

Children's Services

# SchoolTalk

Harrow COUNCIL  
LONDON



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Because you are looked after, there are people around you who can help you make the most of school. Social workers and your carers or your key worker if you are in a children's home are there to help you. And in school there is someone called a '*Designated Teacher for Children Looked After*', who is there for you.

# School Talk

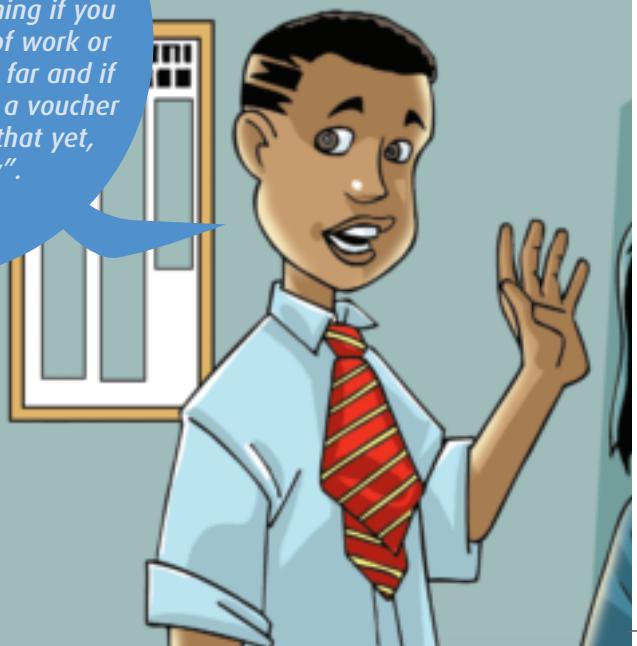
Going to school is important for your future. You can gain skills and learn things that you really enjoy that will help you in later life. You can also make friends and learn how to get on with other people.

### Why you should go to school:

- ✖ So you can do your favourite subjects
- ✖ Make new friends
- ✖ Be with the teachers you like
- ✖ Join after school clubs
- ✖ Take part in trips and visits to interesting places.

## What do you think?

*"School helps me work hard really. I've got some commendations, which is a sticker, and it's more than a sticker and it's like saying very well done sort of thing if you do a really good piece of work or something. I've got 5 so far and if you get 40 then you get a voucher but I haven't reached that yet, but I want to try".  
(12 year old in foster care).*



## Some of the things these adults should help you with are:

- 1 Making sure you have a school to go to**
- 2 Praise you when you have done well**
- 3 Encourage you to do well. It may help you to do better if someone is taking an interest**
- 4 Help you if you are having problems**
- 5 Talk and listen to you about how school is going.**

Your carer or key worker and social worker should talk to the school and see how you are getting on and make sure everything is going ok.

If you don't have a school to go to or if you have to change school, your social worker must try and find another school for you within 20 days.

"Yes I think it's better because I'm in care just because I've got a lot more people looking out for me and trying to help me to get a good education."  
(14 year old in foster care).

"My latest social worker really helps support me. She's just like my foster carer. Every time she comes she's like "how are you getting on at school?" That's the first question she asks except for "how are you?" and I'm like "oh fine" but then I have to rush up stairs and get my studies down and show her and stuff like that".  
(12 year old in foster care).

"My foster carer helps to support me, they're good at encouraging me to revise and study, they're like "If you want to get your exams, it's up to you to work at it". They try and get me to work harder at my homework too, taking more time and doing it carefully. If I work hard they give me rewards, like they have paid for me to go to see football matches and things, that helps me try better"  
(15 year old in foster care).



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# What helps with school?

## Going to school

It's important that unless you are sick, you go to school every day and arrive on time. If you are unhappy about going to school or you have difficulty getting there on time, try and tell your carer or key worker, social worker or designated teacher.

Every school has an education welfare officer that you could ask to speak to. It will be easier to help you if people know how you are feeling.

By going to school as often as you can, you will stay in touch with your friends and teachers and you are more likely to do well and pass important tests and examinations. This will help you do better when you are older and you want to get a good job or go to college or university.

*"I never stopped going to school, even when I moved. School was the only place I felt at home. My friends knew what was going on so did the teachers and they all really helped me"*  
(16 year old in foster care).



# Changing school

If you have to move school, your social worker must try and find a new school for you within 20 days. If you live in Harrow, there is a teacher who will provide you with some school work while a new school is being found. Ask your social worker to arrange this.

