

THE MAGAZINE  
EVERYBODY  
IS TALKING ABOUT!

# Thrive

Special Edition

**BEING IN CARE**  
SCHOOL AND YOUR  
EDUCATION

**No.1**  
FOR YOUNG  
PEOPLE IN  
**CARE**

A sprinkle of Advice

Bullying, Friendships,  
Reviews and School Woes

**YOUR SHOUT!**

You tell us what you  
really think about  
your education

**5** Ways  
to Make  
Mates

Hey, You!  
What's good  
about school?

HERE COMES

**Thrive**

**OMG! WARNING!**

THIS MAG CAN

BE SERIOUSLY

GOOD FOR YOU!

**REAL LIFE** with Jesy -  
'Go for what you want. Don't let  
anyone tell you that you can't do  
it, because you can!'

'I've had 15 social workers  
in just less than 5 years.  
I had one for just 2 weeks  
and I didn't even meet her!'

# Sweet Talk

## Hey Guys...

Well, knock us down with a feather, the new issue is here and we reckon it's all kinds of awesome.

Say hello to our AMAZING Agony Uncle Matt. Check out our mega interviews with Jesy and Deano. Also including our PERF advice for BFF friendships. Not forgetting a whole stack of #INSPIRING features, *Problems Shared* and *Your Shout!*

Why this special edition? Whether you love it or hate it, school is important. If you do well at school you will increase your chances of getting what YOU want out of life. But sometimes, if you are in care, school can be a slog. You might feel maybe that you are treated differently to everyone else. That some teachers don't have high hopes for you getting on. Perhaps, you are being bullied? Or you find it hard to make friends in a new school?

Hang in there. *Thrive* is here to help. This edition is packed full with tips and ideas to help you get the best out of school.

This magazine has been written for you!

What can we say? *Thrive* is life!

Enjoy!

*Thrive* xxx



# GET IN TOUCH

The Fostering Network *Thrive*

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# Ooh look!

There's a cheeky film about what you think about being in school and foster care.

Hands up - who's watched it?!

Visit:

[www.youtube.com/c/fosteringnetwork](http://www.youtube.com/c/fosteringnetwork)

Watch Us On  
**YouTube**



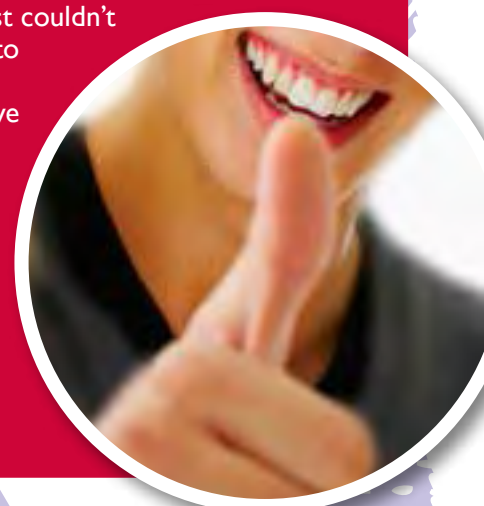
## A BIG UP...

All the young people across Wales who shared their smart ideas and experiences with us during the Summer of 2015.

You told us about some of the obstacles you face when trying to reach your goals. You told us what works... and what doesn't. You shared your über ideas about how to make things better. You told us about your plans for the future.

Without you we would not have the understanding - we just couldn't do it. When it comes to writing, we've tried to share the ideas you have for making education work for you. You all live with the realities of foster care and school, day in, day out. Who better to consult on what works well?

THANK YAAH!



# YOUR SHOUT!

We all know that the oldies take a peek at *Thrive*, now's your chance to tell them what you really think about...

## School support...

> **Tay says:** 'Teachers treat me different 'cos I'm care. They moved me down a set. I was more than capable of being in the top sets but they didn't think I could cope. It sucked'.

> **Luke says:** 'Being made to feel like an outcast because I'm in care. Not getting enough one-to-one support. And that makes me feel frustrated, lonely and vulnerable'.



## Welcome to the future...

> **Shelby says:** 'I'm choosing childcare for college. I want to work with kids in care when I'm older because I know what it's like. I can actually be one of those people who turn around and say I understand, and I actually do'.



> **Jaspar says:** 'What I want is just someone to be with forever when I'm older, just someone to be with. Someone who will look after me and I also want a family. I just want to have a family'.

## School moves...

> **Dani says:** 'Schools don't do the same topics at the same time, I went to one school where we finished a topic. Then I went to the next school and they had just started doing it! And I couldn't be excused, it sucked'. Grrrr!



## Foster carers...

> **Leah says:** 'My foster carer believed in me. She always told me that I could do it. When my teacher said I was not going to be able to do it, she used to say 'NO YOU CAN!' She was really supportive.



