

A YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE To Being Looked After



My Numbers



Introduction to this Guide

Introduction by members of the Children in Care Council

Hi. We are members of the Junior Children in Care Council and the Don't Whisper Senior Children in Care Council. We have put together this Guide for you. It contains information that we believe you will need to know. It is not meant to answer everything. We want you to know everyone is different and we all have different experiences.

Things will get better but it won't be overnight. All the workers and professionals are here to help, make sure you make use of them as they are here for you. Have a look at the contents and check out the various sections in your own time. There are some useful links and information about people who will be supporting you.

Remember you are important, and you matter. Your health, well-being, achievements, ambition and aspirations are too. You are not on your own. Come to the Children In Care Council (CCiC) where you can meet us and others, make new friends and have a laugh. Together we can help the professionals get it right for us.

From members of the Junior Children in Care Council and the Don't Whisper Senior Children in Care Council

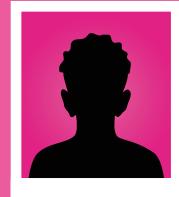
May 2019

Positive Messages

for young people from young people



'coming into care was the best decision I've made in my life – I'm happy.'



'learning to manage and cope with bad news in a better way'



'I've gone to college – and got my qualifications'

'I'm now doing my traineeship in business administration'



'meeting all the people who work to support and care for me'



'look I've got an unconditional offer from City University – I am so proud' From time to time, you may be feeling...

stressed HAPPY
scared shy MXIOUS
not listened to
relieved isolated
expectation not met

l'm not alone

It is ok, don't forget to talk to someone

Our Pledge to You

For Children age 11 and younger

Redbridge Council think it is very important to make sure that all children in care have a better life and will work hard to achieve this.

We will take good care of you, keep you safe and be a good parent to you. We will listen when you tell us what you like and don't like.

The Redbridge Pledge will help us to make sure you grow up happy and have a good life.

The Redbridge Pledge is the promises made by Redbridge Council to all children in care.

- We will give you A Young Person's Guide to Being Looked
 After when you come into our care which gives you information about everything you need to know about being in care. It will give you important telephone numbers of people you may need to contact.
- Your Social Worker will come and see you at least **once every 4 weeks** and you can talk to them on your own every time they come. You will have their telephone number, email address and you will know where they work so you can speak to them when you need to.
- We will talk to your teachers to help you do well at school. You will have a plan called a Personal Education Plan or PEP which will tell us what help you need at school. If you feel that you are being bullied at school, we will work with you and the school to make sure this does not happen.
- When we arrange to come and visit you we will make sure it is not within your school time so **you can be there**. Apart from your Personal Education Plan meeting, which talks about your education, we will hold all other meetings away from your school.

We will tell your carer the things they need to know to be able to look after you and to make sure you are safe and well.

- Before you go to a new carer we will tell you all about them and where they live. You will get to meet your carer before you move there except if you have to move in an emergency or where your parents do not agree to this. If you need to come into our care with your brother or sister, we will try and make sure that you are placed together if this is what you want and is right for you both.
- We will make sure that **your carer** takes you to see your doctor, optician, nurse and dentist **when you need to visit them**.

 We will provide you with a "Health Passport". This holds important information about your health history and your health needs.
- We will make sure that you know if you can see your family and when and where this will be.
- We will make sure you get to meet **other children in care** where you live and in other places so you can help each other and talk about the things you like and don't like.
- You will know how much pocket money you will get and we will help you to **save your money**. The amount of pocket money you will receive will be agreed at your placement planning meeting. The Local Authority expects your foster carer to save a minimum of **£10 per week for you**. This money must be kept in a savings account for you. Your savings will be kept for you until you leave care.
- We will do our best to make sure you don't have too many different social workers and move too many times. If you feel unhappy with the way we are looking after you, we will provide you with an Advocate who will help you to speak out or speak out for you.

Our Pledge to You

For Children and Young People age 12 and older

The Redbridge Pledge is a commitment from Redbridge Council to all children and young people who are in care or are leaving care in Redbridge.

The Redbridge Pledge is the promises made by Redbridge Council to all children in care.

1

Before moving into a new placement, you will receive information about the placement and the area it is in. You will have a proper **introduction to your carers** unless you have to move in an emergency.

We will give you information that you need at every point in your

journey, from care to adulthood, presented in a way that you want including information on legal entitlements and **the service**you can expect to receive from us at different stages in

the journey. We will make it clear to you what information
about yourself and your time in care you are entitled to see. We
will support you to access this when you want it, to manage any
feelings that you might have about the information, and to put on
record any disagreement with factual content.

3

If it is safe for you and something that you want, we will help and support you to **stay in contact** with your family and other people that are important to you.



We promise to make your **care plans and pathway plans** clear about the support you will receive from Redbridge. Together, we will talk about what this will be (for example where you live, what school or college you go to) and who will be responsible for making sure your plan is working for you. We will provide support to you set out in current regulations and guidance and this will include **information**, advice, practical and financial help and emotional support.

5

We promise to make sure you feel safe where you're living and are happy there. We promise to keep you safe from those who may try and harm you and we will provide someone to speak to you independently if you have been missing from care. We will work very closely with schools and partner agencies if we hear that you are being bullied or discriminated against in any way.

We promise that you will meet with your social worker and your personal advisor on your own to talk to them about what is happening in your life.



We promise to **help you know what your rights are** which means what you are entitled to as a child in care in Redbridge. We promise to tell you what plans we are making for you and we will always listen to what you feel is important. We can put you in touch with the **Children's Rights Advocacy Service** if you feel you would like someone independent to talk to about your rights and the plans we make with you. They can speak up for you or help you to speak up yourself if there is an issue you feel you need to make representation about. We have a '**Children in Care Council**' who have been set up to hear your views and influence decisions on your behalf about being in care in Redbridge.

Our Pledge to You

For Children and Young People age 12 and older

7

We promise to support you through your education. We will draw up a regular **Personal Education Plan (PEP)** with you to encourage you to achieve your ambitions and help you get the best results you can. We will celebrate and promote your achievements with you. When you have completed your education at school, we will prepare you as much as possible to pursue an **apprenticeship**, continue into **6th Form**, or apply to go to **college** and then onto **university**.



Your health is important to us. We will make sure that you are registered with local health professionals you need to see for example, local doctors, opticians, dentists.

We will provide you with a "**Health Passport**". This holds important information about your health history and your health needs. We will also provide you with a leisure pass and a MyMax card, **www.mymaxcard.co.uk**, to help you access facilities in and out of the Borough.



We will work alongside you to prepare you for your move into **independent living when you are ready**. We will do everything we can to ensure you are happy and feel safe when doing so. We will help you think about the choices available and to find accommodation which is right for you. We recognise that at different times you may need to take a step back and start over again. We will do our best to **support you until you are settled in your independent life**.

10

We promise to be a **lifelong champion**. We will work together with the services you need, including health, housing and education as well as helping you gain employment. We will treat you with courtesy and humanity whatever your age when you return to us for advice or support. We will trust and respect you and we will remain your supporters in whatever way we can, even when our formal relationship with you has ended.

11

We promise to involve you in staff recruitment, training and in foster carers reviews so you have **the best people working with you**.

12

We will provide opportunities for you to meet and socialise with children and young people in and leaving care locally and nationally to support each other, share experiences and work together to improve services in the future.

Looking After You

We will do our best to keep you near to your home so that you can continue to see your family and friends and keep going to your own school.

Wherever you live it is the responsibility of Redbridge to make sure you are safe and well. Did you know that not all children and young people live in a foster home. Here are some examples of the different homes where they may live.

- family or close family friends
- foster carers
- or in a Residential Home

Family and Friends

Some children and young people are cared for by someone in their own family like their grandparents, uncle, aunty or a close family friend. These family members or friend will be assessed like foster carers as they will need to show that they can care for you and meet your needs. Everyone wants to see you grow and develop to become a confident and independent young adult.

Foster Carers

Foster carers look after children and young people in their own original home. There are lots of foster carers who have been specially trained and assessed to ensure they have the skills needed. You are very important and we want to make sure you are well looked after. They are responsible for looking after you while you live with them and you should be treated the same as any other member of their family and feel part of it.

Living in a Residential Home

A residential home is when you live with other young people and you are looked after by some adults on site. The adults are employed to work at the residential homes and will work as a team to offer you support during the day and nights. You will have a "Key Worker" who has the responsibility for looking after you and making sure you feel safe and secure.

SECTION 1

Who does what?







Information about the professionals you may meet

- Social Worker
- Foster Carer
- Supervising Social Worker
- Corporate Parent
- Children's Participation Officer
- Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)
- Children's Rights Service
- Designated Teacher
- Specialised Nurse for Children Looked After

Social Worker

You will have a social worker who will be responsible for your care. They are there for you.

Your social worker will visit you and will explain to you how long you may be living in your new home for. They will work with you, with the help of other professionals, such as your school and health workers, to put together a plan for your future.

Your social worker will ask you about your wishes and feelings. This will include asking you how you are feeling about the changes in your life, what you want to do, how you want things to happen and what support you need.

When your social worker comes to visit you they will come to where you live, but at times, they can also meet you at a different place if you like. Did you know you can ask for extra visits too?

They will visit you every 4 weeks and talk to you about how things are for you. You can let them know how school is going, if you have been well, and anything else you may want to talk about. They will ask about your hobbies, things you are interested in or things you would like to do in your spare time.

They will make sure that you are safe and looked after properly. You can ask them any questions you have. If your social worker does not know the answer they will find out and get back to you. Their visits will be written up and kept as a record to help with making decisions about how best to meet your needs. Children and young people have a right to see and have a copy of the records. You can ask your social worker about this.

Your social worker where possible will support you to keep in contact with friends and family.

Foster Carer

What is foster care?

Children and young people live away from home when they cannot live with their own families. It's living with a different family in a different home.

What are foster carers like?

Foster carers are people you will be living with. They are carefully checked and trained to make sure they can offer you a safe and comfortable home. Some foster carers live alone whilst others are a couple. Some will have children living with them already. In Redbridge, children and young people are given a profile (information) of the foster carers, telling you about them before you move in.

Will my foster parent be right for me?

There is a team, whose job is to know each foster parent. Your social workers will look for foster carers who are the right ones to care for you. They will try and find families that share your language, culture and religion. Our job is to make sure you have a safe and caring family while you are living away from home.

What do foster carers do?

They provide a home for you and they keep you safe. They listen to your concerns or worries and talk to you about how to keep safe both at home and outside. They will talk to you about relationships and help you to make positive choices. Foster carers help you to do well at school and college and help make sure that you are healthy. They will also help you think about the things you may want to do like playing sport, making music or following other interests. Your foster carers will give you pocket money and show you how to save money. They will take you to interesting places and help you to enjoy yourself and have friendships.

Living in foster care

Your foster parent will welcome you into your new home, want to find out about you and hear what questions you may have, so you can get to know each other. They will spend time talking to you about the family routines as weekends will have a different routine than the weekdays. You can discuss these things together.

What is expected of you?

- show respect to all
- join in family activities and events
- come home at the time that has been agreed
- go to school and do your homework and coursework
- let your foster carers know where you are going

What can I expect from my foster parent?

- they will attend meetings and advocate for your needs
- they will make time to listen to you and support you with anything upsetting you
- they will celebrate with you your birthdays, achievements and holidays
- they will make sure you attend all your health appointments, include your opticians and dentist checks
- they will provide you with nutritious healthy food and snacks
- they will support your education and schooling and encourage you to do your best
- they will agree and tell you what pocket money you will receive each week and what money is being spent on you and what is being saved for you

Supervising Social Worker

The role of the supervising social worker (SSW) is to assist and monitor foster carers in their role of looking after foster children and young people. Although part of their job is to give support to foster carers, their first responsibility is to the children and young people and to ensure that they are receiving good quality care.

Corporate Parent

Redbridge Councillors act as the Corporate Parent to children and young people in the care of Redbridge. The role of the Corporate Parent is to ensure that the services provided by the Council as a whole to support children and young people in care achieve positive outcomes.

