



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.

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1.1 What is Free Loaves on Fridays?

[Free Loaves on Fridays](https://unbound.com/books/free-loaves-on-fridays/) is a book which aims to amplify the voices of care-experienced people of diverse backgrounds. It will celebrate our community, challenge stereotypes, and shine a light on what works well in the system - but also what needs to change. You can find out why the book is called Free Loaves on Fridays, and more about its aims here: <https://unbound.com/books/free-loaves-on-fridays/>

When it comes to making change, there is a care-experienced gap in bookshelves, in Parliament, and in the media. Through this book, we hope to give a loud, clear message that care-experienced voices matter – and that we have the right to be heard.

Practically speaking, it will be an anthology of stories, letters, and poems written by people who have been in the care system as children (see 1.3 for more information). We aim for this book to hit shelves around Spring 2024 (that's because the publishing process is lengthy).

Once published, it will be available as a physical copy/e-book and sold in major bookshops in the UK and possibly overseas. It is likely that, if we receive more submissions than is possible to print, we'll also have a companion publication online. However, the physical book and online space will be equally as important, and the stories they contain will be treated with the same level of care. There may also be benefits having work in the online space, which, for example, could be accessed by a larger audience.

The intended audience will be mainstream, because we hope to improve understanding and allyship with the public - and with as many readers as possible.

For many people, being in care can come with challenges. But this book aims to talk about hope and joy too, and give some balance about our experiences. The book will be published via Unbound. Any proceeds go to two charities [Article 39](#) and [Together Trust](#).

The book will be edited by Rebekah Pierre, a social worker and writer with lived experience of the care system. It will also go through sensitivity checks by care experienced people before it goes to print. Every person who contributes will receive a copy of the book and will be invited to the book launch.

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

We would like Free Loaves on Fridays to be as open and inclusive as possible, and no one who is care-experienced will be turned away. This means that **you are guaranteed to have an opportunity to contribute**: depending on the mix of contributions we receive, this may be online or in print. You can **participate in one of two ways (see options 1 and 2 below)**.

Before you check out options 1 and 2, please take a moment to read over the below:

- To protect against legal issues, we ask that you don't use real names of those you are writing about (or any identifying features which could make it easy for someone else to guess who you are talking about).
- We also ask that specific local authorities, organisations and services are not named.

- The editor will have a level of discretion and some pieces may be adapted slightly (without the meaning being changed). As the book develops, it will go through several rounds of editing. You might be contacted a number of times to clarify things.
- We don't want to censor any writing, but it's good to bear in mind that the book may be read by people of all ages. The odd swear word won't necessarily be removed. If a piece contains swear words or content some people might find upsetting, it may have a trigger warning at the top.
- If English is your second language, or you have a learning disability or any other needs which may make it more difficult for you to take part, we may be able to provide you with help – please email freeloavesonfridays@gmail.com for further information. If you need specialist support, we will try and put you in touch with services who can help.
- In all cases, the copyright for your piece will remain with you. That means you will own the copyright to your words.
- We're hoping the audience of this book (and its companion website) will be large and wide. Members of the public (and even many politicians) may know very little about the care system. For this reason, it would be great if acronyms and jargon could be avoided as much as possible.
- Any contact details you provide will not be shared with any other parties. You may be contacted with updates on your submission, or updates on the progress of the book.

Option 1 - Short submission (any theme of your choice up to 250 words)

- You can send your entry directly by [filling out this form](#).
- The entry can be anything of your choice - a poem, song, rap, spoken word, reflection, or anything else. You can choose to write about any element of your care-experience (we encourage both reflective and serious, as well as joyful and uplifting entries).
- The deadline for submitting is 23.59pm UK time on 15th January 2023.
- Please note that if your submission is over 250 words we will ask you to reduce your word count.
- You will receive a thank you for your submission once the deadline has passed. If the editor has any questions or suggestions, they will get in touch with you via your preferred method.
- There will be between 110-275 spaces for short submissions in the physical book, and unlimited spaces online. Both the physical book and online space will be of equal importance and treated with the same level of care.
- One month after the deadline has passed, you will receive a thank you email which will confirm whether your piece will feature in the physical or online section (this may be subject to change). An editor might be in touch with you via your preferred method of communication if they have any follow-up questions.

