

Hammersmith & Fulham care leavers offer



Welcome from Councillor Larry Culhane

Welcome to Hammersmith and Fulham's Local Offer for Care Leavers. This Offer outlines all the support that our council provides for you, from housing to health and from education to finance.

The Local Offer is part of our commitment to ensuring no one is left behind and that all young people, whatever their background or circumstances, receive the education and support they need to have the best possible start in life and experience opportunities which enable them to pursue happy and successful lives.

We know that the transition to adulthood can be a challenging time. You will be developing skills to prepare you for independent living, for example cooking, laundry, budgeting and looking after your health. However, it will be just as important for you to be able to manage emotionally with all the changes and challenges that adult life brings.

This offer that has been put together by care leavers for care leavers and we will always be guided by you as to the support you need from us to help you on your journey.

Never forget that you, and all young people are the heart and soul of our borough. Your talents and achievements are a key part of what makes Hammersmith & Fulham a great place to live, work and study.

We are behind you every step of the way.



A handwritten signature of Larry Culhane in black ink, written in a cursive style.

Councillor Larry Culhane,
Cabinet Member for Children
& Education

We have agreed a core offer of services and support that we will give to you as a care leaver. Under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 we are required to publish the support and services that we offer to our care leavers. This is called the local offer and includes all the services and support that will help in your journey to successful and independent adult life.

The core offer will help you to know:

- Your rights
- Your entitlements
- Your responsibilities
- Our responsibilities and expectations of you

The core offer includes services and support relating to:

- Accommodation
- Education, employment, and training
- Health and wellbeing
- Finances
- Relationships
- Participation in society

To be able to get the services and support outlined in this offer you must have been in care for at least 13 weeks when you were between the ages of 14 and 16 years (including your 16th birthday) or for 13 weeks after your 16th birthday.

Your Social Worker, the Participation Officer, Children’s Advocate, and Personal Advisors in the Care Leavers service will explain this to you and help you understand and access the services and support that you are entitled to.



Who is a care leaver?

A care leaver is someone between the ages of 16 and 25 who has spent time in care of the council as a child or young person but has now left that care. They may have left care before or after their 18th birthday. As a care leaver you are entitled to support and services from the council. Your entitlement to support and services depends on your leaving care status. This status depends on how long you were in care and at what point you left care. A care leaver can have: eligible; relevant; former relevant; or qualifying status.

Types of Care Leaver

You are an Eligible Care Leaver if:	You are currently in care; and aged 16 or 17 years old; and you have been looked after for a period of 13 weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks) which began after you reached 14 years and ended after you reached 16 years.
You are a Relevant Care Leaver if	<p>You are 16 or 17 and;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You were previously an 'Eligible' (Looked After) young person• You have left care <p>A Relevant care leaver can include those that have been detained through the criminal justice system or were in hospital on their 16th Birthday. If there is a planned move for you to return home to parents or someone with parental responsibility then you will become a relevant young person. After 6 months this changes to a young person Qualifying for Advice and Assistance</p>
You are a Former Relevant Care Leaver if	You are aged 18 years and below 25 years; and either have been a Relevant or Eligible child when you were under 18 years old.
You are a Qualifying Care Leaver if:	You are at least 16 but under 25; and you were in care prior to the making of a special guardianship order which was in force when you reached 18; or if you had been in care at any time when you were between 16 and 18 years old. As a qualifying care leaver, you can access advice and assistance based on a needs assessment completed by the Care Leavers Team

Support you are entitled to as a care leaver

As an eligible, relevant, or former relevant care leaver you will have an allocated case worker in the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Service. If you are under 18 years and still in care your case worker will be your Social Worker. If you are 18 years and above or no longer in care your case worker will be your personal advisor (Social Worker). All case workers are qualified social workers. Your case worker will hold case responsibility and be responsible for the preparation of your Pathway Plan. The Pathway Plan is developed with you and other people who know you and sets out the support that you will need to transition successfully into adult life.

Sometimes, your circumstances might affect your eligibility for some entitlements or might mean that you would need extra support. For example, if:

- You have special educational needs or a disability
- You are an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child (UASC) and your immigration status is unclear
- You are involved with the criminal justice system
- You are a qualifying care leaver young parent

If you are not sure about your entitlements you can ask your case worker or the Care Leavers team.



