

Perfect day

A fun introductory activity that gives participants the chance to reflect on the challenges faced by children in care when trying to make and maintain friendships.

You will need:

- Plain paper or 'Perfect day' worksheet, which is freely downloadable on the My Organiser page of the website: childrenssociety.org.uk/friendshipforall
- Pens, crayons, pencils (optional: old magazines, newspapers, scissors and glue).

Activity instructions:

1. Ask participants to imagine their perfect day with a friend. They can think back to when they were a teenager and what they used to do with their friends.
2. Then (after handing out coloured pens, pencils etc) ask them to make notes or draw pictures to illustrate their 'perfect day' with their friends.
3. Reflect on your own perfect day beforehand. You can share your picture with the group to prompt ideas and encourage people to share their memories.
4. When everyone has finished ask if they would like to share their drawing or description with the group. Give everyone a chance to share their picture. Ask them to describe how they planned their day – what skills, resources, knowledge and friendship experience did they need to make it a perfect day?
5. Next, ask people to work with a partner and to think about the children and young people in their care. Consider the barriers the child or young person may need to overcome to enjoy a perfect day with their chosen friends, particularly if the child has additional needs. Issues may include transport, distance, cost, supervision, confidence, local knowledge, skills and forward planning. Ask each pair to feedback from their discussion. Ask people not to use real names to maintain confidentiality.

Tips for the facilitator:

Discussions arising from this activity may reveal that children in care face significant additional challenges. Here are some points that you can elaborate on if they do not arise in the conversations:

- Foster carers may need to be more involved in the planning of friendship activities. They will need knowledge of the child's friendship history, what they enjoy doing and potential risks. Knowledge of the range of activities available locally, the costs involved and public transport routes will assist.
- There might be less opportunity to be spontaneous, take risks and enjoy the freedoms that are age appropriate. Many venues and activities might not be accessible to them or their chosen friend.
- How does helping the child to enjoy a 'perfect day' impact upon their foster carer and family members in consideration of how the day was planned, how the child's friend is accepted and the interplay in this relationship?
- It is important to be creative and think of ways around potential barriers. Don't be defeatist otherwise young people end up with fewer opportunities again and again.