Children's Participation Officer

The Children's Participation officer works directly with you and all children and young people to ensure your voices and experiences are shared with your Corporate Parents, some of whom, will have the authority to make decisions that affect you. This is achieved through various means. It includes organising the Children in Care Council meetings where elected members and senior officers will be invited to attend to get to know you and hear about things that are important to you. The Children's Participation Officer will keep in contact with you through emails, text and letters. This is to keep you updated with new developments as well as creating opportunities for your voices to be heard as a group or as an individual to improve the support you received and matters that affect you.

At these meetings you will learn about your rights and have your voices heard. Members of the group will collect feedback, experiences and ideas to share with the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel.

The Panel members are made up of elected members (people who have been voted in by the residents of Redbridge), Executive Director, Children and Young People officers. The Children in Care Council members works collaboratively with the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel to improve the service and support you receive.

The Children's Participation Officer will also organise Activity Days, events, run skills development workshops to get you all together. If you are living outside of Redbridge they will write to you and make sure you have their contact details as well as keep you informed of new developments that affect you.

Independent Reviewing Officer

The Independent Reviewing Officer leads the review meeting to discuss with you your progress in care; this will help to decide your long term plan.

Children's Rights Service

The Children's Rights Service will help you to sort things out if you are unhappy or worried about decisions being made about your life.

Designated Teacher

The Designated Teacher ensures school staff help and support you to learn, achieve and enjoy at school.

Specialised Nurse for Children Looked After

The Nurse will help you to keep well and stay healthy by making sure you see a doctor, dentist and optician regularly. The Nurse will also support you to take care of yourself; personal hygiene, eating good food, exercise and have enough sleep.

SECTION 2

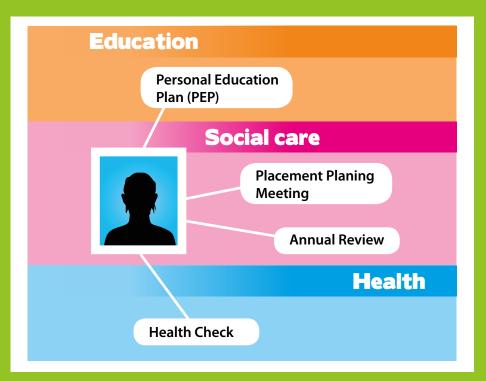
Meetings and Plans







Information for young people about different meetings and the plans that are developed



Placement Planning Meeting

When you come into care, you may feel that there are lots of meetings and people talking to you and about you. These meetings are really important so that you are listened to as well as making sure you understand what is happening in your life.

The Placement Planning Meeting should happen within 5 working days after you have come in to care.

The meeting will be attended by your foster carer and their supervising social worker (yes your foster carers have a social worker as well). The meeting will be all about you and your day to day care; things that you like to eat, activities that you like to do, as well as things that you don't like will be discussed in the meeting. The aim of the meeting is to ensure that all of the people involved in your care are clear about your needs and how these can be met.

20 <u>21</u>

Care Plan

Your care plan has information about how the different services will support you and what should happen in the future for you.

This plan should include your views and wishes and should be agreed with you. The plan will allow you to see what is happening in regards to your health, education, and the views of your parents or carers. There is a section about your identity such as your religion, culture, racial background. Your social worker will talk to you and explain how you can keep in contact with your friends and family, if it is safe for you to do so.

There is a section that will talk about your interests and hobbies and how these can be continued. Your care plan will also look at your personal development. Depending on how old you are you may be supported to keep your room tidy, help around the house, or as an older young person you will get support with learning how to cook, manage your money, understand how to pay bills and buy your own clothes.

Health Plan

Your health is very important. Being healthy does not just mean eating lots of vegetables and not being sick. It's keeping your teeth clean, regular eye tests, having your immunisations up to date. When you become looked after, you will have what is called a "Health Assessment" by a doctor or Nurse for Looked After Children (LAC Nurse) and young people. We will help you to keep well and stay healthy by making sure you see a doctor, dentist and optician regularly.

This should happen before the Looked After Review. If you are 5 years old or over your assessment will take place once a year, if you are under 5 it will be every 6 months. Remember you can also ask for advice or talk about your health with the LAC Nurse. You may have the health assessment on your own or bring someone else with you. If a nurse is undertaking the health assessment it may be in school or at home at a time to suit you.

You have a right to refuse any part of the health assessment.

With your co-operation the nurse draws up a health assessment summary and future health plan for you. This is an opportunity to discuss any health concerns you have, personal hygiene, eating good food, exercise and having enough sleep. You may want to discuss problems at home or school, or friendships and relationships which may be affecting your health and wellbeing.

The LAC Nurse will provide information about the following services.

- health and safety
- drugs and alcohol advice
- immunisations
- c-card registration
- sexual health and contraceptive advice
- pregnancy testing
- lifestyle choices
- chlamydia screening
- counselling services

Pathway Plan

When you are 15 years and 9 months old you will have a Pathway Plan. The Pathway Plan is a key document which details the services and support you will need, when you are looking to move to independent living.

At this stage you will be supported to engage in a transition programme, Preparing for Adulthood, specially design to help you build on the skills and knowledge you will need for when the time comes for you to move out and live independently. You will be given a Preparing for Adulthood Skills Workbook to work through with your carers. This will include learning useful skills like how to cook, manage your money, how to shop and how make an appointment. You will also be invited to attend the Preparing for Adulthood Skills Programme which will be delivered within Redbridge. If you live out side this area an equivalent will be sourced for you as much as possible. Your skills development and responsibilities will need to be reviewed to capture your progress.

See Section 5 for further information.

Case Review for Children Looked After

Case Review, is a review meeting, for you and everyone to talk about how you are getting on and the plans that are being made with you. You, your parent/s (if appropriate), social worker and foster parent will be at this meeting. There may be times that other people are invited, like your teacher or advocate if you need someone to support you.

There is always an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) at reviews. It is their job to lead the discussion at the meeting and help decide your long term plans. They will make sure that you understand what is happening. They will talk to you before the meeting starts. They will ask you if there is anything you would like to talk about at the meeting and tell you exactly what will happen in the meeting so that there will be no surprises. Remember your views are very important. There will also be an opportunity for you to chair your own review, as long as you are comfortable doing so.

You will have your first review when you have been looked after for 20 working days or 28 days if you counted the Saturdays and Sundays. The next review meeting will be three months later. The review meeting will then take place every six months. You will be appointed an IRO within five days of becoming looked after by Redbridge. Your IRO will contact you soon after the 5 days.

It is very important that you go to your review meeting and talk about your views and what you want and think is important to you. If you cannot attend, make sure you talk with your social worker or fill out your consultation form to make sure your views are included in the decisions that will be made. Once everything has been discussed, decisions about how to get the best results for you will be made. These may include how long you are going to be living with your foster carers, how you are going to remain in contact with your friends and family, whether you need additional support with schoolwork to achieve the best you can or whether you have an interest or hobby.

Everyone (including you) will decide what things should be done and who will do them, to meet your needs. The Independent Reviewing Officer will write all of this down. Those who attended the meeting will get the Minutes, note of the meeting. This will form your Plan, as it is all about caring for you.

You can ask your social worker for a copy. A copy will be kept so that when the next meeting is held, they can look and see if what was decided has happened. At the next meeting changes may be made to make sure that your Plan is up to date and still what you need and want. Your views and opinions about decisions that affect your life are important.

Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel

Redbridge Councillors act as a Corporate Parent to children in the care of Redbridge. The role of the Corporate Parent is to ensure that the services provided by the Council as a whole to support children in care achieve positive outcomes.

The five priorities for children in their care are:

- enabling children to have the best start in life and tackling children and young peoples' problems
- enabling children and young people to be safe and promoting their well being
- enabling children and young people to make good progress in education
- enabling young people to make a successful transition to adult life
- ensuring the children and young people of Redbridge receive high quality services

In order to exercise this responsibility, Councillors must be:

- well informed about the children for whom they are responsible
- think about how they are affected by Council decisions
- listen to what children and young people say
- be a champion for children and young people

In Redbridge, this corporate parenting responsibility is carried out by the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel. The Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel meets with looked after children so that they can say what they think about the care that they are receiving.

SECTION 3

Your Voice, Rights, Entitlements and Participation







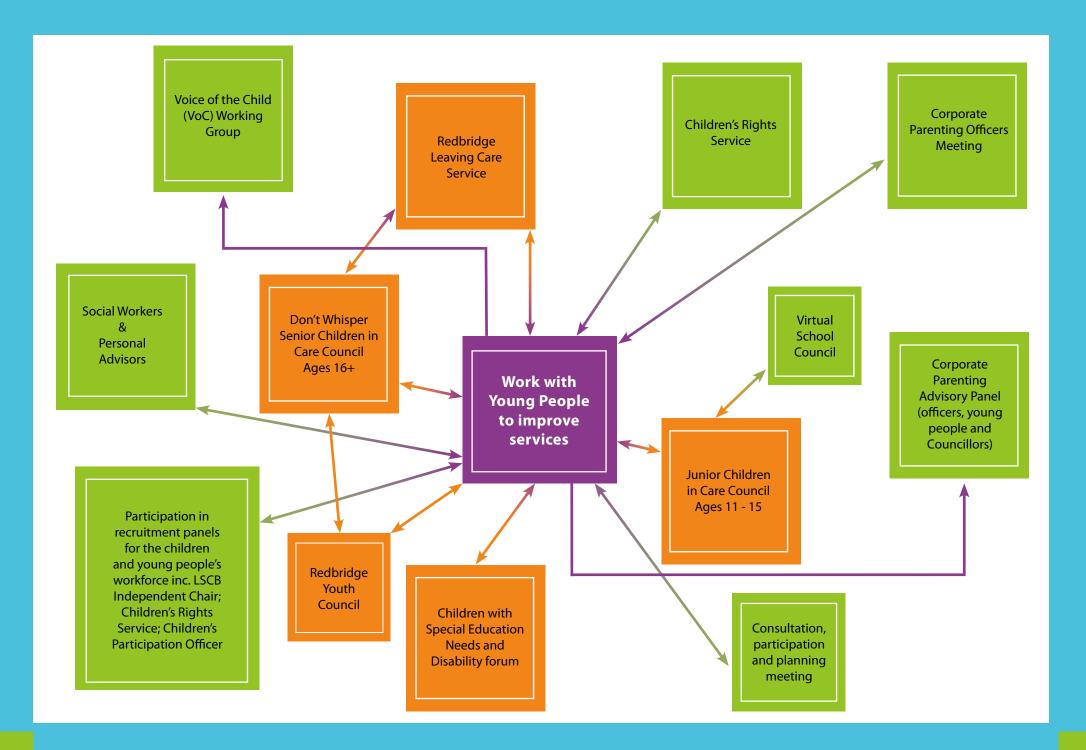
- Your Voice
- Children in Care Council
- Children's Rights Service
- The role of an Independent Visitor
- Savings
- Pocket Money
- Your Records
- Confidentiality
- Bullying
- Compliments and Complaints

Your Voice

It is important for you to tell us how things are going for you, and for the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel to listen to you and act on them appropriately.

Changes and improvement that have been made as a result of what children and young people have said and what the Corporate Parenting officers have done:

- discounted access to leisure and cultural facilities through the "My Max" card
- Redbridge Vision Leisure Services offer to all children living within Redbridge, who are living away from home, FREE use of Redbridge Cycling Centre, gym pass and swimming at the four leisure centres
- Young people are trained to be on interview panels for Children's Services recruitment
- A Young Person's Guide To Being Looked After
- A Health Passport
- Preparing for Adulthood Programme
- Preparing for Adulthood Skills Workbook
- A Guide to be a Care Leaver



Children in Care Council

What is it?

The Children in Care Council is a place where you all can meet up, get together to learn about what's happening in the borough, work on new projects such as designing leaflets, participate in feedback sessions sought by decision makers and senior officers, on policy and service delivery.

Who is it for?

