A guide for Children and Young People looked after by Redbridge
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1. Hello There

Coming into care can be a confusing and a difficult time. With the support of young people, this guide has been put together to help children and young people like you, when you come into care or become looked after. Throughout this guide you will read words like “in care” or “looked after” they both mean the same thing, that a child or young person is living away from their family and home and is being cared for by the Local Authority (LA) and looked after by carers.

Under the Children’s Act 1989 the Local Authority (LA) has a duty to provide help for children in need. This can mean supporting children in their own home with their families. Sometimes this is not enough, and children need to be looked after somewhere else.

Children come into care for different reasons. For some it may be for a short time, others it may be until they are young adults. However long you are in care, we will do our best to look after you. That is why we wrote this guide to help you understand and to answer some of the questions you may have.

Remember, if there is anything in this Guide you do not understand, you must ask your social worker, carer or Children’s Rights Officer.

2. New people

When you become looked after, you will meet different people who play a part in your care. Some you will see often, others you may only see at meetings or a few times a year.

- **Social Worker** - supports and works with you to plan your care
- **Foster Parent** - looks after and shares their home with children living away from home
- **Supervising Social Worker** - works with foster parents to keep you safe and meet your needs
- **Independent Reviewing Officer** - IRO chairs and records what has been said in your reviews
- **LAC Nurse** - makes sure you have all your jabs and that you are in good health
- **Designated Teacher** - makes sure you are doing well in your education
- **Personal Adviser** - when you reach the age of 16 years you will have a PA to support you into adulthood
- **Children’s Rights Officer** - makes sure you know your rights and supports you if things go wrong
- **Advocate** - will help and support you at meetings or if you make complaint

One of the first people you will meet when you come into care is a social worker. Every child and young person who is looked after has a social worker. They will visit you to talk about your needs and to make sure that you are safe and looked after properly. Your social worker should visit you within the first week and then at least every four weeks. They will see you on your own and will try and answer your questions about living away from home. Their visits will be written up and kept as a record to help with making decisions about your care. Children and young people have a right to see and have a copy of the records. You can ask your social worker about this.

### 3. Placement meeting

This is where you, your foster parent and social worker meet to talk about different parts of your life and then agree on your day to day care. For example, your;

- health
- food you like
- contact with family and friends
- education and school
- day to day routines
- pocket money
- interest and hobbies
Your placement meeting should take place within five days of you being looked after, if not before. Your social worker will write all the important decisions about you on a special form, so that everyone knows what you need to keep you safe and happy. Everyone will have a copy of your placement agreement.

4. Foster Care

Children and young people are fostered for different reasons. Foster care is a family home for children to come and live when they cannot live with their own families. After a social worker has gone to court and the judge has said what would be in the child’s best interest. An “Order” may then be made by the judge, for the child to be “looked after” by the Local Authority (LA), which is also known as the “Council”.

What are foster parents like?

Foster parents are people who share their home to care for children and young people. They are carefully checked and are trained to make sure they can offer a safe and comfortable home. Some foster parents live alone, others are married with or without children of their own or other fostered children may live with them. In Redbridge, children and young people are given a profile (information) of the foster parents, telling you a little about them before you move in.

Will my foster parent be right for me?

There is a team called Placement Team, it is their job to know which foster parents are available. Social workers will look for foster parents who are the right ones to care for you. We will try and find one that shares your language, culture and religion.

Our job is to make sure you go to a safe family.
What is expected of you?

- Show respect
- 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 parents know where you are going

What can I expect from my foster parent?

- Your carers will make time to listen to you and support you with anything upsetting you
- We will celebrate with you your birthdays and holidays
- Your carers will make sure you visit the doctor and dentist regularly
- You will be given nutritious food to keep you healthy
- You will be supported in your education and schooling and encouraged to do your best

5. Keeping in Contact

We understand you will miss your family. Your social worker will talk with you and make arrangements for you to see them (if it is safe for you to do so), this is called “Contact”. You may have contact in your foster home or at another place where everyone can meet. You can also keep in contact by phone or text. We try to keep brothers and sisters together, but if this is not possible, we will arrange for you to see them.

What about my friends?

Your social worker and carer will do all they can to help you keep in touch with your friends, as well as making new ones. If you talk with your carer about your friends and when you would like to see them, they will make sure your social worker knows and arrangements are made for you to do so.
6. What is a Review?

