

The London Pledge for Children and Young People in Care



Young London
Matters



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The London Pledge for Children and Young People in Care

The London Pledge aims to ensure that children and young people in care across London have equal access to the same range of key services and support wherever they live, go to school or access employment or training opportunities in London. The London Pledge is a commitment from all Children's Trusts and their partners to all our children and young people in and leaving our care and to care leavers. This pledge has been developed in partnership with Young People, Lead Members and Partners from the Community and Voluntary Sector.

Underlying Principles

Children's Trusts, led by London Authorities, will focus on these principles when consulting on and delivering the London Pledge promises and any additional local commitments. Children's Trusts will ask children and young people in care how they would like these principles to be measured.

1. We will only promise you things that we know we can do.
2. We will care for you as an individual person with your own specific needs which we will plan to meet.
3. You will have the opportunity to talk to your social worker alone every time he/she visits you.
4. We will always involve you in the decisions we take for you and we will respect your right to make choices about your life.
5. We aim to be the best as parents and to make your experience of being looked after a positive one.
6. We want you to be healthy, safe, have fun and gain achievements for yourself. We want you have stability in your life, to make a positive contribution to your community and to leave care able to make your way successfully in life. We will support you to achieve all this.
7. We will have expectations of you as well and we will make these clear to you.
8. We will listen to you as individuals and as a group and we want you to tell us when you meet us whether we are keeping our promises.
9. We will take account of your particular needs, especially those relating to disability, race, culture, religion and sexuality. We will take account of anything that is leading to you being treated unfairly and will give you support to overcome it, including anyone treating you unfairly because you are in care.
10. We will ensure that you receive your full set of rights, as set out in relevant legislation, regulations and guidance and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
11. We will also ensure that you receive your London Pledge entitlements, wherever you live. Any failure on the part of Councils and their Children's Trust partners to deliver this will be promptly resolved.

We will support you to Be healthy

Across London we will work together to ensure that you have access to a range of relevant health services which promote and support your emotional, physical and mental health and support you to make healthy and positive choices for your lives.

- 12.** We will work to make sure that doctors, dentists and other health professionals are trained to understand your individual needs and listen to your problems so that they can give you the best possible support and treatment.
- 13.** We will work with others to ensure that you get better access to the information you need and the right support to help you with any health or emotional difficulties that you may have, especially if you live outside your home authority.
- 14.** We will ensure that we have good systems in place to share information across borough boundaries so that you do not miss out on medical appointments because you move areas.
- 15.** Parents or carers will have access to information, services and support that will help them to care for you and give them with the skills they need to ensure that you have the best chances in life and are healthy and safe.
- 16.** We will ensure that you receive your vaccinations, dental checks and other health checks at the right time and that you and your carers are given the relevant information to support you in accessing healthcare services
- 17.** When appropriate we will ensure that you have access to the relevant sexual health information and support to enable you to make positive choices about your future.
- 18.** We will make sure that you have opportunities to develop your personal and social skills to care for your health and well-being now and in the future.



We will ensure you can Stay Safe

We will work together across London to keep you safe from harm from individuals and your environment. We will ensure that you know how and where to access help if you feel you are being threatened or hurt in any way and we will ensure that professionals and carers know how to support those of you who have been harmed or hurt. We will not move you from a placement you are happy and settled in unless there is a good welfare reason for doing so.

- 19.** All agencies will work to prevent you suffering harm and to promote your welfare, provide you with the services you require to address your needs and to safeguard those of you who are being or who are likely to be harmed.
- 20.** We will have clear arrangements and protocols in place to safeguard you if you run away or go missing from care. These arrangements will be regularly reviewed.
- 21.** We will involve you in the selection of staff working with or for children and young people and the training of new social workers and foster carers.
- 22.** We will ensure that you get good information about your placement and a proper introduction to your carers (unless you have to move in an emergency). When you are moved to a new area you will receive information about the area and how to access services.
- 23.** We will ensure that you have access to youth support services and a Connexions adviser. If you need it, additional guidance relating to your personal health and safety is available.
- 24.** If you get into trouble with the police and end up in custody we will make sure that the most suitable person comes along to support you.
- 25.** We will do our best to give you a choice in the selection of your own foster carer or placement.
- 26.** We will do our best to reduce the number of changes of social worker that you experience while you are in care.



We will support you to Enjoy and Achieve

Enjoy

We will work together to ensure that children in care have access to a broad range of positive activities and opportunities that provide them with places to go and things to do wherever they are. We will particularly work together across borough boundaries to ensure that access to good quality social, cultural and leisure activities feature strongly in placement arrangements.

