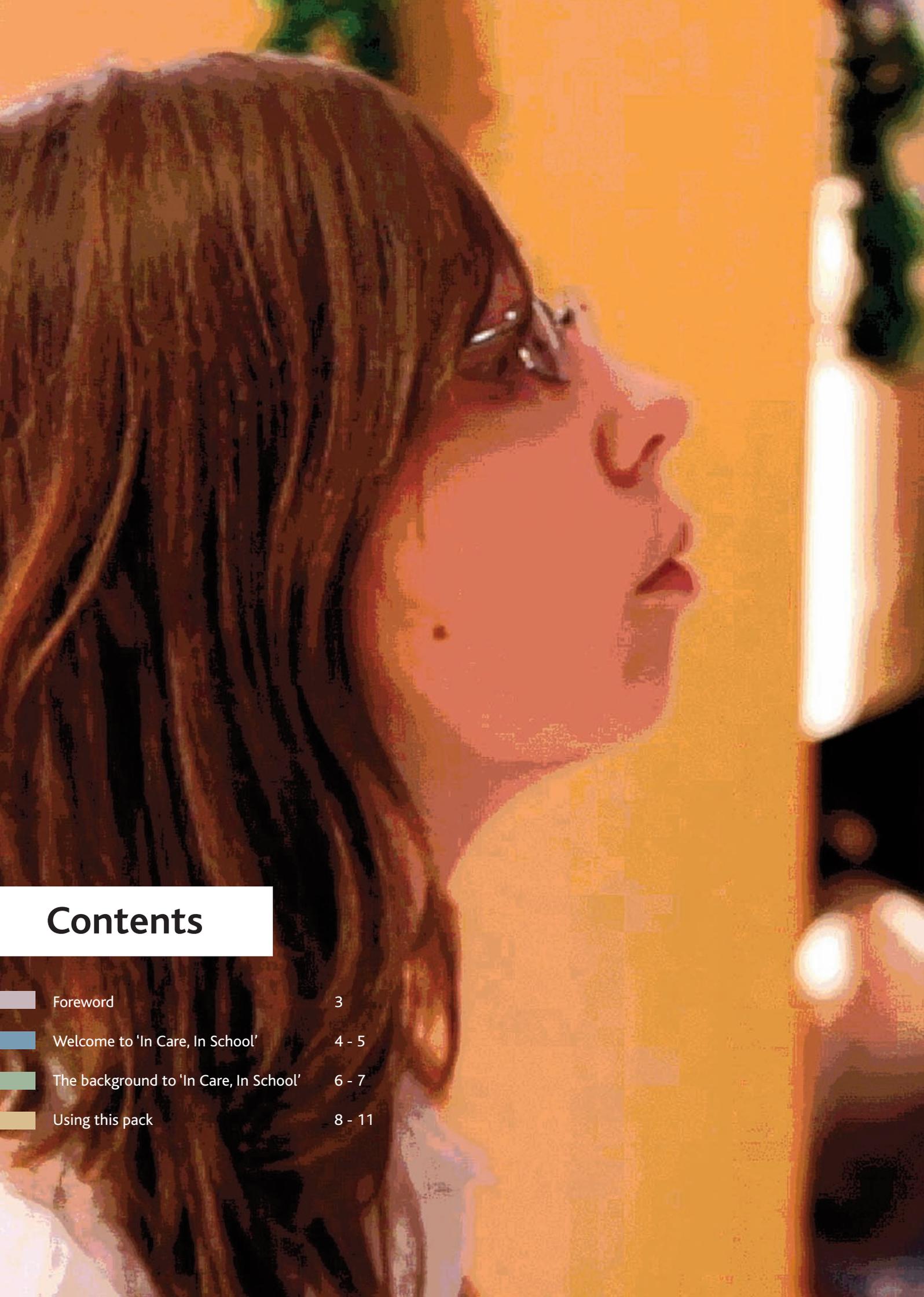




In Care, In School

A learning resource helping school communities understand what it means to be in care and in school



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Foreword

When I was in school I found it very difficult to make new friends and fit in. This was due to being in foster care and moving schools a lot. When starting a new school I always had to make the teachers aware I was in foster care, just in case I had an appointment with my social worker during school time. Having these appointments during school time was the hardest; they made me different and no one else had to leave the class for an hour or so. Then there were always the questions afterwards, "What's so special about her that she gets to skip a lesson?"

Other issues include everyday life such as holidays (Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas). I felt like no one understood why it was so hard for me to sit down and make a card "for the best mother in the world".

