

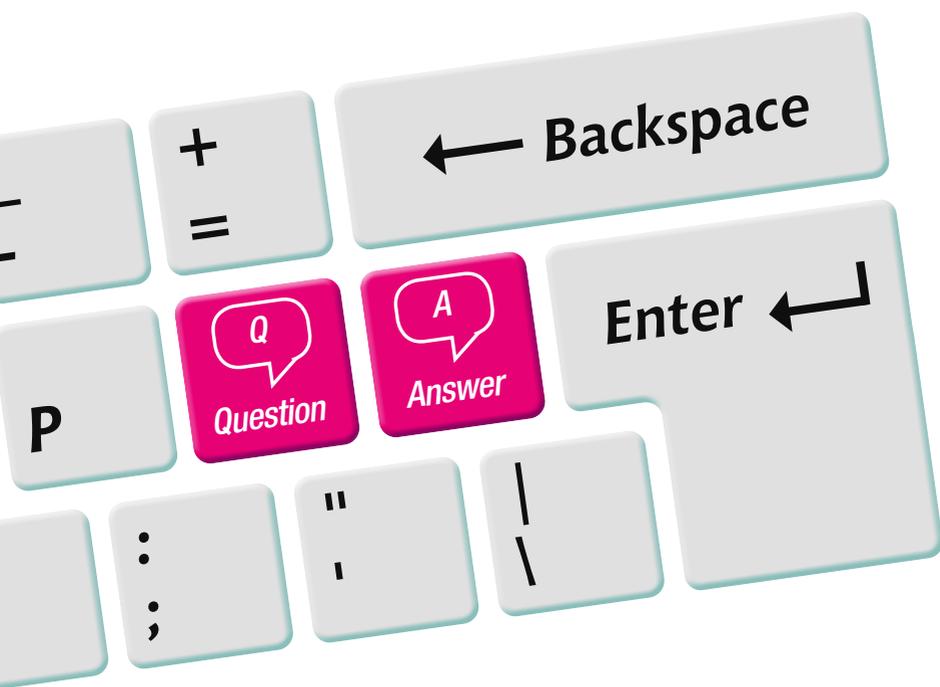
Being looked after

Important things you need to know



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City of Westminster



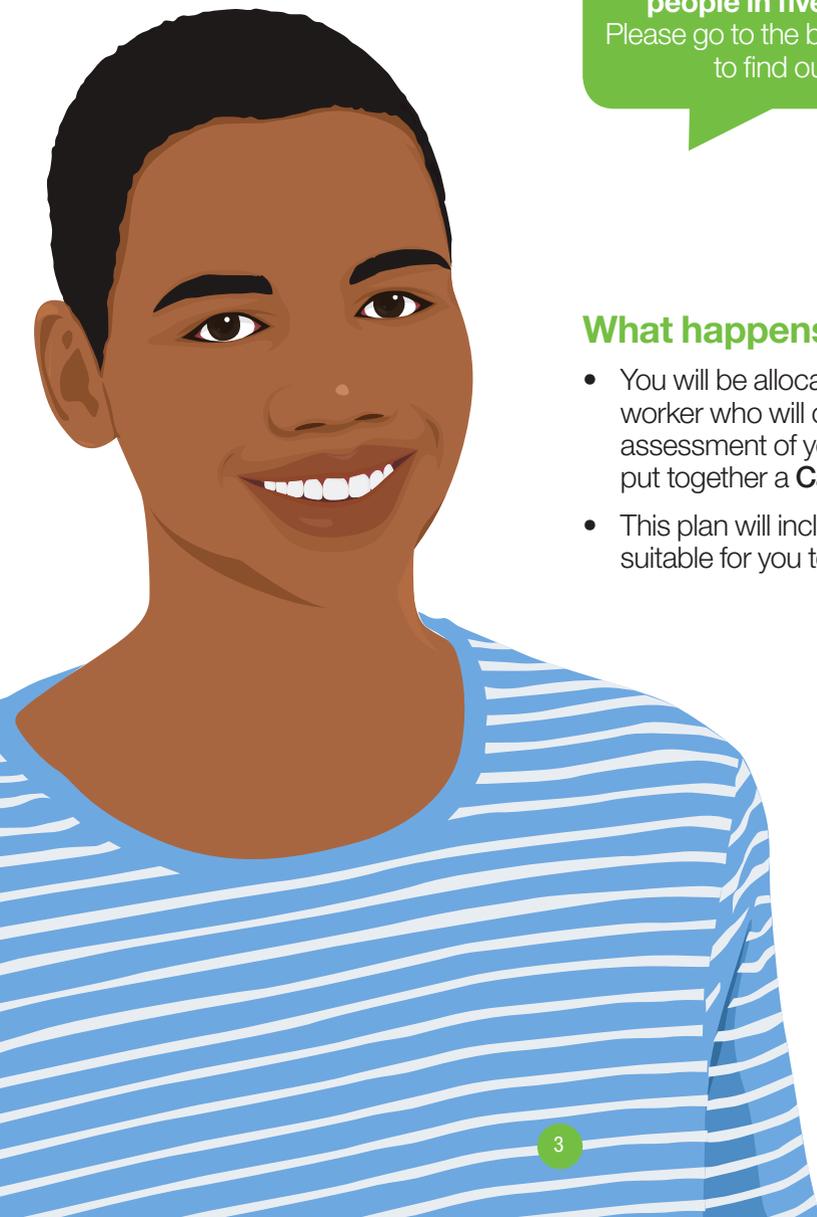
What is this leaflet is about?

