

Young person's guide to being looked after

Your
journey
starts
here



**achieving
for children**

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 where you live with another family that is not your own. 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 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 My Say?

My Say 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. We would really appreciate you 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.coramvoice.org.uk for more information.

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

Phone **0808 800 5792**

Email info@coramvoice.org.uk

Help at Hand (Children's Commissioner)

Children's Commissioner for England

Sanctuary Buildings

20 Great Smith Street

London SW1P 3BT

Help at Hand

Free phone **0800 528 0731**

Email help.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

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

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 8547 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 **116 123**



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



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