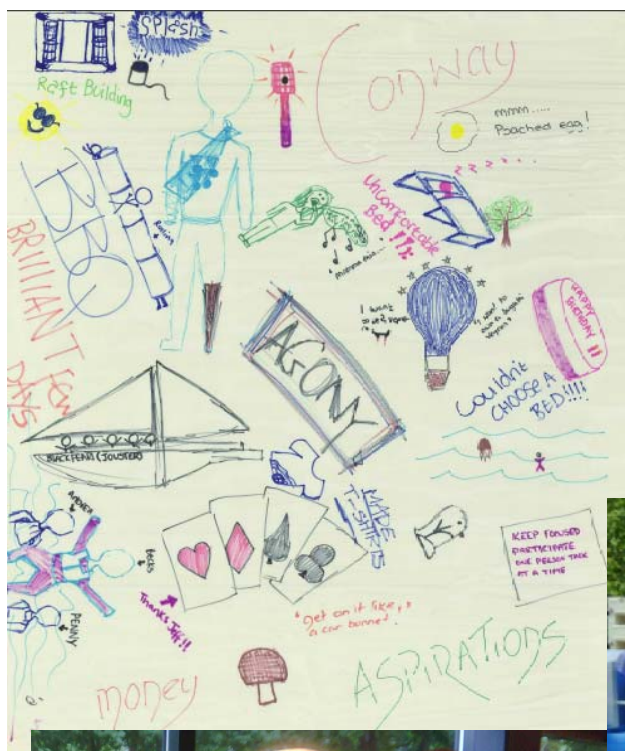


Young people living in care: Achieving and Employment Conway Centre, Anglesey August 2010



Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in Audio, Braille and Large Print formats. If you would like a copy in any of these formats or in another language, please email us at equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk. We are also able to provide a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter to support customers with accessing Council services.

إذا أردت المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، نرجو أن تطلب ذلك منا.

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বনুন।

Pokud byste požadovali informace v jiném jazyce nebo formátu, kontaktujte nás

Jezeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać.

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਸਾਡਾ ਵਾਰੀ ਵਰਤਾਉ ਵਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਵਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਵੋ।

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

Türkçe bilgi almak istiyorsanız, bize başvurabilirsiniz.

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو براہ کرم ہم سے پوچھئے۔

Tel: 0300 123 8 123 **Textphone:** 01 606 867 670

email: equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

web: www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

If you would like further information about this report, please contact the Research Intelligence and Consultation Team:

Research Manager: Beverley Wilson 01244 972176

Research Officer: Helen Pickin 01244 977148

Research@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Research, Intelligence and Consultation Team

HQ

56 Nicholas Street

Chester

CH1 2NP

Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Ambitions of young people living in care</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Achieving.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Employability</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>The Children's Plan</i>	<i>16</i>

Introduction

Background

Cheshire West and Council is responsible for the care of over 330 children and young people. The Every Child Matters Select Panel has undertaken a year-long review to understand the needs and aspirations of looked after children, with the aim of making lasting improvements to the lives of young people in care.

In August 2009, a research workshop took place at Chester Zoo aimed at developing an understanding of what like is like as a young person in care. The findings from the research led to the development of a series of recommendations, which were then tested at a subsequent event with young people in care, held at Delamere Forest.

Whilst conducting the review, several issues have emerged around aspirations, education attainment and employability, in that many of our young people in care fail to reach their full potential. Therefore, a further event was organised to understand young people's perspectives on achieving and employment.

The event and research workshops

The event took place over three days at the Conway Centre – an outward bound activity centre. Research workshops were interspersed with physical activities such as sailing and raft building. There were four workshops in all, aimed at understanding views on:

1. Ambitions
2. Achieving
3. Employability
4. 'Children's Plan' objectives

In all, nine young people took part and were split into smaller groups, based on age, for the workshops.

Ambitions of young people living in care





Achieving

Achieving your ambitions

The young people's aspirations, from having a good career to being a millionaire, were all under pinned by 'achieving'. The theme of achievement was followed up by asking the young people what they need for their aspirations to happen, what barriers might hold them back, how these barriers can be overcome and what organisations or individuals can make a difference.

What do we need to reach our aspirations?

