

Immigration

The UK: OK plan

You are welcome here.

All care leavers who need it get help with immigration. Talk to your social worker to find out about the help we can offer. The City of London is signed up to the South London Refugee Association [Pledge](#).

Your social worker will

- Be skilled and informed on immigration issues
- Connect you with good quality legal support as soon as possible
- Want to support you through immigration applications and appeals (alongside your legal representative)
- Know when your status expires and make sure you have your next application in to extend/appeal (if eligible)
- Help you make plans if you do not get status in the UK
- Enable you (if eligible) to apply for permanent status and British citizenship
- Enable you (if eligible) to apply for a British Passport

Things we will not provide

- Travel documents (passports only are provided).

Because they are temporary, not all countries accept them, and it is not in our duty to provide.

Communication

We will use interpreters if you need them, via telephone, in writing or face to face.

We have a range of languages used to different levels of understanding within our service, currently including Polish, Farsi, Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Patois, Creole, Yoruba, Igbo, Pidgin, French, Italian, Makaton and British Sign Language.

Housing

We can help you find a home and also support you with living independently so that you feel confident and prepared.

All care leavers can get help with accommodation. Talk to your social worker to find out about the help we can offer.

Options include:

- staying with your foster carer
- moving into supported or semi-independent accommodation
- renting your own home privately
- applying for a council home

What is social housing and why is it good?

Social housing is a great choice. The rent is much cheaper than private rent. This is very important because the cost of living is very high.

As a care leaver, you are at the front of the queue for the City of London Social Housing. As a single person you are eligible for a studio property. This may be one large room which includes a kitchen space, some studio properties have a separate kitchen.

Lots of people want social housing because it is affordable, and many thousands of people are waiting because there are not enough properties. The cost of rent in central London is extremely high, and most people cannot afford to live here. You are at the front of the queue (along with people who are homeless, and people escaping from violence in the home).

There are not enough properties so you might wait 2-4 years before one becomes available.

You are responsible for your rent once you are 18 or over. This may be paid via Universal Credit if you are in college, or from your earnings if you are in work.

An example rent of a studio flat in London is between £1,500 and £2,000 a month

An example rent of a studio flat in social housing is £500 a month

When your social worker completes the housing application with you, choose your preferred three housing areas. Put your favourite first, then the one you like second best and then the one you like third.

You have a choice of:

Holloway Estate and York Way in the London Borough of Islington

Golden Lane and Middlesex Street (in the City of London -the square mile)

Avondale Square in the London Borough of Southwark

A council tenancy has the lowest rent in the UK. It is much cheaper for you than private renting.

A council tenancy is the best sort of tenancy you can get it means you have stronger rights within the property good for staying for a long time, so long as you are paying rent. As long as you pay the rent and follow the tenancy conditions you can stay there for as long as you need. You are less likely to be asked to leave.

Most people never get a council tenancy. Even if it is small and in an area of Central London you have not chosen, it is a good option.

For the first year you are in your tenancy with the City of London you are on an introductory tenancy. After 12 months, if you have paid your rent and kept to the tenancy agreement you will become a secure tenant.

Once you are in a secure tenancy you can [swap your home](#) if you want to move area or find a bigger home. This can take a long time because lots of people want bigger homes. As a secure tenant you can apply to buy your property through the [Right to Buy](#) scheme if you have enough money to do so.

If you get a partner or start a family and your flat becomes too small, if you are a 'secure tenant' you will be eligible to apply for a larger one within the City of London.

Once you are a secure tenant you can apply to do a mutual exchange which enables them to swap with a social housing tenant – both Local Authority and Housing association – anywhere in the UK. The Housing Needs Team can provide full details of how this works once you are a secure tenant

To be eligible for social housing you need a local connection to the area where that housing is situated. You have a local connection to the City because you are a care leaver under City of London Children's Services. In some instances you may be able to apply to another local authority.

