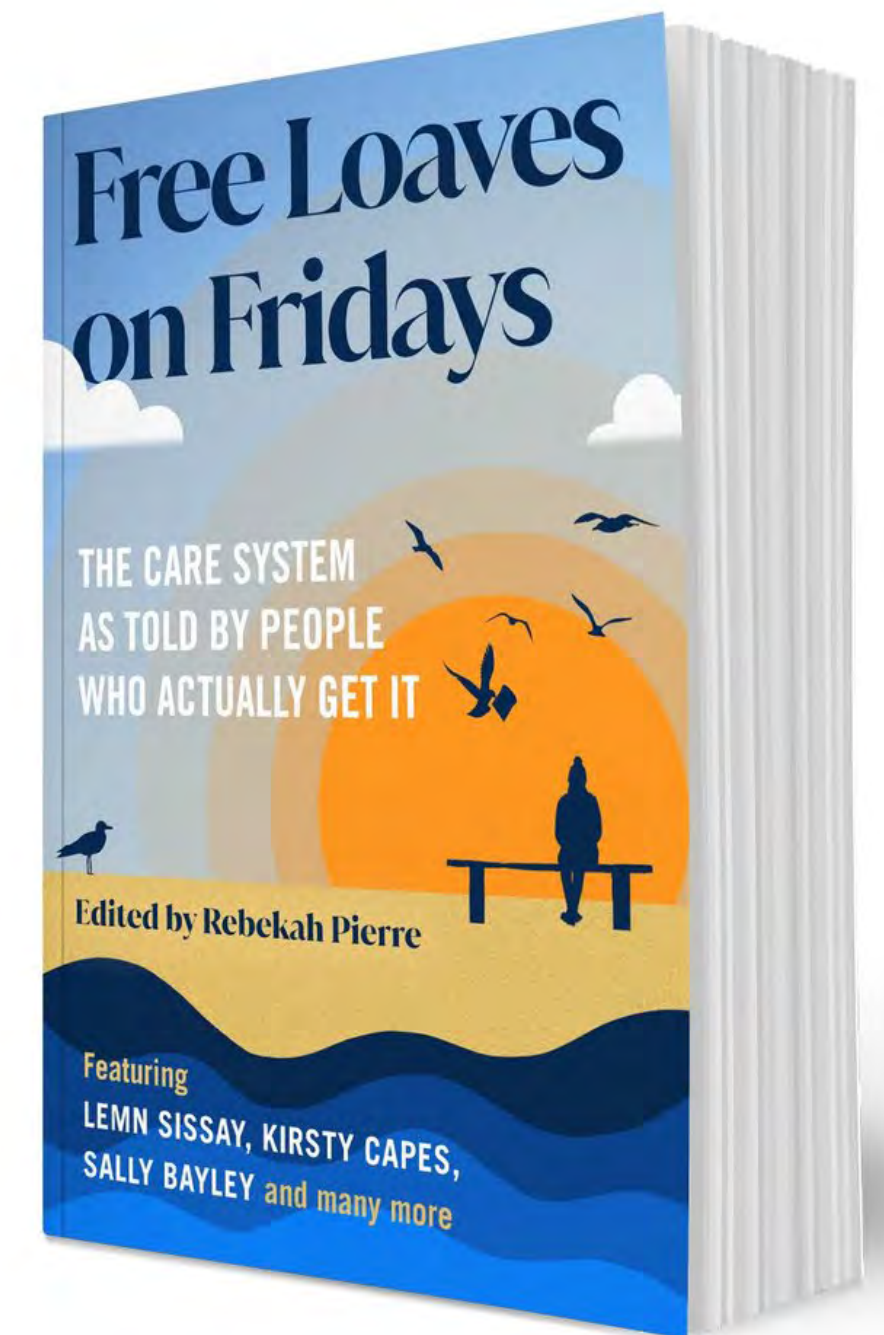


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Free Loaves on Fridays

The Care System as Told by
People who Actually Get It

Featuring 100 Children and Adults from Care.
Edited by Rebekah Pierre



Overview

- 1.No Rejection Policy
- 2.Context of Care (Media, Poliy, Press)
- 3.Changing the Narrative
- 4.Collective Campaigning
- 5.Key Themes - Challenging the System, Legacies of Loss, Experiences of Racism
- 6.Call to Action

Content
Warning

Word Recall



1

Write down the top 5 words that come to mind when you think about care



2

Add '+' or '-' sign



3

Raise or share

Why Free Loaves on Fridays?