The young people were asked to think about what they need to achieve their ambitions.

Qualifications...

- NVQ's
- May need a driver's license [for certain jobs]
- Need training to be a lifeguard
- Need a National Diploma in Art & Design and Fashion and Textiles
- Foundation Degree in Art & Design and Fashion & Design
- GCSE's
- To go to University
- To finish the two years I have left [in University]

A job (and the right job!)...

- Get a job to earn enough for a home
- Good job – a job at least!
- Enhance the family business
- Family business as it is the biggest employer
- To find a job that I am good at that doesn't make me feel like a robot
- To have a decent paid job that gives me a comfortable lifestyle
- For my business to take off, with support and a good clientele to make lots of money

To be active – make it happen!...

- Adopt a penguin [in response to wanting a penguin]
- [Become] Self employed to be a bricklayer and plasterer
- Make demo tapes to send off [to work in music]
- Start my creative writing again
- To try new things such as cooking

Work Schemes...

- Complete an apprenticeship
- Work experience
- Offer training and experience

To be informed & have support...

- The right people to work for you and to have the right information
- Encourage others to do well
- Not to become too old for support
- Have support

Believing in yourself...

- To be more confident and come across as positive in my way of thinking that encourages others too
- Not to take things for granted
- To be able to make mistakes

Family & home...

- Get a 'wifey 4 lifey'
- Have a safe place to live

Other people...

- Get spotted by a scout for Liverpool Football club
- For my skills to be embraced rather than used

Luck...

- Win the Euro millions!

What can stop us from reaching our aspirations?

The young people were asked to think about the barriers that might prevent them from achieving their ambitions and the difficulties that they may face.

Other people...

- Being judged [by my] appearance
- Not knowing the right people
- Peer pressure

- Empty promises
- Stigma
- [Being] Pushed down the wrong path
- What the people will be like who I will work with
- Bullying can bring you down and stop you from achieving
- Might have a bad manager in a job
- If you're a nerd you get picked on

Not believing in yourself...

- Lack of confidence
- Confidence in self and the support
- Self-esteem
- Letting myself down
- Failing and letting people down
- Taking too much on
- Not being ready
- Independence
- Do what's best for yourself
- Things that have happened in the past

Lack of support...

- Lack of a [support] network
- Feeling pressured
- Feel pressure to do well
- Isolation
- Feeling secure
- Encouragement
- No computer [to help with studies]
- One shoe does not fit all. Tailor support and guidance to the individual.
- No good role models

Needing money...

- Finance is a barrier so need a job
- Buying and insuring a car
- Money

- Can't afford to drive as no money to buy a car

Apathy...

- Self control. Got to be bothered to work and bothered to progress
- Self discipline to get a job need to send off CV and keep a job
- Endurance, sticking at something
- Asking for help

Characteristics...

- Age
- Appearance for job and interview
- Face not fitting
- Might not be able to get a job because of something about you, such as you can't be a hairdresser if your not pretty.

Government decisions...

- Allowances have been cut e.g. for driving lessons
- Heard it all before [asked before what want and not changed]
- Getting a computer – took 2 years from asking for one to actually getting one

Education...

- Qualifications
- Grades not good enough
- Skipping school can stop you getting to college and University

Family and home...

- Home situation
- Child minding
- Stability – not moving too often and settling somewhere

Lack of information...

- Not knowing what's out there
- Lack of understanding
- [Worried about] Paying for University as don't know if will get it all funded

Transport

- Pay full price on bus if 18 (not 16)
- Transport

Not knowing what you want to do...

- Not knowing what you want to do
- [Not knowing] Whether you want to go to college or not

Criminal convictions...

- Enhanced CRB check from things years ago
- Criminal record

Lack of experience...

- No experience in living, work, school and social

Overcoming barriers

The young people were asked to think about what could be done to help them achieve their goals and overcome the barriers they faced and to have a happy future. Key actions were:

Transport...

- Funding and/or support with driving lessons
- More volunteer drivers to give lifts to young people, to, say work or college
- Council to 'meet you half way' towards the cost of a car, or help with insurance if you are able to buy a car
- Hire a car from the Council at a good rate, or a van depending on job needs
- Part exchange/second hand cars to be available to the local authority to help young people
- Bus pass for looked after children
- Allowances available to help with transport

Education and qualifications...

