

Looked After Children & Young People - Changing Your Name

Can you change your name?

- Yes, as long as every person, or all those with parental responsibility for you, agree.
- When any of these people object, only the court can decide whether your name should be changed.
- The courts are very cautious about agreeing a change of name, so this is something that would need to be discussed carefully with your solicitor, social worker and parents.

How can you get your name changed, if there is no agreement?

- Either you or your social worker must apply to the court.
- If you want to do this yourself, you should ask your solicitor to prepare the papers that the judge will need to see.
- A Children's Guardian (probably the same person you had in your care proceedings) will be appointed to inform the court of your wishes and feelings and also whether a change of name would be good for you.
- Your parents will be involved and will tell the court whether they disagree.
- In these cases, your feelings are especially important, so the judge will listen very carefully to what you have to say.

What happens if the court agrees to you changing your name?

- If the court agrees to you changing your name a solicitor will prepare a document called a "Deed" stating the change of your name.
- Your school, doctor, social worker and any other relevant person will be informed and you can start using your new name straight away.

Can you change your name even if your parents disagree?

Yes, but only if the court decides to agree to you changing your name.

Can you choose to call yourself by any name you like?

Yes, the law says that you can call yourself by any name you like, however strange, if you either have written agreement from all those with parental responsibility or the court agrees.

What if you are being asked to change your name and you can't decide?

- It can be a very difficult decision.
- Take your time.
- It is always best if you can talk it over with your social worker, or someone else who can help you decide what you really want to do.
- If you really can't decide you can tell the court you want it to make the decision.

What if you are being asked to change your name and you don't agree?

- It is unlikely that the court would give permission for a change of name if you didn't agree.
- You should make your views clear to your social worker and the court through your solicitor if you have one.

Does it make a difference if you are accommodated, i.e. not on a care order?

- Social Care do not have to agree to you changing your name.
- Your parent(s) and anyone you may have lived with before under a residence order would have to agree.
- Ask your foster carer, social worker or key worker to help you find a solicitor on the Children's Panel if you haven't got one already.
- If everyone agrees to the change of name, the solicitor can draw up the deed for you.
- If they do not, the solicitor can apply for legal aid and make an application to the court.
- If someone holds a Special Guardianship Order for you, they may have been given permission by the court to change your name.