27. We will encourage and help you to access good quality affordable social, cultural and leisure activities, both in your community and across London.
28. We will work to provide you with a free leisure card by 2011 to access facilities across London up to the age of 21. This may include free access to gyms, swimming pools and major cultural attractions.
29. We will support you to purchase a bike and safety equipment and we will organise proficiency training if it is something that you would like and that your carers agree.

Achieve

We will work together across London to support you to achieve five A* to G at GCSE or equivalents. We will ensure that you have better access to personal computers and other materials that you may need for your education and that you are able to access the full range of educational opportunities open to your peers. We will pay particular attention to supporting you at key transition stages in your lives and ensure that you and your carers have access to high quality information, advice and guidance that supports you to make the right choices about your future.

30. We will work with schools, colleges and universities to ensure that you are championed to succeed in your education. In school you will have the support of your designated teacher and a governor champion and you will have a high quality, clear and up to date Personal Education Plan which will meet your needs and push you to succeed.
31. If you are leaving care for university or vocational training we will ensure that your Pathway Plan is clear about the support you will receive, including our financial contribution to your studies.
32. We will make sure that you have access to a computer and materials needed for your education and training. We aim to provide you with a laptop or computer at Key Stage 3 and beyond and appropriate software, providing you remain in education and training.
33. Where appropriate we will support you to access vocational opportunities and/or apprenticeships that will enable you to achieve your full potential.

We will empower you to Make a Positive Contribution

We will work together across London to ensure that your voice is heard and that you are able to participate fully in decision making about your own lives and the services that affect you. You will have the opportunity for your achievements to be recognised and celebrate your successes and to contribute fully to the society in which you live.

- 34.** We will consult you about all our services that affect you.
- 35.** We will make sure that you know your rights and what services you are entitled to by putting this down in writing for you. We will also agree with you what we expect from you and put it down in writing.
- 36.** We will organise meetings for children and young people who are looked after by a Council in London so that we can hear from you about how you think we can best plan to meet your needs as a group and you can tell us whether we are keeping our promises. We will also make sure that those who are not part of meetings or a children in care council have their say.
- 37.** We will celebrate and promote your achievements with you, as well as the contribution you make to the community. This will also include marking your birthday, your religious festivals and making sure you have a copy of your school photo and reports.
- 38.** In cooperation with your parents or carers we will ensure that you have a passport or know why you don't have one.
- 39.** Once you get to 16 years old we will ask you whether you want a mentor (e.g. 16+ worker) and arrange one for you if this will be helpful.
- 40.** We will also offer you the chance to set up and participate in a peer mentoring programme for London. This will involve care leavers supporting young people still in care to grow and achieve.
- 41.** In addition to your social worker, carer, family member, Independent Reviewing Officer and designated teacher, we will make sure that there is another way to tell us if you are unhappy about anything or have a complaint. We will let you know how to contact this person (an advocate) in writing and they will speak for you if you want them to.

We will also support you to contact your lead Councillor, Director of Children's Services and senior managers, as necessary and you will be listened to by them.
- 42.** We will work with others to provide you with information about volunteering and access to opportunities to help others.

We will equip you to achieve Economic Wellbeing

We will support you to achieve economic independence and well-being as you progress into adulthood. We recognise that you will need certain skills and support to live independently and we will take the relevant steps to prepare you effectively for independence and the world of employment.

- 43.** We will open a savings account for you if you have been in care for more than 12 months and will make agreed payments into your account for you. You will have a say about how your money is managed and you will be able to start taking money out once you reach the age of 18.
- 44.** Where appropriate, we will support you to learn to drive where this will help you get into training and the right job.
- 45.** When the time comes for you to leave care we will listen to and act on your views about the services and support you need to help you become an independent adult (including accommodation, further/ higher education, training and employment).
- 46.** We will ensure that when you leave school you will receive an offer of education, employment or training. This will include access to a careers adviser and an information and guidance session.
- 47.** We will provide work experience opportunities and training or apprenticeships to help young people in and leaving care to develop their CV and find employment. This will include young people over the age of 18 and a range of different types of work experience and advice.



For an online version of the London Pledge and contact details of where children and young people can access local information about their rights and their Council, please go to www.younglondonmatters.org

Children and young people will also be able to call the children's contact line number of the Children's Rights Director for information and support - **Free Phone: 0800 528 0731**



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