This leaflet will explain what happens to you when you become a **Looked After Child**. The leaflet will also explain what you are entitled to and how your views will be considered. Some of words used to describe people and documents used in your care may be new to you so we put these in **bold letters**.

There is a page at the back of this leaflet called a **glossary** which will give you a short explanation of words that are in bold.

There is also a section called **Help and Support** where you can find out details on how to contact people who may be involved in your care.

Being Looked After is when your borough (also known as your **Local Authority**) arranges for children or young people to live away from their families, either as part of a voluntary agreement or as agreed by a **court** under the **Children Act**. This can be for a short break or for a longer time. This happens for all sorts of reasons when a parent or carer is unable to continue to care for you.



Did you know your borough has agreed to support young people in five key areas?

Please go to the back of this leaflet to find out more.

What happens next:

- You will be allocated a social worker who will carry out an assessment of your needs and will put together a **Care Plan** with you.
- This plan will include somewhere suitable for you to live.

Here are the five important things that children in care are entitled to:

A Care	P	lan
A regular	R	review
See you on your own	O	wn
Listen to your	V	iews
Support your	E	education

P 1. Care Plan

1. You must have a plan called a Care Plan. This document records:

- what your needs are
- what people (like social workers and foster carers) will do to help and support you
- what your plans are now and for the future.

Your Care Plan is the main plan that you will have and will also bring together other plans including your **Health Plan** and **Education Plan**. Your Care Plan will be looked at in your **Looked After Child Review** meetings, to see how the plans are going and to check if any changes are needed.

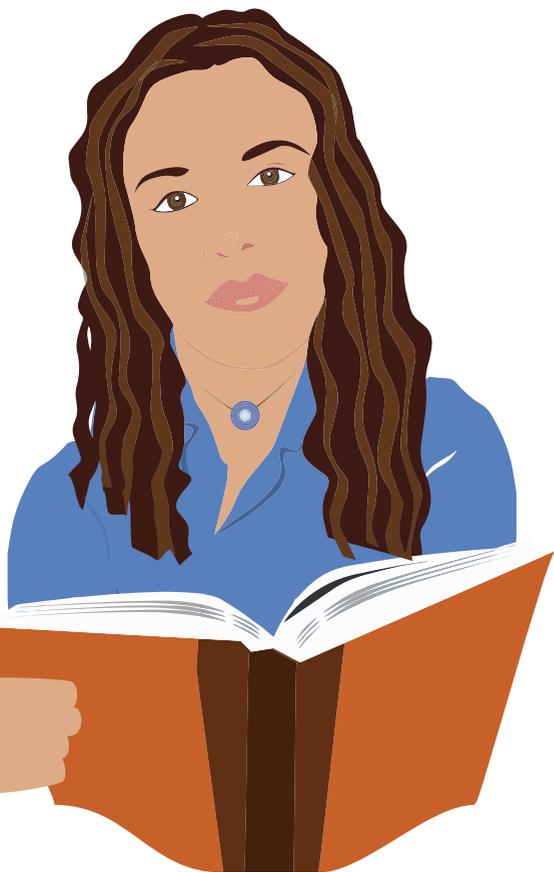
R 2. You must have Looked After Child Review meetings

The review of your Care Plan should discuss all important decisions about you such as a placement change, (unless it is a decision made in an emergency).

Your Looked After Child Review meeting is a chance for everyone to talk about your placement; the plans that are being made for you while you are being looked after and how you are getting on. You will also be asked your views on where and how the meetings are held.

