



CARE LEAVER'S OFFER

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

#RELATIONSHIPMAKINGTHEDIFFERENCE



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FOREWORD FROM GRACE WILLIAMS

Being able to become independent can mean lots of different things and can happen at different ages – the key to the door, getting your first job, being in a stable relationship or completing studies. Independence is not a destination, but a process of developing the skills of resilience, confidence and resourcefulness that you need, whilst at the same time being able to rely on the support of those around you.

The important thing is that it is about making your own choices for your future life and planning the steps along the way to get there. For our care leavers, having a guide to understand what choices and support are available to you as you leave care is even more important. The purpose of this offer is to make it as clear as possible what you are entitled to and how you can more information. The purpose of this offer is to make it as clear as possible what you are entitled to and how you can more information.

The guide is set out in helpful sections to focus on different parts of your life – being prepared, having a home, handling your finances, employment and health. Behind this offer is a strong team of Leaving Care Coaches and other professionals to work with you and your individual needs and a commitment from the Council and its partners to do all it can to support you – through apprenticeships and training opportunities, health offers and continued support from foster carers so that you can confidently navigate your way to independence.



Cllr Grace Williams

Children and young people

“ The purpose of this offer is to make it as clear as possible what you are entitled to and how you can more information.”

FOREWORD FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

Leaving Care Coaches and carers helping us more with practical things is good.

Helping Care Leavers be prepared to live independently is a very important thing. Pleased to see it in the offer.

Helping us to get jobs after Uni by work experience is important. More work experience and apprenticeships will help.

I didn't understand how to bid for a property. The groups will help.

The help with Council tax and debt is really good, so is the Social Fund.

Care Leavers need to start to pay rent and make a contribution so it isn't a shock when you move into your own place.

STATEMENT FROM THE CORPORATE PARENTING SERVICE

OUR VISION

“WE WANT ALL OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE SAFE, HAPPY AND HEALTHY AND TO ENJOY LIFE. WE WILL GIVE YOU THE CARE AND SUPPORT YOU NEED TO BE RESILIENT AND WELL PREPARED FOR ADULTHOOD AND INDEPENDENCE.

WE WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH HIGH QUALITY CARE, SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE TO ENSURE YOU GET THE OPPORTUNITIES YOU DESERVE.”

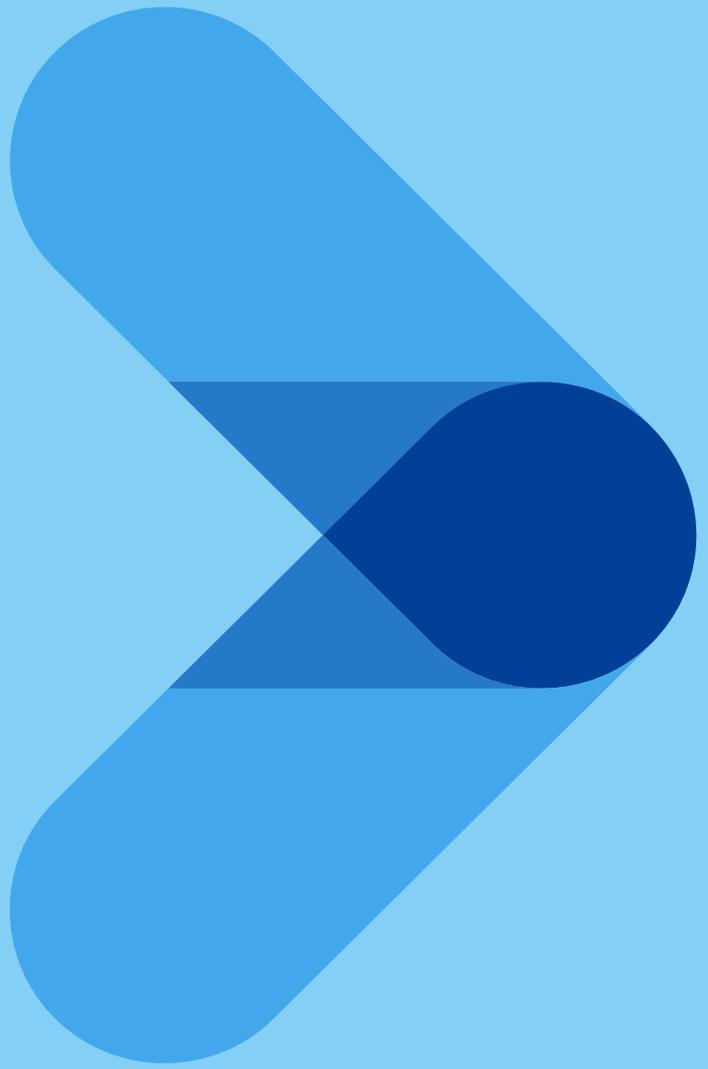
We are committed to helping you get the best available housing, education and work so that you can have the best possible future.