It is for you. It's for all children and young people who are looked after. Every area in England has a Children in Care Council. Every area in England has one. It's a space for you to meet others, to have fun and make new friends. Through these "get togethers" there are opportunities for everyone to develop skills as well as sharing the skills you already have.

There are two groups, the Junior Children in Care Council (JCICC) for those aged 11 – 15 and Don't Whisper group for those aged 16 - 24.

If you live too far to travel to the Children in Care Council you are welcome to contact the Children's Participation Officer whenever you wish. They will also keep in contact with you as well as send you the quarterly newsletter. It will give details of updates, new developments as well as your work if you wish to send them in. Throughout the year the Children's Participation Officer may text, email, send letters and or call you. You are all welcome to contribute to the development of the Newsletter. Your views and opinions are valued so keep in touch.

Why does it take place?

It's about giving children and young people a voice about their lives and how services can support. It is another way for children and young people to inform the decision makers and senior officers about what is good in their lives and what needs to be improved. Service providers and guest speakers are invited to these "get togethers" for you to develop a better understand about the service and for services to hear directly from you who are in receipt of them. It's a great opportunity for you to influence how services are to be delivered.

When does it take place?

The two groups, the Junior Children in Care Council (JCICC) and The Don't Whisper Senior Children in Care Council, meet fortnightly throughout the year, except for a break during Christmas and a change of programme during school holidays.

What now?

For more information of when and where the next session will take place or any other questions, please contact the Children's Participations Officer, details can be found in Section 6.

Children's Rights Service

Did you know that you have rights? Here a few of them:

- the right to have a safe place to live
- the right to have an education
- the right to be treated with respect
- the right to be asked what you think and feel about decisions being made about your life and for your views to be seriously considered

This last one is the most important right for you. This doesn't mean the adults have to do everything you say, but they do have to take your ideas seriously. If they disagree with your ideas they have to explain to you clearly why they can't do what you have asked for.

What to do if you are not happy?

If you are unhappy about anything, first talk to your foster parent, social worker or Independent Reviewing Officer. If you feel that you can't talk to them or that you have not been listened to, you can contact the Children's Rights Advocate; whose job is to help children and young people to get their voices heard.

The Children's Rights Advocate can help you if:

- you want some help in saying the things you need to say to people making decisions about you. (Like your foster parent or social worker)
- you are unhappy about the way you are being treated by your social worker, carer or anyone else
- you are worried about the decisions being made
- you need information about your rights
- you want an advocate to be with you at meetings

Examples of issues children and young people have asked the Children's Rights Advocate to help with:

- I want more contact with my family
- being told they are moving me from my children's home but I don't want to
- not getting the financial support, I think I am entitled to
- the social worker is not listening to my views
- I'm not getting on with the foster parent, can you help me raise this?
- I'm worrying about the plans being made for me
- I dislike the way my foster parent is treating me
- I can't relate to my social worker
- I want to stay with my foster parent after 18
- I want to make a complaint and need help

You can contact the Children's Rights Advocate or ask someone else to make the contact for you. The Children's Rights Advocate will arrange to meet you and help to sort out your problem.

Remember the Advocate is there to support you and make sure people listen to you. The Advocate can keep what you say confidential (except if you indicate that you or someone else is in danger of being hurt). Contact details can be found in Section 6.

The role of an Independent Visitor

An Independent Visitor (sometimes called an IV) is an adult who volunteers to spend some free time regularly with a young person like you. They are not paid to do this - they do it because they like to help and support young people. They are carefully chosen to make sure they are safe and matched to young people, for instance they often share the same hobby as a young person.

They usually visit the young person once or twice a month. Young people and their Independent Visitor spend time talking; they sometimes go out together to places like the cinema, park or football, depending on the young person's interests.

Here are some things young people have said about their Independent Visitor:

- 'my IV has helped me know about different places and look towards the future'
- 'I like having an IV because I can talk to them about stuff and when I'm angry I can tell them my problems'
- 'my IV understands me and is easy to talk to'

If you would like an Independent Visitor ask your social worker or Independent Reviewing Officer for more information.

Savings

All foster carers are required to open a bank account in your name. Your foster carers will also open a Savings Account for you it will not be in your name. They will pay £10 each week into your savings account. This money is not available to you on a daily basis. You will receive bank statements which should be kept by you or your carers, and be available for viewing when requested. Savings are built up over the time to enable you to have a 'pot' of money when you reach the age of 18 as you start your life as an adult. If you change homes, the savings amount will also move with you and your new foster parent will continue to add to your existing savings.

Guide for Children and Young People

ON POCKET MONEY AND SAVINGS

Age	Pocket money per week	Savings per week
50-4	£5*	£10 per week
5-10	£5	£10 per week
11-15	£10	£10 per week
16-17	£15	£10 per week

*As under 5's will be too young to be given pocket money, the weekly amount will be added to the child's savings

These amounts will be reviewed in March each year

Things you need to know about your savings

- Savings will be placed in a savings account until you leave care.
- You will be able to check how much has been saved for you at any time by asking your carer, social worker or personal adviser to show you the account. Your Independent Reviewing Officer will ask to see the savings account at every child care review to make sure that the correct amount is being saved for you.
- If your pocket money has been withheld it will be placed in this account and you will not be able to receive it until the age of 18.
- You can add to this savings account if you wish to.

Things you need to know about your pocket money

- The pocket money is for you to spend how you choose.
- You might want to save some pocket money for something special.
 If you do, you can have this money when you choose, as it is separate to the savings your carer will put aside for you.
- Your pocket money will not be withheld unless:
 - you are using the money irresponsibly e.g. buying illegal substances, gambling;
 - you deliberately break things;

 If it is to be withheld this will be discussed and agreed by your social worker or personal advisor and your carer. You must be informed of the reason why, for how long and what you need to do to change the arrangement. Any withheld pocket money will be placed in your savings account.
- you will not be expected to use your pocket money for planned leisure activities such as cinema, bowling or club membership. Your carer will usually pay for this.

If you have a planned activity where you will be out at a meal time,

your carer will give you money to buy food. You will not be expected to use your pocket money.

Your carer will buy the toiletries you need, but if you want to upgrade to something more special, you can use your pocket money or request it as a birthday gift. You will also receive birthday and festival gifts or money. Information on this can be provided by your social worker or personal advisor.

Pocket Money

Every week your foster parent will give you pocket money. The amount will depend upon your age and what was agreed in the Placement Planning Meeting with your social worker. Sometimes you might get small amounts throughout the week, or a weekly amount to last the whole week; you might want to talk with your foster parent about what suits you best. You can choose to have some of your pocket money put aside if you want to save for something, talk with your foster parent / social worker about how they can help you. This is separate to your weekly savings.

Your Records

You will have a record which will keep the information of all the meetings and visits that have taken place.

These will include your:

- Care Plan and all changes that have been made to them
- visits by social worker
- contact agreement
- Health Assessments and Reports
- Personal Education Plans and school reports and copies of your achievements
- review meetings
- all legal documents. This will be different for each child or young person. It may include a Court Order, immigration papers

You have the right to see your records. Your social worker and Independent Review Officer will be able to tell you how to do this. Your records are confidential and are kept safe and secured. The records are usually kept until your 75th birthday as it may be something you want to look at in the future.

Bullying

Bullying can be anything from name calling because of your race, culture or disability or for any reason, making things up deliberately to get you in trouble, hitting you, taking or damaging your belongings or stealing your money.

If any of these things ever happen to you or anything that upsets you, "please tell someone" about it. Don't be scared by threats. If you don't tell someone things may get worse. You should speak to someone you trust such as your foster parent, social worker, a teacher, the Children's Rights Officer, Children's Participation Officer or you can call Childline. They will do the right things to make it stop.

Compliment and Complaint

We do want to know all the good things about you, that you are happy; and the staff have done a good job. You can give a compliment by completing the on-line form on Redbridgei.

If you are not happy about something, you should talk to your foster parent, social worker, Independent Review Officer and the Children's Rights Officer, who's details are listed in section 6. If the issues are not resolved, you can consider making a complaint. The Children's Rights Advocate, can help you to make a complaint, or if you prefer to make a complaint on your behalf.

SECTION 4

Education







- Your Education and School
- The Virtual School
- Bursary

Your Education and School

Your education is very important to us and we will do our best to make sure you are supported to do your best. Your foster parent, social worker, and your teachers all know how important education is for you and they will give you whatever help and support you need. In every school there is a special teacher called the Designated Teacher. Like your Review meetings, you also have meetings to talk and plan for your education. This is called a Personal Educational Plan (PEP) meeting, the PEP has information on how you are doing and what you need to help in your education.

If you are having any problems or difficulties at school, you should talk to your foster parent and social worker who will help you. You will also be able to get support at school from the Designated Teacher.

The details of the Designated Teacher can be found in the PEP.

The Virtual School

The Virtual School is an additional resource which is there to support and challenge all those involved in your education. All children and young people who are in education, post 16, including university are part of Redbridge's Virtual School.

The Virtual School Team is working to raise the educational achievements and attendance of children and young people in care. The Virtual School tracks educational progress, supports, monitors work to help you achieve your dreams. They will also support and advise the professional team.

The Virtual School is there to ensure you have access to good quality education, providing you with improved life chances.

We expect that you should:

- have a school place
- have a current Personal Education Plan
- attend a full time educational placement
- achieve your dreams

It is our responsibility to:

- promote the attainment
- raise awareness of the importance of education and lifelong learning
- help create opportunities for you to achieve success in your chosen career
- work closely with all agencies to improve educational opportunities for you

The Virtual School is made up of a Head Teacher, support staff and Higher-Level Teaching Assistants. Someone from the Virtual School will attend your Personal Education Plan meetings so you will get to meet them on a regular basis. The Virtual School also arranges activities such as theatre trips and residentials, so watch for their letters.

Bursary Fund

You are entitled to get a bursary (money) to help with education-related costs if you are aged 16 to 19 and are studying at school 6th form, college or on a training course, including unpaid apprenticeships.

What is a bursary for?

A bursary is money that you, or your education or training provider, can use to pay for things like, clothing, books and other equipment for your course, transport and lunch on days you study or are attending training.

Who can get a bursary?

You must be under 19 at the start of the academic year and be studying at a school 6th form, college, or on an unpaid training course. You could get up to £1,200 if one of the following applies to you:

- you're in or recently left local authority care
- you get Income Support or Universal Credit in your name
- you're disabled and get both Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), and either Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in your name
- if you're a parent you'll also need to be living away from your own parents to qualify.

When and how to apply?

It is important that you apply as soon as possible. Once you know where you will be studying or training. Apply directly to the Student Services within school, college or training provider and ask for a Bursary Application Form. Complete the form and return it back to them. The school 6th form, college or training provider will process your application. Check with your school 6th form, college or training provider if they require you to reapply for a bursary for each year of your course. Ask your social worker for a letter to prove who you are and where you live.

Additional information

Remember the bursary is to help pay for things you need to stay in education. We all want you to do well. There will be an expectation that your attendance and behaviour is at an acceptable level – this is set by the 6th form school, college or training provider. Payments will be stopped if your attendance falls below the required level or if your behaviour and conduct is not satisfactory.

You think a decision is unfair

Speak to Student Services if you're unhappy with a decision. Follow their complaints process if you can't resolve the problem.

SECTION 5

Becoming Independent







- Pathway Plan
- Preparing for Adulthood Skills Workbook
- Preparing for Adulthood Skills Programme
- Leaving Care Service

Pathway Plan

Although you've been working on it your whole life (maybe without knowing it) when you become 15 and 9 months old you will officially begin to plan for adulthood. With the support of those around you, you will develop your own Pathway Plan and start working on it. This will help prepare you for independent living when you are 18.

To equip you as much as possible we have a transition programme in place to offer you additional support during this time.

