



# Local Offer for Care Leavers 2022

## Corporate Parenting

### Our Vision

*“We are ambitious for our district’s children and young people. Our vision is for children and young people to tell us they are happy, healthy and safe and thriving in communities where families and services work together to help them achieve their potential and dreams”.*

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Local Offer 2022 v2.

## Introducing the Local Offer

Wakefield Council is committed through this offer to supporting children and young people looked after, or leaving care, to have positive experiences and achieve good outcomes in preparing for independence in adult life.

As corporate parents, services across the council fulfil this commitment through their contributions to this local offer for care leavers.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to publish a local offer for its care leavers. The local offer includes information about their statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support that a local authority chooses to provide. The Act also requires that local authorities have regard to seven corporate parenting principles:

1. To act in the best interests of young people and promote their physical and mental health and wellbeing.
2. To encourage young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
3. To take into account young people's views, wishes and feelings.
4. To help young people to gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and the organisations it works with.
5. To have high aspirations for young people and help them to achieve the best outcomes they can.
6. For young people to be safe, and to have stability in their home lives, relationships, education, work and financially.
7. To prepare young people for adulthood and independent living.

The Local Offer for Wakefield has been developed in consultation with children and young people representing the Children in Care Council and the 16+ Forum. In developing the offer, consideration was also given to the feedback from recent surveys of children and young people who are looked after, including the Bright Spots survey from 2017.

The local offer includes details of the services and support that may assist care leavers in, or moving to, adulthood and independent living that the local authority provides in relation to:

- Independence Skills
- Health and well-being – including services that teach about, support and enable good health and well-being.
- Relationships – including services and support available to help develop and maintain positive social networks.

- Education, training, and employment – including support to help care leavers access appropriate education or training to enable them to fulfil their goals.
- Employment – including information about general employment support and links to Job Centre Plus.
- Accommodation – including support to access appropriate and suitable accommodation.
- Participation in society – including links to and information about activities, events or volunteering opportunities available in the local area.

This Local Offer includes both statutory entitlements and additional services and opportunities that will inform the packages of tailored support to meet the individual needs of each young person.

## **Role of Next Steps (Leaving Care Team)**

### **Personal Advisers**

Next Steps will appoint a Personal Adviser (PA) to each young person prior to them ceasing to be a child in care and ensure that they know who that is and how to contact them.

The PA will ensure that young people are provided with the practical and emotional support they need to make a successful transition to adulthood, either directly or through helping the young person to build a positive social network around them.

The PA will liaise with partner agencies and providers to ensure that they are aware of the extended duty to care leavers for example, Jobcentre Plus and local health, well-being and mental health teams.

The young person's Social Worker will complete a Pathway Plan and needs assessment between the ages of 15 years and 9 months and 16 years and 3 months which the PA will contribute to. Based on the needs assessment, the Social Worker and PA will provide and / or coordinate the support that a young person needs through their Pathway Plan. From the age of 18, the PA is responsible for ensuring that the Pathway Plan is monitored and reviewed at least every 6 months.

The PA will keep full, accurate and up to date records of contacts with the young person and services provided.

Next Steps recognise care leavers grow in stability and maturity between age 21 and 25, during which many care leavers are able to lead successful lives without PA support and may not want continuing contact with their local authority.

Therefore, for care leavers aged 18 to 21, the PA will keep in touch with those young people in line with statutory requirements and ensure that their needs are assessed which will then inform their Pathway Plan.

For care leavers aged over 21 who no longer require a PA service and pathway plan, we will keep in touch annually on or around their birthday until the age of 25 to understand how they are doing and whether there is a requirement for additional support. Care leaver over the age of 21 are aware they can access the service at any point until they are 25 years old.

For care leavers aged 21 or over who may require additional support, the PA will assess the care leavers' needs, and develop and keep under review a Pathway Plan to ensure these needs are met.

Where a PA considers that a young person needs support to avoid putting themselves at risk of harm, this offer will be re-issued, even where a young person may have refused it previously.

Next Steps have developed their duty service and enhanced the ways young people can stay in contact or make contact.

