



One minute guide

Looked after child

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What is a looked after child or young person?

A looked after child is a child or young person up to their 18th birthday who is either accommodated by, or in the care of the local authority. There are many reasons why a child becomes looked after including: the death of parents; the child has experienced or is at risk of significant harm; or the child is or was experiencing neglect. Looked after children and young people may be placed with foster carers (including in [kinship arrangements](#) with family and friends), in children's homes, in secure accommodation or with prospective adopters. Some children may be placed with parents under a [Supervision Order](#). However, children and young people living in private fostering ([guide](#)) arrangements are **not** looked after.

Liam, Public Relations representative for the Have a Voice Council ([guide](#)) defines a looked after child as: 'a child or young person that is under 18 who is in the care of the local council. That means they could be living in many different situations, which would usually not be with their parents. This means that big decisions in their life, that parents would normally make, would be made by someone who works for the council, such as a social worker.'

What does 'in care' and 'accommodated' mean?

A child is described as being in care when a legal order is made (such as an Interim or Full Care Order; or Emergency Protection Order) and the parents or those with parental responsibility (PR) may or may not have provided consent.

Accommodated means that the local authority has provided accommodation usually with the parents' consent (under section 20 Children Act 1989). Also, a child or young person is accommodated if they are remanded to youth detention accommodation in which case they automatically become looked after.

In addition a child is looked after when placed for Adoption (but not following adoption) or when the local authority is authorised to place a child for adoption, either when parents or those with PR have given consent or through the making of a Placement Order.

How do we support our looked after children and young people?

We have a looked after children service to specifically meet the needs of our looked after children and young people whether they live in Leeds or elsewhere in the country.

Every looked after child has an allocated social worker. They assess the child's needs and work with them and with other practitioners to develop a care plan. The plan is reviewed at a looked after child review. Each child also has an Independent Reviewing Officer ([guide](#)) whose role is to quality assure the care planning process for each child and to ensure that his/her current wishes and feelings are given full consideration.

As well as the people who care for and support looked after children where they live, other support comes from Independent Visitors ([guide](#)), designated teachers in schools and looked after children's nurses. The Therapeutic Social Work Team also play an important role in ensuring emotional needs are addressed, including helping foster carers to support the child or young person in their care.

What do we want for our looked after children and young people?

We want to make Leeds a Child Friendly City ([guide](#)), the best city for children, young people and families in the UK. An important part of this work is to improve the lives of our looked after children and young people. These children face some of the biggest challenges so need the best help to give them an equal chance to grow up with the support, care and love that every child deserves. This includes ensuring they receive the best education, are supported to attend school and achieve; and their physical and emotional health needs are fully met.

Where children and young people are looked after, we aim to ensure more of them can live in family settings in Leeds and where possible in permanent long term placements such as through [special guardianship](#) or adoption. To promote this, every child must have a permanence plan by their four month review which sets out how permanence will be achieved; seeking to avoid drift and delay and uncertainty for the child.

Anyone working with or representing the interests of looked after children and young people, is a corporate parent ([guide](#)), and should be aware of the responsibility to advocate on their behalf to ensure they get the support they need to achieve the best outcomes, and to challenge poor practice. To support this, the Corporate Parenting Group made up of elected members, council officers and partners, scrutinise the services provided and offer support and challenge. Members of the group regularly visit our children's homes, and attend meetings with looked after children, young people and foster carers to discuss their experiences.

Lastly, but certainly not least, we want looked after children to have voice and influence over both their individual circumstances by supporting them to participate in planning and for their reviews and collectively through the Have a Voice Council ([guide](#)). Having a voice and influence also brings further opportunities for the young people which enhances their lives. We also want to celebrate the achievements of looked after children and one way we do this is through events such as the [STARS awards](#).

One thing that looked after children tell us is that they do not like to be referred to by the initials 'LAC' (short hand for looked after child). They say it sounds like the word 'lack' and it suggests that they are inferior or that they are lacking in something. They want practitioners to use the terms looked after child or child looked after.

Key contacts and for more information

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You can find out more information from [Children's Social Work Service](#)
www.adopt4leeds.co.uk and www.foster4leeds.co.uk

[One minute guides](#)
[homepage](#)

**Making
Leeds a child
friendly city**