This impacted on my life. I was being bullied for getting special treatment from teachers and losing friends because they didn't understand. Feeling isolated and alone is the worst feeling in the world; despite being in school with over 200 people I was still alone.

This pack is to help (not tell) teachers and pupils to understand, from a young person's point of view, what it is like being in foster care and having an education. From this pack I hope teachers can take a step back and start thinking about the young person's needs and feelings. I hope pupils will get a better understanding of something they might not fully understand. Overall, I would like my experiences to make a change within the schools, and to make people more aware about people in foster care.

Naina Thomas
Bath and North East Somerset
In Care Council



'Even though we created these scenarios I still find it hard to watch them – it's my life we're talking about.' – In Care Council Member



Bath & North East
Somerset Council



St Marys C of E Primary School



Three Ways School



Corsham Primary School



The Corsham School



Welcome to 'In Care, In School'

Councillor Paul Crossley

Bath and North East Somerset Council is committed to its children in care and care leavers. That's why I'm delighted to be able to support and celebrate this fantastic piece of work, drawn from the experiences of our children and young people.

They told us that they wanted to say something to their peers and schools about their experiences of learning. What you see in this pack is that vision made real, in the short films and lesson plans contained within it.

Supporting our In Care Council is one of the ways in which we act as a good 'corporate parent', enabling our children in care and care leavers to have a voice and to help us improve the services and support we offer them.

Through our Virtual School, led by Mike Gorman, we work with schools to ensure that our children in care receive the best possible education. But sometimes all of us need to learn something. The 'In Care, In School' pack has a lot to tell us about how to respond to young people's needs and be aware of the impact of their home life on their ability to learn. Equally, it's clear that the materials will help other students in school understand the experiences and concerns of their 'in care' peers.

So I congratulate the In Care Council, Mike and his team, Bath Spa University and all the partners on the project for an excellent piece of work.

I'm delighted that such a high quality resource has been developed in Bath and North East Somerset and will find its way into schools across the country.

Leader
Bath and North East Somerset Council.

Professor Christina Slade

Bath Spa University has always striven to build strong ties with the local community. Our Centre for Education Policy in Practice (EPIP) was established to improve outcomes for children and young people in partnership with other organisations around Bath and North East Somerset, as well to increase our links on the national stage. Another aim was to demonstrate ways in which an academic institution can bring policy and practice together to achieve those outcomes.

'In Care, In School' is one of a number of successful and influential projects developed by EPIP. This pack is the product of dedicated partnership working and would not have been possible without the drive and determination of colleagues in Bath and North East Somerset and partners in national and local organisations: ASDAN, the PSHE Association, The Who Cares? Trust, VisionWorks, Suited and Booted Films, and the National Union of Teachers.

In addition, I would like to mention the involvement of our Widening Participation team, our teacher education staff and the 58 Bath Spa Teachers who volunteered for this project, as well as those who helped with the filming. Their hard work, including piloting the materials in schools and other settings, is a source of great pride.

Finally, I am delighted that the 'In Care, In School' project has meant that young people involved in the In Care Council have been able to benefit from a project so closely connected with higher education. Enabling access to our institutions is a role we must take seriously if we are to do our best by these excellent young people, and I am very pleased that one of the care leavers featured in the film has recently completed a Fine Arts degree at Bath Spa University.

Vice-Chancellor
Bath Spa University



'I didn't know that much about care but now I have had the lesson I know more!' A pupil



The background to 'In Care, In School'

'In Care, In School' consists of ten brief (1-2 minute) everyday scenarios, five primary and five secondary, which happen at school to children and young people in care. They are based on the experiences of In Care Council members in Bath and North East Somerset and show a range of different interactions between pupils, with teachers and other staff, in and outside the classroom.

The scenarios were written and developed by the In Care Council, working with a film company, professional and child actors. Lesson plans and follow up materials covering both the scenarios and the background to being in care have been produced for teachers. The project has been jointly funded by Bath Spa University and Bath and North East Somerset Council with considerable additional support from the national PSHE Association, The Who Cares? Trust, ASDAN, VisionWorks and the NUT.

The project began when the Head of the Bath and North East Somerset Virtual School, Mike Gorman, asked the In Care Council what was the biggest barrier they faced at school. The Council told him it was a lack of understanding of their needs, both from teachers and from other pupils. They wanted to be able to tell others how they really felt.

