

Looked After Children Hounslow Pledge 2023

Reviewed every three years by young people and monitored annually through our surveys and the Children in Care Council (CICC), for over 15 years, the London Borough of Hounslow has upheld its pledge to Looked After Children. The pledge includes a range of promises that young people feel a good parent should uphold. These promises also include the types of support that young people who aren't in care, may receive. Such as, having a bicycle and receiving help with education and support with your hobbies.

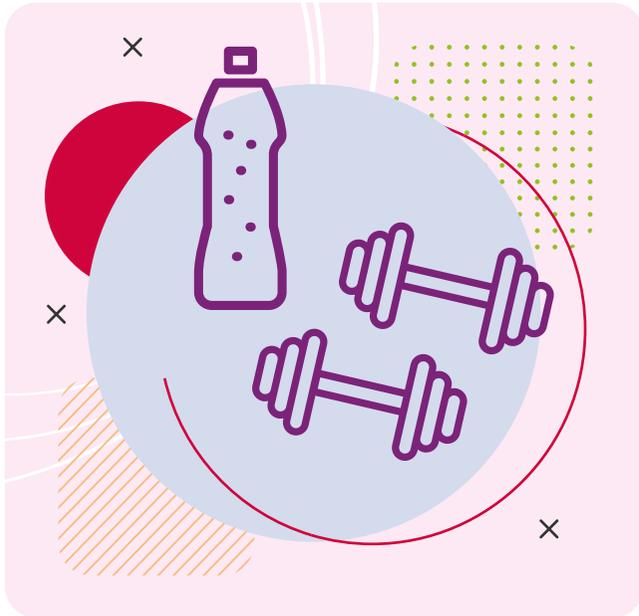
As a "corporate parent", Hounslow council has a responsibility to all the children and care leavers in our care. This includes helping you to reach your full potential and supporting your journey into adulthood. Helping you ultimately create an independent life, we want to remove as many barriers to success as we can, making your experience equal to that of children and young people who aren't in care.

The pledge is just one way we hope to achieve this.

This document outlines **the pledge promises to Looked After Children and Care leavers in Hounslow**. If you have any questions about anything in the pledge, please speak to your Social Worker or Personal Adviser. These people will organise and arrange most of the things in the pledge for you. If you can't speak to them or things aren't happening how you think they should, you can speak to your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) or find the details of our Advocacy Service at the end of this document.



**London Borough
of Hounslow**



Access to Leisure Activities

- If you live in Hounslow and are over the age of 14, you can have a prepaid gym pass for gyms managed by Lampton 360 Leisure.
- If you live outside of Hounslow, we'll support you with a gym membership of up to £25 per month. This will need to fit the goals in your pathway/care plan, so it's of the most benefit to you.

Access to a Bike

- We can buy a bicycle for you, up to the cost of £250—depending on your age and the size of the bike you need.
- We'll consider replacing this as you grow and your needs change.
- If your bike is stolen, we'll need to see a crime reference number before we agree to buy you a new bike.
- You'll need to show commitment to safety too. For example, by wearing a helmet, using a bike lock and attending cycling safety awareness sessions.



Learning to Drive

- From the age of 17 up to the age of 25, we'll help you with the cost of learning to drive.
- To secure the funding, we'll have to consider whether you'll be able to pass your theory and practical tests. We'll also have to consider your ability to drive safely.
- You'll also have to demonstrate a history of looking for and staying in education, training, or employment. If you're in education, you'll need to have an attendance of at least 85%. Driving lessons can be withdrawn if your education attendance falls below 85%.



If you want to learn to drive or continue with your lessons, you won't be able to apply for funding if you:

- Have any driving-related convictions, charges, or charges pending in the last 18 months.
- Have any convictions, charges, or charges pending related to violence, drugs, or alcohol in the last 6 months.
- Behave in a way the driving instructor considers unacceptable.



If the funding is agreed upon, it'll cover the cost of:

- A provisional driving licence.
- Up to 10 hours of driving lessons. (We may be able to fund additional lessons if, for example, you need a driving licence for your job).
- The theory test and one retake.
- The driving test and one retake.
- A full licence once you have passed the test.





Savings

- We'll ensure that a regular amount of money is saved for you, which you'll receive when you turn 18. This will be discussed in detail during your placement planning meeting and reviewed by your IRO and Social Worker at your LAC review meetings.

Rights and Entitlements

- If you're aged under 16 years, we follow national guidelines on how much pocket money you'll receive. The amount of money set aside for this doesn't change. However, sometimes, depending on what's going on in your life, the amount can be managed in different ways. You can ask your Social Worker for information about this and receive a clear, written explanation for the decisions made. The specific amounts will be discussed in detail at your placement planning meeting and reviewed by your Social Worker and IRO.
- If you're aged over 16 years, it's good to know that we're launching a Care Leavers App. This will contain information surrounding everything you're entitled to, including savings, birthdays, educational support, special occasions, clothing allowances and applying for housing as you prepare to leave care.



Education and Future Aspirations

- We'll allocate a Virtual College caseworker to you and they'll advocate and support your learning up to when you reach the age of 18.
- We'll coordinate a termly meeting where we plan and set goals for your education. This is called PEP (Personal Education Planning) and it also involves your school/college, carer and social worker/personal adviser.
- We'll listen to your opinion and your voice will be heard through the student feedback within the PEP document and meeting.
- We'll allocate additional funding to support your learning of up to £500 per term through PPG, post 16.
- We'll provide you with the support and equipment you need to complete your learning programme (within the limitations of the pupil premium grant funding).
- We'll support your application/s for college, higher education and work.