Your social workers and carer should talk to you about which school you would like to go to and take you to see the new school and meet with the headteacher. Your social worker and carer or key worker in a children's home should also help you think about the good and bad points of any school you have visited.

*"I still get a lot of help with homework and support and interest and so I have the effort to do it and I don't know I just pay more attention in school and everything"*  
 (12 year old foster care).



## Extra help and catching up

Lots of young people need some kind of extra help at school. So don't be afraid to ask your teacher.

Talk to someone as soon as you feel you may be falling behind with your school work.

You could ask your carer, key worker or social worker to talk to your designated teacher about what help you may need.

## Homework

Every school expects its students to do homework. Your carer or key worker should help you by:

- \* Making sure you have a quiet place and the time to do your homework
- \* Making sure you have a table and chair to work at
- \* Making sure you have the right books and equipment
- \* Making sure you can use a computer if you need to
- \* Making sure that you have joined the library
- \* Signing your homework card.

If your school has a homework club it is a good idea to use it. It can be easier to stay on a bit longer at school to get your homework done. All the books and equipment that you need will be there and there is usually a teacher at hand to help.

If you are having difficulties with your homework, talk to your tutor, your carer, key worker, social worker or designated teacher, a friend or classmate.

If you do not get a place at the school you wanted to go to, your social worker can make what is called an 'appeal' for you, to see if you can go to the school you wanted to.

Moving to a new school may mean that other young people and teachers will want to know about you. You and your carer or key worker can talk to the designated teacher at the new school about what you want to keep private and who should know that you are being looked after.

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# Important choices

When you are at school you will be asked to make some important choices, such as:

- \* What subjects to study in years 10 and 11?
- \* Which exams to take?
- \* What kind of work experience to do?
- \* And what you want to do when you are old enough to leave school?

It is important to try and think ahead when making these sorts of choices. Everyone needs help when trying to make up their minds about important things, so talk to as many people as possible, to get their thoughts and ideas and think about what you enjoy and are good at.

Speak to your carer, key worker, social worker or designated teacher. If you are between 13 and 19 years of age, another adult who can support you is someone called a Connexions personal adviser. They can give you advice and take up problems you may be having, on your behalf, with the right people.



## Designated Teacher for Children Looked After

Every school will have a teacher who is there to help children and young people who are looked after in the school. This teacher is known as the 'Designated Teacher for Children Looked After'. If you don't know who this person is in your school, ask

*"I was involved in deciding what went into my PEP with my social worker and my tutor. We had a chat how do I think I'm getting on in lessons and things like that and what I needed to do, to do better and what they would do for me and things"*  
 (14 year old in foster care)

# Personal Education Plan

This is a plan about your education. It looks at what you are doing now and what you could do in the future. Your social worker is responsible for starting the plan and it should be done within 20 days of you becoming looked after or starting a new school. You and your carer or key worker, social worker and designated teacher will meet to put together the plan.

It is important that you attend the meeting about your Personal Education Plan as it is a meeting about you and your education and it is a time when adults will be listening to what you have to say. It is your chance to tell the adults about:

- \* What you enjoy about school
- \* What you are good at in school
- \* What you would like to be better in school
- \* What you have got to do
- \* What help you might need at school
- \* What you would like to do outside of school
- \* What interests and hobbies you would like to follow
- \* And anything else that you think is important.

The Personal Education Plan fits in with another plan called a Pathway Plan. You will be asked to do a Pathway Plan when you are 16 and as well as education the Pathway Plan will help you think about training and work.

## Designated teacher

your carer, key worker, or social worker to find out for you. The designated teacher will make sure you have the help you need to do your best at school and help sort out difficulties that you may have at school.

*"I think it's a good idea because if you know someone knows about your background and say you heard some bad news about your family or something you can't concentrate on your lessons. It might be a good idea to talk to your designated teacher, you wouldn't have to start from scratch telling them about everything"* (16 year old in foster care).



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# If things

## Being bullied

Being bullied at school can make you feel miserable, frightened and angry. It can also stop you getting the most out of school. Bullies can find all sorts of excuses for picking on someone – their clothes, appearance, racial origin, or even because they work hard at school.

If you are being bullied, tell someone. If you're frightened of what will happen if you do tell someone, ask your carer or social worker to come into school and talk to the designated teacher.

All schools have rules about bullying and how to stop it. But no one can stop bullying if you don't tell your carers, key workers, social workers and designated teachers about what is going on.