- You have a local connection if you're under 21 and were previously in care in the area for at least 2 years even if you were placed there by another council.
- You also have a local connection if you're under 25 and you get advice and support from the council's social services team under a pathway plan.

- If your pathway plan is provided by a county council, you have a local connection to every local housing department in the county council area.

Things we will not provide:

- One-bedroom flats or bigger

These flats are reserved for people with children over the age of 6 months

Rent Privately

If you want to rent privately then we can help you with a deposit. We can be your guarantor so that you can rent.

This can be a good option if you want to move with friends, or if you want to move to a different location in the UK which is more affordable than London.

Your social worker will:

- ensure you are supported to find a home that you can afford (check you can afford the rent on your wages from your job, or that that rent will be covered by Universal Credit)
- seek approval for the deposit and first month's rent if you have found somewhere that you can afford
- arrange for the City of London Corporation to act as a guarantor for your first year of tenancy (when you are ready and able to be a tenant) so you can rent a room/studio/flat privately
- you can rent a room/studio privately whilst you wait on the list for a council tenancy

Housing and Risk

It is important that your accommodation is for you. The support in this offer is to help you build safe caring friendships. Sometimes people involved in criminal activity (such as dealing drugs) might want to use your home. This is called 'cuckooing'. This is unsafe and puts you at risk. Please tell us if you feel unsafe and we can work to support you.

-

Supported Living

You do not have to move into your council home/private renting until you are ready.

We will provide you with accommodation until you move into private renting or council tenancy (or you reach 25 years of age)

- You will have keywork support for as long as you need and use it.
- The keyworker will support you to learn how to run your own tenancy, including how to:
 - use a washing machine
 - use a launderette
 - budget for food and bills
 - make healthy food
 - use a bank account
 - make a doctors/dentist/optician appointment
 - call your immigration lawyer
 - travel around by bus
 - keep yourself safe sexually
 - set up services and pay bills (e.g. electricity) and anything else agreed between you, your social worker and support worker

Apply for a council home

As a care leaver you can apply for a City of London home. As a care leaver you will be given priority.

The home will be in one of five City of London estates. You will be offered a studio flat when one becomes available. The flat will be suitable for you. Do not accept the flat as you will not be offered another.

Your social worker will

- help you apply for a City of London home
- work with you to understand the responsibilities of running your own home
- ensure your keyworker helps you be confident with running your own home
- offer you the opportunity to practice living in your own home and/or access expert financial support via <https://www.mybnk.org/>
- you will have the support of your own Tenancy Support Officer as you move into your own home and afterwards

Things we will not provide:

- One-bedroom flats or bigger

These flats are reserved for people with children over the age of 6 months

- Permanent housing outside of City of London properties

We have no access to these properties. You can join the housing register in another borough/county if you have lived there for 2 years or more but you only have priority with the City of London as a care leaver. This means you would wait many more years for a permanent place to live.

Council Tax

As a care leaver you are exempt from paying Council Tax until you are 25.

Your social worker will:

If you live in the City of London (square mile)

- make sure that the City of London exempts you from Council Tax bills if you reside in the square mile

If you live outside of the City of London (square mile)

- make sure you have single person/any other subsidy from the local authority (borough) you are living in
- arrange for payment for the rest of your council tax bill (to be paid direct to the local authority where you live)

Help with moving into a new home

When you are ready to move into your own home we will support you to buy the essential things that you need. This is known as a setting up a home allowance.

You will receive up to £3,000

Your social worker will support you to make the most out of your money. This will include accessing low cost/second hand items and charity funding to set you up in your first home.

- furniture, flooring and white goods
- decorating costs
- your first TV licence
- removal and transport costs for moving in
- cooker and washing machine connection costs
- one year of contents insurance
- support with winter fuel payments for your first winter (December-February £10 a week)
- additional support for single parents

Your social worker can also provide you with luggage to help you move.

Culture, music and arts

We will support you to enjoy culture, music and arts.