How you will be involved in your Pathway Plan

Your Pathway Plan will be based on an up to date assessment of your needs and set out the support that will be offered to you to meet your needs and achieve your aspirations. Your case worker will involve you in the development of your Pathway Plan and your wishes and views be included in your Plan.

Other people involved in your Pathway Plan

Your case worker will talk to you and seek your agreement about involving other people that are working with you or know you in developing your Pathway Plan to ensure that all the support you need is offered to you. They can be people from your housing and accommodation providers; education, training, and employment providers; benefits agency; health services; youth justice service; your family and carers.

What will be considered in your Pathway Plan

Your Pathway Plan will consider your current circumstances and the key things that have to be achieved to help you in your journey towards independence living. These may include your: accommodation, education, training, and employment; health and development; independent living skills; family and social relationships; participation and social life; finances; and a contingency plan (alternative actions if the agreed action in the pathway plan do not go according to plan)

Your Pathway Plan will be completed before you are 16 years old. If you were over 16 when you came into care then this will be within 3 months of the date of you coming into care. Your pathway plan will then be updated and reviewed at least every 6 months or within 28 working days of any significant change to your plan. Your Pathway Plan will be written and available at your review meeting. You will have a copy of your Pathway Plan and your case worker will also keep a copy.

Your finances and general up keep

If you are 16 – 17 years old

If you are 16-17 years old and supporting yourself in your own accommodation (i.e. not in foster, residential care, private & voluntary placements, some supported housing) and not working; entitled to benefits; or receiving any other form of income you will receive the following:

- Leaving Care Maintenance Allowance: to match the current Universal Credit/Jobseeker's Allowance (UC/JSA) levels or National Asylum Support Service (NASS) Section 4 levels for All Appeal Rights Exhausted (ARE) Asylum Seekers where determined needed by Human Rights Assessment. This money will pay for essential toiletries, food and entertainment. Young people who are on remand or custody will receive an allowance of £40 per month.
- Transition Grant: a weekly grant equivalent to UC/JSA levels will be offered to you upon reaching your 18th birthday to ensure smooth transition between leaving care support and benefits for up to 6 weeks if needed. Any further funding needed to cover transition due to delays in processing will be loaned to

you, by signed agreement, and recouped on payment of benefits.

- Support to identify a suitable and appropriate placement/or the means to secure accommodation including university and vacation accommodation up to your 21st birthday.
- Clothing Allowance: a total of £450 per annum – paid in 3 instalments of £150.00 every 4 months as agreed by the Team Manager.

Please note:

**All allowances will be based on an assessment of need and will be set out in your Pathway Plan. The Plan must also highlight any attached conditions, how payments will be made, the frequency of payments and when they will be reviewed.*

**Refer to or ask your case worker for the Care Leavers financial policy document for further information.*



If you are 18 – 24 years old

If you are 18 years and are supporting yourself in your own accommodation (i.e. not in foster, residential care, private and voluntary placements, some supported housing) you will no longer receive a maintenance allowance. Instead you will be expected to claim benefits to help you with living costs from the central government. This will include the following:

- **Jobseeker's Allowance:** if you are aged 18-24 years, not in full-time education, actively seeking/available for work or working less than 16 hours per week you will be eligible to claim JSA equivalent rates
- **Universal Credit:** if you are aged 16-19 years, in full-time education (excluding university) and either a parent, not living with a parent, or a refugee you will be eligible

to claim UC equivalent rates. Care leavers can continue to receive universal credit until age 22 if the claim is made before the young person reaches the age of 21 and is still in full-time education.

- **Housing Benefit:** if you live away from family, have a low income and less than £16,000 in savings, you can get help with your rent. Individuals who are not eligible to claim include EU jobseekers, asylum seekers without leave to remain and full-time students in higher education (unless you have children). Different rates apply depending on where you live. Care leavers eligible for housing benefit should be entitled to the single room rate up to the age of 22.
- **Clothing Allowance:** one off payment a total of £150 in any one year and as agreed by the Team Manager.