- Sixth form close by so don't have to move
- Extra courses and night classes at colleges and schools
- Extra support from teachers, they can do more than just teach
- Connexions help more with work and college

- Being home schooled for young people that have been excluded or are not attending school for some reason

Work/Jobs and life skills...

- Help with CVs, job applications and college/University applications
- Workshops to help with lack of confidence. Need to believe you 'can do it' and to encourage positive behaviour.
- Merit scheme, where young people receive awards to doing well. Will help with CV and confidence
- Job tasters – try jobs before you do them, almost like an induction period
- Council needs to help provide the tools for your first job. Could be tools for a vocation, such as plasterer's tools, a camera, or even e-mail access for something office-based
- Work experience via school is good and provides a choice of placement
- 'From Care 2 Work' embedded into the local authority – to have a good pool of work places and courses to try.
- More jobs available generally
- Help for local businesses to employ looked after young people
- Remove age restrictions on Modern Apprenticeships, so can still take advantage of them when older

Stability...

- Provide everyone with a safe and secure place to live
- Less moves in foster care to create more stability
- Stay closer to home and not have to move out of the area
- Be able to stay in residential care as long as you want to
- Be able to decorate your own home to your own taste (and not just have cheapest that is provided) and avoid constantly moving people

Other support...

- Groups in schools for people being bullied for example
- Use VLE [Virtual Learning Environment] board at school to 'post' worries where anyone can answer, including teachers and others
- 'Angels' for Year 7s who are matched to Year 10s that provide someone to talk to and help you fill in forms etc
- Peer support, mentors – good attachment as don't want to let down role model, someone to give you a push!
- Set up allowances and list what is available. Should be the same for everyone

- Council to take more interest on young people's views all of the time, not just twice a year
- Provide the right support networks to meet individual needs
- Don't let young people disappear or go 'off the radar'. Ensure support is provided
- More information on entitlements and what support is available

And finally...

- Young people need to have discipline and self motivation (need to send CVs out yourself and be motivated to get out of bed!)
- Never give up on what you want!

Who can provide support for looked after young people

- Social worker
- Foster carers (provide fantastic support in some cases)
- Youth workers
- Mentors/advocates/Link workers/Outreach workers
- Support groups
- Family
- People who mean something to you
- Friends
- Angels (in Year 7 each tutor group is allocated two year 10 people to help with everything, like mentors)
- Connexions
- Cheshire West and Chester and 'Corporate Parent'
- Schools and colleges
- Teachers
- People who have done the job you want to do – to advise and mentor you to get there
- Employers
- Other young people in care
- Government – need to invest in things that matter and not cut key services
- Buddha/God
- Young people themselves – hard to help those who don't/won't help themselves!

Employability

Being ready for employment

Employment was a key theme for the young people. Having a job, particularly the job that they wanted to do, was an aspiration mentioned by all.

What makes a good employee

The theme of employability was explored by asking the young people to think about the attributes and behaviours that a good employee might have and list their 'top ten tips for being a good employee'.

Older age group (18+)

1. Appearance (first impressions count)
2. Be respectful, reliable, resourceful
3. Be enthusiastic/focused.
4. Have a good personality
5. Be trustworthy/honest
6. Be able to work on your own or as part of a team
7. Be able to converse at all levels
8. Be confident
9. Be non judgemental in terms of equality and diversity
10. Be punctual, professional, polite

And in addition...

- Be willing to learn and listen to others
- Be ambitious
- Encourage others
- Have the qualifications needed
- Be flexible

Middle age group (16-17)

1. Honesty and trust
2. Professional
3. Qualifications
4. Attendance and punctuality
5. Appearance
6. Competent
7. Motivation

8. Team player
9. Sensible
10. Reliable

Younger age group (13-14)

1. Cooperation and good team player
2. Good grades
3. Someone who is tidy and clean
4. Someone who doesn't smell
5. Someone who is helpful
6. Polite
7. Someone who is on time
8. Honesty
9. Respectful, no 'isms' (racism and homophobia)
10. Respect your environment

And in addition...

- Not lazy
- Smile
- Manners
- Always available to help
- Not rudely speaking
- Someone who dresses nicely
- Someone who puts effort into their work
- Someone who talks to people
- Someone who doesn't skip work
- Beautiful

Across all age groups a number of themes were raised that young people think contribute to being a good employee.

