

Life Story/Memory Boxes

Once a young person is placed in your care it is part of your responsibility to help that young person keep a consistent record of their life and their achievements or significant experiences. This information may be used to put together a Life Story book by a social worker or support worker, or it may not, but either way it is important to keep it carefully. Without this help, young people can grow up and find they have no photographic or written reminders of their childhood and an incomplete sense of identity.

If young people move placements repeatedly they are faced with having to make new friends many times. Therefore it's really important, to help them keep records of names and photos of friends so they can stay in touch with them or reconnect with them when they are older.

Here are some tips and ideas about the sort of things you should keep (memories can be recorded in lots of different ways – they don't have to be a written record in a book or diary):

- School or class photos (make a note of names on the back – especially names of friends)
- Party invitations
- Thank you letters
- Certificates from school or any extracurricular clubs
- Photos of friends from parties or school
- Examples of school work or special drawings
- Diaries or accounts written at school or at home
- Letters from friends or family
- School reports
- Swimming badges or any trophies or awards
- Uniforms or school ties.

This is not an exhaustive list and just gives you an idea of the sort of things you should help your young person to keep. If you have your own children think of the kind of things they kept or you kept for them.

Top tips

Work together with your young person: If the child is old enough and is able to, they should be included in recording memories and should take as much responsibility as possible for this.

Make a Memory Box: Get a sturdy cardboard box and some stickers, glitter, pens or anything that can personalise and decorate the box. While you are working together you can discuss the sort of things they would like to keep. The box can then be kept in a safe place to store anything that they feel is special and they will want to remember.

Keep a copy: Make copies of everything that can be easily photocopied or stored electronically just in case it gets lost or damaged. Your young person may want to rip up diaries or photos if they have had a fall out with a friend or just had a bad day.

Think about the future: Children in your care may not seem so interested in keeping these memories when they are younger, but as they get older they will want to look back and you can play a key role in making sure these memories are not lost forever.

'I don't have any photos of me at all from when I was little; I don't remember who I was friends with and wish I had something to help me remember.'

16 year old girl in a foster care placement