Your education, employment, and training



We will support you get the right education and skills that you need to achieve a successful independent life. Relevant 'education or training' can include a range of opportunities as listed below:

- Pre-entry qualifications (basic skills courses)
- Further Education (vocational training and apprenticeships)
- Higher Education (university diplomas and bachelor degree courses)
- Post graduate qualifications (master's degree courses)

If you wish to pursue a course of education, employment or training you must be enrolled on a chosen course before the age of 25. This

includes young people previously eligible for leaving care services resuming programmes of education or training after the age of 21.

The package of support for you will include a Pathway Plan, personal adviser, assistance (where education or training needs require it) and financial support subject to assessment and varying circumstances. e.g. where a young person is employed by a training route or a student undertakes a year in industry where he/she is in employment, they will not have access to further funding. For further information, please see the Care Leavers 21-25 years returning to Education, Employment, or Training Policy 2015.

Available funding from the central government, trusts, and other organisations

- The 16-19 Bursary Fund – a bursary of £1200 per year administered by college institutions which provides financial support to help young people with education-related and training for work costs. This may include money to pay for specific clothing, books, equipment, and transport

essential for relevant courses and training. Students who want to apply for support from the Bursary Fund should contact their chosen institution as soon as possible to make an application. Young people will be expected to claim this support first before applying for other additional funding.

- The Care Leavers' Foundation grants and vacation grants for care leavers— where applicable a young person who is in receipt of a Parental Contribution should first attempt to apply for any care leavers' grants where available. Eligibility for certain grants is variable but primarily targeted at care leavers aged 20-29 who have no recourse to any statutory support or alternative sources of funding.

Funding from the council

Further education

If you are aged 16-17 years and starting a course at college, employment or training you may receive the following:

- College enrolment fees paid only where necessary: subject to agreement by the Education Support Panel and timetable must be supplied.

- Employment, training, and support grant: One-off negotiable grant up to £500 to access special tools, equipment and uniforms for training courses and apprenticeships.
- Books, equipment and stationery: a total allowance of up to £50 for Further Education (FE) per annum. A full list of books from the institution must be provided.
- Interview/work clothes or uniform x 2 sets: total of £100 per annum (see Centre Point for clothing grants if living in their accommodation).
- Travel expenses which may include a student travelcard which enables the cheapest means of travel where possible. e.g. by bus.

Top-up payments: if you are not eligible for the 16-19 Bursary Fund you may receive a weekly top-up payment. For part-time courses the top-up amount will be given on a pro-rata basis. Proof of earnings will be needed in all circumstances and will be subject to agreement by the Education Support Panel.

If you are 18-24 years and starting or returning to pursue a course of Further Education (i.e. an apprenticeship) employment or training you may receive the following:

- Full-time work bridging grant: Weekly payments to match current UC/JSA rate levels for a maximum of 4 weeks while waiting for your first salary payment.
- Employment, training, and support grant: one-off negotiable grant of up to £500 to access special tools, equipment and uniforms for training courses and apprenticeships.
- Financial contribution towards books, equipment and stationery: a one-off payment. A full list of books from the institution must be provided.
- Financial contribution towards Interview/work clothes or uniform (2 sets) per annum (also see Centre Point for clothing grants when living in their accommodation).
- Travel expenses which may include a student travel card which enables the cheapest means of travel where possible – e.g. by bus. This will be subject to financial assessment.
- For apprenticeships, a corporate parent contribution up to the amount of £2000 is available to supplement those on low income (no more than £195.00 per week). This will be paid over 12 months.

**Full-time work is equivalent to at least 16 hours per week. Young people who are in part-time employment or training may also receive financial support, but this will be decided on a pro-rata basis. All funding will be subject to agreement by the Education Support Panel after all other funding has been applied for and proof of need has been made clear.*



Higher Education

If you are starting or returning to a course of higher education (i.e. at university) before the age of 25 you may receive the following:

Councils have a statutory duty to provide a one-off higher education bursary of £2000 for young people commencing or returning to a course of higher education (e.g. university) before the age of 25. We have agreed to offer a Parental Contribution of up to £5000 upon

financial assessment to those living independently (i.e. not in Staying Put). You will be expected to use this funding to obtain all education-related resources, equipment and materials and contribute towards your own sourced 'all year round' accommodation, including vacation accommodation, whilst at university. During holiday periods you will be expected to find employment. This is important for you to help you learn how to gradually support yourself and become more independent. Payments will be made in 3 instalments over the course of the year.

