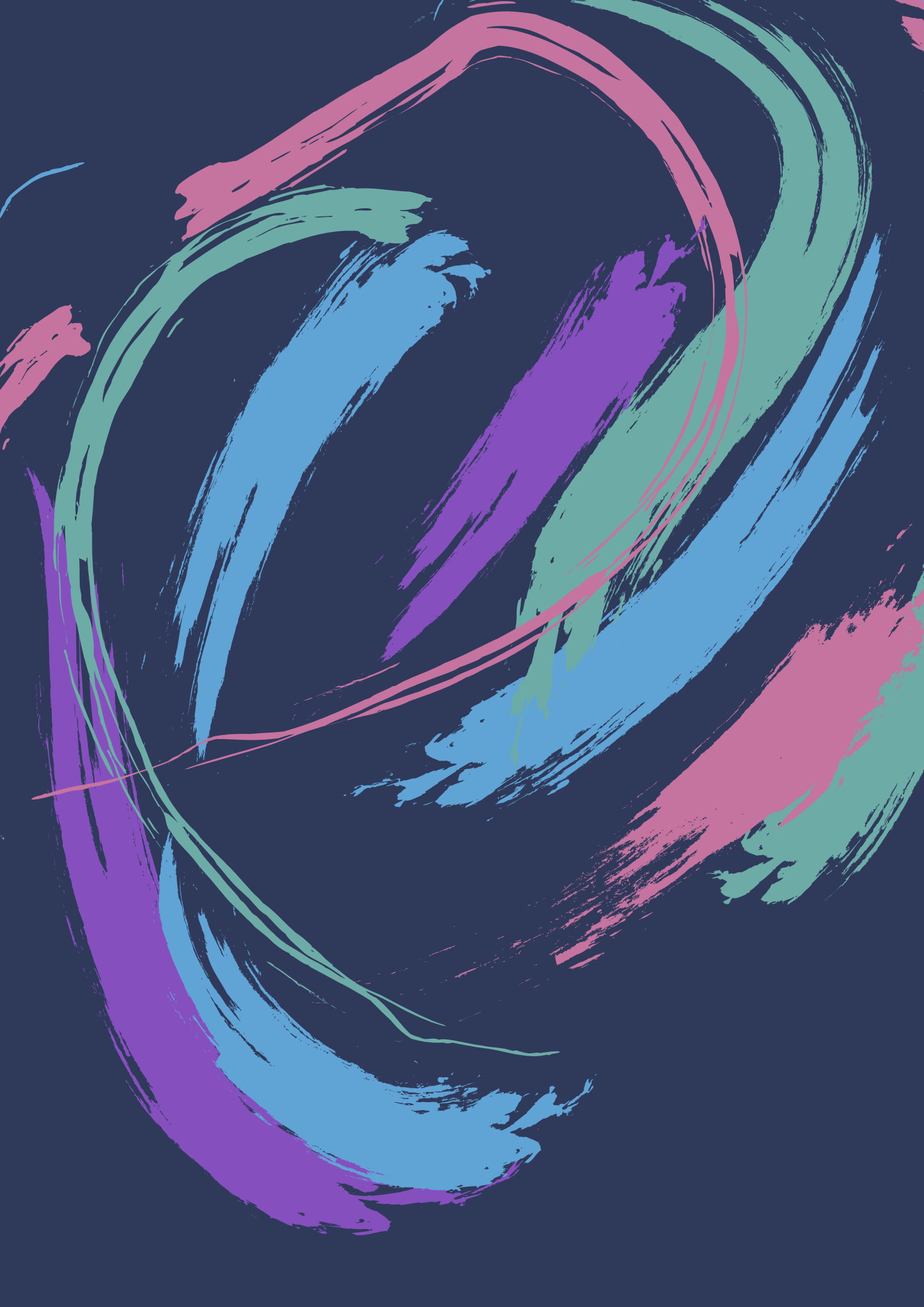


YOU ARE NOT ALONE

A booklet by
Show Me That I Matter
York's Children in Care Council





"Open Book"

Sometimes life is good in care,
But at first it gave me a scare,
I did not know why I was there,
Sometimes I feel it's just not fair.
Once my feelings had been spoken,
And I realised I wasn't broken,
I used to show no emotion,
But now the pages of my book are open.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