Option 2 - Longer submission focused on children's rights (an open letter of up to 750 words):

- We have 5 spaces in the physical book for an open letter of up to 750 words, and unlimited spaces online (please see the criteria below which tells you more about what we are looking for).
- You can send your entry directly by [filling out this form](#) (but make sure you read the criteria below first).
- The deadline for submitting is 23.59pm UK time on 15th January 2023.
- A care-experienced panel will decide which open letters will be featured in the physical copy/online section of the book once you submit.
- One month after the deadline has passed, you will receive a thank you email which will confirm whether your piece will feature in the physical or online section. An editor might be in touch with you via your preferred method of communication if they have any follow-up questions.

Open letter criteria:

Free Loaves on Fridays aims to shine a light on children's rights in the care system in England. We are looking for 5 open letters reflecting on the theme of rights – what needs to be done to protect the rights of care-experienced people, and why rights are so important. Each letter must highlight at least one of the articles in the United Nations Convention of the Child ([see the treaty here](#) - and a [simplified version here](#)).

Please feel free to state who your letter is for. Some examples are:

Dear Prime Minister
Dear members of the public
Dear social worker
Dear foster carer
Dear Director of Children's Services
Dear media

For example, your letter could be a thank you to a foster carer or a children's home for ensuring your voice was fully heard, or it could highlight the difficulties faced by children in care around their right to education, or their right to be safe. It is entirely up to you which area of rights you focus on.

Here is an example of an [open letter written by the editor](#), which touches on the theme of rights.

We are looking for open letters which:

1. Are easy to follow (just like an ordinary letter).
2. Focus on at least one article of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
3. Show why children's rights are so important to you.
4. Give solutions and ideas for making sure children's rights are fully protected.

A care-experienced panel will decide which open letters feature in the physical book (in which there are 5 spaces) or online (of which there are unlimited spaces). Please note that the panel will try to make sure that the letters in both spaces represent a diverse range of topics, as well as represent the diversity of care-experience, and this will factor in their decision-making.

[You can submit your open letter here when you are ready to do so.](#)

1.3 Who can take part?

You can take part if you are care experienced. That means anyone who couldn't live with their family for whatever reason when they were under the age of 18, for any period of time. We welcome submissions from people who have been adopted, and from those who lived in a formal or informal foster placement, in a children's home, in kinship care, in an unregulated placement, homeless shelter, in prison, in hospital or a residential school or in any other arrangements which aren't listed here, so long as you were under 18 at the time.

We ask that children under the age of 16 who want their work to be published by Unbound gain consent to this from their parent or carer. We will try to help you with this if necessary.

1.4 Can I remain anonymous?

Yes. You can select this in your application.

If you are under 18, we ask that you just use your initials to protect your identity. We might have to tweak some details if we feel there is a chance you could still be identified, but we will let you know if this is the case.

1.5 What happens if you get too many submissions?

We have a no-rejection policy, so any care-experienced person who wants to take part can.

If there are too many submissions to fit in the physical book, some may appear online and not in the hard copy of the book. To appear in either will be an incredible achievement - and there are pros and cons to both. For example, if your work appears online, it is more readily accessible to a wider audience.

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

Yes. Please make sure you let us know this is the case before the deadline of 23.59pm on 15th January 2023.

1.7 The Role of Article 39 & Together Trust

Article 39 and the Together Trust are two separate children's charities. They are not involved in choosing what goes in Free Loaves on Fridays – either online or in the printed book. They have agreed to make a short contribution to the book on the importance of being an ally of care experienced people, and standing up for children's rights. They will put this contribution together after hearing from children and young people they work with – see 1.13 below.