- Course, enrolment, and examination fees will be paid only where necessary – subject to agreement by the Education Support Panel and proof of enrolment on approved course.
- Students in Staying Put: there will be a reduction in Parental Contribution of up to £3000 and £2000 will be paid towards the direct funding of the Staying Put arrangement.
- Funding for postgraduate courses – e.g. Master's degrees. This will be subject to discretionary agreement by the council.

Please note:

**You must be eligible for student finance to get the above support for higher education.*

**Full-time education is equivalent to at least 16 hours per week. Young people who are in part-time education may also receive financial support, but this will be decided on a pro-rata basis.*

**All funding will be subject to agreement by the Education Support Panel after all other funding has been applied for and proof of need has been made clear, Students must be eligible for and in receipt of funding from 'Student Finance England'.*

**Students will also be required to fill in a termly tutor feedback form to demonstrate proof of attendance.*

Your accommodation and housing



We will ensure that you live in an accommodation that is suitable and right for you; and help you to maintain your accommodation.

If you are 16 – 18 years old

Young people who are aged 16-18 and moving into semi-independent living (SIL) or other semi-independent accommodation may receive the following:

- **Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA):** A one-off grant in setting up costs if deemed necessary and subject to agreement by the Team Manager. This may include bedding, kitchen appliances, and other basic household goods.

If you are 18 – 24 years old

When you leave care aged 18 - 24 years you will need to apply for your own accommodation. All applications for accommodation will be brought to the Leaving Care Housing Panel. It is the responsibility of this panel to decide the most suitable accommodation that should be offered to you in the borough (Hammersmith and Fulham).

- Most young people will be expected to move into permanent Social Housing, shared accommodation, or private rentals.
- We may offer financial assistance for you to pay your initial housing deposit and one month's rent for affordable accommodation. This offer will be available whilst you are still in receipt of the service and will be reflected in your pathway plan. You must demonstrate your ability to manage and pay rent for your chosen accommodation.
- Young people who turn 18 and are full-time students not in higher education will be expected to claim Housing Benefit to assist in paying rent. Those aged 21 years and over full-time students not in Higher Education will no longer be eligible to claim

- Housing Benefit.
- Young people who turn 18 years and are full-time students not in higher education will also be eligible to claim Universal Credit. Care leavers can continue to receive Universal Credit until age 22 if the claim is made before the young person reaches the age of 21 and they are still in full-time education.
 - The Care Leavers Service must insist that the young person claim these benefits and will not provide personal allowances at age 18 years and beyond unless the young person can show that they are unable or have been refused to claim Housing Benefit.
 - Council tax: young people who are full-time students in university must apply for exemption via their institution. Young people who are aged 18-24 years on some apprenticeships may also be able to apply for an exemption. The young person must provide a declaration from their employer with proof of earnings no more than £195 a week and the training leads to a qualification accredited by a body recognised by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) or the Scottish Vocational Education Council (SVEC).

- Care Leavers and Council Tax Exemption: Hammersmith and Fulham care leavers who are 'Former relevant', living in the borough in their own accommodation and under the age of 25 are exempt from paying council tax. If they are sharing accommodation, there may still be a reduction but not full exemption. The exemption only applies to Hammersmith and Fulham care leavers.

Where the Housing panel decides that you are not ready to manage independent accommodation you will receive further training and support to move into a more suitable accommodation (e.g. privately rented). Where the panel confirms that you are ready for independent accommodation you will move into a final stage accommodation when available. Once you move into your own tenancy you will qualify for a Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA). This is as follows:

- A discretionary, 'one-off' payment subject to assessment of up to £2000 may be awarded if you are aged 18-21 (until 24 if still in education or training) to help you buy essential household items when setting up your own home. You must be in receipt of a service

from the Care Leavers Service and the SUHA must be reflected in your Pathway Plan.