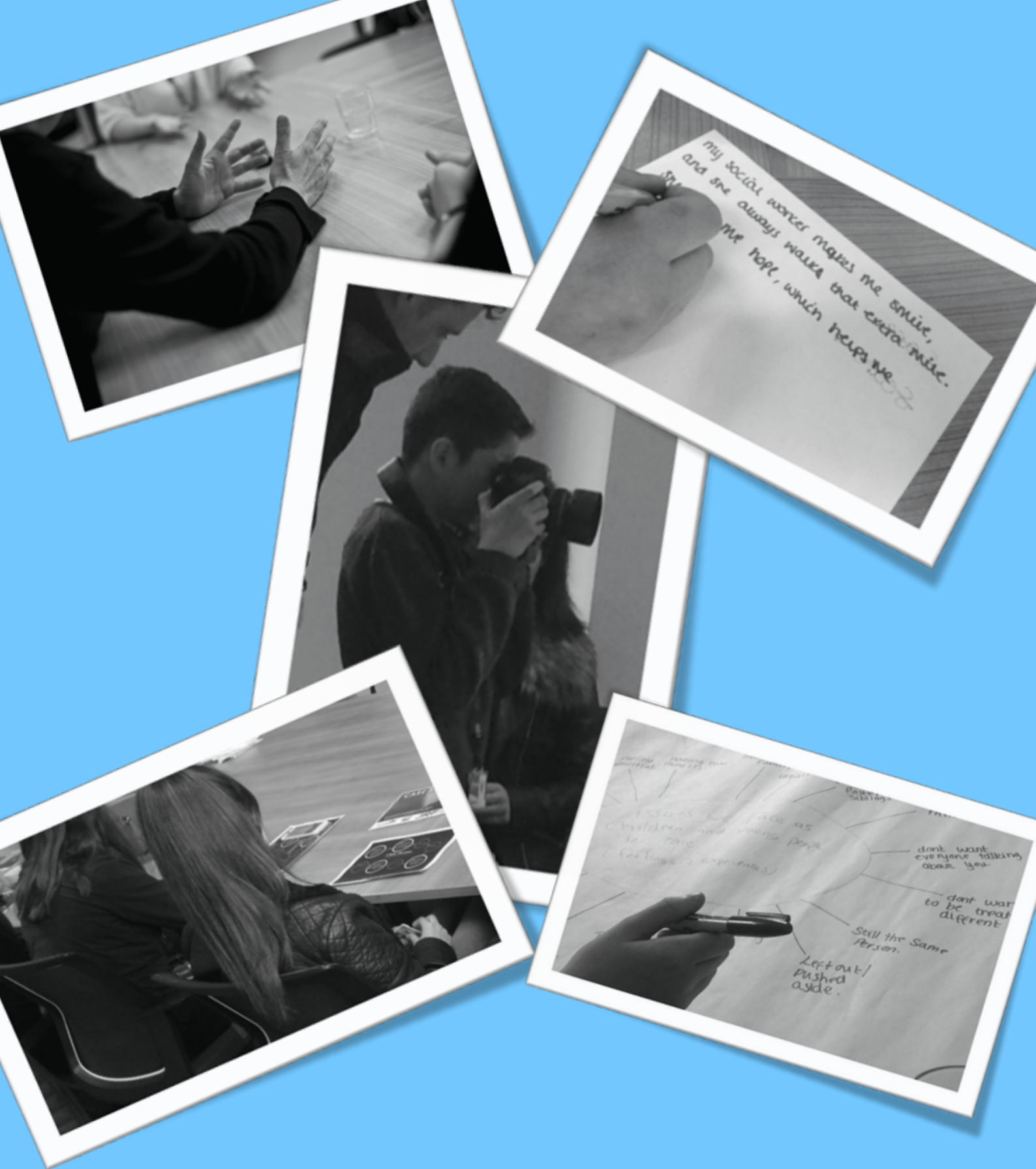
Show Me That I Matter is the name of York's Children in Care Council; they are a group of young people who all have experience of being in care in York. One of the things they wanted to do was to help other young people in care understand the feelings and emotions they might experience when coming into care.

We ran a series of workshops with Inspired Youth where young people had the opportunity to develop their creative writing skills and were encouraged to talk about some of the difficult feelings they had experienced and what they had found helpful. The group came up with important messages that they wanted to share through this booklet with other young people so that they know that they are not alone and who they might talk to about some of the difficult feelings they may experience.

"You are not alone, other people have experienced the same feelings and there is help out there."

A young person in care

*** You can find out more about Inspired Youths projects by going to their website www.inspiredyouth.org**



With thanks to the following young people :
Katie, Mel, Leon , Shinad, John, Natasha,
Megan, Millie, Amy , Shelly, Katie and Jade

COMING INTO CARE

We know that coming into care can be really difficult and sometimes it's really hard to understand why. Young people tell us that they often find it hard to feel part of a new family and that settling into a new home, getting to know the people that live there and understanding the house rules can often leave them feeling unsettled. Managing your feelings about being separated from your own family and missing parents, brothers and sisters are normal feelings to experience.

Advice from Young people

It's ok to miss your family – but it's important that if are feeling upset you talk to your social worker, foster carer or key worker who can give you the right support. They might not have gone through what you have but that doesn't mean they can't help.

