

Care Leavers Offer



Welcome

This leaflet tells you about all the support that we have in Leicestershire for you as a care leaver. Moving out of care can mean lots of changes and we want to make this a positive step for you.

Just because you are leaving care, or have already left care, we haven't stopped caring about you. We want to make sure that you feel safe and supported and know where and who to go to for advice and help.

Local care leavers have helped make this leaflet. We will continue to listen to your views to make sure that we offer you the support you need. We have written this leaflet with the SYPAC group.

To be able to get the support set out in this leaflet, you must have been in care for at least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 16 (including your 16th birthday) or for 13 weeks after your 16th birthday.

If you are not sure whether you qualify for support, please email Childrensduty@leics.gov.uk or call 0116 305 0351.

The support we must give you by law

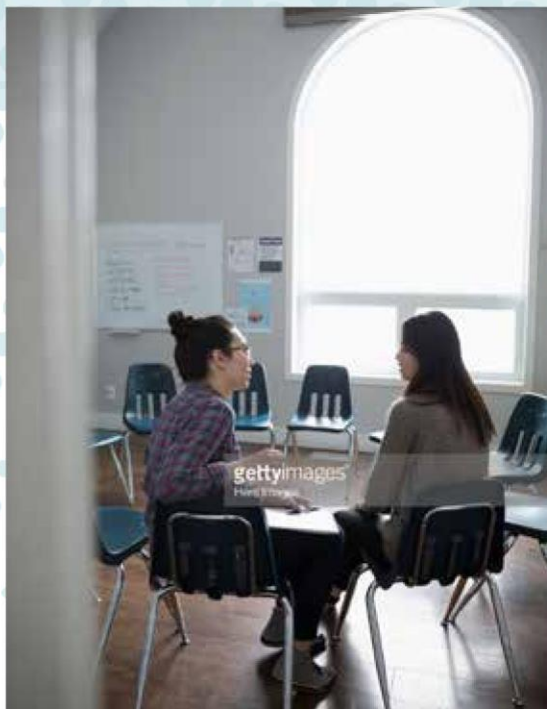
A Personal Adviser

Following changes introduced through the Children & Social Work Act 2017, you will be able to ask to have support from your personal adviser up to the age of 25 whether you are in education or training or not. This is to try to make sure care leavers receive similar support to young adults who live with their families.

Your personal adviser is there to help you to prepare to live independently and to offer advice and support after you leave care.

Personal advisers get involved in discussions about your needs and your pathway plan.

Your pathway plan is written by the local authority after consultation with you and important people in your life. It sets out your needs, views and future goals, and exactly what support you will receive from us. We review your pathway plan with you at least every 6 months so that it is kept up to date.



We will try to let you keep the same personal adviser, though this will not always be possible. The amount of support that you receive from your Personal Adviser will depend on what you want and your circumstances.

Your leaving care team will consider with you what extra support you may need. You might, for example, need extra support because:

- You have special educational needs or a disability.
- You are an unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC) and your immigration status is unclear.
- You are in or leaving custody or you have had contact with the criminal justice system.
- You are a young parent; or
- You are going through a difficult time in your personal life.

Your right to be heard and taken seriously

You have a right to be involved in all decisions about your plans for leaving care.

You have a right to support from an independent advocate if you are thinking about challenging decisions about the care we give you.

Independent advocates can inform you about your rights and help you to be heard in meetings. They are separate from social services.

If you want to speak to your advocate then please contact our Children's Rights Officer, Elaine Constable by phone or email - Childrensrights@leics.gov.uk or 0116 3056500.

You have a right to see the information we keep about you, including the files and records written about you when you were in care. Your Personal advisor can help you to make a Subject Access Request to do this.

Leaving care before turning 18

We will encourage you to stay in care until you are 18. Most young people still live at home with their families at this age.

If you choose to leave care before age 18, the law says we must provide you with suitable accommodation.

We will make sure that the type of accommodation provided to you is based on your individual needs and is right for you.

Support to engage in education, employment or training

We want to make sure every young person leaving our care has the support to achieve their goals in life.

The law says we must provide you with assistance with expenses linked with employment, education and training. In particular:

- We will provide you with a Higher Education (HE) bursary of at least £2,000 if you go to University.
- We will provide somewhere for you to stay during University holidays (or funding for this if you would prefer to make your own arrangements) if you are in HE or in residential further education.