If you are having problems with other children, at home or with adults, tell an adult you trust and remember you can always talk to your designated teacher.

## Being excluded

**All schools have rules about how their students should behave and all students should be told what they are.**

### You can be excluded for:

- \* Breaking rules about behaviour or
- \* Being a threat to the education or well-being of others.

### You can't be excluded for:

- \* Being looked after
- \* Not doing well at school work
- \* Being late or not going to school
- \* Being pregnant.

If you do get into trouble at school, you will have the chance to tell your side of the story. The designated teacher would be a good person to talk to. With a bit of thought and help you can change your behaviour and stay in school.

**There are two types of exclusion:** One is called '**fixed term**'. Which means that you cannot go to school for a certain number of days. The other is a '**permanent exclusion**' which means that you cannot go back to that school.

If you feel the exclusion is unfair, you can talk to your social worker and carer and go to a meeting of the school governors, where you can say why you think it is unfair.

You can also ask for help from an '**advocate**'. This is someone who will also come with you to the school governors meeting. You can arrange to speak to an advocate by telephoning one of Harrow Council's Participation Officers on 0208 420 9245.

# go wrong



If you still think the exclusion is unfair you can ask your social worker and carer to '**appeal**' against the exclusion. An appeal is when people, who are not part of the school, listen to what the school has to say and what you have to say about the exclusion. They will then tell you if they think it was right to exclude you from school.

While you are excluded from school the school will give you work for you to do so that you can keep up with your studies.

If you are '**permanently excluded**' from school, another school place will be found for you as soon as possible or you may be asked to attend a Pupil Referral Unit.

## If things are not going right for you at school

If you are not happy with the way things are going at school you can talk to your carer and social worker and ask them to speak to the school.

If the problem is not sorted, your carer or social worker could talk to the headteacher. If the problem still has not been resolved, your carer or social worker can ask the headteacher for a copy of the schools '**complaints procedure**'.

This tells people how to resolve issues that they may have with the school. For further advice on school complaints please contact Access Harrow on telephone number 0208 424 1307.

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# Useful contacts

## **Children's Services**

Social Care  
 429-433 Pinner Road  
 North Harrow  
 Middlesex HA1 4HN  
 Tel: 0208 863 5544 Fax: 0208 424 8045

## **Access Harrow**

General Education Enquiries  
 Harrow Council  
 PO Box 22  
 Civic Centre  
 Station Rd  
 Harrow HA1 2UW  
 Tel: 0208 424 1307 Fax: 0208 424 1134  
 Education@harrow.gov.uk

## **Leaving Care Team**

1st Floor  
 Milmans Resource Centre  
 5 Eastcote Road  
 Pinner  
 Middlesex HA5 1DS  
 Tel: 0208 423 9183 Fax: 0208 423 6306

## **Children's Participation Officers**

Harrow Council  
 Civic Centre  
 Milton House  
 Milton Road  
 Harrow HA1 2UW  
 Tel: 0208 420 9245

If you  
 want more  
 advice and support,  
 you could call a  
 helpline or look  
 up some  
 websites.



# Websites

[www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk](http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk)

Lots of information for  
 children and young people  
 who are looked after.



# Helplines

## ChildLine

0800 1111 (freephone)

Open every day, 24 hours a day.

Confidential and free helpline for children and young people.

ChildLine Textphone

0800 400 222 (freephone)

Monday to Friday 9.30am – 9.30pm

Saturday & Sunday 9.30am-8pm

## Connexions

0808 001 3219 (freephone)

07766 413219 (textphone)

8.00am- 2.00pm everyday

Personal advisers who can give help and advice to 13-19 year olds.

## National Youth Advocacy Service

0800 616101 (freephone)

Monday-Friday 8.00am –8.00pm

Saturday 10.00am – 4.00pm

Offers advice, information and support to any child or young person  
who wants to have a say when decisions are being made about them.

## NSPCC

0808 800 5000 (freephone)

0800 056 0566 (textphone)

Open every day, 24 hours a day.

Confidential helpline for children and young people.

## Connexions

[www.connexionsdirect.gov.uk](http://www.connexionsdirect.gov.uk)

For 13-19 year olds.  
Contact your local Connexions  
Service through this site.

## There-4-Me

[www.there4me.com](http://www.there4me.com)

On-screen advice about lots of  
issues and you can send an  
e-letter to the site's "agony aunt".

Many thanks to the young people who contributed to the development of this booklet.