

**a guide** for looked  
after children and young  
people in Greenwich

**Sometimes children can't live at home. You may become 'looked after' by the Royal Borough of Greenwich (sometimes called 'the Council') if there is a decision by a Court, or if your parents ask the Royal Borough to care for you.**

# How can I use this guide?

This booklet will help you understand what **'being looked after'** means. It gives lots of information, but you don't have to read it all at once.

You can read the guide:

- **with a friend and then talk with them about it**
- **with your social worker, your key worker or your foster carer.**

**They can help explain things you don't fully understand**

# The Royal Borough of Greenwich cares for you. This booklet is for you.

While you are in the care of the Royal Borough of Greenwich, we will make sure that you are safe, and that you are healthy and happy.

We will make sure that we listen to your ideas and feelings about what you need to make your life happy. We will work with you to make good decisions about your needs and about your future.

This booklet is to help you understand what happens when children are looked after by The Royal Borough of Greenwich. It may seem complicated or scary at times but there are plenty of people to ask for help and advice.

I hope you find this booklet helpful.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jackie Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Jackie Smith,  
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

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SectionOne

being

looked after



## What does being 'looked after' mean?

Sometimes children can't live at home. You may become 'looked after' by the Royal Borough of Greenwich (sometimes called 'the Council') if there is a decision by a Court, or if your parents ask the Royal Borough to care for you. Being looked after is sometimes called 'being in care'.

You will have a social worker who will explain what is happening, answer your questions, and make sure that you are listened to. Your new home may be with foster carers. It could be in a children's home. It could be with other members of your family. It could be in other accommodation.

## Why am I staying with a foster family?

Foster carers are there to provide you with a safe place to live, in their own home. They may also have their own children living there with you. Foster carers and foster families do what most parents will do:

- **by making sure you are happy and healthy**
- **by talking with you and listening to you**
- **by helping you do your favourite activities**
- **by talking to you about school and helping with homework**
- **by going out with you and having fun.**

Foster carers also have a social worker of their own to support them in their role of caring for you.

## What is a children's home?

A children's home is a place where a group of children and young people who are being looked after live together. There are staff at the children's home throughout the day and night. They will support you in all kinds of ways - taking you to school, taking you out for trips and making sure you are healthy and happy. You will have your own key worker who spends more time with you and gets to know the sorts of things you like to do. They will also help you deal with any things you are worried about.

## You and your social worker

You will have a social worker wherever you are living –whether it's in a foster home, a children's home, or somewhere else. Your social worker is someone who listens to you and supports you.



**It sounded really exciting**

## Your Independent Reviewing Officer (sometimes called the IRO):

This is the person in charge of your review meetings

### They should:

- offer to speak to you before the review
- make sure everyone knows your views and your feelings.

### Your social worker will:

- spend time talking to you and getting to know you and your family
- help you express your feelings or concerns with other adults including family members and teachers
- help make plans for you, usually with your family, your foster carer and your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

### Your social worker has the important task of making sure:

- you are happy in your new home
- and that being looked after is a good experience for you.



## Your Care Plan

At first, your social worker will ask questions, about you, your family and your carer. They will involve you in making your 'care plan'.

### All this is important:

- so your carer knows your likes and dislikes and understands what you need to make you happy
- so everyone knows what the plans are for you.

Your care plan makes sure you are well looked after and that you get the things you need for a happy and healthy life. It says what has been decided about important issues in your life.

### This will include:

- who you live with, and where
- how you are cared for
- your health
- going to school
- seeing your family and friends
- respecting your culture.

The care plan may change as things in your life change. Shortly after you become looked after, there will be some meetings. These will help sort out details such as:

- when you see your family and friends
- your health and education needs
- day to day things like pocket money and bed time
- hobbies and activities.

 **I thought coming into care was like a long-term hotel**

## What about my parents?

Most young people will want to stay in touch with their parents. Your social worker will help to arrange this, and help to make sure you have your say in this. Your parents will also be involved in planning for your future, and will normally be invited to meetings about your care.

## How does the Royal Borough of Greenwich decide how to care for me?

Your social worker will work with you to make decisions about where you live, your contact with family, your education, your health, legal issues, money and other activities. Your social worker and other adults will talk with you to find out what you need. They may decide you need extra support at school. They may also suggest some outings, hobbies or fun activities. You and your family will be involved in these discussions and have the chance to say what you feel you need.



**I thought it would be like Tracy Beaker**

### **Your social worker should:**

- visit you regularly
- talk to you alone about where you are living and what you are feeling
- talk to you about anything else you want to share
- meet and talk with you before and after each review meeting.