The transition programme consists of;

- completing the Preparing for Adulthood Skills Workbook
- attending the **Preparing for Adulthood Skills Programme**
- a Guide to Redbridge Leaving Care Service

The transition programme will offer you the opportunity to work at your own pace as well as bring you together to learn in a group setting with others who are also transitioning into adulthood. This will enrich your experience and offer you a space to grow together. The Children's Participation Officer will invite you onto the transition programme and let you know the dates of the workshops. We want you to feel confident and supported as you take on additional responsibilities towards your independence.

Preparing for Adulthood Skills Workbook

You will be given a 'Preparing for Adulthood Skills workbook' to get you started on the right path.

It is intended as a tool for you and your foster parent, with the support of your social worker, to work together to evidence your development. It is required that you complete the workbook within a set time. This will be negotiated according to your abilities. The sooner you completed it the sooner you will be able to put more of your skills into practice. On completion it will prove you have fulfilled the basic competencies needed to live independently.

The Workbook will offer you the opportunities to enhance your current skills, learn a few new ones and have fun at the same time whilst you are still living with your foster carers. You are encouraged to take some photos along the way to evidence your progress. Not only will it be something to look back on but also it will form evidence for your Silver Youth Achievement Award, a nationally recognised award to add to your CV.

Preparing for Adulthood Skills Programme

Just so you don't think you are on your own, we have put together a **Preparing for Adulthood Skills Programme** which will bring you and other young people together. These will include workshops on First Aid, Money Management, Events Coordination, Do It Yourself (DIY), and Budgeting to mention just a few. The programme will run throughout the year and alongside your Workbook.

Together it will enhance your Pathway Plan to form the foundations on which you will build upon once you become a care leaver and join the Redbridge Leaving Care Service.

As you approach your 18th birthday your social worker will introduce you to a Personal Advisor who works in the Redbridge Leaving Care Service. They will work with you instead of your Social Worker once you are 18. There will also be a Connexions Personal Advisors available to support your future education and career plans.

Guide to Redbridge Leaving Care Service

You will be given a Guide to Redbridge Leaving Care Service which will contain information you will need to know when you turn 18 and become a care leaver. It will give you an introduction to the service and inform you of the professional team who will be supporting you as you start of your life as a young adult.

Redbridge Leaving Care Service

If you were looked after by Redbridge for 13 weeks between your 14th birthday and at least one day after your 16th birthday, you will be eligible for support from the Leaving Care Team from when you are 18 to 24 years old.

As part of Redbridge Leaving Care Service you will have access to:

- an allocated Personal Advisor
- continue to build on your skills by supporting you to complete Redbridge Leaving Care Life Skills Programme
- groups and "drop in" services to enhance your independent skills through various training sessions
- visits by Personal Advisors to your home every 8 weeks
- a Pathway Plan which is reviewed 6 monthly or earlier if there has been a significant change in your circumstances
- support with accommodation including permanent council housing
- financial entitlements as well as additional support when required
- Birthday and festive money accordance to your entitlements
- out of hours support for emergencies from the Emergency Duty Team and/or accommodation providers
- education and careers advice to reach your dreams

If you were not looked after by Redbridge for 13 weeks between your 14th birthday and at least one day after your 16th birthday, your Social Worker will explain what support you will receive once you are 18.

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SECTION 6

Key Contactand Information

Contacts for you in London Borough of Redbridge

Brook Advisory Centre

For sexual health and wellbeing advice 0808 802 1234 www.brook.org.uk

Children's Participation Officer

Children in Care Council 020 8708 3448 Email: chi.doan@redbridge.gov.uk

Children's Rights Advocate

020 8708 5811

Email: janet.edwards@redbridge.gov.uk

Complaints Department - Redbridge

020 8708 5268 / 020 8708 5174 Email: Childrens.Complaints@redbridge.gov.uk

Connexions Service

020 8708 2600

Email: Connexions@redbridge.gov.uk

FIND

46

0800 587 7500 find.redbridge.gov.uk www.info4carekids.og.uk

Fusion

Young People's Dugs & Alcohol Service 020 8708 7801 Email: info.fusion@wdp.org.uk www.wdpyoungpeople.org.uk

Redbridge Adoption Service

020 8708 7459

Email: adoptionteam@redbridge.gov.uk

Redbridge Council

Main Switchboard for all council enquires 020 8554 5000

Redbridge Domestic Violence One Stop Shop

Free support and information from a range of support services 07939 255 014

Redbridge Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service (EWMHS)

Specialist Community Health Service for children and young people 0300 555 1182 / 0300 300 1624 New-tr.rbcypspa@nhs.net

Redbridge Fostering Service

020 8708 7528

Email: fostering@redbridge.gov.uk

Redbridge Leaving Care Team

0208 418 4950

Out of hours: 0208 708 5600 or your accommodation provider

Redbridge Youth Service Hainault Youth Centre

020 8500 8071

Specialist Nurse for Looked After Children

020 8708 8202

Local Sexual Health Information and Advice

www.youngpeoplefriendly.co.uk www.comecorrect.org.uk

Victim Support Redbridge – young people worker

020 8550 2410

vs.redbridge@vslondon.org

Virtual School Service

020 8708 3939

Email: Class@redbridge.gov.uk

Other useful contacts

Become

The charity for children living away from home and for care experienced adult 020 7251 3117 Adviceline 0800 023 2033 advice@becomecharity.org.uk

Children's Commissioner for England

The Office of the Children's Commissioner
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT
020 7783 8330
Freephone 0800 528 0731
Help at Hand
help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk
Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

Child Exploitation Online Protection Thinkuknow

Provides advice on how to keep safe on line. Find out what's good, what's not and what you can do about it. There's also a place which anyone can use to **report** if they feel uncomfortable or worried about someone they are chatting to online.

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Childline

A free 24-hour counselling service for children and young people up to the age of nineteen. It is a private and confidential service where you can contact a counsellor about anything - no problem is too big or too small.

0800 11 11

www.childline.org.uk

Kidscape

For children and young people from 6 to 19, anyone who has concerns, specifically to prevent bullying and child sexual abuse 08451 205 204

www.kidscape.org.uk

NSPCC

Offers a combination of services to help protect children, support families and work together with services to safeguard children. 0800 11 11

www.nspcc.org.uk

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD 0300 123 1231 www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Children's Society

Works directly with the most disadvantaged children. 0300 303 7000 www.childrenssociety.org.uk

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Working together to support children and young people



Children's guide to fostering and being looked after





Background information

This booklet is to help you understand what being looked after means and what foster care is.

This may be a difficult time for you, but we want you to know that we want the best for you for as long or as short a time that you stay with us.

What does being looked after mean?

Being looked after is where you don't live with your own family.

Sometimes it is with:

- a friend or a relative
- a home where other children and young people live

But most often with

a family you do not know

You may live away from your family for a short time, be looked after by someone else only at weekends, or you may stay with them until you are an adult.

It all depends on what is needed to make sure you are safe, happy and well cared for.

Your carers will treat you with dignity and respect and will want you to do the same to them. It may take a little time to get used to your carers and their house rules, and all carers will have their own way of doing things. Your carer knows that at first this may be strange for you and take time to get used to.

Our mission statement

Achieving for Children, the joint children's service for Kingston and Richmond, is passionate about ensuring the best possible outcomes for children and their families and will deliver the services they need to live safe, happy, healthy and successful lives.

What does foster care mean?

If you live with another family, this is called foster care.

Who are foster carers?

Foster carers are people who look after children and young people in the foster carers' homes, when the child or young person is unable to live with their family.

Foster carers are ordinary people who care about children and young people and want to help make sure they are safe.

Not all foster carers are the same. They may be single or married, black or white. They may or may not have children of their own. Foster carers may live in a house or a flat. They may have pets.

All foster carers, their families and their homes have been carefully checked to make sure that they can offer you a safe place to live.

Achieving for Children's Fostering Service will do its best to find you a foster carer who has a similar background to you, who will be able to look after you and make sure that you have everything you need.

The foster carer's home will be safe and comfortable.

When you are looked after, your foster carer will care for you as if you were part of their family. They will look after you until you are able to return home or until other longer term plans are made.

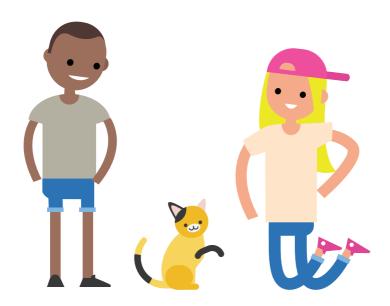
You will be able to talk to your foster carer about how you are feeling. They will understand how upsetting it can be living away from your family and friends.

Your foster carer will get to know you and help you do the things you like, and if you want something that is very important to you, they will do their best to help you. Your foster carer will help you with hobbies or leisure interests, so let them know what you like to do and they will make sure you can get to do all the things you enjoy.

What is residential care?

Residential care is where you live in a children's home rather than with a foster family. This usually means that there will be more children and more adults where you live. You may live in a children's home because of particular needs you have.

To make sure your needs are properly met, children's homes have a key worker or link worker system who have particular responsibility for you. Achieving for Children will always do its best to ensure that you live in the best place to support your development



What we want for you

We want to make sure you have everything you need, which includes the following things.

- Positive relationships
- Where you live is safe and you get everything you need
- You do really well in your education
- You know who you are and where you're from (your identity)
- You are listened to and involved when important decisions have to be made about your life
- You have the support you need to move into adulthood
- You have people around you who you can talk to and make sure you feel good about life
- You are fit and healthy
- You know the people who will support you in your life

You will be shown everything you need to know about your new home. You will get to know who else lives in the home, what the rules are within the house and people will make sure you are OK. You can talk to your foster carer or person responsible for you where you live if you are not sure of something.

What is a social worker?

All children we look after have their own social worker who is responsible for making sure that they are well cared for.

A social worker is someone who is trained to help children and families through difficult times. Their job is to make sure you are safe, settled and well. They will explain things to you and help you to understand what is going on.

It's their job to make sure that everything possible is being done to help you achieve your best while we care for you. We will make sure that your health needs are being met, that you go to the right school or college, and you are being encouraged to do the best you can there.

Your social worker will visit you to check that you are OK. They will ask you how things are going and tell you about any plans that affect you. Your social worker will also work with your family to try and make it possible for you to return home.

My wellbeing

Can I see my family?

This is a very important question, but the answer is not the same for everyone. Your social worker will talk to you and your family about arrangements for you to see each other. We understand that you want to know what plans are being made and will try to find out what is happening as soon as possible.

Can I see my friends?

Your foster carer will do their best to help you stay in touch with your friends, and make new ones. It will be important for you to agree with your foster carer when you are going to see them. They will want to talk to their parents if you are thinking of staying overnight with a friend. Your friend's parents will want to talk to your foster carer if you invite the friend to stay overnight with you.

What happens with my education?

It may be that you stay at the school or college you already go to. If you can't stay there, then your social worker will work out which one is best for you to go to. If you don't go to school or college at the moment or haven't been for a while, you may feel a bit nervous. The person who is caring for you can help you with this. Remember it isn't just about lessons, it can be a great place to meet new friends and try new activities.

We want to make sure that you do the best you can so that you can achieve your potential. To do this we create a personal education plan which helps you, and us, think about your future and where you want to get to. At your school or college you will also have a designated teacher who is there to give you support to make sure you are on track with achieving your goals.

What happens with my health?

Your health is very important and so to make sure you stay healthy we have a doctor and a nurse who you will meet and will make sure your health needs are met. If you become unwell they will make sure you are cared for so that you can recover, and they will also ensure that you are growing up as you should. The doctor and nurse will also be able to give you information and advice about different areas regarding your health.

Will I have my own bedroom?

This depends on your age and circumstances. In most situations, you will have your own room. Sometimes, young people like to share a bedroom with their brother or sister.

What if my foster family is a different religion to me?

Your foster carer will do all they can to make sure that you can attend your place of worship, keep up your customs, eat food that you are used to. Your social worker will try to put you in touch with people from your own community so that you don't feel cut off from your culture. They will also arrange for you to have a translator or an interpreter if you need one.

What is a supervising social worker?

The supervising social worker oversees your foster carers. They will ask you what you think about the care you are getting.