The City of London [runs](#)

- Epping Forest
- Hampstead Heath and their men's and women's swimming ponds
- The Barbican
- The Guildhall Art Gallery
- The Museum of London
- Tower Bridge
- A large number of green spaces

Your social worker will take you to see drama/music/art at least once a year, in addition to organised CiCC group activities. Your social worker will celebrate your culture with you throughout the year.

Education, employment and training

We want you to succeed and we will support you to achieve

Your social worker will be able to help you decide what route is the best for you.

You can also get help and advice from:

- Our Virtual School Headteacher
- Our Participation Officer
- Our Careers Coordinator
- Our Adult Education Service

Your social worker and/or keyworker will support you into education training or employment.

ESOL

You will have access to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) if you need it. For new arrivals there is a college set up for you in the Guildhall.

Enrichment

There are learning activities to add to your college timetable. We know that ESOL at college takes up 15 hours per week, and if you are studying you would benefit from extra opportunities.

There will be enrichment activities such as:

Monthly visits to Epping Forest (for wellbeing)

Music

Physical Education (PE/sport)

History

Arts/design/crafts

Oracy: learning to speak clearly – this helps with succeeding in interviews

Football/sport activities

Bespoke courses

We can find bespoke courses to help you in your journey to work. Recent examples include lifeguarding and security training.

Work experience

You have priority for work experience within the City of London Corporation. Ask your social worker to set this up.

Support with college

To qualify for help, you must be able to show you have good attendance and that you are doing your best to keep up with the work.

Laptop

You will be given a laptop when you enter into care. You should take care of your laptop and use it to study, complete homework and apply for college and work.

If you are going to be with us for a short time, before you move to your permanent area via the National Transfer Scheme, then you will need to return your laptop before you move.

Government bursary

You might be able to get help with education related costs from the Government if you are:

- aged 16 to 19
- in care or a leaving care

Find more [information on the Government bursary for 16 to 19 year olds external link](#).

You can also speak to your social worker who can support you apply to charities such as the [Trussell Trust](#) or the [Buttle Trust](#) for additional funds.

Travel

We will provide you with an annual bus pass until you are 25

Speak to your social worker for more information.

We will continue to lobby central government to be able to provide funding for the tube and trains

University

We offer you university taster days in February half terms, so you can see what university is like.

We can help with finding universities with flexible admissions processes and those with foundation courses.

We will help you with your UCAS form

If you decide you would like to go to university, we will support you to go to university if you are able to and would like go

Our support includes:

- supporting you to apply for student loans
- paying for accommodation in the holidays
- your social worker will, if you would like them to, visit university campuses with you before you apply
- keeping in contact and reviewing your pathway plan
- supporting you to move into your university accommodation (if you move outside of London)
- up to £100 towards graduation costs (gown & photo)
- retaining the place on council tenancy waiting list whilst you study

The university may also offer bursaries and student finance can offer grants and loans. We can help you with that.

[Find out more about student finance](#)

We will offer you a bursary of £3K per year whilst you are studying for your first degree and/or masters degree (or PHD) if you conclude your study before you are 25, in addition to paying for your holiday accommodation

Employment and training

You have access to an information and guidance specialist who has extensive experience in supporting children who are in the UK unaccompanied by an adult to care for them.

If your immigration status allows, we will support you with finding a job or training to do a job.

- We will offer you work experience and practice interviews
- We will help you write and update your CV
- We will help you search for work
- We can help you into extremely short (a week or two) training or longer training
- We often use [Breadwinners](#) to support you with work/training

If you decide you want to [find a job or a training course, get information and guidance from the National Careers Service external link](#). Or [contact](#) your dedicated careers worker

Help with money if you are working or in training

We can support you to buy clothes for an interview, and for starting work.. We will apply to Suited and Booted, Dress for Success or Smart Works for this clothing.

We will provide you with an annual bus pass to support your travel

There may be support via the job centre if you are on universal credit

Health and wellbeing

We will support you to be healthy and well.

