. There was a lot of talk about my mobile costing too much at my last review.

Matt says: Don't be put off about money! It really shouldn't be an issue for you.

In terms of costs, you will want to have the right boots, kit and any subscriptions fees to join a club. Your foster carers receive a weekly allowance to meet the on-going costs of your care. Let your social worker know too, as the local authority has a legal duty to you, to meet any additional one-off costs such as boots and kit. It's worth finding out about this and make sure it's included in your review.

Now that's out of the way. Have you enquired about the school team? Most places have a sports or leisure centre running five-a-side teams. Ask for details from the sports assistants there. They'll also know about other local clubs who are looking for team members. Check online to look for footballing opportunities locally. Volunteer to help out with younger teams.

They'll always appreciate your skills.



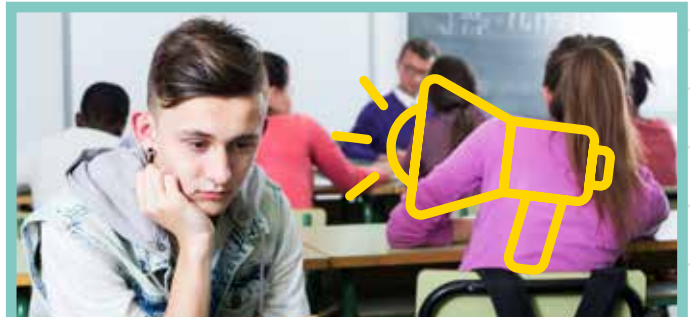
Can't Move on

Q: I thought I had it all, a fab school and loads of friends. Then my mum started drinking. I have had to move in with foster carers. It's as if my life just melted away. My new school is rubbish. I keep in touch with my friends, but nothing's the same. I really want to move back home and I have been told that won't be any time soon. I've tried to move on, but I can't.

Matt says: Moving to a new home and leaving all that you knew (and enjoyed) is stressful. All of these feelings are normal. Not comfortable, but very normal.

You don't say how long ago you moved, but with some effort and time to adjust, your new home can start to feel like a more comfortable place.

Your foster carers are there to support you and wouldn't want you to be this upset. Why not make it a goal to build a good relationship with them? Make an effort to talk about everyday stuff with them. When your foster carers feel connected to your daily life, they can be there for you, for the important things.



Nightmare bullies

Q: At school, a group have found out that I'm in care and have started bullying me. They make fun of me, call me names and make my life a misery. What should I do?

Matt says: Nobody deserves to be bullied. This is horrible.

First of all, and most importantly, TELL SOMEONE YOU TRUST. Remember bullies depend on your fear to stop you telling on them. They often pick up on insecurities, finding out what you feel less confident about, and then tease you about it. One reason why it's so painful is because it's so personal. You MUST talk to someone - whether it's your foster carer or your teacher. You will feel better, and together you can think of ways to beat the bullies.

Your school has a duty to protect you. Every school has an anti-bullying system in place, so please don't worry, as they are set up to deal with situations like this.

Good luck.

Be Yourself



Billy No Mates

I was always the odd one out and it really got to me. All my friends used online chat groups and they kept trying to get me to add, but my foster carer wouldn't let me!

I said the internet is great. She said it's not the real world! Aaagh!

I said it's a chance to meet new friends. She said 'Are those friends real? Are they always who they say they are? It's safer to talk to someone face to face.'

In the end, after a real 'live' chat between us (!) my foster carer and I have come to an agreement. She's right about not giving personal details online and I know to be careful with the words I use and the images I post.

She explained about the importance of privacy settings and passwords and I know she's doing it to protect me. We've come to an agreement together. It's all about the trust!

Jordan



Outside looking in

I had to start over at a new school. Everyone seemed to know everyone else and I felt so like the outsider. I talked to my foster carer who said I wasn't on my own and told me to start by talking to my teachers, telling them how I felt. Result!

They helped me by setting me up with classroom 'buddies'. It wasn't easy at first, I made rubbish excuses not to try, but finally it was...deep breath and join in!

Advice from a really cool teacher was, 'Don't push in but don't be pushed out!' Good call - I'm important too!

I'm settled now and just want to help others like I was. Pass the kindness on. Be a good buddy!

Maya



STOP!