Talk to your social worker, foster carer or key worker and ask them to help you understand the house rules.

Ask your social worker about Life Story Work; it's really important and helps you to understand why you have come into care.

Life Story work is a record of your life in words, pictures and photos. It is made by you with an adult and is yours to keep. It can help you better understand the things that have happened in your past, your family and the reasons why you have come into care.

YOUR IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS

We know that it is really important for you to continue to have a relationship with your family. When you first come into care how often you see your family will be discussed when your care plan is agreed and usually at each review you have.

When you are due to see your family you may have really mixed emotions. You may feel excited, nervous and anxious at the same time. You may worry about how your family are, especially if you helped look after them.

Sometimes things don't go smoothly and for whatever reason you may not be able to see a member of your family. If this happens you may be feeling sad, disappointed and confused but your social worker, foster carer or key worker will be able to help you understand why this may be.

It is important that however you are feeling you find someone who you trust to talk to.

Advice from young people

Talking to your carers can really help.

I was really worried about my sister; it helped me to talk to her over the telephone.

Certain times of the year can be particularly difficult; Christmas for example or Mother's Day / Father's Day. Talking to people about how you're feeling can really help during these difficult times.

When you have a brother or sister who is adopted it can be especially hard. Everyone's situation will be different but it may be possible to still have some contact after an adoption. The most common form of contact is called 'letterbox contact'. This is an exchange of letters, usually once or twice a year which sometimes takes place between birth family and an adoptive family.

If this is something you want to know more about it is important that you talk to your social worker who will be able to help you understand what arrangements may be in place and why.

YOUR EXPERIENCES

If you have experienced difficult things before coming into care these can stay with you in lots of different ways. Some young people find it really hard to trust adults or believe what they are saying. For other young people it may affect different areas of their lives such as sleeping (having nightmares or a poor sleeping pattern), eating (eating too much too quickly or hoarding food) or how they feel about themselves. You may feel really angry but not know why. There are lots of reasons why you might have missed out on a lot of play opportunities, sometimes because of this you might want to do activities or play with games that are for younger children and that's totally fine.

Advice from young people

I used to hoard food under my bed because when I was at home I didn't know when I would next get food. I eventually talked to my foster carer who helped me with this.

I remember playing with my Polly Pockets – people thought I was too old for them but I'd never got the chance to play with them before

YOUR IDENTITY

Knowing who you are and being confident in yourself can sometimes be harder for young people living in care, because of all the extra things you may be thinking about. Young people tell us that they worry about things like being safe and secure , who to trust and whether they will be able to have positive relationships in the future, even what they will be like as an adult or a parent. This can affect your relationship with lots of people such as foster carers, teachers other workers and friends. There are lots of people around you to help you make sense of everything.

Advice from young people

You might feel scared that people will judge you when you are older – you don't need to tell people – it's up to you!

It's so hard – I use to worry about telling my school friends; that if we fell out they would have all my secrets. However once I plucked up the courage to tell a few trusted friends it really helped me.

Coming into care was really scary at first, but now I can see that it was to help me and it's ok.

MENTAL HEALTH

We know that young people in care are more likely to experience difficulties with their mental health because of the experiences before coming into care and all the different emotions and feelings that leaving your family can leave you dealing with.

What is mental health?

Mental health is about our feelings, our thinking, our emotions and our moods. Looking after our mental health is important.

There are key times in your life that you might find more difficult than others, such as important events or exams. Exam stress can be really difficult and it is important that you know there is lots of help available to help you manage how you are feeling and reduce some of the pressures.

There are lots of resources on line and your school / college will be able to help you find coping techniques that work for you.

We all have small feelings everyday; these sometimes feel strong and overwhelming but they go away before too long. Sometime we experience big feelings; these can feel strong and overwhelming for a long time and can stop us doing what we want to in our lives.

Anxiety

Feeling anxious sometimes is normal – most people worry about something – our body tells us we are anxious through the feelings we experience. These feelings are different for each person. If your anxiety stops you from doing everyday things and the things that you enjoy doing it can leave you feeling unhappy. It's important that you find someone you can trust to talk to.

Depression

We all feel low or down at times but if your negative feelings last a long time it is important that you talk to someone about how you are feeling, particularly if you are feeling irritable, upset, miserable or lonely for long periods of time or not wanting to do things that you previously enjoyed.

Self Harm

Self harm is when you hurt yourself on purpose. It can be very difficult to talk about and you may feel that no one will understand. But there is lots of advice and support out there.

If you are having feelings of self harm or suicidal thoughts it is important that you don't ignore the feelings .You must find someone you can trust to talk to.

Advice from Young people

It might be hard talking about it but please try.