You can speak to your social worker and/or your keyworker for help and advice.

We will provide you an annual health card so that you have free prescriptions until you are 25.

We will pay for gym/physical exercise until you are 21 years old

The cost of a council run gym (currently £30 a month) will be paid direct to the gym, and usage reviewed in your pathway plan. This is to help keep you healthy. You can choose a different sport/exercise if you do not want to go to the gym. Discuss with your social worker.

Support with health appointments

Your keyworker or social worker can help you with any health appointments. They will help you find the nearest GP/walk in clinic/sexual health clinic/dentist/optician nearest to you and can help you with appointments.

We will cover the cost of your prescription if you have to pay, until you are 21 years old. Ask your social worker to find out how.

Access to the Family Therapy Clinic

You have access to the family therapy clinic attached to our service.

The clinic offers therapeutic support to any child and/or family open to social care or early help in the City of London.

The clinical lead has a doctorate in global mental wellbeing and the clinic will be there to welcome you.

Your social worker will look with you at your health and wellbeing when they meet up with you and in your pathway plan review. Do ask if there is anything worrying you.

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity

Race & Ethnicity

You are valued for who you are. We will celebrate your race and ethnicity with you and support connect you with others who share similarity with you. We will promote your rights and belonging.

Racism: racism is not acceptable, and is against the law. We will support you to complain or report and we will listen to you and be your champion.

Ability/Disability

You are valued for who you are. We will support you recognising your ability and championing enabling environments. We will listen to you, ask your advice and views and advocate for you to achieve your goals.

Abuse based on your ability/disability is not acceptable and is against the law. We will support you to complain or report and we will listen to you and be your champion.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual +

You are valued for who you are. We will support you in your identify. We will record your preferred name and pronouns and use these in all our communication with you. We will not assume heterosexuality or gender binary norms. This includes in pregnancy and parenthood. We will tailor our services to you and we will know about and/or find out about support for you and your identity. We will think about safe spaces for you.

Homophobic and Transphobic abuse is not acceptable and is against the law. We will support you to complain or report and we will listen to you and be your champion.

Your Say

To make sure you are able to share your views and experiences we will communicate with you in a way that you can understand. We will use interpreters if you need them during phone calls, or face to face meetings, and to translate important documents for you. This might include using Makaton or sign language for those that need it.

You have a right to be involved in all decisions affecting your life and this includes having your voice heard in meetings and plans made for you. We will try and include you in planning meetings, so that we hold meetings at a time that suits you, in a place that you feel comfortable. Your social worker, and carer or key worker if you have one, will support you to attend meetings, have your say, and understand the decisions made.

Sometimes you might want someone outside of Children's Social Care to support you, and help you understand how decisions are made, and how to share your views, these people are called advocates.

Advocacy

When you come into care you are always asked if you would like an independent advocate – someone independent who works for you, helps you share how you are feeling, and what you want.

You can have any advocate at any time, please ask your social worker to make a referral or contact; [London Advocacy Service | Action For Children](#)

An advocate is someone who understands the law, knows how social services work and knows about your rights. Your advocate can speak up for you. It is their job to make sure that you are listened to and taken seriously in decisions being made about you and your life.

The Promise

The City of London has made a promise to all our children in care and care leavers, about how we will look after you, and what we will offer. We spoke with children in care and care leavers to ask what you feel it is important for us to do, and how we can best help you have the life you want.

These were then written down and are translated into a range of languages. [\[link to updated version of The Pledge?\]](#)

If you do not think that the service, you are getting meets these promises, you should let us know so we can make sure we do meet our promises to you. You can speak with your social worker directly, speak with a manager, talk to an advocate, or you might want to make a complaint.

Complaints and Compliments

You have a right to complain if you are not happy with a service you have received from the City of London Corporation. If you've a positive experience, we would love to hear your compliments too.