An employee should:

- Take pride in their appearance, be clean and tidy with good hygiene.
- Have good manners and be polite and respectful of others
- Have good punctuality and be reliable
- Be honest and trustworthy
- Be motivated and enthusiastic

What could help young people living in care prepare for employment?

A list of potential ideas that could help young people living in care prepare for employment was compiled from a previous desk based exercise and from the young people's ideas in an earlier task. The young people then prioritised which ideas they felt were most important to be put into place.

Older age group (18+)

Top choice:

1. A mentoring scheme
The young people felt that a mentoring scheme would provide support for the young person and could aid with interview skills and preparation for starting work. It was also felt that it could work hand in hand with a paid placement.

Second choices:

1. Paid work placements
Young people need an incentive to be motivated. Also practicality of needing money. The placement should be tailored to the young person.
2. Traineeships and apprenticeships more readily available
It was felt by the young people that more support is received in a traineeship than going straight into employment. Traineeships can give young people experience of a job and build confidence. It was commented that traineeships are something that the local authority does not do well.
3. Workshops featuring guest speakers who have lived in care and are now working or living independently
The young people thought that workshops would help provide the stepping stones that young people need to build confidence.
4. Workshops on going to university and further education including funding opportunities
The young people said that they need to be shown what they are entitled to in terms of grants and loans.
5. Workshops on confidence building
The young people felt that confidence in young people was important for motivation and to take risks.
6. Workplace skills including mock interviews, CV building, presentation skills and time keeping
The young people said that workshops would help with confidence building, knowing what to expect in job interviews, how to write a CV and so on, which would give the young people the skills they need to be competitive with other applicants. Some of the young people already learn these skills at college, but those who do not attend college miss out.
7. Have a member of staff dedicated to helping young people in care become prepared for employment
It was felt by the young people that a dedicated officer would be specialised and not a 'jack of all trades'. They said that having an officer would answer many of the

problems that young people currently face when trying to get employment and that the help can be tailored to the young persons needs.

In addition, it was felt that many of the ideas above could not be incorporated without 'Finding businesses and organisations who will provide work experience yet fully understand the needs of young people in care'.

Middle age group (16-17)

Top choice:

1. Positive discrimination and ring fencing to ensure that children living in care are provided with sufficient opportunities
The young people felt that this would give young people in care more of a chance for employment as it was perceived that employers would not consider a young person who had lived in care (unless they are the council).
2. A mentoring scheme
It was felt that a mentoring scheme would help point young people in the right direction, focus them and get them ready for work.

Second choice:

1. Opportunity to undertake work based certificates such as health and safety, cooking skills, fire safety, basic computing etc
The young people felt that this would provide useful skills and be valuable for their CV.
2. Finding businesses and organisations who will provide work experience yet fully understand the needs of young people in care
3. Traineeships and apprenticeships more readily available
It was considered important that there are traineeships and that there was a choice of areas to work in.
4. Have a member of staff dedicated to helping young people in care become prepared for employment
It was felt that this would be valuable and that there could be regular meetings with the officer and young people perhaps through Connexions.
5. Workshops on confidence building
6. Provide sufficient information for young people living in care to know what they need to get the job/career they want and options available
7. Workshops on going to university and further education including funding opportunities
8. Celebrate the achievements of children living in care – both academic and non academic
This is already in place with the Awards Scheme and is considered important.

Younger age group (13-14)

Top choice:

1. Provide sufficient information for young people living in care to know what they need to get the job career they want and the options available
2. Workshops on confidence building
3. Improved careers advice and guidance
The young people said that they would like help in selecting potential careers that they might be good at. Some of the young people felt that the careers advice and guidance they receive currently is satisfactory.

Second choice:

1. Finding businesses and organisations who will provide work experience yet fully understand the needs of young people in care
2. Workshops featuring guest speakers who are people who have lived in care and are now working or living independently
3. A mentoring scheme

In summary:

- All age groups felt that a mentoring scheme was important with the older age groups both putting it as a top choice and the younger age group as second choice.
- Other ideas chosen by the young people were based around giving them the skills and knowledge they would need to be competitive in the jobs market.
- All age groups considered confidence building as important. Confidence is a theme that has run through all of the tasks and is felt to be an important trait for young people in care to succeed in the future.