- This will be paid in a total of four instalments of up to £500. You will be given advice and guidance through the Pathway Plan on how best to spend the money. Proof of purchase will be needed prior to each instalment being paid to you
- Whilst your wishes should be given consideration when spending the money, the council reserves the right to make sure that the money is spent appropriately. It is expected that before you leave care you, your carer and case worker will decide what items will be provided including when they will be provided and who will provide them

Please refer to the accommodation pathway document for further information

How you will be supported with childcare cost if you are a parent

Available funding from the central government, trusts, and other organisations

- Young parents who are British citizens may access the Sure Start

Maternity Grant of £500 from week 29 of pregnancy until 3 months post birth (see Sure Start Maternity Grant - GOV.UK);

- Single parents may also apply for healthy start vouchers to help purchase milk and fresh/frozen fruit and vegetables (see the Healthy Start website);
- Young people who are under 20 and in full-time education may apply for the Care to Learn scheme to help with childcare costs whilst they study. (see Care to Learn – GOV.UK)

Funding from the council

- Where funding is not available from mainstream sources, the Children’s Resources Panel (CRP) may consider childcare funding on an individual basis. The young person may receive essential baby equipment including a cot, mattress, buggy and steriliser unit. This may be agreed for by the Team Manager if under £150 or by the Head of Service if it exceeds £150.
- Young parents who are aged 16-24 may receive a one-off payment of £150 for maternity wear as agreed by the Team Manager.

Your relationships



We will support you to establish, re-establish, and maintain friendships and relationships that are safe and in your best interests. Your case worker will maintain regular contact with you and may be able to offer you additional practical and emotional support, such as:

- Providing you with a mentor, advocate, or coach
- Continuing to support contact with the 'Independent Visitor' you had while you were in care, where appropriate
- Help to maintain or reconnect with people special to you or who cared for you in the past, such as

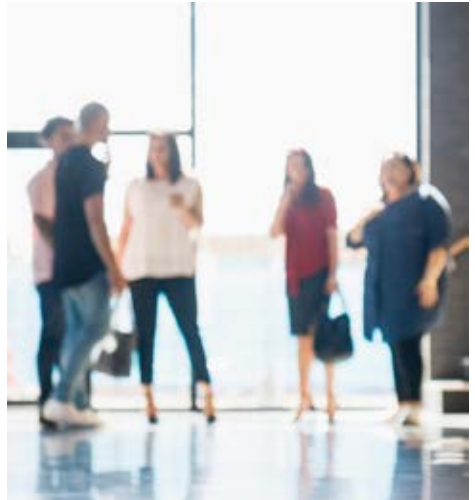
family members, former foster carers, social workers, or other professionals

- Link you to activity groups that might be interested to you. For example, groups for those with special education needs or disability, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children background, interested in sports, science, theatre

Participating in society

We will support to develop and celebrate your identity and culture and make a positive contribution to society.

- If you are aged 16 - 17 years you will receive identity documents including standard birth certificates, passports, and travel documents.
- Birth certificate: one copy and replacement, if necessary.
- Passport with photos included: a first copy and renewal until the young person's 18th birthday;
- Travel documents: will be based on needs assessment and only where the young person is travelling imminently and does not have a passport from their country of origin;
- Birthdays: you will receive a gift voucher on your 16th, 17th, 18th and 21st birthday.
- Religious festivals: you will receive a gift voucher per annum for a festival of your choice if you are aged 16-17 years.
- Holiday travel: only in exceptional circumstances and must be included in your Pathway Plan and agreed by the Head of Service.



You will be able to participate through:

- The Youth Council, Children in Care Council, Care Leavers Advisory Group
- Annual customer care month survey
- The Participation Coordinator
- The Children's Advocate

Please note:

**All documents will be supplied at the standard rate and subject to agreement of the Team Manager.*

Your health and wellbeing



We will support you to stay healthy and live a healthy lifestyle. Support will include:

- To register with a GP and dentist
- General healthcare: if you are under 19 and in full-time education you will receive all standard healthcare, dental care, free prescription costs and sight tests covered by the NHS. If you turn 19 years and are on low-income you may apply for the NHS low income scheme. You will be expected to complete the HC1 form, a claim for help with healthcare costs
- Optical care: financial contribution for prescription glasses/contact lenses may be available for further costs not covered by the NHS. This may be subject to further agreement by the Head of Service
- Dental care: financial contribution for young people in full-time education up to the age of 24 if not covered by the NHS. This may be subject to further agreement by Head of Service
- Mental healthcare: to refer you to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) if you are aged 16-17 years. And to move from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health services is you reach 18 years. You can ask your GP to make a referral to Adult Mental Health services if you are 18 years and above
- Health Passport: after your final looked after child health assessment, you will receive a final health care summary and health plan from the Looked After Children Nurse. The Health Passport will include a summary of your health assessments, health history and how you can access relevant health services and your health records
- The LAC nurse will be available to provide advice and support you with any health relate queries