## **Pathway Plans**

Every young person will have a unique Pathway Plan that sets out how they will be supported, and their assessed needs will be met.

The frequency of contact between PAs and care leavers will vary depending on the nature of each individual's circumstances and will be recorded in the Pathway Plan.

The Pathway Plan will include:

- Arrangements to support the young person in further education or employment.
- Arrangements to ensure the young person is living in suitable accommodation; including any 'Staying Put' arrangements.
- The young person's health needs and how these should be met.
- Arrangements to support the young person in sustaining and developing relationships, including their family.
- Arrangements to ensure the young person is properly equipped for taking greater responsibility towards their independence.
- An assessment of the young person's financial needs and any financial assistance provided.

The PA is responsible for ensuring that the Pathway Plan is monitored and reviewed at least every 6 months.



## LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS

Co-produced and based upon recommendations from young people during consultation

### Independence Skills

#### Leaving Care Core Offer

- We will provide you with an initial pack about Next Steps Leaving Care Service. This will tell you about leaving care and hopefully reduce any worries you may have about what is happening in the future.
- We offer an Independence Skills Assessment 'Do you know your Stuff' to complete with the people who know you well such as foster carers or key workers. Completing this will show you just how much you know and when reviewing this, you will see just how much you have learnt so far on your path to independence. You will be provided with this when you meet your PA. We believe that further partnership working between foster carers, residential units, CIC teams and Next Steps would improve your chances when moving onto independence.
- We have translated the skills assessment for our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) so they can be supported more effectively when they first begin to receive a service.
- We run a 12-week Skills Programme at Next Steps for 16-18 year olds, this is supported by other agencies such as Spectrum, the Employment Hub, DWP, and Equans. This will provide you with skills you need for independence.
- GRAL (Get Ready for Adult Life) is a National Leaving Care Advisory Service program we provide to support you in developing independence skills and other provisions.
- Earlier intervention in developing independence skills as we believe it would benefit you if you had opportunity to develop your independence skills at a younger age.
- Information around budgeting is provided in the initial pack and the independence skills packs also provides guidance. The Personal Advisers are there to support you in this area.

- We are working more closely with fostering and residential services to ensure that you are developing independence skills earlier and know about what Next Steps is and what they can offer
- We are providing opportunities to meet older care leavers who will be able to share their knowledge and experiences with you
- We will create a guide about the areas you live in so you can settle in more easily
- We are ensuring you are suitably prepared for moving onto Keeping in Touch (KIT), looking at the network of support you have around you, and ensuring you have the information you need to stay in touch
- We are working in partnership with WDH's Tenancy Ready Team who will provide an allocated worker and three month's support to young people with band A priority who are moving into WDH accommodation. This will give you a positive start to managing your tenancy.
- We run a budget clinic at Connect Café to support you in managing your finances
- We have added a life skills section to the Care4Us website which includes tips and ideas for day-to-day life

**Health and well-being** – including services that teach about, support and enable good health and well-being.

### **Leaving Care Core Offer**

- In partnership with CIC Health, we will provide a robust plan around your health and health summary, so you understand your health history and have the support you need in place before you become 18. Your health history will include a summary of previous health assessments, any diagnoses and treatments you have previously received.
- Your Personal Adviser will support you to ensure that you are registered with, and have access to doctors, dentists and opticians.
- We will provide information about health services in your local community.
- Health providers are invited to our groups, and they provide 'Drop In' sessions for you to seek advice and support.
- We have expanded our Emotional Wellbeing offer to include a Care Navigator and a Transitions worker who attend Connect Cafe. Their support will enable you to access the Mental Health and wellbeing support you need. We will ensure that you have access to links for other emotional health and wellbeing services who may be better suited to your needs.
- We will support you to find out of hours support and ensure this information is easily accessible
- Spectrum provide a session around sexual health and relationships as part of the skills programme
- We will let you know if your Personal Advisor is on leave or not in work and we will ensure you know how to contact Next Steps in these instances
- We have reduced the number of primary cases Personal Advisors have, so they have more time to support you
- We won't promise something unless we can deliver