What is a review meeting?

A review is a meeting to see how you are getting on. Your parent(s), social worker and carer(s) will also be invited to the meeting.

It is a chance to talk about what has been happening and what plans are being made for you while you are being looked after. Your first review meeting usually happens when you have been looked after for four weeks. There will be a second review meeting after three months and then every six months after that.

What does my independent reviewing officer do?

Every child and young person who is looked after must have a named independent reviewing officer (IRO). It is their job to:

- chair your review meeting
- · check that the plan is right for you
- make sure you have your say about what is happening
- make sure that everyone listens to what you have to say and considers it carefully when they are making decisions
- make sure everyone has their say
- check that everyone is keeping to their part of the plan
- · check that there are clear plans for your future
- check that you know how to make a complaint
- check that you know how to request further support if it is needed, such as asking for an advocate (someone who can speak on your behalf)
- check if you need an interpreter or a translator

What is Viewpoint?

Viewpoint is a way that we find out what you think. It is a questionnaire that asks you questions about where you live, school or college, friends, your health and the things you like doing.

The Viewpoint officer's role is to visit or contact you by phone or email to help you with completing the questionnaire. Your views are then sent to the independent reviewing officer and will be used in your review meeting to make sure that you are being listened to.

Who are the Children in Care Council?

The Children in Care Council is a group of looked after children and young people and care leavers who meet regularly with social workers, service managers, local councillors and directors to represent the views of young people on the services delivered to you.

They need your help to make services better. If you are interested in joining the Children in Care Council talk to your social worker or foster carer.

What help can I get if I am unhappy about something?

If you have any questions or are unhappy about something, you can usually ask your carers, your social worker or independent reviewing officer.

This can be about anything like keeping in touch with friends and family, getting pocket money, needing to see a doctor or a dentist, or going on holiday.

If you think that you are not being listened to and want to make sure that what you say is heard and acted upon, an independent advocate could help and we can arrange this.

Useful contacts

The Voice Advocacy Service is a confidential service that listens to what you have to say

Coram Voice, Gregory House, Coram Campus, 49 Mecklenburgh Square, London WC1N 2QA

T: 0808 800 5792

E: info@coramvoice.org.uk
W: www.coramvoice.org.uk

Help at Hand (Children's Commissioner) Children's Commissioner for England

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street London SWIP 3BT

Free phone 0800 528 0731

E: help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

W: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/learn-more/ help-at-hand

Child Line

Free phone 0800 11 11

Ofsted

You can also contact 'Ofsted'. It is an organisation set up to monitor and inspect all children's services in the country including fostering services and children's homes. If you have a complaint contact:

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street

Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0303 123 1231,

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children)

T: 0808 800 5000. This helpline is open 24 hours a day.

Samaritans

T: 116 123

Other useful numbers

AfC Children Looked After Team

T: 020 8547 6904

AfC Fostering Team

T: 020 8547 6042

AfC Quality Assurance Team

T: 020 8891 7370

Kingston:

Complaints and Information Access Officer

T: 020 8547 4716

Richmond:

Corporate Complaints and Access to Information Manager

T: 020 8891 7937



You can write the names and phone numbers of people who will help to look after you below.		

We hope this booklet has told you about some of the things you would like to know about being looked after. If there are things we have missed, or if you have any questions about anything in the booklet, please ask any of the staff your social worker or foster carer.

If there were things you would have liked to see in the booklet that we missed, please tell us, and we will try and put it in the next edition.

Please don't forget:

Once you have left our care, we would like to keep in touch and hope that you will come back to see us.

f you would like this information in any other language or format for example large print or audio please contact 'Looked After Children Education Team' on 01642 527119.

ردًا كيت ترغب الحصول على هذه المعاومات بلغات أو بأشكال أخرى على سبيل المثالة الطبعة الكبيرة|أو بالشريط المسجل فالرحاء الإنصال أبدأ هرستي نيم (namanama Chiam Esumba Tum) على هاتف رقم 31-3471 (1912)

Arari

数要這份資訊的其它語言版或其它酸式例如大字體印刷/錄音帶。請 習慣/01642) 527119 核治 "另元化量"(Locked After Children Education Team)

Mandari

اگر شما این اطلاعت را به زبان با شکل دیگری مثلا چاپ بزرگ یا بصورت صدا پخواهد لطفا یا تبر داور سیتی (گوناگونی) «Ocean Atm Chaon یا شما ره ۱۳۶۹ (۱۳۸۵) (۱۳۸۵) به تماس شوید

FARS

Si vous souhaitez obtenir ces informations dans d'autres langues ou sous un autre format, par exemple, en gros caractères / version audio, veuillez contacter l'équipe (Locket Ma Onde Standon Team) au nº (81642) 527118

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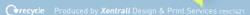
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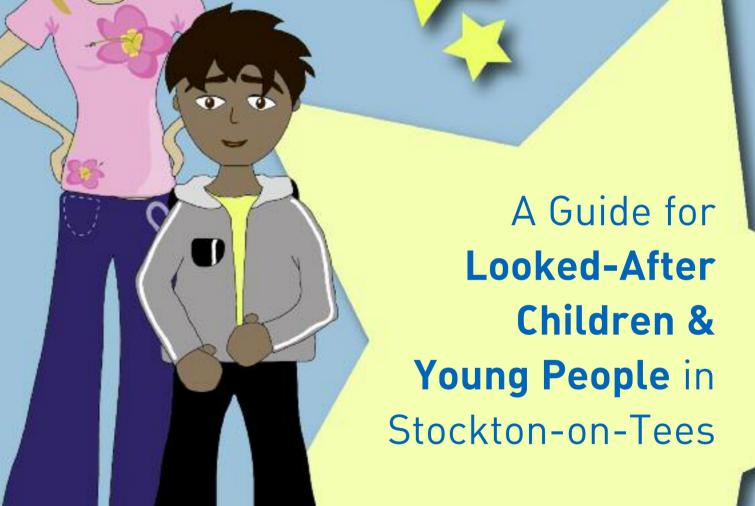
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Children and Young People

Big plans for the young people of our Borough



Contents

Welc	ome	2
Who'	s Who	2
What does being In Care, Looked After or Accommodated mean?		
Where do they live?		
How long will I be in care?		
While you are in our care		4
Conta	Contact with your family	
Foste	Foster Care	
Resid	Residential Care	
Meet	ings	6
•	Placement Agreement Meeting	7
•	Review Meeting	7
•	PEP Meeting	9
•	Young People (or House) Meeting	9
•	Council Meeting	10
•	Disruption Meeting	10
Abou	About you	
•	Your Care	11
•	Education	12
•	Health	13
•	Our Files	13
Usefu	Useful Telephone Numbers	
Web addresses		14
Compliments & Complaints		15
This Booklet belongs to		16
How	to Complain and who to	17
Just	for you	19
Му Р	ersonal Notes	
Thing	as I want to remember	

Welcome

This booklet has been made to help you understand and answer some of the questions you may have about being looked after by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Children, Education and Social Care which includes Social Services. It's sometimes difficult to remember everything people tell you at first, so we have put some information together regarding things that you might want to look back at. It will hopefully tell you what you need to know, but you can also ask your Social Worker or your foster carer if you are unsure about anything. They are there to help and support you.

At the back of this booklet is a section that has some paper in. We thought this might be useful if you want to write things down in case you forgot something that's important to you. You will be given some other booklets about being in care and a folder for you to keep things that are important to you in.

Who's Who

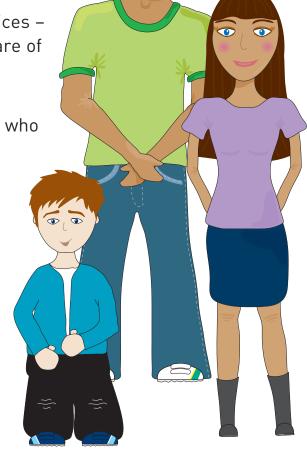
Children, Education & Social Care have lots of people working together to help children and young people in Stockton-on-Tees. The "boss" is the Corporate Director, and the main people involved in making sure you are looked after properly are:

 Head of C&YP Services – who has overall responsibility for all children's services in Stockton

 Service Manager Looked After Children's Services – who has responsibility for all children in the care of Stockton Borough Council

 Child Placement Team Manager – who has responsibility for managing the social workers who support all of Stockton's foster carers

 Resource Team Manager – who has responsibility for all of Stockton's children's homes



What does being in looked after or accommodated mean?

These are all words you may hear when describing children in care: looked after, accommodated, LAC.

For many different reasons, some children and young people like you can't live with their parents and the Local Authority become involved. They make sure there is somewhere safe for you to live and that there is someone to look after you. When this happens the children and young people are said to be in care or looked after.

This can happen when parent and Social Services agree that a child or young person should not live at home with their parents. This is called Accommodated or In Voluntary or Public Care.

Another way is when a Court makes an order. This is called a Care Order or Interim Care Order and can happen even if parents want their child or young person to stay at home, but the Court feels that they would be better living somewhere else.

Where could I live?

You could live:

- In a Residential Children's Home with staff employed to care for a small number of children.
- With Foster Carers these are usually carefully chosen people who are trained to look after children in care, usually in the foster carers' own home.
- With a Relative sometimes grandparents, aunts and uncles are considered suitable carers for children in care.
- In a residential or boarding school.
- In a supported lodgings scheme.

How long will I be in care?

It all depends. Some children are in care for a short while, others for longer. Your Social Worker will be able to help you keep up to date with what's happening.

While you are in our care

The staff of our homes and the foster carers we work with will:

- ✓ Treat all young people and their families as individuals and with respect.
- ✓ Try to make the young people in their care feel special and cared about
- ✓ Help young people to build their self confidence
- Build on young people's strengths and support them through any difficult challenges
- ✓ Offer support and guidance
- ✓ Keep you up to date with what's happening.
- ✓ Seek to give information on services that are available
- ✓ Seek to promote positive contact between you and your family, friends, and other people who are important to you
- ✓ Support and help you when you move
- ✓ Help with school, education, training or employment

They are not allowed to do any of the following as a form of punishment:

x Hit, kick, pinch or throw things at you

x Unreasonably stop you from having food or drink

x Stop you from contacting or seeing your family unless there is a risk

x Stop you from seeing your Social Worker, Solicitor, advocate etc.

- x Stop you from going to the dentists, doctors, opticians
- x Stop you from having your usual medication
- x Stop you from sleeping during the night
- x Make you pay a fine (unless it is a Court fine or a fine to pay for damage you have deliberately caused)
- x Lock you up
- x Search you in an intimate way



Contact with your family

We understand that contact with your family is important to you and we will make arrangements with you and your family about how often you see the people you want to see. In exceptional cases we may not be allowed to let this happen if it meant you could be in danger. Your Social Worker will talk to you about this if necessary.

Foster Care

What are foster carers like?

People who foster are ordinary people who like children and young people. Sometimes they are married with children of their own and some may live outside of Stockton area. They may go to work or stay at home. Some foster carers have pets and lots of interests and hobbies. Foster Carer's are trained to do the job of looking after you, and are checked thoroughly before they start looking after children and young people.

What will it be like to live there?

It will probably be strange at first because all families are different and have different ways of doing things. All Foster Carers and members of their family will make you feel welcome and understand the first few days may be difficult for you.

Can I have a room of my own? Sometimes

Can I still see my mates? Yes

Will I have to change schools? Not usually

Do I get pocket money? Yes

Just before you move in or just after, a Meeting will be held where all these things are discussed, including bedtimes, rules and other things we haven't covered. Wherever possible, you will be at the meeting which is called a Placement Agreement Meeting and you'll be able to ask lots more questions. Your family and school may also be invited.

Residential Care

What are Residential Children's Homes like?

Residential Children's Homes tend to be different to other peoples houses in terms of their size, the number of children and young people living there and how they are ran. Stockton Borough Council have a number of residential homes where between 3 and 6 young people live. Sometimes this is temporary place to stay while we assess what a young person needs to help make the best plan for their future. Some homes are outside of Stockton. There is always a member of staff at 'home' and there are rules that have to be kept just like any house.