A review meeting is a time for you and everyone to talk about how you are getting on, and the plans that are being made with you while you are in care. You, your mum or dad (if it is appropriate), social worker and carer 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 meetings will then take place every six months. You will also be appointed an IRO within five days of becoming looked after by Redbridge. Your IRO will contact you soon after the 5 days. If you wish to speak to someone before then, you can contact the Team Manager on 020 8708 5134.

It is very important that you go to your review meeting and talk about your views, what you want and think is important to you. If you cannot go, make sure you talk with your social worker or fill out your consultation form to make sure your views are included in all the decision that will be made.

Once everything has been discussed, decisions about how to get the best results for you will be made. Decisions about how long you are going to be looked after, how often and the type of contact you will have with your friends and family. Whether you need additional support with schoolwork or whether you have an interest or hobby.
Everyone (including you) will decide what things have to be done and who will do them, in order to care for you. The person leading the meeting will write all of this down on a special form. You will have a care 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 care plan is up to date and still what you need.

Your views and opinions about decisions that affect your life are important.

7. My Health

Your health is very important. Being healthy does not just mean eating loads 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.

The LAC Nurse will also support you to take care of yourself; personal hygiene, eating good food, exercise and have enough sleep. You can call 020 8708 8202 to talk to the Health Advisor for Looked After Children.

8. What about my Education and School?

Most young people will go to the same school, but there are times when this is not possible and you may have to change to a school that is near your new home.

The many changes in your life may mean you find school work a bit more difficult to concentrate on or hard. Your education is very important to us and we will do our best to make sure you are supported to do your best. Your carer, 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 a Designated Teacher for children looked after. Like reviews you also have meetings to talk and
plan for your education. This is called a Personal Educational Plan (PEP), which writes down how you are doing and what you need to help in your education.

If you are having any problems or difficulties at school, you must talk to your foster parents and social worker who will help you. You will also be able to get support at school from the Designated Teacher for looked after children. There details is at the back of this booklet

**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, “**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 like your carer, social worker, Designated Teacher, the Children’s Rights Officer or you can call Childline. They will do the right things to make it stop.

### 9. What happens when you are 17 years +?

When you become 16 years you will begin to plan for your independence. You will be supported by your carer who will help to teach you life skills to live on your own. You will also plan with your social worker moving on to the Leaving Care Team. Their job is to prepare young people for becoming independent and to give career and employment advice.

**Pathway Plan**

This is for young people who are aged 18 years. A pathway plan is filled in as part of Leaving Care; the first one is completed when you are 16 years. Young people with the support of their Personal Adviser, write down actions that have to be done by everyone involved in your care, including you.

Once everyone feels you are ready and fully equipped to live on your own, you will then be placed on a housing list for consideration for a flat.
10. What Rights and Responsibility do I have?

Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, you have the right to:

- be treated with respect
- say what you think and feel about decisions being made that affect you
- have your language, culture, race, gender, sexuality and religion respected
- have a private life
- have protection from being hurt or badly treated
- an education and health care
- a safe place to live
- not to be punished in a cruel or hurtful way

What do I do if I am not happy?

If you are unhappy about anything you must talk with your social worker and foster parent, who will try to help you. If you feel that no one is listening to you, you contact the Children’s Rights Officer who will support you to know your rights and responsibility as a young person.

Children’s Rights Officers work for the Council to make sure young people know and have information about their Rights and Responsibilities. The main job of the CRO is to listen and support children and young people who are looked after or leaving care to have their say. They also work with other professionals to promote Children’s Rights and make sure they are respected.

If you are unhappy about your placement or need support to have a say at your reviews or other meetings, you can contact the Children’s Rights Officer who will support you through the process. If you feel at any time that the service you are getting is not good enough and that you have not been listened to, you have the right to make a complaint. The Children’s Rights Officer, will support you through the process, by first trying to see if the matter can be dealt with informally, if not then you’ll take the next step which is to make a formal complaint.
You can also speak to an Advocate, who will support you at any meetings.

Advocates help children to raise issues and concerns about things they are unhappy about.

Advocates do this by giving children information, appropriate to their age, so that they can achieve understanding and form opinions. Advocates speak up for children and empower children to speak up for themselves, so that their voices are heard and their wishes and views are fully understood, and they can take part and influence decisions that affect their lives.

Advocates work exclusively for children and the child always leads the advocacy process. The Advocate only acts upon his/her express permission and instructions. Advocacy is independent and confidential. This means that nothing will be disclosed outside the advocacy service, without the child’s agreement. Only in exceptional circumstances would confidentiality be broken, namely where there is risk of significant harm to them or to someone else, or if disclosure is required by a court.