Wider Council Offer	Lead	Champion Council Directorate/Service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of Leisure Card up to the age of 25 years, which provides free access to leisure facilities and hobby and development opportunities.</li> <li>• Access to the Live Well Wakefield' Service</li> <li>• Access to Care Navigator &amp; Emotional Wellbeing who attend drop in sessions for care leavers to provide information and advice on keeping healthy and promoting well-being</li> <li>• Children in Care Health Team</li> <li>• Spectrum</li> </ul>	<p>Leisure Services</p> <p>Public Health</p> <p>Emotional Wellbeing Team</p> <p>NHS</p> <p>CCG</p>	<p>Culture &amp; Leisure</p> <p>South West Yorkshire NHS</p> <p>Children &amp; Young People</p> <p>NHS</p>

**Relationships** – including services and support available to help develop and maintain positive social networks.

### **Leaving Care Core Offer**

- We have a dedicated space for care leavers called Connect Café where you have access to computers and brunch. Here you will have opportunities to meet, socialise and seek support. Next Steps groups run from Connect Cafe and various services attend to offer further support such as EET providers and Health.
- We will invite you and your carer to Next Steps before you are 16 so you know more about us and our core offer. You will be able to meet Care Leavers who can share their experiences with you
- Your Personal Adviser will support you to establish and maintain safe and healthy relationships.
- Through the Next Steps Service, you have access to the 16+ Forum that meets once a month to discuss issues that are important to you.
- You can access mentoring support through other agencies who have signed up to the Leaving Care Covenant
- We will ensure that you have different ways of contacting the service when you need support for example by telephone, email, text or social media
- We will support you to access your files should you wish to, and provide guidance about this
- As part of Care Leavers Week, we will celebrate you and your successes
- We will support you to develop good relationships with people who are important to you, whether that's family members, foster carers, teachers or good friends by arranging a team around you or a Family Group Conference to help look at your support networks and how they can all support you in different ways now and beyond 25.
- When you are 21 and over, we will have an understanding of you, but not be invasive given your age, so you do not need to answer too many questions

<b>Wider Council Offer</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Champion Council Directorate/Service</b>
Connect Café	Wakefield Families Together	C&YP
FGC (Mypeople)	FAC Team	C&YP

**Education, Training and Employment**– including support to help care leavers access appropriate education or training to enable them to fulfil their goals and including information about general employment support and links to Job Centre Plus.

### **Leaving Care Core Offer**

- You will have a Personal Education Plans (PEPs) completed with you up to the age of 18 and your Pathway Plan will reflect and support your future aspirations.
- We run a monthly EET clinic with partner agencies such as the Employment Hub and Virtual School to support you to progress with your plans for the future and discuss which pathway is the best for you.
- We will support you whilst you are at college, or in training. The Virtual School and Next Steps will work in partnership to support and advise you about your career plans. We continue to build relationships with providers to ensure you receive the support you need.
- If you are planning to go to University or study a Higher Education course you will be given support to enable you to do this and you will be provided with clear support and guidance including linking in with the Universities and student finance. We also have links with Go Higher to improve the experience of University for Care Leavers. We have a dedicated leaflet advising of the support available
- We have extended our offer to Higher Education students who are progressing onto a Masters qualification
- You will have access to Connexions who provide web and telephone contact around Information, Advice and Guidance on education, training and employment opportunities. This is provided up to the age of 25.
- We provide ring fenced apprenticeship opportunities for Care Leavers. This opportunity is developing further with more apprenticeships becoming available in different departments.
- We have lots of Employment opportunities through Wakefield Council and their partners, these are available to you and you can find out more in the leaflet 'Work Opportunities at Wakefield Council'
- Access to traineeships with Wakefield Council in partnership with a training provider

- Access to training courses run by Wakefield Council, such as Food Safety
- ‘Second chance learning’ through the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) gives you the opportunity to continue your learning at 19. We have continued to build on our relationship with DWP to ensure we work can support you to access the opportunities
- We have numerous opportunities to support you with CVs, interview skills and opportunities.
- We will support you to enable you to travel to your place of work
- We will listen to you and find out your aspirations so we can support you to access the right EET opportunities for you
- We will support you to access the Youth Hubs and their services and activities
- We have representation from the SEND development team, and any young person who completes an expression of interest will be supported to access taster days with Wakefield Council or partner agencies