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Table-turning movement



'Resident protests against children's homes are a microcosm of an uncaring care system'

The "othering" of children in care by some residents is mirrored by the lack of support they receive in a care system unworthy of the name, says former residential child care worker David Jones

April 19, 2022 in **Children**

Residents fear noise and parking issues over plan for children's home

The property in Stafford would cater for eight to 18-year-olds who are in care

 News ▶ Stoke-on-Trent News ▶ Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Neighbours defeated as children's home to open in their street

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has ruled the children's home can operate on Laburnum Grove, in Blurton



“Your shift is
my life” -
Caitlin Macleod,
aged 26

Written
about, but
without

“It is known that when you are in care, you get a file written about you and you can choose to read this when you reach the age of eighteen, which I did. This would go on to be one of the worst things I have ever done, as it portrays me as someone I am not, and shows that once labelled, it sticks and defines you for the rest of your life”

- MN, aged 23

No Rejection Policy

- No writing experience needed
- Open to anyone with lived experience of care
- All ages welcome (<13-68)
- Moving from Co-Production to majority self-production (CEP designed cover, undertook sensitivity read, & edited book)

Care review's rejection of over 900 applicants for experts by experience group sparks 'pain and anger'

Review lead Josh MacAlister says process designed to create diverse group with lived experience to advise him, following criticisms that selection criteria were unclear and experience of rejection traumatising

by Alice Blackwell on February 19, 2021 in Children



Diversity of experience

survivor
disability
low-income
queer
neurodivergent
working-class bi-polar
ptsd mental-health adhd
exploitation dyslexic learning-disability
domestic-abuse

Writer-led
rather than
publisher-
led

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Free Loaves on Fridays - Submission Guidance

Thank you so much for your interest in writing for Free Loaves on Fridays. It is very generous of you to consider sharing your experiences for the good of others.

This guide has been put together for care-experienced people interested in contributing, as well as for professionals/loved ones who may support you. Please take the time to read through this guide carefully. It contains important information which could help you decide whether taking part is the right thing for you/those you love and support.

If you need help to access this information, please email freeloavesonfridays@gmail.com and someone will get back to you as soon as they can.

1.1 What is Free Loaves on Fridays?

1.2 How can I submit and what are you looking for?

1.3 Who can take part?

1.4 Can I remain anonymous?

1.5 What happens if you get too many submissions?

1.6 Can I specify if I would like my work to appear online?

Honesty regarding risk

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- Even if you are excited about the prospect of taking part now, is there a chance you could feel differently in 2, 5 or 20 years?
- If you put your story out there, is there a chance you could be recognised by family, friends, professionals, or possibly those who have hurt you in the past (even if you remain anonymous)? *Please do not submit if doing so would put you at risk of harm.* If you are supporting a child/young person to take part, we advise that you **carefully discuss the potential positives and negatives, both now and into the future.** Please note that children will need consent from a carer/guardian if under the age of 16.
- There should be no stigma when it comes to sharing our care-experience, but as you know, sadly stereotypes, discrimination and misunderstanding persists. Could writing about your experience put you in a difficult situation at work, school or in your relationships?
- Do you have someone to turn to if, through the process of writing, difficult memories or feelings come up? *If you're under 16, we strongly recommend you have support from a trusted adult. That can be a professional, carer or a loved one.*
- Every care-experienced person who would like to take part can do so (as long as you apply by the deadline). However, there is still a submission process (see below for further info), and the chance that some entries will be published online only, if there is not enough space. How may you feel if it does not end up where you would like it to?
- Writing about our experiences is a brave and vulnerable thing to do. How might you feel if your work is edited? Is there a chance you might find this frustrating or upsetting, especially if this is the first time you have written about your experiences?
- Do you have enough time to commit to writing at the moment? Could committing to this cause unnecessary stress or worry?