The Children's Plan

The final workshop was used to focus on the draft Children's Plan which included looking at what makes young people happy or worried in different environments and how organisations should be working together to improve quality of life.

In depth - Supporting children at home, in school, in college, in the workplace and the community

Young people were asked to think about what would/does make them happy and what would/does worry them in each of these environments.

Home

Happy

- The family that you are sent to live with should have enough money
- It feels like a family unit
- The carer is helpful, friendly, easy to talk to, listens to you and is there for you
- That you know it is safe and you feel safe and secure
- That there's plenty of food
- Feel looked after and cared for (cared for not just cared about)
- Feel wanted
- That can get an allowance, including an education allowance. (But this is not as important as having a home)
- That you like the people who live there and have a good friendship
- That you can go on outings such as to the beach, swimming pool and places for your birthday
- You have lots of stuff including a bed, a wardrobe, chest drawers and a radiator
- Get to visit the doctor and dentist
- Regular contact with family, around once a month to every 6 weeks
- Germ free!
- Clean environment including clean clothes and bed covers
- A comfy bed!
- Chance to take part in foster family decisions such as where go on holiday
- Being accepted
- It feels like 'home' and is a nice environment
- Get along with the neighbours
- Having your own personal space
- My Mum getting along with the Foster Carers
- Being asked about other placements moving in and not having to worry
- Freedom

Worry

- Worry that the carers may not be nice
- People make decisions and don't tell you
- The food might not be very nice

- Don't get friends nearby [if move placement]
- Worry about health if place not clean
- Other young people in the home might be 'rough'
- Worried about what the bedroom will be like and if going to have to share with someone
- Keeping belongings safe and damage to property
- Arguments and /or losing friendships
- Transport [major issue for many young people in terms of getting to college/job]
- Reduced support [especially financial/allowances]
- Cutbacks – staff cuts, personal allowance cuts, cuts affecting the children's home
- When staff [in children's home] move on due to cuts [lose link/relationship with staff]
- Loads of new admissions [to children's home and consequently changes which are unsettling]. New kids' behaviour poor – very stressful
- Constantly moving and not being able to settle
- Being moved on (not my choice), other young people trying to ruin my relationship with foster family. When moving on should be to a place where you want to live
- Links can be very stressful when you first move in
- Shortage of cash

School

Happy

- More activities and groups such as a church group 'Christianity class' so can talk about the bible
- Need a 6th form
- If teachers give you more help and support with subjects. Prefer this help at lunchtime.
- Learning resources with computer
- More support groups
- Like going out of class to see mentors
- Good network of friends
- Praised for good work
- Being noticed for my own sense of style when designing
- Social/Outreach workers keeping in touch in general to see how you are getting on not just because they have to
- Steady money coming in for me to be able to live e.g. work
- The right course for me. Designated teacher that I can talk to
- EMA
- Qualifications
- Understanding teachers and the right equipment
- Stable and safe environment as a foundation. I have less worries to concentrate on my studies
- Learning new skills
- Like everything about college
- Appropriate funding for educational purposes – e.g. school trips, after school activities, equipment mentoring and support
- Nice college, nice tutors, nice people

- A good friend base
- To be myself

Worry

- That will not be sent to a good school when move placement
- School toilets are disgusting and never get cleaned
- Bullies, fighting and gangs
- Getting detentions
- Teachers might hit you
- Kids smoking in areas around the school
- Having to walk home in the dark if stay for an after school club
- Bullied because of glasses, teeth, skin colour, makeup, hair and boys
- School work might be too hard
- Exams and tests
- Homework too hard
- Clashing with teachers and mum moving away or placement breaking down
- Not being good at what I'm doing e.g. exams, essays
- Being moved from place to place
- When I don't get my own way
- Courses too long
- Cuts in college places