<b>Wider Council Offer</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Champion Council Directorate/Service</b>
<p>Employment preparation support, including CV writing and interview preparation</p> <p>Work experience/placements</p> <p>Employment Hub provides Careers advice and support with securing training, employment opportunities including apprenticeships for 15-24 year olds.</p> <p>The Step-Up programme provides employment and training support for all residents 19+. This includes Business start-up and enterprise advice.</p> <p>We will provide work experience/placement opportunities within the council.</p> <p>Casual front line staffing opportunities (including Leisure, Libraries, Museums and Castles and Highways).</p> <p>Volunteering Opportunities including Arts, Culture, Leisure, Planning, Transport and Highways services.</p>	<p>Corporate Services - HR</p> <p>Corporate Services – HR</p> <p>Economic Growth &amp; Skills</p> <p>Economic Growth &amp; Skills</p> <p>Corporate Services - HR</p>	<p>Regeneration and Economic Growth</p> <p>Human Resources and Organisational Development</p> <p>Regeneration and Economic Growth</p> <p>Human Resources and Organisational Development</p> <p>Regeneration and Economic Growth</p>

**Accommodation** - including support to access appropriate and suitable employment.

### **Leaving Care Core Offer**

- We will ensure that Pathway Planning and reviews are focused but realistic in relation to your accommodation needs and steps towards independence.
- We will support you to stay with your foster carer's under a staying put arrangement post 18 and up to 21.
- We will provide you with a 'setting up home' allowance to buy the things you need to start off in your own accommodation. We have created a guide about this
- We will provide you with a guide about the different types of accommodation available in the Wakefield district.
- We have extended our types of accommodation to ensure the best match for you
- We will provide an opportunity for you to access a 'trainer' flat to develop your independence skills, these will be based upon need, not age
- We will offer access to 16+ temporary, semi-independent accommodation attached to the Next Steps Service. We will support you to move into safe, appropriate accommodation, and provide ongoing support to keep it that way. You will have a support plan, so you know who is going to support you.
- We offer access to Intensive Support Advisors who are available to work with you in the Next Steps 16+ accommodation to develop independence skills, and if you may need out of hours support.
- We will act as 'Guarantor' where appropriate to support you to access accommodation.
- Provision of Housing advice including the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rules for care leavers age up to 25.

- We have a Memorandum of Understanding with Wakefield District Housing to support you in gaining priority 'Band 'A' status as a care leaver for allocation of social housing. This means you will have priority when bidding on appropriate housing meaning you are likely to gain one much faster.
- We will ensure that you will be matched well in shared accommodation
- We will support you to source accommodation that allows pets and advocate for you having a pet in your accommodation if we feel this is appropriate
- We will ensure, as much as we can, that the accommodation you move to has access to local amenities.
- We will provide a starter moving in pack which includes items such as a torch and a sewing kit, things you might not think to buy but will come in handy

<b>Wider Council Offer</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Champion Council Directorate/Service</b>
Provision of Housing advice.	Communities - Housing Needs Service and Economic Growth & Skills	Communities
Memorandum of Understanding with WDH	Communities - Housing Needs Service/WDH	Communities



**Participation in Society** - including links to and information about activities, events or volunteering opportunities available in the local area.

### **Leaving Care Core Offer**

- Through the Next Steps Service you have access to the 16+ Forum that meets once a month to discuss issues that are important to you.
- Next Steps Service provides opportunities for you to meet and socialise at events that are designed and hosted in venues that meet the expressed wishes of young people.
- You will receive a Next Step Newsletter every three months so you are up to date with events and activities, we also have a dedicated website for Children in Care and Care Leavers with lots of helpful information.
- You have opportunities to shape the future of the Next Steps service.
- We have a Facebook page, so you are up to date with any news and events.
- Next Steps run a series of drop ins at the Connect Café including a monthly LGBTQ group, and a games night, mother and baby group, football Friday and Humanity group (for asylum seeking young people and refugees)
- You will be supported in important meetings to ensure your voice is heard by your Personal Advisor or an advocate
- We will provide a variety of social activities requested by you all year round to give you opportunity to relax and spend time with other young people.
- We will work with local businesses to promote the Leaving Care Covenant to build on discounts and opportunities for you
- We will promote the Connect card to you and the offers available through the Leaving Care Covenant which is a national programme to ensure you have support to live independently with opportunities to achieve your full potential.