You can call: 020 7332 3498

Or Email: [Complaints and Compliments Team](#)

Having your say about services for care leavers

It is important that we are always working to improve our services, so that children in care and care leavers achieve the best outcomes possible. The Children in Care Council (CiCC) is a group for children and young people aged 12 to 25 years. They meet regularly and work together to talk about what is working well, what might not be working well, or things that young people are finding difficult, and come up with suggestions to improve the services care leavers receive from the City of London Corporation.

It's a great way to meet other care leavers, share your views and experiences, and work together on important campaigns and projects.

You can join the group or share your views by contacting the [Participation Worker](#) or by calling; 020 7332 1215, or messaging; 07795 090649.

London Children in Care Council

The City of London also works with the London Children in Care Council run by Partnership for Young London. You can find more information here; [London Children In Care Council | PYL \(partnershipforyounglondon.org.uk\)](https://partnershipforyounglondon.org.uk)

The London CiCC helps to;

- Improve the care experience for looked-after children & young people and care leavers across London.
- Identify common themes and issues across London.
- Enable opportunities to influence policy and services affecting looked after children & young people and care leavers in London.
- Improve young people's skills and confidence through participation.

If you would like to get involved speak with your social worker, the [Participation Worker](#) or contact Partnership for Young London directly, from the link above.

Social Activities and Events

There are a range of activities and events that you can attend if you would like. The Children in Care Council run activities, which help you to meet other care leavers, and contribute your experiences and feedback. Please speak with your social worker or the [Participation Worker](#) (020 7332 1215 or 07795 090649)

The Virtual School also offer a number of activities and events which can support your learning not only educationally, and emotionally, but also practically e.g. cooking. They also support opportunities to access employment. Your social worker or the Participation Worker can share these details with you, or you can contact the Virtual School directly to discuss; [Virtual School Head](#) or [Virtual School Deputy Head](#)

Your social worker, carer or keyworker, can also explore local social opportunities for you depending on where you are living.

Independent Visitor

You might want to develop a relationship with an adult outside of the services you work with, especially if you don't have a family network locally. We can match you with an independent visitor who is an adult

who volunteers to regularly spend time with a young person in care. They will meet with you each month for a minimum of 2 years. You can spend your time with as you like, doing activities, or going for a coffee and a chat. They will support you to develop your interests and provide guidance and advice as needed.

To find out more please see; [London Independent Visitors | Action For Children](#), or speak with your social worker.

Getting your say through elections

From the age of 18 if you are a British Citizen you will have the right to vote. You will need to register to do this. This also makes it easier to do other things such as applying for housing, your passport or a bank account.

If you need support with this speak to your social worker. Find out about your rights when you are leaving care.

Accessing your social care records

Find out more on [your rights and access to your social care files with the Care Leavers' Association](#).

Find [films, podcasts and blogs produced by young people in care and care leavers with IMO](#).

Your advocate via Action for Children can help if you need <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/>

Becoming a parent

Your social worker will support you in preparing for and becoming a parent. Support will be clearly set out in your pathway plan. There is a special section for this so you know what is available local to where you are living, and the plan is updated as your child(ren) grow.

You can join our online parenting programme and/or in person programme to help you prepare and to meet other parents. Ask your social worker or email children.duty@cityoflondon.gov.uk. It is a programme accredited by the [Race Equality Foundation](#).

If the timings don't suit you, we can find other online parenting programmes to help.

Support services and financial help

Your social worker or keyworker can support you to attend doctor, initial midwife and health visitor appointments. As well as this, you can get the sure start child maternity grant and vitamin vouchers for when your baby is born.

If you want to return to education, training or an apprenticeship, your personal advisor can help you access costs for child care and [apply for care to learn grants](#).

If you're a lone parent and have sole care of your child moving into your first home, you can get additional financial support on top of your setting up home allowance, to help you furnish the property.

There are lots of other services and financial support that you may be able to access:

Support during pregnancy or if you've recently given birth

Prepare for a baby

Get help to prepare for your new life as a parent.