## What is a review?

### Reviews are meetings that you have with adults to check:

- your care plan is working for you
- you are being looked after well
- if anything needs to be changed
- that things that were decided earlier have been done for you
- what plans need to be made for your future
- that you and your family know about your care plan and that you can all have your say.

### Adults at the meeting will normally include:

- your social worker
- your foster carer or key worker
- your Independent Reviewing Officer
- your parents or another family member will generally be invited too

You should tell one of the adults beforehand if there is anything in particular you want discussed at the meeting. You may want to write down your views. There is a special consultation form you can fill in. You can let people know your views in any way that you choose. It is good to attend your review if you feel you can.

### The main things to remember:

- You are the most important person at the review
- Your views are important
- If you want to know something – please ask!

## What if I have special needs?

If you have a disability or special needs, your social worker and other adults involved in your care will provide extra help and support. You may be allocated a social worker who knows a lot about disability, and what children with disabilities need.

## Questions you might have

### How often can I see my family?

This depends on what you want and what is best for you. If you are worried about seeing anyone in your family alone, then another adult can be there with you when you meet your family.

### Can I stay at the same school?

Yes – if it's possible

- Most children stay at the same school
- Sometimes your new home may be too far away to travel to your old school
- If that happens, your social worker and carer will help you find and settle into a new school

## When can I go home?

Most young people do return home if it's safe to do so. Your social worker will talk with you, your family and carer and will discuss this with the other adults at your review.

Sometimes it is possible to go back home after just a short time away. Sometimes it is not possible to go home. If this isn't possible then there will be lots of discussion about what is best. Plans will be put in place to give you a safe and stable home for the future.

**The review puts your mind at rest because you know what is going on**

**It was informative and all about you**

SectionTwo

**myeducation**

## **Your Personal Education Plan (or PEP, for short)**

*If you are 16 or under*

When you first become 'looked after' or move into a new school, a Personal Education Plan (or PEP) will be made with you, your social worker and your teacher. The Personal Education Plan says what needs to happen for you to have a successful school life. It will be your plan and it is important that the plan has your views on what education you need.

## **Designated teachers**

Schools have a designated teacher for young people who are looked after. They will be there to support you when you need it. They will also help you and your social worker to complete your PEP.

## **Personal Education Allowance (or PEA)**

This is a sum of money that can be used to support you in your education.

## **The support you need**

Schools and teachers will help you get the support you need in school. Sometimes there will be a written plan for meeting your education needs. If you have a Special Education Needs Statement you will also have someone in school to support you, your family and your carers.

## **For young people over 16**

Your social worker and your school will work together to draw up a Pathway Plan for you. This Plan is to help:

- make sure you get the training and funding you need
- plan for your future independence

## **Bullying**

Being bullied makes you feel frightened, lonely and angry. It makes going to school harder. Bullying is always wrong and you should talk about it to someone who can help you.

## **What should you do if you are being bullied?**

**The most important message to remember is:**

- Don't stay silent - tell somebody that you trust!

**Other things you can do to try and stop bullying are:**

- tell your teacher, carer or social worker
- if you feel strong enough, tell the bully to stop.

## **What you should NOT try to do if you are being bullied:**

- don't fight back
- don't blame yourself for being bullied
- don't call the bully names or make fun of them in return.





# my health

It is important for you to keep fit and healthy and to feel good. This is true for everyone.



## Taking care of your health

Your overall wellbeing –your physical, emotional and sexual health is important.

There is plenty of advice and help available, so please ask if you need it.

If you are worried about your health and wish to see a health professional, talk to one of the Looked After Children's Nurses (LAC Nurses), your School Nurse, Social Worker, Carer or Key Worker.



**You can get as  
much attention  
as you need**

Once a year you will be asked to attend a Health Assessment for a health check-up. This is to make sure that you are in good health and that you are getting any help you need to stay healthy now or in the future. It is also an opportunity for you to:

- Talk about any health concerns or worries - spots, bedwetting, worries about weight.
- Discuss giving up smoking, drug use, drinking, sexual health, feelings and emotional health.
- You might want some help to register with a doctor or a dentist.

If necessary, you can be referred to be seen by another NHS service - GP, hospital or a specialist clinic.

Your health needs are an important part of your care plan and they will be talked about in your review meetings.

Section **Four**

my

**rights, wishes  
& feelings**

As a young person in care you have a right to tell adults what you want and what you feel. You can talk about all aspects of the care and support that you are given. You will often hear this called 'having your say'.

It is important that you take part in decisions about how you are looked after. That means telling the adults involved what your wishes and feelings are. That way, the adults who look after you are more likely to listen, and to understand what you need. Whenever there are meetings or discussions about your care or your future, you should be given a chance to have your say.