Will someone explain everything to me?

Just before you move in or just after, a meeting will be held where everything will be discussed, including bedtimes, rules and other things we haven't covered. You will be at the meeting which is called a Placement Agreement Meeting and you'll be able to ask lots more questions.

Meetings

You will probably have gathered that lots of meetings are held, some of which you will be able to attend and some that will take place when you are not there. Your Social Worker or foster carer will let you know about the meetings and you will have a chance to let people know what you think. There are different ways you can have your say, this could be done by:

- Being there
- Writing a note to be read out
- Having someone you trust what you think or feel (it might be your teacher or an advocate)
- Sending in an audio recorded message
- Filling in the Looked After Children's Consultation Booklet
- Saving your thoughts on the computer and send the to the chair or your Social Worker
- Telephoning/emailing the chair or Social Worker
- Draw a picture
- Filling in a 'Let me tell you what I think' consultation booklet

The important thing is that you have a chance to be listened to and your voice is heard.

The Meetings you might hear mentioned are:

- 1. Placement Agreement Meeting
- 2. Review Meeting
- 3. PEP Meeting
- 4. Young Peoples (or House) Meeting
- 5. Council Meeting
- 6. Disruption Meeting

There's a lot of them aren't there and lots of young people have asked the same questions about them from time to time. We have therefore included examples of some of the questions that you might ask.

Please add in or you can fill in a children and young people's consultation booklet.

Placement Agreement Meeting

What is a Placement Agreement Meeting?

It's where what is expected of you and the people you will be living with is discussed. Any house rules, bedtimes, pocket money and what you can and cannot do will be agreed at this meeting. It's important as it is about planning for your future safety and who is going to look after you.

Reviews (Child Care or Looked After)

What is a Review Meeting?

A review is a meeting to discuss the arrangements for where you are living at the moment and to talk about the plans for your future.

Who comes to a Review?

Usually, this would be you, depending on how old you are, your Social Worker, your carer and your parents/family, as well as the person who will be in charge of the meeting (the chairperson). It might also be a good idea for people who know you, for example your designated teacher, to come to the review. You can also ask for an advocate (someone who helps you to have your say or will say what you think or feel) to attend.

Do I have to come to a Review?

As it is your Meeting, it is important that your views are heard. Your Social Worker will take about the future plans with you before the review. If you feel unable to

come to the review, your Social Worker or your advocate will let people know what you think and feel. You could also write or send an e-mail message to the Chair to make sure they know what you think and feel. In addition there is consultation questionnaire called 'Let me tell you what I want' that can be used to record your views, wishes and feelings which can go towards your review.

What happens in a Review?

Before the meeting, the chairperson will offer you the opportunity to talk to him/her about the meeting and also the plans that have been made for you. The chairperson will start the meeting by asking everyone there to say who they are. Everyone will have the chance to talk about how things are and if any changes need to be made.

The chairperson will give everyone a chance to speak and have the opportunity to talk about how things are for you. Decisions will be made which your Social Worker will talk to you about, if you are unsure or need extra information just ask. The chairperson will be taking notes at the meeting of what has been decided.

What else do people talk about?

People at the meeting will talk about your education, health and the contact you have with your family as well as the plans for the future.

What happens after the Review?

The chairperson will write down the recommendations and send a copy to you. It is important that everyone completes the work that has been recommended because this will be looked at again at the next Review.

What if I am unhappy about the Review?

If you want to talk to someone about the review you can contact anyone who was at the review who you feel confident talking to. The chairperson will always be willing to listen and help you. Your Social Worker or Children's Rights Officer can also give you a leaflet that explains how you can make a complaint, or compliment if you are happy with how things have turned out.

What if I don't agree with the plan?

Sometimes the adults at the review may feel it necessary to make decisions you don't agree with. Even so, the decisions should always be explained to you by your Social Worker or the chairperson. You can challenge these decisions through the Children, Education & Social Care complaints procedure by making a formal or informal complaint.

How often do Reviews take place?

The first review should take place before you have been looked after for one month. The next review usually takes place three months later and every six months after that. If the plans for you are changing or there are some difficulties which you (or other people) want to discuss, then a review meeting may be arranged earlier.

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

What is a PEP Meeting?

We want you to do well in school and to receive the support you need. To help make this happen your Designated Teacher, Social Worker and school work together to make a Personal Education Plan for you. You, your carers and parents along with other professionals may be invited to the meeting to make the plan. Your plan will then be reviewed every six months, around the time of your Looked After Reviews.

Young Peoples (or House) Meetings

What is a Young Peoples (or House) Meeting?

Regular meetings are held in children's homes to allow everyone who lives there to have the opportunity to have a say in the way the home is run and what's happening.

The booklet you receive if you go to live in a children's home will give you more details about these meetings.

Council Meetings

The Corporate Director of Children, Education and Social Care has to report to the Council's service committees which are made up of Councillors. These Councillors have to decide on how the directorate will be run and how much money will be spent on the services it is responsible for. All major decisions on changes affecting the service you receive take place at these committees.

Disruption Meeting

What is a Disruption Meeting?

It's a meeting that takes place to discuss how and why a placement has broken down. If you are moving from one placement to another you should have either a review or if things are happening quickly, an emergency planning meeting. You will also be asked about your views after you have moved.

About You

Whilst you are being looked after, you will be encouraged to:

- Practice your religion
- Be active and healthy
- Do your best at school, college or work
- Keep in contact with your friends and family as stated in your Care Plan
- Be you!

Education

Virtual School for Looked After children and Young People

The Virtual School exists to champion your educational needs in school. The school does not exist as a real building but it has a range of staff from different services to ensure you are making the appropriate progress in your own school. Your attendance is checked weekly and each term we track your academic progress in partnership with your school. The LACE Team (Looked After Children Education Team) work as part of the Virtual School and help individual pupils or school to provide additional help when this is required.

The Virtual School works closely with your Designated Teacher at school. The Designated Teacher is a special teacher who has been asked to support you in school. In some schools this may be your Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher. In all cases they will be responsible for your Personal education Plan PEP.



Virtual Learning Platform

The Virtual School has developed a Virtual Learning Platform so you can access information, advice and guidance relating to your education and future steps.

You can access the platform from your computer https://stockton.itslearning.com Generic student logins are:

- primarypupil.vs
- secondarypupil.vs

All accounts have the password of Stockton which is case sensitive.

If you have any concerns or wish to contact the Virtual School or a member of the LACE Team you can use the following email laceteam@stockton.gov.uk

Will I have to change schools?

We will try to make sure you can continue going to your own school, though if your new home is a long way from your current school we may need to think about moving you. We will always try to discuss any changes with you, and we will not move your school if it is close to exams and might affect how well you do. All young people are expected to go to school and if for some reason, you are not in school your carer and Social Worker will need to discuss your education with you and with the Education Department.

Will I have to leave school at 16?

As from 2013 all pupils are required to stay in education, training or employment with training until they are 17 years old. In 2014 this will be raised to 18 years old. If you enjoy school it's worth thinking about staying on to take extra exams, further training, going to college or university.

In all cases we will help you make the decisions for your future careers and support you in applying for your chosen pathway. Youth Direction (formerly Connexions) will also allocate a 'Participation Advisers' to support you in your decision making.

Who will let the school know that I've moved?

We will. We will send a letter to let the school know that you are being looked after and where you are living. The Social Worker will also contact the school to arrange a meeting to complete a Personal Education Plan (PEP) for you.

Health

Health Assessment

You will be offered a Health Assessment when you are first looked after. This is your chance to talk a doctor about your health.

While you are looked after you have the right to good health care and all children and young people should have a medical examination on becoming accommodated and every year after that. This includes dental and eye care. We will respect your wishes if you do not want to have a medical assessment, but we think it is important to make sure all your needs are met.

Why do I need a Health Assessment?

Growing up as fit and well as possible will help you get the best from all the opportunities in your life. The health assessment is provided to help you stay as healthy as possible. It's an important part of making sure you are looked after properly.

What do I get out of it?

This is a chance for you to talk about your health and perhaps anything else that may be worrying you, and helps us plan with you for your future.

Where will I go?

Lawson Street Health Centre, Stockton where there are doctors with a special interest in the health of young people.

Who will go with me?

Any, or more than one, of the people below can go with you, you can discuss this with your Social Worker

- Your parents may attend,
- You could go with your foster carers or link worker,
- Your Social Worker may go with you,
- You may take a friend or relative,
- You may go by yourself if your social worker and the doctor agree.

What will happen?

The doctor will talk to you about your health and any concerns you may have. He or she will check your height, weight, eyesight, hearing and listen to your chest.

Will I need to have an injection?

No, not normally. If you do, the doctor will usually arrange for your own GP to give you any injections.

What happens after the check up?

Usually the doctor fills in a form and sends it back to your Social Worker with a copy to your carer and your own doctor. Your parents may also want a copy.

This form is kept on your notes confidentially and in a safe place by your carers who will return it to your Social Worker for safe keeping if you move placement or return home to live. There will also be a copy for you kept on your child-held file.

How often will I need to go?

Normally only once, after that you will be offered a health re-assessment once or twice or year, depending on your age – if you are still being looked after.

What happens if I am unhappy?

The check up is important to ensure the best health care for you and will give you the information you need to make choices about your own health both now and in the future.

If you are not happy about the check up, you should discuss this with your Social Worker or the Looked After Children's nurses; they will try and sort things out.

What is a Health Re-Assessment?

A health re-assessment is a chance to look at your health plan again and bring it up to date. Most importantly – it is a time when your can talk about your health with someone who can help.

Who will I see?

A qualified nurse will arrange to see you, normally at your home. Depending on your age it could be a health visitor, a school nurse or Looked After Children's Nurse.

Who will be with me?

Usually your carer will be with you, but older children they can choose to have their re-assessment alone.

What will happen?

The nurse will arrange to see you in a place that you feel comfortable with. This could be at home, at school or somewhere else that suits you and the nurse such as a clinic.

The nurse will ask you how you feel and if you have any problems or worries about your health. She will offer to weigh you and check your height. She may see you more often if you have any problems that she can help with.

You and the nurse will look at your health plan and make sure it is up to date. You may need to see someone else, such as a doctor or a dentist. This will be written in your health plan so it can be arranged.

What happens after the re-assessment?

A copy to your plan will be sent to your Social Worker, carer and your own doctor as before. If you are over 14 years you will receive a copy of your new health plan to keep. There will also be a copy for you kept on your child-held file.

If you would like any more information on this please contact the Senior Nurse for LAC on (01642) 524911/07979224606

Leaving Care Personal Advisor & Pathway Plan

By your 16th birthday preparations should be underway to allocate you a Personal Advisor. A Personal Advisor is someone who is there specifically for you, to offer advice and guidance. They are there to provide support, help improve your circumstances and opportunities in life and advocate on your behalf. They will help to support you until you are at least 21 or 25 if you go on to higher Education.

Your Personal Advisor will do the following:

- Work with you and other professionals to complete your assessment and Pathway Plan
- Provide you with advice and support
- Help you make decisions about your future
- Work with other services that you need in order to help and support you
- Keep in contact with you regularly to see how you are progressing and ensure your Pathway Plan is meeting your needs
- Assist you with managing your money and budgeting

Pathway Assessment:

Together with your Social Worker/Personal Advisor you will complete a Pathway Assessment to help identify your skills now and where you would like to be in the future. This will look at where you would like to live, your education, training, employment etc. From your assessment your Social Worker/Personal Advisor will help you to complete a Pathway Plan.

Pathway Plan:

This is your plan and you should always be involved in its completion. This plan will set out a pathway of your choice as you move towards independence. The plan will be regularly reviewed independently to include any changes that you wish to make along the way.

Your Pathway Plan will include:

- Your accommodation your rights and housing options
- Education/training/employment needs
- Relationships with family and friends
- Any practical skills you need to live independently and how to get them
- Any personal support you need for your health needs

Remember: Your Pathway Plan is your plan for the future!