Support for contributors

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1.11 Is there any help available for contributors?

We would love to give as much support as possible. But unfortunately, there is a limit to what can be provided because of the expected number of applicants.

Here is what we **can** help with:

- You can email freeloavesonfridays@gmail.com with any questions. We expect the inbox might get busy, and so it might take a little while to get back to you but will try our best to get back to you as soon as we can.
- Signposting you to places you can receive emotional or practical support. Please see the end of this document for more details.
- We can give you 1 round of feedback via email before you submit your final piece if done within at least 1 week in advance of the deadline.

Here is what we **cannot** help with:

- Providing emotional, practical or financial support. However, further information on how to access emotional support can be found under point 1.15.
- Due to the expected volume of applicants, ongoing 1:1 writing support is not possible for shorter submissions.
- Help to raise a complaint to social care/other services (however, Article 39 is launching a dedicated online training course on this which may be able to help).
- Help accessing your care files (however, The Care Leavers Association have advice here: <https://www.careleavers.com/what-we-do/access-to-records/accessing/>).
- Support with contacting/mediating between a former professional or family members

Advice on writing about lived experience

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1.12 Writing about lived experience can be painful – some suggestions

Writing about our lived experience can be really empowering – but it can often come at an emotional cost. You may find yourself reliving upsetting or distressing moments you might have otherwise forgotten, and all sorts of memories can resurface. Here are some things you may wish to consider:

- Think in advance about what might be the safest environment to write in - that might include a location, but also a time of day, and whether it might help to have someone you trust nearby.
- You might want to keep a reminder of the present with you - i.e., something that grounds you to the here and now. It could be an item, a photo, or even just a mantra you find comforting.
- If you can, try to schedule a grounding activity afterwards, to help keep you connected to your body. It could be as simple as doing some exercise or doing something which helps to use your senses, like cooking or going for a walk.
- Schedule regular breaks if you can whilst you write.
- You might want to schedule something to look forward to afterwards if you can, no matter how small.

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An Open Letter to the
Social Worker Who
Wrote my Case Notes

Case Note 1

○ Notice of other agency
contact with child / young
person

Further details

Rebekah telephoned (this is the spelling of her name according to her). She stated she is

Case Note 2

Identity

Child / young person's needs	Actions / services	Additional services	Frequency / length	Person / agency responsible	Start date	Planned outcomes	End date	Actual outcome
Rebecca is a young person who appears a little mixed up about the direction of her life and the influences around her.								

Family and social relationships

Case Note 3

The allegations she has made against [redacted] are complex. It appears that they started experimenting at the age of [redacted] and [redacted] respectively and that a 'relationship' has been on going. It is unclear as to whether there was violence, aggression or coercion. It is also unclear in relation to consent issues - further interviews are required.

Case Note 4

			Notes
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	Liaised further with [Redacted] regarding the injuries witnessed on Rebecca. Rebecca recently stated that she had bruising all over her arms and legs and [Redacted] had witnessed this. However [Redacted] stated that the only bruising seen on Rebecca was on her arm following the altercation [Redacted] [Redacted]

Case Note 5

Rebecca presented at A & E on the 17/11/09

EDT Only

- Request for Appropriate Adult

Action taken

- Provision of information / advice
- Passed on as referral
- Referral to other agency
- No further action

Case Note 6

The above called with concerns relating to [REDACTED] following an argument with [REDACTED] in Skegness.

Both children had stated that they were scared to return [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Advised that Rebecca could return home to her flat in [REDACTED] due to her age and level of independence.