### **Where do my rights come from?**

The Children Act is the most important law for children and young people's rights. It tells you what you should expect from the Royal Borough, from the school and from the adults who are taking decisions about you and your future.

### **The Children Act is important to you because:**

- it gives you protection
- it puts your welfare first
- it says you must be listened to and be taken seriously by adults

- it gives you the right to be in contact with your family, unless that puts you at risk
- it gives you the right to make a complaint.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, helps make sure young people are protected and treated with respect.

### **Finding help to have your say**

An advocate is an independent person who helps you get your views and feelings across to the adults involved in your care. There is a special advocacy service for children and young people who are being looked after by Greenwich. It is run by the charity Barnardo's and is independent of the Council.

See contacts page for details of both these services.

There is a group representing young people called the Children in Care Council ("Our Lives Matter"). It gives a voice to young people who are looked after in the Royal Borough of Greenwich.



Section Five  
**how do I make  
a complaint?**

If you are not happy with your care, you can complain about this. You can also complain if you are unhappy about the decisions that are made about you and your care.

## Who can complain?

- a young person who is being looked after by the Royal Borough of Greenwich
- a young person who has recently left care
- a parent or an adult who is involved and concerned about your welfare
- your foster carer

## Who can I complain to?

- your social worker or their manager
- your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)
- the Children's Complaints Team at the Royal Borough Greenwich

## How can I complain?

- You can talk to your social worker or their manager and tell them what you are unhappy about.
- Or you can fill in the complaints form and send it to the Children's Complaints Team.

- If you wish, you can get a friend, teacher or carer to help fill in the complaints form.
- You can also get an advocate to help you (see Section 4)

## What will happen then?

- The Children's Complaints Team will ask the manager to try and sort it out with you. They should try to do this within 10 working days - or in 20 working days if the case is complicated.
- The Children's Complaints Team can put you in contact with an advocate. He or she will help make sure your views are heard and support you while your complaint is investigated.

***Fixing a problem can sometimes take time - don't give up!***

SectionSix

what things

**mean**



**You may hear words used that are unfamiliar. Here are some of them:**

### **Advocate**

This is an adult who works with you to help you speak about what you want and what you think. If you ask them to, an advocate can speak for you and help you with other problems.

### **Bullying**

This is behaviour by an individual or a group of people, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another person or group.

This hurt can be either physical or emotional.

### **Care Plan**

This describes the decisions that are made about you and your care. It includes decisions on things like: where you live, contact with your family, school issues, health and legal issues, money and other activities.

### **Child**

The Children Act says that everyone under the age of 18 is a child.

### **Children Act**

This sets down the main law about children, your welfare and how you are protected.

### **Children's home/Children's residential care home**

This is a home for children who are not living with their family or foster carers. Children are looked after by staff at the home.

### **Consultation form**

This is a form that you are given before a review. It has spaces where you can describe how everything is going for you and what your wishes and feelings are.

## **Family Group Conference**

This is an informal meeting with you and everyone important in your life. It could be your parents, other family members or close friends. It's a chance for you all to talk about the best way for you to be cared for, and who is the best person/people to look after you.

## **Health Assessment**

This is an assessment of how healthy you are. It is written by a nurse or doctor and will say what kind of support you should get with any health problems.

## **Independent Reviewing Officer**

This is the person who chairs your review meeting. They make sure your wishes and feelings are considered, by social workers and other adults. They check to make sure that delays are avoided wherever possible.

## **Key worker**

If you live in a children's home or residential special school you should have a key worker. Your key worker will help you, your social worker, staff at your school and anyone else who is involved with you to make sure things are as good as they can be for you.

## **Looked after**

This is when you cannot live with your own family and a social worker has to work with other people to find you a place to live.

## **Personal Education Plan (PEP)**

This is a plan that is written by your teachers and social worker. It helps make sure that everyone at your school understands what you need if you are to do your best and be happy at school.

## **Placement**

This is another name for the place in which you will be living.

## **Review**

This is a meeting where you and the adults who care for you check that your care plan is working. If the Care Plan is not working, it can be changed during the meeting. Everyone at the review will be talking about your care and your future. Decisions will be written down in the Care Plan after the review.

## **Special Education Needs (SEN)**

Teachers use this expression when they decide that a young person would benefit from some extra support or help at school. Schools have a system for working out whether you have special education needs. If you do, they will fill in a special report.