We were clear from the outset that the In Care Council should agree and determine the pace and direction of the project, that it must inform and involve young people in care, avoid sensationalism and be rooted in young people's everyday experience of school. We needed to make sure that we had age-specific materials which could be used in both primary and secondary schools, and which would hold students' interest. We should also involve the next generation of those working with children and young people – Education Studies, PGCE and other students - while at the same time validating and accrediting the contribution of young people themselves – both the In Care Council members and school students engaging with the materials.

Council members created the scenarios, interviewed a number of film companies, worked with a professional script writer, and helped direct the filming. The classroom materials were piloted by experienced teachers and by nearly 60 PGCE students, and evaluated jointly by the university and the In Care Council before being made available for teachers on a national basis. The films are already being used in a number of undergraduate and postgraduate courses at Bath Spa University, often involving Council members, and four further videos have now been produced, involving young people in care from Bath and North East Somerset, and Bath Spa University, covering their school experience, post 16 and leaving care issues, as well as the background to the scenarios themselves.

The films were viewed with the In Care Council by Ofsted inspectors in the course of an inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services in January 2012. They concluded:

'Looked after children have made an excellent contribution to the development of high quality education materials for use in personal, health and social education programmes in schools across the authority and further afield. These materials include a DVD which is based on the experiences of children in care which are poignantly and powerfully re-told in a series of scenarios using professional actors. The DVD is designed to promote awareness of what life is like for looked after children and young people growing up in Bath and North East Somerset.'



Tim Loughton MP, Under Secretary of State for Children and Families (to September 2012) wrote:

'This is an excellent example of what can be done through imaginative local cooperation. I am particularly impressed by the way in which the local Children in Care Council has played a central role.'

Edward Timpson MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, described the films as:

'An excellent piece of work that really brings to life the experiences of children in care in an absorbing and effective way.'

One teacher told us:

'I was particularly sensitive to using these materials given the context of my school setting (a very socially deprived area of Bristol where many children live with others in alternative family arrangements) ... those children were not reluctant to talk about the issues with this film, nor withdrawn from any part of our discussion; if anything, it was more a question of my own confidence to explore the project without upsetting [them].'

Children's comments have included:

'This lesson changed the way I feel about children in care'

'I think this lesson really helped me with foster care. I now know it is nothing to joke about'

'I understand how hard it is for people in care now'

A Bath Spa PGCE student concluded:

'Having had little knowledge of this area and its potential impact prior to this assignment, I am now much more aware of the issues and will strive to promote this project throughout my career, as the benefits are considerable, not only for children in care but for their peers and teachers in promoting compassionate and sensitive learners regardless of home life.'

More comments by teachers and school students who have used the pack, and information about children in care, can be found in the Staff Training and Support booklet.

We will be very interested in any thoughts, comments or other feedback you have about this pack.

Mike Gorman, Headteacher of the Bath and North East Somerset Virtual School for Children in Care.

Richard Parker, Director of the Centre for Education Policy and Research at Bath Spa University.

Ashley Horwood, Chair, Bath and North East Somerset In Care Council.

'I thought that the lesson was fun I also learnt a lesson about gossiping and how it is bad' **A pupil**



Using the pack



This pack is aimed at supporting busy PSHE and class teachers in using the film materials. There are separate primary and secondary handbooks, each containing a brief and practical introductory section, two generic lesson plans and lesson plans based on the five scenarios. For ease of access we have also included background information on being in care, and contact lists, in each handbook.

While each set of scenarios was created with a particular age range in mind, some teachers have found it helpful to mix and match them to the needs of their particular classes. Similarly, while the films of care leavers talking about their actual experiences and the rationale behind the film scenarios are intended to support staff training, teachers and lecturers may find these useful in working with older groups and sixth form students.

An important area of development has been to provide formal certification and to map these materials against accreditation frameworks. We have included information on ASDAN programmes for both primary and secondary schools, as well as a link to the National PSHE Association website, to enable colleagues to map activities against the current PSHE curriculum.

One major outcome from our initial pilot was the need to provide further background and training materials, which are found in the Staff Training and Support booklet. This includes a suggested course outline for staff, background information on care issues, advice as to how to use the films and materials, detailed comments from teachers and pupils involved in the pilot, and a contact list.

Further information on 'In Care, In School' can be found on the website www.incareinschool.com, or contact:

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'I enjoyed this because the starter was fun and I really like all of this and if I was a child in care I would like it as well' **A pupil**

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'This lesson really helped me to not be mean to people in care and that we should treat them like us' A pupil



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