Always remember that you are the most important person in the Leaving Care process so it's essential that you make decisions that are right for you!

Your files

Can I see what is written about me?

You can see what's written on your Social Care file if Children, Education and Social Care (Social Services) think that you will understand what is written there. They will not let you see what is written about other people, unless these people agree. They will not let you see anything which they will think will put you in serious danger. If you want to see your file or what is held on computer about you, tell your Social Worker, who will arrange this.

Useful telephone numbers for help & advice

Childcall 0800 774466

Childline 0800 1111 (4.00 pm - 10.00 pm)Children in Care 0800 88444 (6.00 pm - 10.00 pm)

Children's Legal Centre (01206) 873820 Youth Direction (01642) 677600 CSCL (01642) 628960 National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) 0800 616101 Independent Reviewing Officers (01642) 527626

(Review Chairperson)

Designated Complaints Officer (01642) 527521

Ofsted 0300 1231231

Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, We report directly to Parliament and we are independent and impartial. We inspect and regulate services which care for children and young people, and those providing education and skills for learners of all ages.

Web addresses you might find useful

www.kidsdomain.co.uk Contains online games and games to

download, clipart library and a reviews

section covering software, books,

games and films.

www.encarta.co.uk On-line encyclopedia

www.homeworkelephant.co.uk Home work help

www.bbc.co.uk/education All education ages, with interactive

revision

Supportive information, help and an www.bullying.co.uk

e-mail helpline which attempts to offer

a 24 hour reply service.

www.whatnow.co.uk Official website for What Now?

Information and Advice for young

people

Information and guidance for young www.stockton.gov.uk/childrenandyoung people/youthservices/youthdirect/

people aged 13-19.

Information, guidance and support for

young people who are or have been in

care.

www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk

How to complain and who to!

Have your say - no problem is too small

This leaflet is for children and young people who feel there is something wrong with their care or they are happy and want to say thank you – it could be anything at all.

If it's a problem, first try to talk to someone you trust – we care and are here to help.

If you are still unhappy, fill in the other side and make your complaint (or compliment). You can also phone us on (01642) 527521.

We'll listen and do our best!

We'll reply within 28 days at the most and we will try to help you with your problem.



How to complain and who to!

Age: Where I live: My Social Worker's name is: People helping me to make this complaint/compliment are: My complaint/compliment is: What I want to happen:				
My Social Worker's name is: People helping me to make this complaint/compliment are: My complaint/compliment is: What I want to happen:				
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What I want to happen:				
What I want to happen:				
What I want to happen:				
What I want to happen:				
Signature: Date:				
This can now be sent by FREEPOST to: The Designated Complaints Officer, 4th Floor Bayheath House, Prince Regent Street, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1DF				

Complaints & Compliments

If you are not happy with your care you receive while you are looked after you have the right to complain. First talk to somebody you can trust about the problem. They will try to sort it out. If you unhappy fill in the leaflet 'You and Your Points of View' which will be in the home or fill in the form in this booklet. You can ask an adult or friend to help you do this.

You can also let us know when things are going well, someone has helped you or if someone has made things better for you. We all like to be thanked for doing something good and Social Workers, foster carers, Residential staff and other Council staff aren't any different. You can use the same forms we have mentioned or let us know by contacting us at:

Children, Education & Social Care Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council 4th Floor, Bayheath House Prince Regent Street Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1DF

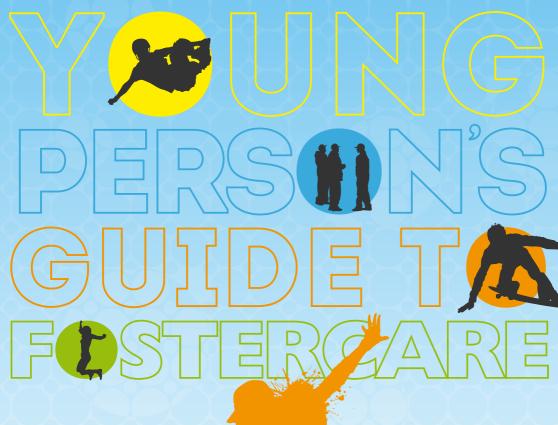
- **1** (01642) 527521
- ₼ lisa.batey@stockton.gov.uk

If found please send this booklet to:

- ✓ Jayne Parry
 Children, Education and Social Care
 Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
 52-54 Hartington Road
 Stockton-on-Tees
 TS18 1HE
- jayne.parry@stockton.gov.uk



ust for You
This booklet has been produced in partnership with the Let's Take Action Group.









A Young Person's guide to Foster Care

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"This guide has been made by children and young people in foster care with the support from NYAS. We hope it helps you when you come into foster care."

Contents

Introduction to foster care 1

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- Moving into foster care 2
- Day-to-day life in foster care 4
 - What are my rights? 6
- What if I am unhappy with the care that I receive?
 - Leaving Foster care 9
 - Useful contacts 11
 - NYAS Participation Group 12

Children and young people who are unable to live at home sometimes have to live with a foster family. Foster care is when children and young people live with and are cared for by people who are not their parents.

Foster carers have been specially trained to look after you and keep you safe. Fostering families come in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes you might live with a family member like a grandparent or an aunt or uncle or a friend who is a foster carer and this is called 'Kinship' foster care.

There are different types of foster care and this can be short-term or long term, depending on your circumstance and your needs.

You might stay with your foster family for a short time, maybe for a few weeks or a few months or you may need a permanent home with your foster family as you are unable to return to your birth family. Your social worker will talk to you about your plan.

Social workers will work with your parents and foster carers to make decisions about what happens to you. They should remember your wishes and feelings when making decisions about you.





Moving into foster care

Before you come into foster care:

- You should also have a say on where you would like to live.
- Your social worker should try to meet your wishes and feelings.
- You should visit your new home and meet your new foster family. Sometimes this is not always possible if the decision is made that you need to leave home quickly.
- If you are not comfortable, you must tell your social worker.

Where will I live?

It will depend on your personal circumstance and needs. But you will most likely live with another family in their home. Sometimes you might live with your own family members, like grandparents or aunts and uncles. You will live somewhere where you will hopefully be happy and most importantly safe.

If I have brothers or sisters will I live with them?

Your social worker will do his/her very best to place all of you together in one foster home. Sometimes this is not possible. However, your foster carer and social worker should promote family life by making sure that you still get to see your brothers and sisters, as long as it is safe for you and your wellbeing.

"MY FOSTER CARERS
WERE REALLY NICE,
THEY DIDN'T ASK
ME LOTS OF
GUESTIONS. THEY
JUST LET ME TALK
WHEN I WAS
READY."



"WHEN I WENT TO SCHOOL I THOUGHT EVERYONE ELSE KNEW I WAS IN CARE.BUT NO ONE KNEW ANYTHING.I DION'T WANT ANYONE TO KNOW MY BUSINESS." "I DIDN'T HAVE
POCKET MONEY
WHEN I WAS AT
HOME AND MY
FAMILY COULDN'T
AFFORD TO PAY
FOR SCHOOL
TRIPS. IT WAS
NICE TO BE ABLE
NICE TO BE ABLE
TO HAVE MY OWN
POCKET MONEY
AND GO ON
SCHOOL TRIPS."

"WHEN I CAME INTO FOSTER CARE I FELT EXHAUSTED AND SAD. I THOUGHT THAT I WOULDN'T SEE MY FAMILY EVER AGAIN, MY SOCIAL WORKER THEN TOLD ME ALL ABOUT CONTACT AND I FELT A BIT BETTER."

Did you know?

You have a right to express your wishes and feelings in all matters affecting you? (Article 12 of the UNCRC)



Moving into foster care

Contact with family

Visiting family is known as 'Contact'. The law states that you have a right to contact with family and people who are important to you as long as this is in your best interests. However, if it's not safe for you to have contact with certain people your social worker will talk about this to you. Contact usually takes place after school and can be in the community or at the Contact Centre.

Will I see my friends?

Your social worker and foster family should support you so that you can keep in touch with your friends from school, if you move away and are not able to see them anymore.



Health

You have a right to access good quality healthcare and be treated with dignity and respect at all times.

Your foster carers will need to make sure you have a doctor or dentist to support you when you are ill. You will also have a medical once a year to make sure you are well and being looked after properly whilst in care.

Going to school

Your education is important.

Your foster carers will support you in going to school. Sometimes you may need to move schools if you are placed far away from your old school.

Your school will have a designated looked after child teacher. This teacher will be aware of your circumstances and support you if you need it.

teachers in your new school should support you as much as possible to help you settle in your new school. You can also ask to see the school counsellor. They will support you emotionally.

Pocket money!

Your foster carers should give you pocket money each week for your own use. Your foster carers will buy you clothes, shoes and any equipment for school or other activities. Your foster carer should also open up a bank account for you and help you save some money for a rainy day.

Looked After Child Review Meetings

A review meeting is to look at if your needs are being met. You should have a review meeting within the first four weeks of going into care, then you should have one three months after this and then at least every six months. You have the right to ask for a review meeting at anytime though.

You should be involved in your reviews as it is your care plan. If you are old enough and you'd like to go, you can attend your review meetings. Your social worker has to ensure that Social Services hear your wishes and feelings. You can ask an advocate to help you speak out.

Your reviews are chaired by an Independent Review Officer (IRO). It's their job to make sure you are able to speak up and put your views across. They will also make sure that everyone is doing what they said they would do at the last review and also what's in the care plan.

If you choose not to go to the meeting you might want to fill out a booklet instead or if you want you can speak to the independent reviewing officer before the meeting.

Rules and having a say

Your foster carers and social workers will have some ground rules in place whilst you are looked after. You should have an input in the rules and come to an agreement. These rules are to keep you safe from harm and to make sure things run smoothly. For example, keeping safe online or what time you should be home and what you and your foster e.g. respecting each other's should support your rights as a child/young person and must be fair and reasonable.

Remember - It's your right to have a review of your care plan, and to have your wishes and feelings taken into account when adults are making decisions about your life.



What are my rights?

All children and young people have rights. These rights are what the government says you are entitled to, to make sure you're treated fairly and that you receive a good standard of care.

The UNCRC is the United Nations Conventions of the Rights of a Child. All children and young people have rights including all of your friends in school. This means that people should be working towards making sure your rights are supported. You, as a looked after child and young person, also have rights under the Social services and Wellbeing Wales Act 2014.

If you feel that you are being treated unfairly you can ask for an advocate to help you. The advocate will speak on your behalf and will help you get heard. To find out more about the support available, visit: www.nyas.net or telephone: 08088081001.

In summary:

- You have a right to an education.
- You have a right to be heard and have a say about issues affecting you.
- You have a right to confidentiality People should keep information about you private unless you or someone else were being harmed or may come to harm. If information needs to be passed on, you should be made aware and told the reasons why it needs to be shared.
 - You have a right to be treated in a non-discriminatory way.
 - You have a right to practice your religion.
 - You have a right to family life and to have contact as long as it is safe for you.
 - You have the right to have your care plan reviewed.
 - You have a right to be protected from violence, abuse and
- You have a right to have your identity, religious and

What if I am unhappy with the care I receive?

It can be very hard moving into a new family and some children and young people can feel upset about leaving their own family and everything can feel different and strange. But remember that there are lots of people here to help you.

If you're feeling unhappy about anything at all, it's really important that you let your social worker know. If you feel that you cannot speak with your social worker, you can talk to someone you trust, like a teacher or you can speak to an advocate.

An advocate is someone who is independent from social services. They listen to what you have to say and help you get something stopped, started or changed when you are unhappy about something. They also tell you about your rights and can support you at your review meetings. If you can't get problems sorted out, they can also help you to make a complaint to the Children's Complaints Officer.

You can also speak to the Complaints Officer on 029 2087 325 or ask to speak to advocate who can help you make a complaint or help you with anything that is worrying you.



Leaving foster care

Before you reach 18, your social worker will talk to you about the plan for you to leave care and the support you need to prepare for this. It is very important that you discuss your options with your social worker, personal advisor or independent advocate.