There will be an **Independent Reviewing Officer** chairing the meeting to make sure your opinions are listened to up until you turn 18 years old. The meetings will take place as follows:

- The first review meeting should be held within four weeks of you becoming Looked After.
- The next one will be 3 months after that.
- The meetings will then be held every 6 months.



3. Seeing You on Your Own

When a social worker visits you, they must speak to you on your own unless you refuse, or the social worker is unable to for some reason. Your social worker works for the Local Authority where you come from. It is their job to help children and families through difficult problems.

What you can expect from your social worker:

- Your social worker must see you on your own.
- They will answer your questions about living away from home.
- They will explain what will happen next.

How often will my social worker see me?

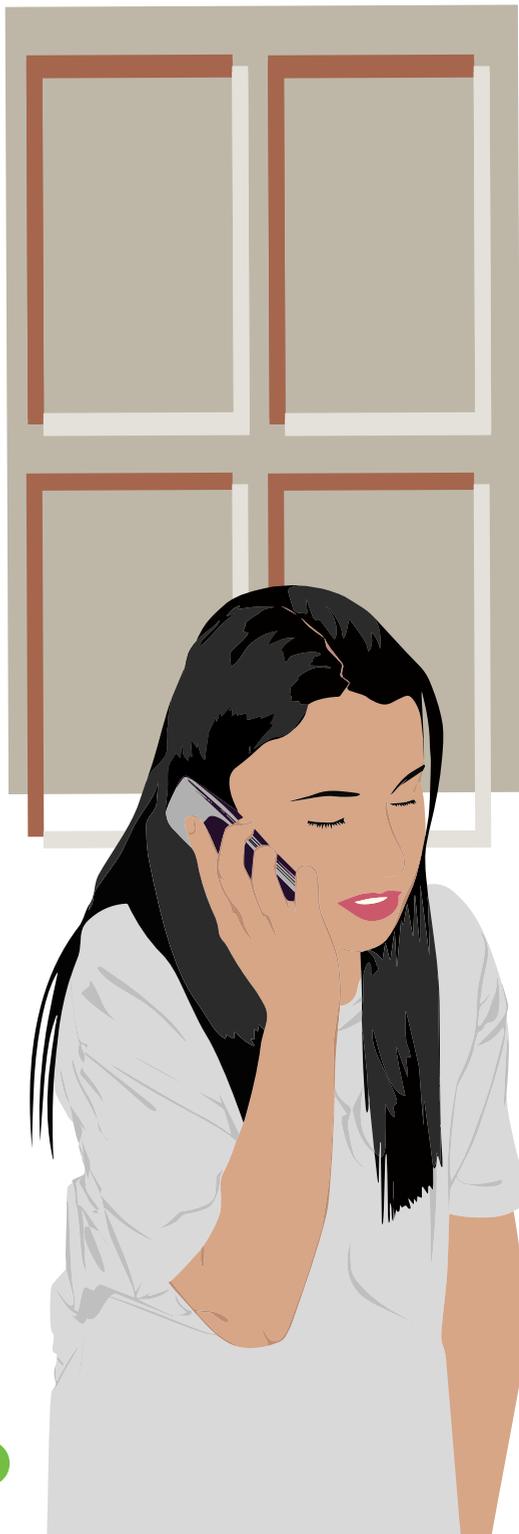
- You should have a visit from your social worker within the first week of your placement in care.
- After your first visit, you should have a visit every 6 weeks for the first year.
- After the first year, they should continue to visit you regularly. The frequency will depend on the plans being made for you.

V 4. Your Views

Your Care Plan must include your views because your views about your life are really important.

In making decisions about your care, it is important that you are asked about your wishes and feelings and they should be taken into consideration depending on your age and understanding. Your Care Plan and all other plans should always include your views:

- **Your wishes:** what you want to do, what you want to happen or what you would like someone to do for you.
- **Your feelings:** if you are happy, sad, worried or frightened, even if you don't know why or understand what is happening.





E 5. Education

All Looked After children and young people must have **Personal Education Plan (PEP)**. A PEP will say how your school or college, carer and Local Authority will support you to do the best you can while you are in education. This may mean you are entitled to extra support to help you with your education. This could be a tutor or mentoring or it could be money to help you with books, equipment or travel.

If you are in school or college between the ages of 16 and 19, you are entitled to the “16-19 bursary”. This could be up to £1200 per year, but it is dependent on your attendance. The bursary is paid to you by your school or college.

You can get advice and support on any aspect of your education from the **Virtual School**. The Virtual School is a specialist education team within social services set up to help children and young people with their education, if you are not sure who to contact speak to your social worker.