11. Complaints and Compliments

We try to make sure we get things right, but there are times when we get things wrong. It is important for us to know when we are doing things right as well as where we need to make improvements.

You can talk to your carer or social worker. If after talking to an adult you can trust, you are still not happy you have the right to complain. There are other people who will listen to you and want to help you to resolve any problems.

YOU CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT IF YOU ARE UNFAIRLY TREATED, ARE UNHAPPY OR YOU FEEL THAT YOU HAVE NOT BEEN HEARD OR YOU COULD MAKE A SUGGESTION IF YOU FEEL SERVICES COULD BE IMPROVED IN SOME WAY.

If you want to make a complaint you can phone: 020 8708 5268 or fill out a special form called Children’s Representations Procedure Form (your Social Worker will give you one of these) and send it to:

The Customer Relations Team
London Borough of Redbridge,
Freepost Town Hall 1Y634, Ilford Essex IG1 1BR
What happens after a complaint is made?

The complaints procedure has three stages:

- **Stage 1** – is when you tell us what is wrong and we have two weeks to sort it out. If you are still unhappy you can go to Stage 2.

- **Stage 2** – someone new will look into your complaint. The Manager (boss) has to read the report and answer your complaint. This should all happen in a month. If you are still unhappy you can go to Stage 3.

- **Stage 3** – three new people will have a meeting to listen to what you and social services say about your complaint. They will read the report from Stage 2 and tell the Director (big boss) what they think should happen. The Director will then write to you. If after this you’re still unhappy there’s a person called the ‘ombudsman’ who can look at your complaint, (but only after you’ve gone through our procedure). You’ll be told how to contact them after Stage 3.

- You can also contact Ofsted to complain if you want to, they may want to talk to you about any problems you have told them about. Their contact details are on the bottom of page 14.
Useful numbers - contacts for you in London Borough of Redbridge

Redbridge’s Fostering and Adoption Service
Telephone: 020 8708 7528
E-mail: dutyteam@redbridge.gov.uk

LAC Nurse
Telephone: 020 8708 8202
E-mail: @redbridge.gov.uk

Virtual School
Telephone: 020 8708 3913
E-mail: class@redbridge.gov.uk

Children’s Rights Officer
Telephone 020 8708 5811
E-mail: childrens.rights@redbridge.gov.uk

Children’s Participation Officer
Telephone: 020 8708 7894
Email: participation@redbridge.gov.uk

Complaints Team
Telephone: 020 8708 5268
E-mail: childrenscomplaints@redbridge.gov.uk

Office of the Children’s Rights Director
Website: www.rights4me.org
Address: Director for England, Ofsted, Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6SE
Telephone: 08456 404040 / Free phone children’s helpline: 08005 280 731

Department for Education
Website: www.education.gov.uk
Address: Children in Care Division, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London W1P 3BT
Telephone: 0370 000 2288

OFSTED
Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk
Address: Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
Telephone: 0845 404040 or text to 60085
Other useful numbers & Contacts

Childline – 0800 11 11 / www.childline.org.uk
NSPCC – 020 7825 2500 / 0808 800 5000 – www.nspcc.org.uk
Kidscape – 08451 205 204 / www.kidscape.org.uk
Voice – 0808 800 5792 / 020 7833 5792 / info@voiceyp.org
The Children’s Society – 0845 300 1128 / www.childrenssociety.org.uk
Rights 4 Me – 08456 404040 / www.rights4me.org
Lawstuff – 0800 8020 008 / www.lawstuff.org.uk
National Counselling Service – 0131-552 8901 / www.counselling-directory.org.uk
Samaritans – 0845 7909 090 / www.samaritans.org
Drinkline – 0800 917 8282 / www.drinksmater.org
Anti–bullying Project – 016724 289 289 / www.anitbullying.org.uk
Brook Advisory Centre – 0808 802 1234 / www.brook.org.uk

Useful Contact Sheets:

Your social worker is: 

Their contact details are: 

Your foster carers are: 

They live at: 

They have children called: 

Other people in the house are called: 

Your foster carers supervising social worker is: 

Their contact details are: 
Did you know?
That some people you see everyday have been in care or fostered?

- Coco Channel – fashion designer
- Malcolm X – Civil Rights Activist
- John Lennon, who was a member of the Beatles was fostered by aunt Mimi
- Bill Clinton – ex President of USA
- Nelson Mandela was fostered by the chief of his tribe when his father died
- Kathy Burke - actress
- Ashley J Baptiste, Cambridge graduate and X Factor finalist