If you are settled, you might be able to continue living with your foster family under the 'When I am Ready Scheme' until you are 21, if you, your foster carer and social worker think that this is the right decision for you. This could be extended to 25 if you are in education or training.

We have also created a flyer about the scheme, which explains the process in more detail.

You can keep in touch with your foster family when you leave care.

Words you may come across whilst being in care:

LA - Local Authority (Where you are from or who is responsible for your care i.e. The City of Cardiff Council)

Accommodated - This means that your parents have agreed for you to go into care. They alone have parental responsibility for you and not Social Services.

Care Order - Young people are sometimes on a care order, which is made by a court (a family not criminal court). The court will make a care order where there are worries that a young person is being harmed or is at risk of significant harm. Both Social Services and your parents have to work together to make decisions about your life (they share parental responsibility for you). If you are on a temporary care order this is called a 'Interim' Care Order.

Special Guardianship Order (SGO) - An order means a child lives with carers who have parental responsibly for them and usually lasts until a child is 18. The child is no longer the responsibility of the Local Authority.

Parental Responsibility - Those with parental responsibility for you have the right to make decisions about the way you are brought up, if you are on a Care Order. Social Services will share parental responsibility with your parent(s).

Looked After Child Review meeting - A meeting that takes place to ensure that children and young people in care are getting the support they should be getting from Social Services and to make sure that everything is going ok in your life around things like placement, contact, school and your health.

PEP - Personal Education Plan

Social Worker - A social worker is someone is trained to work with children, young people and their families. You will have a social worker who will work with you, your family, your foster carers and other people to decide what is best for you whilst you are living in foster care. It is important for your social worker to listen to your wishes and feelings when making decisions about your life.

Words you may come across whilst being in care:

IRO - Independent Review Officer

Independent Visitor - volunteer who will visit you regularly and befriend you.

Complaints Officer - A person who works for Social Services who will listen to your concerns if there is something you are unhappy about in care and try and put things right for you.

Supervising Social Worker - Foster Carers own Social Worker. They are there to make sure that your carers are getting the help they need and that they are looking after you well.

Contact - Social Services must support you to see your family. This could be face to face contact or through letters and phone calls. Sometimes you might have to have supervised contact which means that someone from Social Services will be with you when you see for your family. Sometimes it might not be in your best interests to have any contact, but a court must decide about this if Social Services want to stop you having contact.

Respite - Short stay foster care this maybe overnight or for a couple of days.

Personal Advisor - A person who works with you whilst leaving care.

Advocate - Someone that does not work for Social Services and is there to make sure you are listened to and have a say in decisions. The advocate can let you know your rights whilst living in care and when you leave care.

Designated Looked After Child Teacher - A teacher at school who supports you.

For more information and support whilst being in care, we have included a list of useful organisations that can help you.

Useful contacts

Cardiff Children's Service Looked After 0-14 Service 02920 871169

Cardiff Children's Services 14 plus team 02920 871168

Cardiff Fostering Team 02920 873797 www.fostercarecardiff.co.uk

Cardiff Emergency Duty Team 02920 788570

Children's Services Complaints Officer 029 2087 3251

NYAS

Independent advocacy service, which can help you get something stopped, started or changed. 0808 808 1001 Website www.nyas.net

Meic Cymru

Advocacy, information and advice helpline for children in Wales - available 24 hours a day 0808 80 23456 Website www.meiccymru.org

Childline

A free 24-hour advice helpline for children and young people. They are confidential, so won't tell anyone anything about you unless you are in danger. 0800 1111

Website www.childline.org.uk

Children's Commissioner for Wales Championing the rights of children and young people in Wales 01792 765600 Website www.childcomwales.org.uk

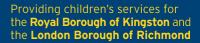
CSSIW

An organisation called CSSIW checks the work of fostering agencies to improve childcare in Wales.

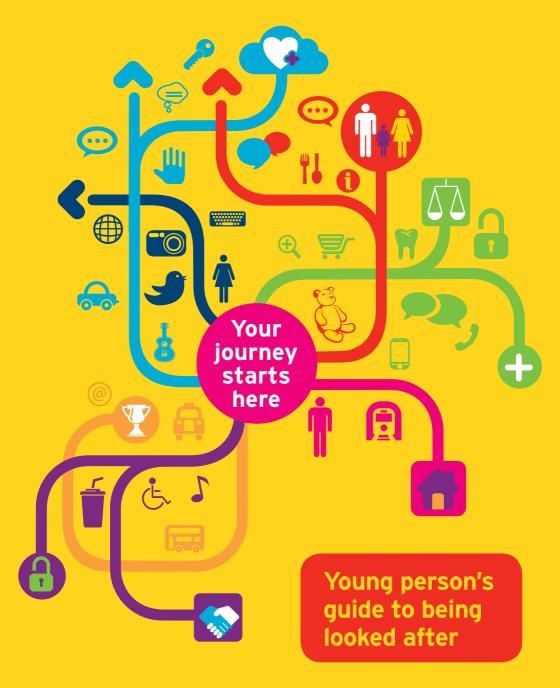
03007900126 Email cssiw@wales.gsi.gov.uk

This guide was created by looked after children and young people. Just one of the great things that we do within our group. We work on lots of different projects throughout the year helping other children and young people share their experiences and make sure they are be heard.

If you would like to join our group, please ask your social worker for more information or call us on 029 2066 8956 to find out when and where our next meeting is being held!







Mission statement

Achieving for Children, the joint children's service for Kingston and Richmond, is passionate about ensuring the best possible outcomes for children and their families and will deliver the services they need to live safe, happy, healthy and successful lives.



Introduction

This booklet is a guide to the support you will get while you are in the care of the local authority.

The local authority is also known as a Corporate Parent, which means that we are responsible for making sure that you are supported properly. This means that we want to make sure you have everything you need, which includes the following things:

- You have positive relationships
- Where you live is safe and you get everything you need
- You do really well in your education
- You know who you are and where you're from (your identity)
- You are listened to and involved when important decisions have to be made about your life
- You have the support you need to move into adulthood
- You have people around you who you can talk to and make sure you feel good about life
- You are fit and healthy
- You know the people who will support you in your life

What is being looked after?

Being looked after is when you live away from your family home. Sometimes it is with a friend or a relative, or in a home where other children and young people live, but most often it is with a family you do not know. You may live away from your family for a short time, be looked after by someone else only at weekends, or you may stay with them until you are an adult. It all depends on what is needed to make sure you are safe, happy and well cared for.

You will be shown everything you need to know about your new home, you will get to know who else lives in the home, what the rules are within the house and people will make sure you are OK. You can talk to your foster carer or person responsible for you where you live if you are not sure of something.

The person looking after you has been specially chosen by children's services while plans are made for your future.

Your carer will:

- Help you keep in touch with friends and family
- Make sure you are safe and happy in their home
- Sort out school or college with you
- Look after you if you are ill
- Be there for you if you have any worries

Your carers will treat you with dignity and respect and will want you to do the same to them. It may take a little time to get used to your carers and their house rules, and all carers will have their own way of doing things. Your carer knows that at first this may be strange for you and may take time to get used to.

What does my social worker do?

A social worker is someone who is trained to help children and families through difficult times. Their job is to make sure you are safe, settled and well. They will explain things to you and help you to understand what is going on.

When you are being cared for by us, whether that is in a foster home, children's home or placed with someone you know, you will have an allocated social worker. It's their job to make sure that everything possible is being done to help you achieve your best while we care for you. We will make sure that your health needs are being met, that you go to the right school or college, and you are being encouraged to do the best you can there.



My wellbeing

What happens with my education?

It may be that you stay at the school or college you already go to. If you can't stay there, then your social worker will work out which one is best for you to go to. If you don't go to school or college at the moment or haven't been for a while, you may feel a bit nervous. The person who is caring for you can help you with this. Remember it isn't just about lessons: it can be a great place to meet new friends and try new activities.

We want to make sure that you do the best you can so that you can achieve your potential. To do this we create a personal education plan which helps you and us think about your future and where you want to get to. At your school or college you will also have a designated teacher who is there to give you support to make sure you are on track with achieving your goals.

Can I see my family?

This is a very important question, but the answer is not the same for everyone. Your social worker will talk to you and your family about arrangements for you to see each other. We understand that you want to know what plans are being made and will try to find out what is happening as soon as possible.

What happens with my health?

Your health is very important and so to make sure you stay healthy we have a doctor and a nurse who you will meet and will make sure your health needs are met. If you become unwell they will make sure you are cared for so that you can recover, and they will also ensure that you are growing up as you should. The doctor and nurse will also be able to give you information and advice about different areas regarding your health.

Will I have my own bedroom?

This depends on your age and circumstances; in most situations, yes, you will have your own room. Sometimes young people like to share a bedroom with their brother or sister.

Having my say

What is a review meeting?

A review is a meeting to see how you are getting on. Your parent(s), social worker and carer(s) will also be invited to the meeting. It is a chance to talk about what has been happening and what plans are being made for you while you are being looked after. Your first review meeting usually happens when you have been looked after for four weeks. There will be a second review meeting after three months and then every six months after that.

What does my Independent Reviewing Officer do?

Every child and young person who is looked after must have a named Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). It is their job to:

- Chair your review meeting
- Check that your care plan is right for you
- Make sure you have your say about what is happening
- Make sure that everyone listens to what you have to say and considers it carefully when they are making decisions
- Make sure everyone has their say
- Check that everyone is keeping to their part of the plan
- Check that there are clear plans for your future
- Check that you know how to make a complaint
- Check that you know how to request further support if it is needed, such as asking for an advocate (someone who can speak on your behalf).



What is Viewpoint?

Viewpoint is a way that we find out what you think. It is a questionnaire that asks you questions about where you live, school or college, friends, your health and the things you like doing. The Viewpoint Officer's role is to visit or contact you by phone or email to help you with completing the questionnaire. Your views are then sent to the Independent Reviewing Officer and will be used in your review meeting to make sure that you are being listened to.

Who are the Children in Care Council?

The Children in Care Council is a group of looked after children and young people and care leavers who meet regularly with social workers, service managers, local councillors and directors to represent the views of young people on the services delivered to you.

They need your help to make services better. If you are interested in joining the Children in Care Council, talk to your social worker or foster carer.



What help can I get if I am unhappy about something?

If you have any questions or are unhappy about something, you can usually ask your carers, your social worker or Independent Reviewing Officer. This can be about anything like keeping in touch with friends and family, getting pocket money, needing to see a doctor or a dentist, or going on holiday.

If you think that you are not being listened to and want to make sure that what you say is heard and acted upon, an independent advocate could help and we can arrange this.

Visit www.voiceyp.org for more information.

The Children's Rights Director:

Office of the Children's Rights Director Ofsted Aviation House 125 Kingsway London WC2B 6SE

Free phone **0800 528 0731** Website **www.rights4me.org**

The Voice Advocacy Service is a confidential service which listens to what you have to say:

Head Office, Voice 320 City Road London EC1V 2NZ

Phone **0808 800 5792**

Email info@voiceyp.org

Kingston complaints officer contact number **020 8547 5000**

Richmond complaints officer contact number 020 8891 1411

Other useful phone numbers

Kingston Looked After Children Team 020 8547 6904

Kingston Leaving Care Team 020 8247 6901

Kingston Social Care **020 8547 5008** (Outside office hours **020 8770 5000**)

Richmond Children Looked After and Leaving Care Team **020 8831 6160**

Richmond Social Care **020 8891 7969** (Outside office hours **020 8744 2442**)

Childline **0800 1111**

NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) **0808 800 5000.** This helpline is open 24 hours a day.

Samaritans **0845 790 9090**



You can write the names and phone numbers of people who will help to look after you below

My carers are
Their address is
Telephone number
My social worker is
Email address
Telephone number
My Independent Reviewing Officer is
Email address
Telephone number

Please contact us if you need this leaflet in Braille, large print, on audio tape or in another language. Phone **020 8891 1411** or Minicom **020 8831 6001**.