Get free vouchers each week to spend on:

- milk
- fruit and vegetables (tinned, frozen or fresh)
- pulses (fresh, tinned or dried)
- infant formula milk
- vitamins

Find [more information on Healthy Start](#).

Help with money

You could get a one off payment of £500 to help towards the cost of having a child. This is known as a Sure Start Maternity Grant. Find [more information on GOV.UK](#).

Family Information and Support

Family services in the City of London can be found via <https://www.fis.cityoflondon.gov.uk/> . This includes information on [childcare](#), the [children's centre](#), [libraries](#) and services available to families.

You may be living outside of the City of London. Your social worker will ensure you know about information and support nearest to where you are living and will include this in your pathway plan.

City of London Children's Centre

You can access our [children's centre](#) wherever you are living. We can also help you find a children's centre near to where you are.

Find a variety of services in our Children's centre including:

- stay and play groups
- parenting courses
- a nursery

Children over the age of two get 15 hours per week free nursery (subject to criteria)

Financial support for care leavers

Find out about the financial support and advice available to you from your social worker.

There may be times when you find yourself short of food or struggling to pay some of your bills. We want to help if you are having difficulties.

If you speak with your social worker they will help you work out what help you need and make sure you have the right support moving forward. This could be helping you to make some budget plans or sorting out any benefit problems. They can also get you food parcels or help towards energy bills if things get really difficult – subject to financial assessment.

Birthdays and religious festivals

We want to celebrate your birthday and will give you £60 each for these, as well as for one religious festival a year such as Christmas or Eid until you are 21 years old.

Clothes

You can get costs for interview clothes and shoes via the job centre.

You will be supported of up to £150 per year until you are 21 (unless you are in employment) to help with winter clothing/to assist with sportswear/clothes.

Identity Documents

You will need ID for lots of things. This includes opening bank accounts, starting a new job, getting a library card, accessing services and going abroad.

We want to make sure that you have a suitable form of photo ID, so we will support you to get your first adult passport or provisional drivers licence if you do not yet have British Citizenship. We will keep a copy of

your immigration ARC card, and your provisional licence on our database so that we can support you to get a replacement if you lose it.

TRAVEL: Driving lessons, tests and licence

In London, public transport is easily accessible. [You can travel by bus, tram, tube or train](#). We support you with an annual bus pass.

London is aiming to be an environmentally friendly city, and there is a [congestion zone](#) for drivers, and the [ULEZ](#)

Learning to drive can be expensive. We can help you pay for it if it is relevant to your education or your job. Your social worker will help you access:

- one provisional driving licence
- 10 driving lessons (up to £400), you will need to top up the rest yourself
- one theory test and one practical driving test
- help to find a good instructor

We may be able to support you with driving lessons subject to grant funding if it is not relevant to your job/study if your college attendance is excellent.

Things we will not provide

- A car or motorbike

TRAVEL: Cycling

Cycling in London is a good travel option.

[Transport for London](#) have bikes to hire as well as cycle maps which show quieter roads.

[Dr Bike](#) offers bike checks and cycle safety training. Your social worker can help access this.

Your social worker can also access cycles via the Police schemes and via charitable organisations. It is important to wear a cycle helmet, and we will fund this for you.

Claiming benefits

If you are a British Citizen or you have immigration status (such as limited leave to remain) you may be entitled to benefits to help you pay rent and money to live on.

You can speak to your social worker or keyworker who can help you.

Your social worker can connect you to [City Advice](#) who are experts on making the most of your money. They can also provide emergency vouchers if you have run out of money.

The department for work and pensions is the government department that pay most benefits, such as [Universal Credit](#).

Free gym/exercise support for 18 to 21 year olds

We will pay the cost of a council gym membership directly to your gym. If you do not want to go to the gym/swimming we can fund a sport/physical fitness activity up to the equivalent funding (currently £30). Use will be reviewed in your pathway plan as we want to support you to be fit and healthy.