In the workplace

Happy

- That the area is clean and have drinks machines
- That meetings are not interrupted in case it is a private/ personal matter
- Colleagues are polite and smell nice
- Happy with the job you have and it's one you want to do!
- Good career progression routes. So not always the same
- Recognition for using own initiative and not just if you may have not done something right
- Have a good colleague base to support me
- Gaining qualifications
- Getting paid
- Money!
- £1,000,000 (Reasonable wage)
- Incentives to work e.g. certificates, money
- When I get the cash I deserve for the hard work
- To enjoy my work
- Meeting new people
- To be as equal as peers and to do the best I can at my job
- To be valued and respected

Worry

- Worry about being on the dole
- People might pick on you if you don't have a job where they think you should be
- Working with kids if a teacher, the kids might be nasty to you
- Have to have certain grades to get some jobs
- Where to find a job
- Worries that others might tell people stuff they overheard
- Not to be the tea man
- Getting shouted at by manager for doing something you have done wrong
- Embarrassing start pay
- Taking too much work on through pressure
- Embarrassing if you do something wrong
- Not being able to get there
- When I get the sack/ or don't get a pay rise
- Feeling intimidated by other workers

Community

Happy

- A variety of socialising and things to do such as the park, beach, bowling, loads of activities, amusement parks/arcades, leisure centre, cinema
- Good transport network
- Friends live in the area
- No homeless people
- Shops and food outlets
- Neighbours are nice and friendly
- It's where you're from
- Feel safe – Police are there – feel safe when you go out
- Friendship
- Family
- Quiet area
- Everything you want is nearby – shops such as supermarkets
- Cheshire Oaks

Worry

- Dirty trains and buses
- Litter
- Broken glass
- Chavs/yobs/scallys
- Gangs, people with knives, anti-social behaviour, makes you feel intimidated
- When transport is off can't get any where. Wait for the bus and if doesn't come have to wait longer and be late for school.
- School in area is not a good school so go to school 7 miles away
- Too much smoking in places like shopping centres. Worry about getting tar on lungs.
- Public toilets are disgusting and no loo rolls

- Isolated when in independent living and no one to talk to, not there long enough to know people out of the area
- Busy roads
- Property damage
- Not fitting in
- Not having enough resources
- Cuts in public services
- Cuts in shops
- The Police

In depth – Joined up working

Who can help young people?

- Foster carer
- Myself
- Social support worker
- Connexions
- West Cheshire College
- Cheshire West and Chester Council (Corporate Parent)
- The Government (by investing in what matters and not cutting key services)
- Angels (when start school in year 7 each tutor group allocated two year 10 people to help with everything to support, help with forms, advice etc)
- NYAS (advocacy)
- Friends (can help as make you smile)
- Teachers
- Mum/family
- Doctor (tell how to look after yourself and say if your healthy) and health services
- Police Force (stay safe)
- People who have done what you want to do and can mentor
- Support groups
- Buddha
- God
- Employers
- Housing Associations
- Princes Trust
- The community
- Fire service
- Independent visitors

How do young people receive support now?

- Teachers give extra help as know in care
- Foster carer
- Mentors in school help support and do activities and have their own offices with drop in sessions
- Get advice from carer or social worker but if in school go to teachers and mentors
- Go to Connexions once a week in school [voluntary]

- Virtual learning environment (VLE) [type of intranet in school where can ask questions and get homework and course information and can ask private questions]

Who should work together (joint working)

- Everyone should work together where appropriate
- Teachers and young people must work together
- Friends and us must talk to each other
- Wouldn't want doctors to go into school
- Would like a website with a blog and email address. Different areas that you can click on to ask a person a question who can answer such as health. Could ask questions with a private button, could ask about placements or pregnancy.
- Even manager of a website shouldn't be able to see what write should be private to doctor/ health. Private. [following on from idea above about a website with lots of professionals linked up]
- More likely to use the internet than go to a place for advice
- Would like a website with useful links to information and advice, but links go to actual organisations (rather than a single website that contains all the info)
- Agencies should have shared views
- The Corporate Parent (Cheshire West and Chester) should work with everyone
- Schools and colleges should work with Connexions, foster carers and employers
- Social outreach workers should work with foster carers and housing associations
- Foster carers also need to work with parents and independent visitors/mentors
- The police should work with the fire service and with the community

Sharing information

Mixed views:

- Only share information that is relevant
- Should ask us first [if can share information]
- Shouldn't share stuff that is private
- Some happy for everyone to share information about them if it will help, some not
- Have a say on who sees your records when you are 18