- We will ensure you have opportunity to meet your corporate parents in formal and informal settings such as events like care leavers week and at Corporate Parenting Panels – this is because a corporate parent is someone who acts in your best interests and ensures your voice is heard so that you have the best access to the best opportunities to achieve your full potential.
- We ensure you have access to information about your rights and entitlements. This is on the Care4Us website
- You are invited to sit on interview panels when we recruit new staff
- We are a member of the National Care Leavers Benchmarking Forum (NCLBF) and we will ensure we have contact with other LA's and their Leaving Care Services to support those young people living out of Wakefield.
- We are ensuring you have the opportunity to be part of the Young People's Benchmarking Forum (YPBMF)
- We are creating 'good to know' guides for different parts of the district (and beyond) so you will know what is available locally to you
- We will ensure that Challenging Stereotypes training reaches a larger audience, so you feel more supported in other settings – can we add a sentence to explain this?
- We will ensure that you have opportunity to attend National Citizenship Scheme to help you develop life skills, team building and confidence.

<b>Wider Council Offer</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Champion Council Directorate/Service</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteering opportunities across the Council with links to Nova.</li> </ul>	Communities – Area Development and Cohesion	Communities

## Finances and personal budgeting

### Leaving Care Core Offer

- We provide you with information in the initial welcome pack about your financial entitlements.
- We will support you to open a bank account if you don't have one already. We support all young people to have a savings account at the earliest opportunity and for those aged 16 and above to have a current account where you are eligible.
- We provide weekly personal allowances as agreed to ensure that you have an appropriate level of financial independence.
- We will ensure that you do not have to pay Council Tax up to your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, if you live out of Wakefield, we will look at how we can support you with Council Tax in the place you live.
- Next Steps has an established and effective working relationship with DWP, the local Job Centre and the Social Justice work Coaches. Young people are supported to make a claim prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. There is continued support from DWP who nationally signed the Leaving Care Covenant. Next Steps works closely with DWP to ensure you have the level of support you need. Care leavers can prepare their claim to Universal Credit up to 28 days before and including their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. This helps ensure support is in place as soon as possible.
- We will support you to access Discretionary Housing Payments for a shortfall in your rent costs. Some of our young people told us they felt this was really useful and some had already accessed it.
- You will receive a birthday and festival allowance each year until you are 21.
- The Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA) is accessible when you move into semi-independent and independent accommodation. The (SUHA) to enable you to have the things you need when you move into your own place. We can give you more information about the kind of items you will need to buy and your PA will complete an assessment of need.
- We will ensure you have the ID you need that includes your photo and date of birth, this will be either a driving license, or passport.

- We know how important it is for you to remain in contact with your support network therefore, your PA will look at ways to support you with contact once you have turned 18.
- You will have access to the ISA that the government set up on your behalf when you were a child in care. You can decide what you would prefer to do with the ISA once you are 18.
- We will also pay for your driving license, test, theory, and 50% of your lessons to a maximum of 20, if this is agreed in your pathway plan and you are EET, some conditions apply.\*
- We will provide some financial support to you when you are doing volunteer work or work placement.
- We will assess if support with a dongle or top up would be of benefit to you, your well-being and aspirations.
- When you live independently, we will pay you a cold weather payment of £25 for every seven day period where the temperature is below zero
- We support you to access reduced rate transport
- We provide you with advice about money through the Skills Programme which provides sessions from Cashwise and Department for Work and Pensions (Job Centre)
- We have a leaflet called Money Matters which informs you of the money you are entitled to. This is also on the care4us website.

<b>Wider Council Offer</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Champion Council Directorate/Service</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council Tax exemption</li> <li>• DWP drop-in session at Next Steps</li> <li>• WDH Cashwise</li> </ul>	Corporate Services – Finance  DWP  WDH	Corporate Services