## Reviews...

> **Lewis says:** 'Meetings should be held outside of school, not just when it's convenient for the professionals. They never listen to me'.

> **Carly says:** 'They'd have my review in school time. I wanted to be part of it 'cos I want to find out what they're saying about me. So, I would have a day off and my school was brilliant. The social worker would ring a couple of days ahead and say: 'Carly is off because she's got a review'.



## School pick-ups...

> **Eddie says:** 'With after-school stuff, foster carers often can't give you a lift. There should be extra help with transport - support workers whose job is to make sure you get to where you want to go'.





# A Problem shared...

## Ask Matt...

### Got a PROBLEM?

Get an answer you can trust, right here.



## HAUNTED BY BULLIES

**Q** I'm being bullied 'cos I'm in care. I'm too scared to go to school. I've run out of excuses not to go. Please help me Matt.



**Matt Says:** How horrible for you. No one has the right to stop you from going to school. 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, 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. It's up to you, but please don't bottle up your feelings. They will work a way out to help you. I understand you're scared but believe me, you won't get in trouble – they will listen. 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.

If you really feel too scared to take that first step, then call ChildLine on 0800 1111 for free and confidential support. There's no need to suffer in silence. Good luck.

## EVERYBODY KNOWS MY BUSINESS

**Q** I hate being different and school doesn't help. It's mega cringe worthy. The teachers know really personal stuff about me - stuff they wouldn't know about other students. They don't treat me as normal. I get pity and false sympathy. Last week, my class walked past and could see me with my social worker. Now they are all asking questions – what can I do?

#cringe



**Matt Says:** As hard as it may be to believe, social workers want to make decisions about your life with your help. At times, you may disagree with them, but they **MUST** consider your wishes and feelings, and put your welfare before anything else.

The whole point of a review is that it should be 'driven' by you. You should be choosing the review agenda, the time and the venue.

### You could try:

- 1** Talking to an advocate about contacting the Independent Reviewing Officer (aka the IRO) to say that you would like to choose the time, date and venue of your next review.
- 2** Reminding your social worker that all paid staff have an obligation under the Data Protection Act to keep your information confidential. Ask your social worker to remind everybody, including the teachers, at your school.
- 3** If you still don't feel Social Services staff are listening to you, consider putting in an official complaint to Social Services (For details, check out your council's website).

# The *Thrive* Problem page

## OUT OF COUNTY BLUES

**Q** I'm what you all call an 'out of county kid'. My last review was awful. They all sat there arguing about who pays my transport, who pays for my schooling, etc. I feel that I'm a mega problem for everybody. I hate feeling like this.



**Matt Says:** You should not be made to feel that you are a problem. I'm sad to hear you feel like this. Your review is about you, your needs and the planning that is needed to support your ambitions for the future. Money is 'back-room' information that needs to be discussed AFTER you have taken part in your review.

You could try talking to the IRO and sharing your unhappiness about the 'business' of your placement interfering with your review. Tell them you want your next review in two parts. The first part must be about you, your needs and your future. Tell them that you will leave for the second part of the review that deals with the 'business' side of your fostering placement. If you still feel unhappy, then put in a complaint to Social Services.

## MY FRIENDS DON'T UNDERSTAND ME

**Q** Hi Matt. I could really do with your help. My best mates have changed since I have been in foster care. We used to be so comfortable talking about anything to each other. We talked all the time, even on Facebook. Now they only chat to me if I ask them a question. My friends mean everything to me but they don't seem to feel the same. They keep leaving me out of things.



**Matt Says:** Is it possible your friends feel a little left out with what has been going on in your life? Maybe they want to help but they don't want to appear nosy? Just try keeping them in the loop - but only tell them what you feel comfortable with. Making sure they know you appreciate their support and how much their friendship means to you would be a good place to start getting things back on track.

Maybe they don't know what fostering is about? Have you tried telling them you are still the great friend you were and that the only difference is that you live with another family for the time being rather than your birth family? Maybe your social worker has a leaflet about fostering you could give to them? Have you thought of sharing this with your foster carer? Ask them if you could invite your mates for a sleep-over so they can see for themselves that a foster home is no different from theirs.

## MY LAST TRY

**Q** I'm in the school rugby team and they're planning a rugby tour. Last time, my permission slip wasn't signed in time and I couldn't go. And there's training every week. My foster carer says I can't go as she has to make too many trips to school as it is. I'm thinking nobody will pay for me to go anyway. I don't want to give up rugby. It's the only thing I'm good at. Please help.



**Matt Says:** Social Services have a legal duty to support you in a full range of social, sports and community activities.

If it's your ambition to take part in a sport such as rugby then it should be clearly set out in your review. It should also include the cost of taking part, such as buying new kit, and attending training and games. When preparing for your review, make sure that you and your social worker put these costs together to present to the meeting. Once confirmed at the review, it is up to your social worker to get Social Services to confirm the amount of money required.