No further action seems to be the common response, as seen in case note 5. After I called you in distress 200 miles away from [my unregulated placement](#), you advised I could return alone due to my 'age and independence'. No follow up was ever given to see if I was okay.

Case Note 7

22.45. Rebecca contacted EDT from the [redacted] where she is currently residing.. She stated she felt [redacted] was being physically abused by [redacted]

She was on the telephone today to [redacted], somehow [redacted] thought the phone call was over, but Rebecca states she could hear [redacted] shouting at [redacted]. This conversation is partly recorded according to Rebecca. She then states that she saw [redacted] who said [redacted] had punched [redacted] in the face. Rebecca would like to talk to her social worker.

Date	Description	Charges	Payments	HB	SP	Adjustmen	Balance
14/02/2018	credit over 6 years old -under £10					£0.52	£0.00
11/10/2011	12/09/2011 - 02/10/2011						-£0.52
07/10/2011	Income		-£40.00				£447.95
26/09/2011	Charge	£152.20					£487.95
19/09/2011	Charge	£152.20					£335.75
16/09/2011		29146	-£6.00				£183.55
16/09/2011	Income		-£5.00				£189.55
15/09/2011	15/08/2011 - 11/09/2011						£194.55
12/09/2011	Charge	£152.20					£792.51
05/09/2011	Charge	£152.20					£640.31
29/08/2011	Charge	£152.20					£488.11
22/08/2011	Charge	£152.20					£335.91
18/08/2011	18/07/2011 - 14/08/2011						£183.71
15/08/2011	Charge	£152.20					£781.67
12/08/2011	Banking slip 29145		-£5.00				£629.47
12/08/2011	Banking slip 29145		-£8.00				£634.47
08/08/2011	Charge	£152.20					£642.47
01/08/2011	Charge	£152.20					£490.27
25/07/2011	Charge	£152.20					£338.07
22/07/2011	20/06/2011 - 17/07/2011						£185.87
18/07/2011	Charge	£152.20					£783.83
11/07/2011	Charge	£152.20					£631.63
04/07/2011	Charge	£152.20					£479.43
27/06/2011	Charge	£152.20					£327.23
22/06/2011	23/05/2011 - 19/06/2011						£175.03
20/06/2011	Charge	£152.20					£772.99
17/06/2011	Banking slip 29144		-£10.00				£620.79
13/06/2011	Charge	£152.20					£630.79
06/06/2011	Charge	£152.20					£478.59
30/05/2011	Charge	£152.20					£326.39
27/05/2011	paying in slip 29143		-£10.00				£174.19
26/05/2011	25/04/2011 - 22/05/2011						£184.19

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Reframing language to be trauma- informed

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Deficit

Bossy
Angry
Attention-seeking.
Lazy
Troubled/challenging
Disengaged
Putting self at risk
Contact arrangements

Abundance

Assertive, confident
Passionate about/protective of...
Attachment-searching
Needs restorative days (especially relevant for neurodivergent children)
Has experienced trauma
Professionals have failed to engage
Is being put at risk/being exploited by...
Family time

Write/read records from a Reflective Space

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Ask:

Is now the right time?

Is this the right environment?

Are my immediate needs met?

What emotional support may I need?

Think:

Visualising technique

Grounding with an object

What may the child think in 15 years time?

Co-produced records?

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For a teenage girl, I harbour such hatred that I fear the potential damage I could cause if given the right opportunities.

I liken my mind to a broken record; catatonically drifting over the same tangled chords of the past.

Living at [redacted] is extremely difficult day in day out. Coming here to a silent flat with no electricity. Being too frightened to leave the room at times, or being

intimidated by the angry mob outside the evening, leaving, laughing. The loneliness is unbearable. If I needed help I could show no one. I have

I have such a deep wounded sadness, I feel like a lost & lonely wounded child, my cries have been to arise from some primitive part within me - my desperation never ends. I feel absolutely torn, & I'm not quite sure when it is that I am crying for pain that like is just too devastating, & this pain so much raw that it makes me shiver

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Celebrating Love,
Care and Connection

“Before I was adopted at the age of nine, I put a handwritten prayer into the ‘prayer box’ at school, asking God to find me a forever family who would love me unconditionally. Every night after posting it, I stayed up late praying for the same fortune. In my heart I believed it would come true.