Your Local Authority is signed up to the following areas recommended by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2013.

Five entitlements for Looked After Children

1. You must have a Care Plan that says what your needs are now, what will be done to meet those needs and what your plans are for the future.
2. The Care Plan must include your views and when deciding what to do people must take those views into consideration.
3. No important decisions, for example, a placement move, about you should be taken without a review meeting being held unless it is an emergency.
4. Looked After young people aged 16-19 should get a £1,200 bursary if they stay in full-time education.
5. When a social worker visits you, they must speak to you alone unless you refuse, it is not appropriate at that time or the social worker is unable to.



Where to get help and support if you are from Westminster City Council

Some questions you may have	Contact Details	Write your notes here
How to contact my social worker?	Looked After Children's Team T: E:	My social worker is: Name: T: E:
How to contact my IRO?	Independent Review Team T: E:	My IRO is: Name: T: E:
How do I find out about my rights and entitlements?	Children's Rights Service T: 0207 641 7585 E:	My contact is: Name: T: E:
How do I make a complaint or give compliments?	Tri-borough Complaints Team T: 0808 202 6210 E: socialcarecomplaints@westminster.gov.uk	My contact is: Name: T: E:

Glossary

This section tells you what some of the words in this leaflet mean

Words which have been highlighted in bold	What does this Mean?
Advocate	An advocate is somebody independent who listens to your point of view and can help you in situations when you don't feel able to say what you think. You can choose who you want your advocate to be. It can be someone who you know and trust and feel comfortable with. You can ask your social worker, your IRO or your foster carer to help you get an advocate or you can you can contact the RBKC Advocacy Service.
All Party Parliamentary Group	This is a group that was set up by the Government to look at the needs of Looked After Children and Care Leavers across the UK. They have made recommendations which Local Authorities can sign up to.
Borough/Local Authority	This is the area that you come from and is also responsible for your care. Your Local Authority is also known as your Borough.
Care Plan	This document is the main plan for your care. This plan records what your needs are now and what your plans are for the future. The plan will tell you what all of the people involved in your care e.g. your social worker will do to support you.
Court	This is a place where legal decisions are made about your care. Professionals involved in your care will provide information (also known as evidence) to a Judge or Magistrate so that you are given the best care and support when you become Looked After.
Health Plan	This is a plan which is written by the Looked After Child Nurse. This plan will help you to stay healthy and ensure you are getting regular health checks like visiting the Dentist.

Words which have been highlighted in bold	What does this Mean?
Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)	This is a professional who will chair your Looked After Child Review Meetings and will ensure your views are being listened to by those that are involved in your care and that your Care Plan meets your needs.
Looked After Child	A child or young person becomes Looked After when they are in the care of the Local Authority for more than 24 hours.
Looked After Child Review Meeting	This is a regular meeting that brings together those people who are closely concerned with your care. This meeting is chaired by your IRO.
Personal Education Plan (PEP)	This is a plan which will help you with your education and will support you to do well at school.
Social Worker	Your social worker is a professional who will help to assess your needs and provide you with help and support. Your social worker will visit you regularly and will also attend your Looked After Child Review meetings.
The Children Act	This is a part of the law (also known as legislation) which social services and other agencies who help care for children and young people have to follow. The Children Act helps children to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be healthy • remain safe in their environments • enjoy life • be successful • make a positive contribution • achieve economic stability.
Virtual School	This is a team of teachers and dedicated education professionals who work to support the education of Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

Your Borough is signed up for the following areas recommended by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2013

Five entitlements for looked-after children

1. You must have a care plan that says what your needs are now, what will be done to meet those needs and what your plans are for the future.
2. The care plan must include your views and when deciding what to do people must take those views into consideration.
3. No important decisions, for example, a placement move, about you should be taken without a review meeting being held unless it is an emergency.
4. Looked after young people aged 16-19 should get a £1,200 bursary if they stay in full-time education.
5. When a social worker visits you they must speak to you alone unless you refuse, it is not appropriate at that time or the social worker is unable to.

Five entitlements for care leavers

1. You can ask your authority for £2,000 for the setting up home allowance. How this amount is paid may vary depending on your needs.
2. Your local authority must provide you with help with costs of being in education or training up until you are 21 (or 25 if you're still in education).
3. Your local authority must provide you with help with the costs of getting and keeping a job (up until the age of 21 if you are in education, employment or training).
4. You must be given a copy, and full explanation, of your assessment and Pathway Plan
5. If you're in higher education, your Local Authority must provide you with vacation accommodation (or money towards it).