It's also good to remember that many families will find it hard to cover the costs of taking part in a sport or pastime. So, the more that you and your mates can work together, the more it cuts down on the costs for everyone. Talk to your team and coach about sharing lifts after training, or maybe borrowing a mini-bus to attend matches.

# A CHAT WITH DEANO!

Name: Deano

Age: 15

Fact: He likes fixing cars with his foster bro.

Another Fact: 'I've had 15 social workers in less than five years. I had one for just two weeks and I didn't even meet her!'

## So tell us Deano - how are you getting on at school?

'I like my school, though everyone says it's sooooo boring! Sure thing, but you have to go to school to get what you need for the future don't you?'

## Have you got exams soon?

'Yeah, I've got my first ever GCSE soon, so I'm busy revising. Eek! I'm doing them at school but I go to college one day a week too.'

## So what course are you doing at college?

'Motor vehicles. It's mega, it gives me the same as an extra four GCSEs! I want to be a mechanic when I'm older, so it helps me do what I want to do.'

## You want to be a garage mechanic?

'Yeah. I help my foster brother a lot with his car. We teach each other. A right laugh.'

## So it's your foster brother that you got interested in cars?

'Yeah, though I've always liked cars ever since I was little. So when the college courses started opening up for me I thought: 'Let's go and do something I enjoy.' I was really nervous before the interview but I got through it, and got accepted onto the course.'

## Is college better than school?

'I think so - you get treated way differently. In school, you have to be in certain places at certain times, but in college you have more freedom. You get treated like an adult.'

We get a cheeky peek into the life of Deano as he spills the beans on school and other stuff. School, College, Cars and foster carers. It's all here!

## Do you have everything you need for school and college?

'Well, I've finally got a laptop, LOL. I've been asking one for ages. Social Services kept saying 'No'. My foster carers have been chasing it. They eventually gave a laptop to me just before half-term.'

## Thrive on Foster Carers...

Talk about everyday stuff with your foster carers – AND DO IT EVERY DAY! It builds a bond that can smooth the way for times you need to ask them something difficult. When they feel connected to your daily life, they can be there for you when something really mega comes up.



## Sounds like your foster carers are very supportive?

'Yeah, they really are. I've only been with them six months, but they do everything they can to help me with school stuff and seeing my Mum.'

When I wasn't getting anywhere with the social workers my foster carer said: 'Oh! I'm just going to have to sort something out.' And she did!

## What about your mates?

'I only tell my close mates that I'm fostered. We tell each other everything, like when we are worried about things and stuff. So that's good.'

## Thrive on talking about YOU...

People are negative about being fostered they don't know what it's like. You might find that talking about it makes it less of a big deal. But... it's completely up to **YOU** who you tell and when. If you would rather that other people didn't know, make this clear to your designated teacher. It's up to you.



Great. Well, thanks for talking to us Deano - we'll leave you to your revision now!

'Ha Ha! – I think I'll have a night off tonight!'

# What's good about school?

## Check out our SCHOOL-OMETER!



### School can help you forget you're in care.

'I always have good days in school... just having, doing normal lessons and being with my friends. Sweet'.



### When somebody shows you they care.

'My head of year stayed with me three hours after school finished when Social Services were trying to find a placement for me. It meant a lot that he went out of his way just to help me'.



### When school and foster carers come together and help you.

'I like it when teachers praise me and tell my foster carer on parents evening. Teacher: 'Oh good, you're trying your best every time'. My foster carer: 'I'm so proud of you because you've done really well in school'.



### Having everything you need for school.

'My foster carers bought everything. Sucksack, books, pens, everything I needed'.



### Everyone expects so little of you.

'Some people look at us and say: 'They're in care, they're going to fail'.



### Feeling different.

'Being made to feel like I'm an outcast. Just 'cos you're in foster care doesn't mean you're some pity child!'

### Taking you out of class.

'My social worker would take me out of a class in front of everyone. She'd wait until it was my favourite lesson as she knew that I'd be there. GRRRRRRR!'



### Missing out and it's not your fault.

'I found moving around schools hard. I was always trying to catch up'.





# 5

Things Nobody Tells You About Making and Keeping Friends... It's All Here!

Whether it's a new school, a new class or a new foster family, we'll always have to deal with those super-awkward and scary first days making friends - but once you get over the first hurdle, you will be well on your way to Friendsville (*that's not a real place btw-ed*). **#sorted**

## #1

**Moved placement. Started a new school.  
I don't know anyone.**

OK – everyone is new at some time in their life so stay chilled. Maybe you like swimming, Tae Kwon-do, drama or music?