Two weeks later, after years of failed prayers for my birth parents to get better and take me back, Gail, my social worker at the time (one of many) – a kind woman with a caring, patient and motherly spirit – informed me that my prayer had been answered. Gail was the shining light during my time in care – a rarity, someone with whom I always felt safe”.

Chantelle Billson, aged 28

“You opened up your family. Your holidays. Your life. It all became mine too, and without the burden I’d felt in other homes, where I was made to feel lucky, or that I should feel grateful. It was unconditional. At the time it seemed so natural that I took it for granted, as children often do. They’re supposed to in many ways. That was taken from me for many years, but you gave me back that part of childhood. I could even be naughty again. No more eggshells to walk on. I belonged. I felt safe. You gave me a place to be. Not an extra. Not a bolt-on. Not a foster kid. It was all of us together.”

John-George Nicholson, aged 45

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Challenging the System

“We are shipped around like boxes
Fragile labels stuck upside down
Chucked in the back seat of a social worker’s car
Ready to be delivered to some stranger’s door
They don’t understand the brick wall exterior
Our defence from placement to placement
They mistake it for misbehaviour
Please understand it’s fear” – Carla, 22

“One day, without any prior warning, I was whisked away into a big, sterile room at school where I immediately felt intimidated by the various social workers, teachers and unknowns. Being bombarded with questions regarding home life was stressful, and consequently met with meek answers. After all, how could someone pour their heart and soul out, reliving their worst memories and daily challenges to a room full of strangers they had only just met, with no guidance or support in sight?” – Luke Ward, 23

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Legacies of Loss

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Alice Spencer - care experienced
psychotherapist and writer from
Manchester Author of 'When the Lights
Dimmed: Finding Hope After Losing My
Parents'

Instagram: Alice_Spencer

Twitter: Alice Spencer 98002



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Experiences of Racism

“Many of my rights were violated when I was in care. Despite being a Muslim, I was fed pork and told it was chicken; I was fed non-halal meat and treated with offence when I questioned or raised concerns”

Chukoury, 24

“I have an article about me advertised in the Guardian newspaper aged eight – ‘NATALIE NEEDS A FAMILY’. This went out to the British weekly Caribbean Times newspaper, despite me being of African heritage” – NB, aged 42

“Bags of rubbish thrown over the garden fence, threats made, scratches on the car, and a brick thrown straight through my bedroom window. After that, I dreaded night-time; I’d lie awake and listen to the neighbour banging on the wall and swearing, fearful of another broken window. My nana said the attacks were racially motivated. That was the first time I thought about my race and what it meant to have brown skin in a place it didn’t belong.” – Alice Spencer, aged 30

A-Z of Allyship

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B is for BEST

‘Do your best to be an ally. You might get things wrong but it’s OK. We are all learning.’

H is for HONESTY

‘Tell the truth, you can’t build a bond from lies.’

I is for INDIVIDUALITY

‘Please see us as individuals with different personalities, interests and needs.’

W is for WILLINGNESS

‘Are you willing to learn about and stand up for a group other than your own?’

X is for XENOPHOBIA

‘Some care-experienced people may also face xenophobia and racism. We have to fight against these injustices together.’

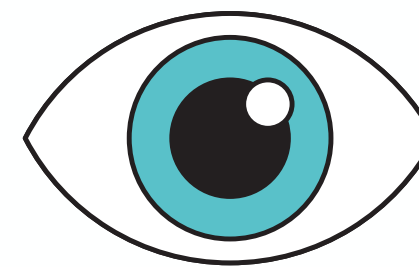
Body Smarts



Something you
felt



Something you
heard for the
first time



Something you
saw differently



Something you
will do
differently

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staff today

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Article 39

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ANY QUESTIONS

Reach out.