Emergencies and additional support

We will give you the necessary support to ensure that you are safe and able to have essential things you need in case of any emergency or unforeseen circumstances. The support may include:

- Advance UC/JSA crisis loans of up to a maximum of 6 weeks may be covered by the Care Leavers Service to offset any delay in payments due to signing on for welfare benefits processing, if necessary.
- Any payments of allowance beyond this will be loaned to you and repaid when you receive your benefits lump sum payment. A payment plan/agreement will be set up with you and reviewed weekly
- In the first instance, where possible top-ups for utilities and food parcels will be given to you rather than cash provision to ensure that you have essentials items.
- Payment for emergency accommodation up to a maximum of 6 weeks may be provided if you move and the claim for Housing Benefit has not been granted. Proof of application for the Housing Benefit claim and backdated to date claim must be provided.
- Where emergency payments become relied upon, your Pathway Plan will need to be reviewed to set out the support necessary to help develop your financial capability and skills.
- Suitcase/rucksack. One replacement if necessary, subject to agreement by the Team Manager.
- Family contact: travel expenses to see siblings, parents, and extended family members. Intervals and arrangements must be documented in the Family/Social Contact section of the pathway plan.
- Discretionary payments for leisure and social activities: consideration of infrequent requests related to the young person's hobbies and interests which add value to the young person's development.

Access to your social care records



The law says that you have a right to see personal information held about you unless we think that it would be emotionally harmful to you. Your case worker will explain to you if we decide that you cannot see your records. When you are 18 you will be able to see all the records we have kept on you, and your case worker will talk to you about the support you will need to read and understand the information. If you would like to see your records you can make a request to your case worker or you send the request to the Customer Relationship team. Below are the contact details for the Customer Relationship team:

H&F InTouch
Executive Services
Room 229
Hammersmith Town Hall
London W6 9JU
handfintouch@lbhf.gov.uk

Making a complaint or compliment

If you want to complain or make a compliment about the support or service you get from your case worker or the council you can telephone, write, or email the manager of your case worker or personal advisor about it. If you make a complaint and you are not satisfied with the response you receive or you want the complaint to be investigated by an independent person you should telephone, write, or email the Customer Relationship team about it.

Our Contact Details

Care Leavers Service	020 8753 6522
Head of Service and Team Managers	020 8753 6522
Virtual School	020 8753 5521
Education Development Worker	020 8753 5521
Education, Employment and Training Advisers	020 8753 5521
Children's Advocate	020 8753 5125
Participation Coordinator	020 8753 5521
Service location	Cobbs Hall, 266 Fulham Palace Road, SW6 6LL
Our out of office (emergency duty team) contact number	020 8748 8588



Useful contacts and resources

National Care Advisory Service - www.leavingcare.org

- National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) - www.nyas.net
- 0808 808 1001 (freephone)

Childline –

- www.childline.org.uk
- 0800 1111

Benefit enquiry line

- www.gov.uk
- Tel: 0345 608 8545

Job Seekers Allowance

- www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance

Universal Credit

- www.gov.uk/universalcredit

Child and Working Tax Credits

- 0345 300 3900

Child Benefit

- 0300 200 3100

Money advice Service

- www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau

Provides information and advice about benefits, money, employment, and housing rights.

- www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Rees: the care leavers foundation

Provides small grants to care leavers aged 18 – 25 years.

- www.reesfoundation.org

The care leavers association – a charity for improving lives of care leavers.

- www.careleavers.com

Become

online advice and information for care leavers. www.becomecharity.org.uk

Propel

Information on available support at university for care leavers.

- www.propel.org.uk

Shelter

Provides housing advice

- www.shelter.org.uk

Children's Commissioner

Promotes and protects the rights of children.

- www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Coram Voice

Supports children and young people to hold to account the services that are responsible for their care.

- www.coramvoice.org.uk/young-peoples-zone