Say buh-bye to friendship stress forever, we asked you for your top tips.



Respect yourself!

I'm sixteen and my new boyfriend is nineteen. He started to pressure me to do things I didn't want to do and now he's put nasty photos of me online. Am I worried? Totally! I'm destroyed! Why did he do this to me?

He told me he loved me. I hate feeling a fool like this. My friends said drop him now and that what he's doing is illegal. They've told me to get the online account blocked. I wasn't sure how to do this, but I talked to my foster carer and she was great. She understood. Now the photos and the boy have gone!

I'm better off without him if that's how he treats me.

Livvy



Gambling is a mug's game!

My older mates are into online betting and gambling. They do their best to get me to join in. Nah!!!

I haven't got much cash in the first place so why would I give it away? The betting companies always win in the end. They hustle you with great promises but any debt you rack up stays with you for the rest of your life.

My mates win occasionally and I can see why they then get hooked, but in the end they're the losers. They get sucked in and waste time - and more money - trying to win back the dosh they lost! They've got bills mounting up!

Not me - I ignore all the never-ending ads, hang onto my cash and any spare goes on something I can keep for me or to buy something nice for someone I like.

Olly



LONELY TOGETHER



||
Rushing into having a boyfriend just to impress your friends could leave you feeling awkward because you didn't make your own decisions.
||

→ SELENA:

I had never really thought about boyfriends until I moved in with my new foster carers and everyone in the class had a boyfriend or girlfriend. I started to feel left out and on my own. Then they started to tease me.

My BFFs were hanging out with the boys and I felt that they didn't want to know me anymore. I started to feel really down. I started to think there was something wrong with me because I was in care and that's why I didn't have a boyfriend. I was a pity child!

I spoke to my BFF Leanne and she set me up with her boyfriend's best friend, Josh. She thought she was doing me a massive favour, but all I really wanted was to spend time with friends.

Everyone was watching us. He came up to me in maths and asked if I would be his girlfriend so I said yes. At first, I was mega happy that somebody was interested in me. I was desirable! Me! I could finally feel normal. I hated being different. Everybody knew I was in care after being dragged out of history to see my social worker last term!

Don't get me wrong, Josh was nice enough. I didn't really want to chat to him cos I would have to tell him about being care. We didn't have much in common either - he just banged on about rugby and his Xbox. To be honest, it was mega awkward and boring. I was hanging out with him, so many rugby matches, when all I really wanted to do is be with my friends on the weekend. **I just wasn't ready for having a boyfriend. There was too much going on.**

He never messaged me back

Then I started to notice that Josh never messaged me back, and if he did I always felt I was being a nuisance and tagging on. In the end, Josh didn't have the guts to break up with me himself. He got Leanne to WhatsApp me when I was waiting for him at the cinema one afternoon. It didn't help that I had bragged to the whole class that we were going out on a mega date.

I felt so silly, that it was my fault - the care kid! Yet another rejection. **I started to miss school** because I was embarrassed and I was getting teased. It was all getting to me.

My new foster mum, Sian, heard me sobbing in bed one night. She knocked the door and came in to ask me what was wrong. She was so kind. I opened up to her and told her all about it. **Sian didn't judge me and she made feel so much better.**

|| I used to worry all the time that I wasn't one of the cool kids and that I wasn't good enough. Wrong - good friends build your confidence and stand by you. No one is perfect. Things do go wrong - but they go right too! Don't beat yourself up. Be kind to yourself. ||

She told me there was no rush to get a boyfriend. She said that I maybe wanted someone like Josh to feel pretty and wanted, and that was understandable. Things started to make sense when I thought about why I was after a boyfriend so badly.

Sian then pointed out that the pressure I put on myself was worse than the pressure from my classmates. Most of us have to deal with it at some point, but it's difficult when they brag about having boyfriends. She reminded me that not everything you hear is true. She said that some of my class could be exaggerating to make themselves look more experienced. She said that good mates stuck around no matter what, even if they had boyfriends!

So I've decided to wait until I'm ready. Not be forced to go out with somebody I didn't really like.

Sian has really helped me - she's let me have lots of BFF sleepovers and drops me off to youth club twice a week.

She has also had a word with school about my social worker popping in. We now meet after school.

I've learnt not to bottle things up and let Sian help me. Things are getting better.