Find an adult you trust to talk to.

You might think people won't understand because they've not been through what you have, but try talking to them and build up the trust.



LOCAL SUPPORT

Young Peoples Services @ 30 Clarence Street

There may be times when you feel like you need advice or support about any aspect of life, or would like to know about services that can help you. The team at 30 Clarence Street can provide information and signpost you to services in the city that may be able to help you , including access to in house counselling services.

You can contact the team at Clarence Street on :
01904 555400 / text 07624802244

The School Wellbeing Service

This is a school based early intervention mental health service. They work with children and young people and school staff to offer early support to young people experiencing mental health issues. Please talk to a teacher if you would like to know more about how the school well being service could support you.

IDAS York

This service can offer one to one support and groups for children and young people. They are also able to provide support for young people who are starting to be abusive.
www.idas.org.uk

York Mind

Young Peoples Service aims to support people aged 8-16 who are experiencing difficulties with their mental health, through a variety of 1-1 mentoring and group support.
www.yorkmind.org.uk

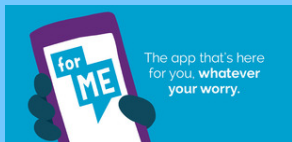
HELPLINES AND APPS



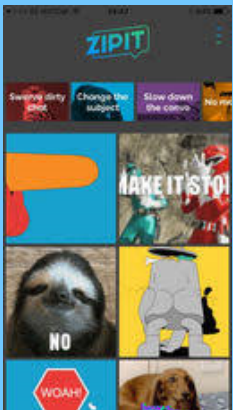
Childline is a private and confidential service for children and young people up to the age of nineteen.

FREEPHONE : 0800 1111

www.childline.org.uk



'For ME' is the brand new way to get advice and support on loads of topics – from issues that can play a big part in everyone's life, like school and exam stress, through to extremely personal issues, such as self-harm and mental health.



Zipit' is a brand new app from Child line that offers information about staying safe on line.

The Mix is an online guide to life for 16 to 25 year-olds. It provides non-judgmental support and information on everything from sex and exam stress to debt and drugs.

www.themix.org.uk

FREEPHONE: 0808 808 4994

Beat

Information, help and support for anyone affected by eating disorders

www.b-eat.co.uk

FREEPHONE : 0808 801 0711 (Young People)

0808 801 0677 (Adults)

Talk to Frank

Friendly, confidential advice on drugs. Chat facility, phone line. Live chat, email, phone and text service.

www.talktofrank.com

0300 123 6600

Kooth

Free, safe and anonymous online support for young people

www.kooth.com

Mood Juice

The site is designed to offer information and advice to those experiencing troublesome thoughts, feelings and actions. From the site you are able to print off various self-help guides covering conditions such as depression, anxiety, stress, panic and sleep problems.

www.Moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk

Young Minds

Provides information and advice on all aspects of young peoples mental health

www.youngminds.org.uk

Papyrus

Papyrus provides confidential support and advice to young people and anyone worried about a young person. They run a national helpline, including text and email services, staffed by a team of mental health professionals who provide practical help and advice to vulnerable young people and to those concerned about any young person who may be at risk of suicide.

www.papyrus-uk.org

FREEPHONE: 0800 0684141

Text : 07786 209697

Samaritans

The Samaritans offer a safe place for you to talk any time you like, in your own way – about whatever's getting to you.

www.samaritans.org

FREEPHONE: 116 123 (24 hours a day, 365 days a year)

Cruse Bereavement Service

Cruse offers face-to-face, telephone, email and website support for any one affected by bereavement

They have a national helpline and local services, and a website and freephone helpline specifically for children and young people. Services are provided by trained volunteers and are confidential and free

FREEPHONE - 0808 808 1677

Young People's website - www.hopeagain.org.uk

SPEAK UP

York's Children's Rights and Advocacy Service

An advocate can:

Put young people's views forward for them or help them speak up for themselves.

Help young people work out what they want and how to say it.

Help young people be part of any decisions about their care or future.

Help young people prepare for meetings, such as reviews.

Make sure young people have information about their rights and services.

Support young people to make a complaint if things can't be sorted out any other way.

If you are unhappy and would like to talk to an advocate, call or text us on:

07769 725174

Email us: speakup@york.gov.uk

Messages from young people

Get involved with as much as you can, it helped me realise I wasn't on my own

Try not to be afraid, it gets better

Don't feel guilty; it's not your fault

Ask questions if you are unsure and don't be afraid

Don't be scared about coming into care, it's really not as bad as you think

"Keep looking up, keep going strong, do what you want to do and don't let anyone keep you from aiming high and achieving your goals!

Everything will be okay, you might not think it now but if you stay optimistic about your future, your life line will soon become clear and everything will work out"

Natasha