FAO: Director of Children's Services
CC: Leads for Safeguarding,
Children in Care, and Participation

10 September 2016

HELP AT HAND

The Children's Commissioner's new advice service for children living away from home

I am delighted to introduce you to my newly rebranded advice service - ***Help at Hand***.

Help at Hand is my national advice line for children and young people who are in care, care leavers, living away from home or working with children's services (Children Act 2004 s8A, Children and Families Act 2014, Part 6, s108)**.**

Help at Hand is accessible via phone, email and through our website and seeks to support all children in the S8A remit to receive the best possible care and services. My staff will provide advice on rights and entitlements, assistance in linking with support and advocacy and representation when a child's views, wishes and feelings are not being heard. From time to time I may also make representations on behalf of a child or young person. The goal is to develop positive working relationships with local authorities so that we can jointly resolve issues for vulnerable children and young people. We are currently discussing how we can share data from the service with Ofsted to ensure that issues brought to our attention via calls are formally followed up during inspections.

I would be most grateful if you would:

- Share information and materials about ***Help at Hand*** with children, young people and the professionals who support them.
- Ensure that all children coming in to care or beginning work with the local authority are made aware of ***Help at Hand*** as well as their right to access local advocacy provision.
- Make your staff aware of our service and notify them that, from time to time, myself or my staff may make representations on behalf of children and young people and that our aim is to work together to positively resolve issues as quickly as possible.
- Providing a named person and postal address for materials (flyers, wallet cards and posters) to be sent.

Thank you for your time and assistance. I look forward to working with you and your staff in these important matters.

Yours Sincerely,

Anne Longfield OBE
Children's Commissioner for England

Promoting & protecting children's rights

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