Find out if your school has any clubs at lunch times and join in. It's a good way to make new friends quickly 'cos you all have something in common. Go on – just do it!

## #2

I don't see the point in trying to make friends. I'm always movin' around. I'm always let down. I'm fine on my own.

Well, if that's really true, then no sweat. But most of us rely on our friends to support us. They can be there for you when times are tough and even protect you from bad things like bullying. And they can be a laugh! One good real-life friend is worth more than a million FB likes. And also worth the effort don't you reckon?





# #3

**I don't know how to start talking to somebody new.**

Well... remember you're new to them too. Look them in the eyes and smile! 😊 Ask them their name. Look interested and listen to what they say. They will like you being interested in them. Make a promise to yourself that you will talk to at least one new person a week for ten weeks. You'll be surprised at who you might find you like... and who likes you. Sweet.



# #4

**I'm not cool enough to hang out with the cool kids.**

So this cool thing is all a bit bonkers really. The so-called cool kids don't always make the best mates, 'cos they're so busy trying to be cool they don't really have time to think about other people.

And if you find the right friends, there's a good chance they'll think you're pretty cool. And that's what counts right?

So stop worrying about who is or isn't cool and find the one or two people you like. **#beyourself**



# #5

**My foster carers live a long way from school. I don't see any school friends in the evenings or on weekends.**

Then make some more friends outside school. There are plenty of activities you can join that aren't connected to school, like youth clubs, drama groups or sports clubs. You could also think of helping out local charities – they are always keen to find more young volunteers. Ask your foster carer or social worker to find out what's in your area. Volunteering is a great way of meeting new people and can be good fun too. Give it a shot! YOLO.



# True Life

## - Hey Jesy!

**It's Jesy's turn to get a grillin' this issue.**

Jesy, 19 grew up in care. She tells us why things got so bad at school and how university has turned her life around...



*'My school hated my piercings and they kicked me out. It was tough for a while, but I got myself back on track... and now life is sweet!'*

### School and being in care - What's it like?

'I went to a pretty horrible school. It was strict. I had a load of piercings done so I spent a lot of time being excluded for the way I looked. My social worker didn't help much either. She made it so obvious that I was in care by coming and getting me out of lessons.

### What was good about school?

Well, I liked the music lessons and trips. LOL. My RE teacher was fab - I could just go and like speak to her. It kinda felt that I was being listened to.

### So how did it get so bad?

It started with the piercings. No-one really bothered to listen to me. In the end, I thought: "Well I'm going to do what I want then!" So I was kinda causing trouble. It wasn't long before I got kicked out. They did let me back though to do my GCSE's tho.

### What happened after that?

I started sixth-form college, but the subjects were really hard. It got too much. I also moved into semi-independent living. I was surrounded by people drinking and doing other stuff. So I kinda of fizzled out, took the rest of the year off and started drinking too.

### That's really tough. But you're in university now and really happy. How did you turn things around?

I went back to college and did an awesome BTEC in Theatre. I only went back to get free bus travel, but by the time I'd done a week there, I decided I wanted to stay!

My tutor was amazing and I was living with a mate by then who went to the same college. I was thinking I could maybe get to uni, so I went to a different college afterwards to do my AS Levels.

### What's so good about university then?

I've been in uni for two years now and the tutors are really kind to care leavers. I'm a student ambassador and I do volunteering. It's so good being in an atmosphere full of people who are trying to do something with their lives.

### Do you think young people in care are put off going to uni?

Yeah. Everyone kept saying: "Kids in care don't go to university." Even other care leavers would say: "Why are you even bothering? Everyone knows that we don't get anywhere."

### Any top tips?

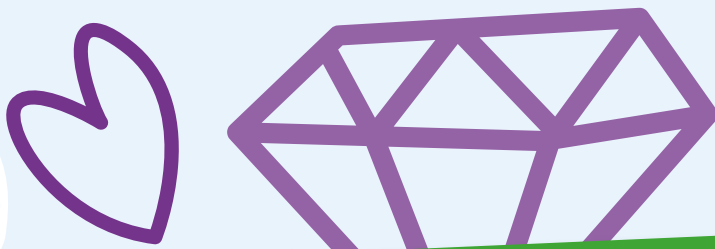
Yep... don't give up on school, hang on in there. Things have changed since my school days. It's now much easier to get support, and universities are more switched on about helping care leavers. So talk to your foster carer about your plans and make sure you let everybody at your review know too.

### Who's the last person you WhatsApped?

My BFF from home, we talk every single day. She sends so many pictures and I love it! ❤️

### Final word?

Go for what you want. Don't let anyone tell you that you can't do it, because you can!



*'My former foster carer said: 'You're going to be that 1%' who go to uni? And I don't know, it kind of just put a little bit of more belief in me. It just made me want to do it that little bit more!'*