1.8 Safeguarding considerations

Whilst writing and publishing your story can be empowering, it could also be very painful. It is important to put your safety and wellbeing first when deciding if this project is right for you/those you support.

If you have any doubts after reading this guide, it is best to listen to your inner voice. Even if you do not take part in Free Loaves on Fridays, there are lots of other ways you could share your story (see 1.14). Here are some questions to help you to decide:

- 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?

It is important to be upfront that there is a risk that the book - and your story in particular - might get picked up by the media once it is published. Unfortunately, there would be no way to control whether someone like a journalist might try to get in touch with you (though we will never share your contact details without your permission). . There is also a chance that readers might try to get in touch with you via social media, or any other means. Even if you remain anonymous, there is a chance that someone could identify you by piecing information together.

Having been upfront about some of the potential risks, we absolutely do not want you to feel put off. It's incredibly important that people get to hear and read about the views and experiences of care experienced people, and we have nothing to feel ashamed or embarrassed about. We want you to put yourself first, and to think about what being involved in Free Loaves on Fridays could mean for you – all the good stuff, as well as any negative.

1.9 Do I have to be a published and/or experienced writer to take part?

Not at all. You are welcome to submit no matter what your experience.

1.10 Will my work be edited?

The heart of Free Loaves on Fridays is not to censor anyone, or police what anyone has to say about our experience. However, it is important to share that all pieces will go through an initial edit with the editor of the book, and then go through a copy edit and proof-read with Unbound's in-house editorial team - as well as a 'sensitivity read' with care-experienced people.

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

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.

1.13 Existing contributors

The care-experienced essayists listed on the Free Loaves on Fridays landing page have already been commissioned to write longer essays of between 1,500-5,000 words. Because of the length and commitment involved (including several revisions of their work within a short deadline), these contributors are experienced writers. They were selected by the publisher, Unbound, based on having a diversity of lived experience, as well as specific knowledge which could help educate a mainstream audience about current issues within the care system. This includes (but is not limited to) first-hand understanding of issues faced by Black children in the fostering-to-adoption process, human rights, and how to support children in a trauma informed way.

A focus group of children and young people will also take part in an A-Z of Allyship section of the book. These children **and young people** are connected **to the two charities Article 39 and the Together Trust**.

A care-experienced graphic designer will be commissioned to design the final front cover of the book.

1.14 Other writing opportunities:

If you've got this far and decided Free Loaves on Fridays is not for you, thank you for taking the time to read this guidance. You may want to consider other opportunities such as:

- Voices National Writing Competition: <https://coramvoice.org.uk/get-involved/voices-writing-competition/voices-2021-the-national-writing-competition-for-children-in-and-leaving-care/>

- Care Collectives: <https://carecollectivezine.co.uk/about>
- Barnardo's Care Journeys: <https://www.carejourneys.org.uk/>

1.15 Signposting to further support:

Childline - A free, private, and confidential service where you can talk about anything (on the phone, online and by email)

- **Contact number: 0800 1111**
- **Website: <https://www.childline.org.uk>**

Shout - A free, confidential, 24/7 text messaging support service for anyone who is struggling to cope. All texts are answered by trained volunteers who are supported by experienced professionals

- **Text to: 85258**
- **Website: <https://giveusashout.org>**

Samaritans - Whatever you're going through, the Samaritans are there to listen to you 24/7

- **Phone: 116 123**
- **Email: jo@samaritans.org (response time: 24 hours)**
- **Website: <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>**

Young Minds - A charity which fights for children and young people to get the help they need

- **Website: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/>**

Article 39

- **Article 39 has a dedicated website for children and young people: <https://rights4children.org.uk>**
- **If you are in care and need help to be heard, you can find an advocacy service here: <https://rights4children.org.uk/gettinghelp/if-you-are-in-care-or-leaving-care/>**