Other support we offer

Accommodation

If you are aged over 18, your personal adviser will help you to find suitable accommodation. This might involve:

- Working with Housing Services to come up with suitable housing options for you, including supported accommodation if you are not ready or don't want to have your own tenancy.
- If this is what you and your foster carers want, supporting you to remain with your foster carers under what's called a 'Staying Put' arrangement. This can last until you are 21. You can find out more about this scheme from your personal advisor
- Support to access different housing options including social housing (this is accommodation managed by the local housing authority or a housing association)
- Advice about holding down a tenancy, including avoiding rent or Council Tax arrears, paying bills and budgeting. We know it can be very hard having your own place for the first time. We will do whatever we can to ease the pressures on you.
- Helping you to claim housing benefit/universal credit if you need this to help pay for your home.
- Practical support with moving into and furnishing your new home.
- Supporting you if you have a housing crisis, including helping if you are threatened with or lose a tenancy [NB: care leavers aged 18-20 are treated as a priority need group in homelessness legislation].
- In house housing officer offering advice, guidance and support in accessing District Accommodation
- Joint housing protocol in place with all Districts in Leicestershire meaning that Care leavers have priority status and are exempt from paying council tax within Leicestershire



Education, training and employment

We want you to succeed in your education, training and employment. We will ask you how you are doing and be ready to celebrate your achievements with you.

We will offer you:

- Careers information and advice.
- If you attend University, a bursary of £4,000 to help with the cost of books and materials.

NB: Care leavers are a priority group for the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund administered by FE colleges, which pays a bursary of up to £1,200 a year to support vulnerable young people to participate in education.

- Support to meet your transport costs when travelling to training, school/college, apprenticeships or job interviews.
- Support to buy tools, equipment, essential clothing, and books.
- Support if you choose to go to university, such as helping you obtain tuition fees and maintenance loans, travel costs at the start and end of term, and making sure you have somewhere to live during the holidays. We will help you choose the right course and university that matches your talents and interests.
- Opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships, and employment within the council.
- The chance to attend and help organise our celebration event when young people achieve education, training, and employment milestones.

Health and wellbeing

Below are some of the ways our care leaving team and your personal adviser can support you to stay healthy and look after your physical and mental health. We can:

- Give information on healthy living.
- Give information on getting help to pay for prescriptions.
- Support you to register with a GP.
- Support you to move from CAMHS to adult services.
- Give information about counselling services that are available locally.
- Give you help with transports costs when attending health appointments.
- If you are a young parent, take an interest in your child/ren and support you to do the best for them. We will help you arrange childcare if this is what you want.
- Give you information about health drop-in centers.
- Work with you to make a 'health passport' containing key information from your childhood (for example, when and if you have had immunisations) and your current health needs.
- In house Mental Health Worker who can offer bespoke support on a 1:1 and provide opportunities to attend wellbeing groups with other Care Leavers
- Opportunity to attend the quarterly Care Leaver Parent group run by PA's'
- Support to pregnant Care Leavers by direct access to the Pathway Scheme if wanted



Finances

We will try to help you financially, in a similar way to how parents would support their own children. Our help includes:

- We offer a Leaving Care Grant (LCG) of up to £2000 to help you buy the things that you need for your first home.
- Providing or tell you about relevant money management courses.
- Information on how to access your Junior ISA, if you have one (a fund of money set aside by the government and the council).
- Support to open a bank account.
- Support to gain important identification documents, such as a passport and/or provisional driving license.
- Support to get your National Insurance number.
- Exceptional financial support in emergencies.
- Providing a financial gift at birthdays and Christmas or other celebrations.

Relationships

As well as support from a Personal Adviser, we may be able to offer you additional practical and emotional support, such as through:

- Providing you with a mentor/peer mentor.
- Where appropriate, continuing to support contact with the 'Independent Visitor' you had while you were in care.
- Help to maintain or regain contact with people special to you or who cared for you in the past, like former foster carers or social workers.



Participation in Society

We want our care leavers to be active members of society, and to have all the chances in life that other young adults have. We can help you participate in society in the following ways:

- Providing information on groups and clubs you may wish to join.
- Informing you about relevant awards, schemes, and competitions you can enter, in line with your talents and interests.
- Encouraging and helping you to enroll on the Electoral Register, so you can vote in elections.
- Offering work experience with our councilors'.
- Informing you about voluntary work that we think you may be interested in.
- Informing and possibly helping with the cost of leisure activities.
- Giving you advice and helping you to challenge any discrimination you face as a care leaver.

Who can help?

To enable you to receive the right numbers for the support you need we will work with you when you make contact to gain the following:

- Key contact numbers for:
 - Personal adviser
 - Care leaving team
 - Housing advice
 - Designated doctors/nurses
 - Education, employment or training support
 - Local authority leadership e.g. the Director of Children's Services, Lead Member
 - Care leavers' forum

Other places you can go for help:

- Prince's Trust
- The Rees Foundation
- Care Leavers' Foundation

Relevant universal services: this might include links to or contacts for:

- Health services such as sexual health clinics and drug/alcohol support.
- Information about further or higher education.
- Relevant youth clubs/groups/activities.
- Parenting support groups.
- Youth Offending Team.
- Citizenship Advice Bureau.

