

A message from



THE
ESSEX



Children in Care Council

A message of reassurance

This message of reassurance is from me, a care leaver, who is reaching out to other young people who feel they may need support. Reassurance means removing someone's doubts or fears, especially in times of grief, distress or suffering. And while we may not be able to be within your physical presence, we are using this platform to comfort and console your worries during these difficult times.

Being emotional is not a bad thing; emotions are our motivation during difficult times. Your feelings are always valid. The best thing to do when you feel something isn't right, is to check it out. Don't sit on negative thoughts, talk with someone whom you trust, we may not always see the bigger picture and an unbiased opinion may be helpful.

No matter how small, silly or obvious things may seem, there will always be someone you can reach out to. Having someone to listen to you can take a huge weight of uncertainty off your shoulder so you can breathe again. Take the time to practice exercises which not only help your physical well-being but your mental well-being. You are the most important person in your life and you need to look after yourself.

Here are some important things to remind yourself, these are your truths and you can read them over as many times as you need.

- - You are powerful. Your voice will always be heard.
- - Asking for help is a sign of strength.
- - Your mistakes don't define you, they make you human.
- - Just because you have a bad morning, doesn't mean it has to be a bad day.
- - It's hard to be strong all the time and that's okay. That's why we have support.
- - You are not the only person to feel like this. Feelings are normal, even your Personal Advisor has them.
- - It is okay to say "no". You do not need to excuse yourself.
- - There is no such thing as a small victory, celebrate every single one of your accomplishments.
- - The fight is worth it.
- - You have survived 100% of your bad days so far, you are doing great!

Please remember that there are lots of options for support that your Personal Advisor, The Involvement Team and C.I.C.C. can provide. Don't be afraid to speak out, people are here to help. Make sure you stay in contact with your friends and family members, and to stay safe and follow the government guidelines. You are valuable and important. We are still learning how to cope right now, we must be patient and kind with ourselves.

By Dana, aged 21

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"Well, here's the thing..."

In the world, it is a scary time. There are governments over the world scrambling to understand this virus, trying to put a stop to it. Families are out of jobs, parents out of money and the only thing we can do is stay inside with our family and friends.

Well here's the thing. Up and down this country of ours there are care leavers who have no family who they can call when they are feeling scared. Some are out of work and even struggling to buy the basics food that most are taking for granted. Being stuck in your home is difficult but it makes it that much harder when you don't have the resources to text, call or video call those who might be able to help to relieve you of that anxiety.

I am here to tell you that it's going to be okay. It might seem like there is a storm up ahead and all that seems to be happening is rain and lightning, but those clouds are going to part. At first it might still seem like it is raining but that sun is going to shine through a little more by the day. You have got up to this point and I am so proud of you for that.

Just imagine in 20 years, we are all going to look back on the year of 2020:

- The year where we stayed at home to help each other.
- The year that we appreciated what we have in this world
- The year that we found out who was there to support us and who we was able to turn to for help

This period isn't all doom and gloom; cities' pollution across the world is decreasing, animal and wildlife are returning to their homes and waters are clearing. That's because of you, all this good that is happening is because of you. The sun is already shining through the clouds, the rain may still be pouring but the sun is breaking through.

And you are not alone. You're never alone.

During these times, we don't know what our neighbours are going through. It may be a simple hello from the other garden (because social distancing is important!) or if you are popping down to the shops ask your vulnerable neighbours if you can help them. Make signs, notes, songs even videos and stories because all of these create joy, and distractions. The power of creativity in this pandemic is unbelievable and more effective than you think.

If you are struggling to get internet and stay connected there are companies that allow you to enter websites without the need of mobile data. If all fails, pick up an interesting book. Draw something that makes you smile or even just take a walk as long as you're staying within the CDC guidelines. Crank up the music and jam to your favourite song and just dance like no one is watching. And if they are dance anyway because they are probably dancing too.

Every Thursday, the country steps out their doors and claps for the Key Workers that are keeping this country afloat in this trying time and if you are one of them key workers, I applaud you along with millions of others up and down the country.

I'm so proud of you. No matter how you are dealing with the situation, I am proud because you are here, reading this letter.

By Kaya, aged 21

Things to do in lockdown:

Get creative with our "Expressive Self" online exhibition. Each month we are asking for online submissions of artwork, poetry, creative writing, lyrics, songs and each month we will host an online exhibition of children and young people's work on our website. This month's theme for Expressive Self is Our Happy Earth.

The COVID 19 Pandemic has had a positive impact on our climate; emissions have fallen and air quality improved, goats are exploring Welsh towns and turtles are having babies on Thailand's beaches again. Can you share your visual or written expressions of Our Happy Earth with us? Send us your expressions at involvement@essex.gov.uk



- Read a book. You can download the Kindle App for free and then read hundreds of books for free or cheap.
- Be read to. Audible has a free 30 day trial of audio books.
- Watch some Disney films. Disney Plus has a free 1 week trial.
- Become part of an online community; have a look for Coram Voice (www.coram.org.uk), Become Charity (www.becomecharity.org.uk), or Essex Youth Services (youth.essex.gov.uk)

If you need more support:

If you are struggling emotionally, need someone to talk to or need advice or practical help please call your personal adviser or leaving and after care team. If you need help out of hours call the Emergency Duty Service on 0845 6061212.

The Involvement Service team members are always here to listen and help where we can. You can find out more about getting involved in the children in care council (we have lots of activities, even in lockdown!) please message us at involvement@essex.gov.uk

In crisis? Use the Shout Crisis Line for support in a crisis, Text Shout to 85258

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visit cicc.essex.gov.uk to find out lots more!