Section Seven  
**help & advice**



## **Royal Borough of Greenwich**

The Woolwich Centre  
35 Wellington Street  
Woolwich  
SE18 6HQ  
Tel: 020 8854 8888

**[www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk](http://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk)**

Information about services in the  
Royal Borough of Greenwich

**[www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/teenagers](http://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/teenagers)**

The Royal Borough of Greenwich's  
website  
with events and services for teenagers

## **Services that you may find helpful**

### **Children in Care Council (Our Lives Matter)**

Group representing children and  
young people who are looked  
after in Greenwich.  
Tel: 020 7358 2014  
Mob: 07720 940 832

### **Initial Response and Assessment Teams**

Tel: 020 8854 8888

### **Young People's Teams (for ages 13-18)**

Tel: 020 8854 8888

### **Care Planning Teams (for ages 0-12)**

Tel: 020 8854 8888

### **Children with disabilities Team**

Tel: 020 8921 XXXX

### **Family Solutions (helping families stay together)**

Tel: 020 8921 5366

### **Independent Reviewing Officers**

Tel: 020 8921 4475/4400

### **The Leaving Care Team (for ages 18+)**

Tel: 020 8921 8708

### **Children's Complaints Team**

Tel: 020 8921 3082

### **Family Information Service**

Tel: 020 8921 6921

## **Advice and information for young people**

Here are some organisations that work with young people. Some of them offer special sessions for young women, young black people, or young people who are gay or lesbian.

### **Barnardo's**

This charity runs an advocacy service for looked-after children in the Royal Borough of Greenwich

Freephone: 0800 169 3762

[www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)

### **The Point - One Stop Shop for Young People**

Advice, guidance, and support for ages 16 and over.

Tel: 020 8921 8224

[www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/thepoint](http://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/thepoint)

## **UK-wide services**

### **ChildLine**

A free and confidential helpline for any child in trouble or danger

Helpline: 0800 1111

Helpline for Children in care:

0800 88 4444

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### **NSPCC**

A free 24-hour service providing counselling, information and advice to anyone concerned about a child at risk.

Child protection helpline:

0808 800 5000

[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

### **The Who Cares? Trust**

Offers confidential advice to children who are looked after or have been in the past.

Tel: 020 7251 3117

[mailbox@thewhocarestrust.org.uk](mailto:mailbox@thewhocarestrust.org.uk)

[www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk](http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk)

### **National Youth Advocacy Services**

Provides information, legal advice, representation and advocacy

Helpline/Advice: 0300 300 3131

[info@nyas.net](mailto:info@nyas.net)

[www.nyas.net](http://www.nyas.net)

### **Voice**

Telephone and email helpline for children who are looked after

Tel: 0808 800 5792

[info@vcc-uk.org](mailto:info@vcc-uk.org)

[www.vcc-uk.org](http://www.vcc-uk.org)

## **A National Voice**

Run for and by young people who are or have been looked after.

Tel: 0161 237 5577

## **Health advice organisations**

### **Brook Advisory Centre**

The Brook is a national service for all young people. You can call them to find out about sexual health services in your local area.

Mon, Tue and Thu 9am – 5pm

Wed and Fri 9am – 4pm

Advice line: 0808 802 1234

Text: 07711 798 9023

[www.brook.com/health](http://www.brook.com/health)

- for information on all aspects of health

### **Local nurse for looked after children**

Tel: 020 8317 8079



## **CAMHS - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services**

CAMHS is part of the National Health Service (NHS) and provides help and treatment for children and young people with emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties.

Greenwich CAMHS  
Highpoint House  
Memorial Hospital  
Shooters Hill, SE18 3RZ  
Tel: 020 3260 5200  
(Eltham and Greenwich)  
Tel: 020 8331 7100  
(Woolwich and Plumstead)  
[www.camhscares.nhs.uk](http://www.camhscares.nhs.uk)

## **Some other useful websites**

### **[www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)**

Advice on bullying

### **[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)**

Advice on drugs and drug misuse

### **[www.metrocentreonline.org](http://www.metrocentreonline.org)**

Advice for lesbian and gay young people

### **[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)**

For advice on mental health

### **[www.teenagehealthfreak.org](http://www.teenagehealthfreak.org)**

Health advice for teenagers

### **[www.lifebytes.gov.uk](http://www.lifebytes.gov.uk)**

A general health website for young people aged 12 and over.



# Our Lives Matter

Tel: **020 7358 2014**  
Mob: **07720 940 832**

- We are Our Lives Matter, the Children in Care Council for looked after children in Greenwich.
- We are here to represent young people and share our stories about being in care.
- We will raise your concerns to the Royal Borough and speak up on your behalf.
- We meet once a month and would like to see more children and young people at our meetings to make them better.

**By getting involved you can get your voice heard and help change things to make them better for children in care, because we are all ordinary young people.**