We'll keep you safe, give you a safe place to live and help you feel safe

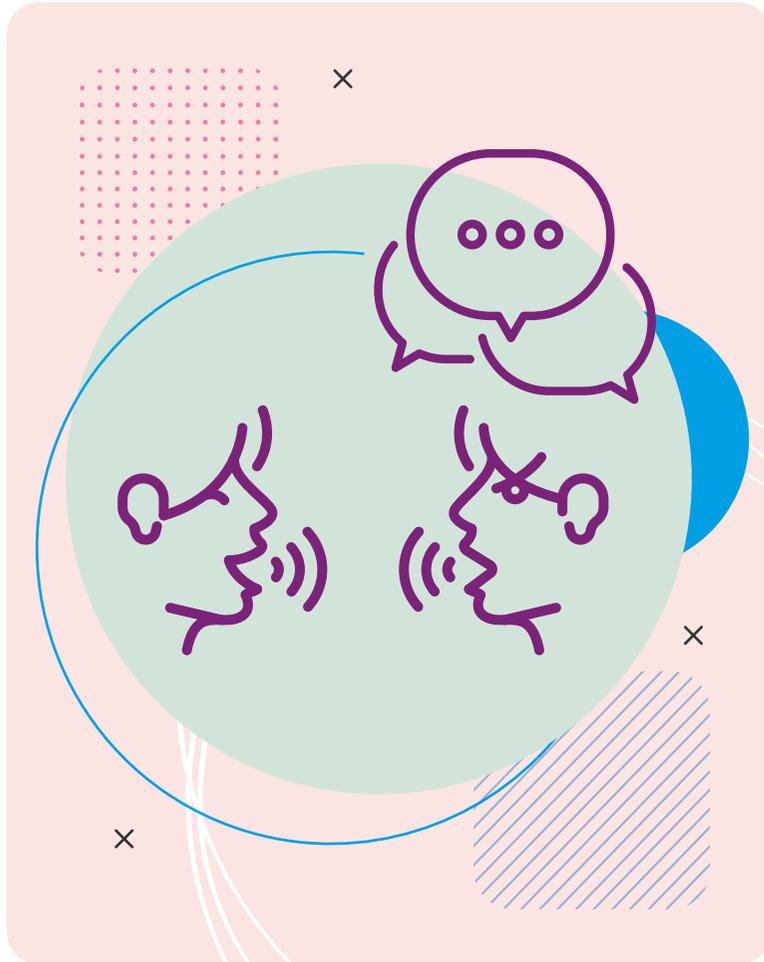
- If your move is planned, we'll do our best to give you a choice of foster carer or supported accommodation and give you the opportunity to meet them before you move in.
- We'll always share information with you about foster carers before you move in. This will include a picture of the family and lots of information about them. Young people in care decided what information should be included and we call this the Foster Carer Profile.
- We'll look at all the information surrounding your circumstances, including your identity needs. We use this to help decide where the best place is for you to live and we ask you what you think about this too. So do let us know anything you think will help!
- Through our Children in Care Council (CICC) you can have the opportunity to meet with leaders and influence what the council is doing to improve community safety.
- Your Social Worker will come to see you regularly to make sure you're okay and if there's anything we can do to help you more.
- Every six months, your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) will check that the adults around you are meeting all your needs. A document called Your Care Plan sets out what everyone should be doing to support you. Your IRO will make sure this plan is up to date.
- If you get into trouble with the police, we'll make sure an adult is with you at the police station to help.



We'll help you to keep healthy

- When you arrive in care, you'll meet with our specialist nurse. From here, we can understand your health needs and make a plan to keep you healthy.
- The specialist nurse will meet with you for a check-up once a year, but they're also available if you want to see or speak to them about your physical, mental and sexual health and your relationships, in between check-ups.
- We'll encourage you to take part in physical and creative hobbies and activities, including by providing you with a gym membership.
- We'll support carers to make sure you have a healthy, balanced diet. Equally, to teach you how to cook and make healthy food for yourself when you're old enough.
- We'll support you with your mental health. All foster carers take part in ongoing training to better understand mental health.
- If you do struggle with your mental health (thoughts and feelings that don't feel good, right or healthy), we'll help you to take part in an activity that works for you. This can be talking to a therapist, a doctor, or a nurse or doing other activities such as art, music or drama—until you feel that things have improved.





We'll give you accurate information about your rights and entitlements and we'll do our best to make sure your opinion has a meaningful influence

- We'll ensure you know about the pledge and have a copy of it.
- We'll keep our website up to date with information about your rights and entitlements and we'll provide opportunities for you to get involved.
Visit: <https://careexperienced.hounslow.gov.uk>
- We'll ask for your views and encourage you to be involved in reviewing your care plan. Before your care plan review, your IRO will talk to you about taking part in the meeting and what you want to share.
- You can become a member of the Children in Care Council (CICC). This means you can meet other young people in care and share your feedback and ideas on improving the experience. You can also meet with the London CICC and national organisations too.
- We'll send you a survey once a year, so you can tell us what's working and what isn't. The survey is co-produced with young people who have experienced care.
- Hounslow works in a shared way so all children and young people can participate. It's called the Lundy Model of Participation. Based on the United Nations Charter for the Rights of the Child, we believe it's your right to participate and be heard. We respond to what you say, give our feedback, and do our best to make sure your opinion influences change. You can find more info here: **https://ceforum.org/uploads/event/event_documents/594/LUNDYMODELCEX.pdf**
- If you think the professionals at Hounslow aren't listening to you, you can access an advocate of Action for Children. They'll support you and speak up for you by addressing your concerns. They can also help you to make an official complaint.
Their phone number is: 0207 254 9408. Their email is: London.Advocacy@Actionforchildren.org.uk.