We will keep in touch with you to offer you support until you are at least 21 and in some circumstances until you are 25.

Values and Principles

We will:

- respect and honour your identity
- believe in you
- listen to you
- inform you
- support you
- find you a home
- help you to find work



“It was a bit scary at first, but I now enjoy the responsibility of managing my own money for things like rent.”



1. BEING PREPARED TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY (THE SKILLS YOU NEED) – OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

Your Social Worker or Leaving Care Coach will write a Pathway Plan with you. In the plan you should discuss what you need to help you be ready to live independently.

This will happen before you reach 16 if you are in care at that point. We should work with the people caring for you to make sure that you are able to learn skills in how to take care of yourself. This will include:

- How to buy enough food for the week and pay your bills with the money you have
- How to cook and make meals from the food that you buy
- How to make sure you know how to eat healthily so that your diet helps you to be fit and well
- How to take care of your space (being clean and tidy, washing your clothes, not allowing other people to mess up your space, getting on with neighbours and landlords, paying your bills)

You may have other issues or difficulties which should also be in your plan. If they are not talk to whoever is writing the plan with you. Do not sign the plan until you are happy that it covers what you think it should. You can use the complaints procedure if you do not get the support you think you need.

The plan should be reviewed twice each year. It is your plan. Make sure you know and understand what is in it. This becomes even more important after you turn 18.

What it means

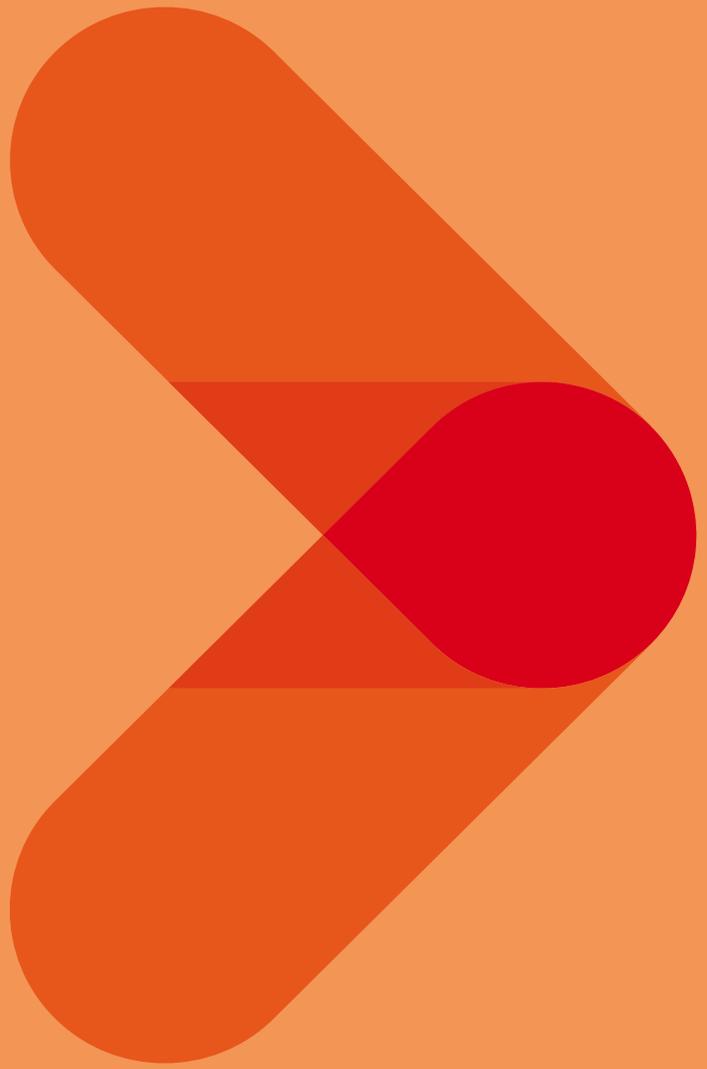
We use a tool called My Guide which each older Looked After Child and Care Leaver will have. It breaks down the things you need to learn and understand to live independently. You can work with your carer and Leaving Care Coach to go through each task which is then signed off and kept in your folder. It is step by step process. We work with carers to ensure that they understand how to support you with it.

You will be provided with a key worker in semi – independent accommodation to support you with learning how to maintain a tenancy and your responsibilities around this.

In addition to this we also offer;

- Budgeting and Life skills workshops at Leaving Care Base (Leyton Cricket Ground)
- Revenue and Benefits experts will discuss with you your entitlements and how to claim them at Leaving Care Base
- Opportunity for you to meet other young people who have made a successful transition into adulthood at the Leaving Care Base.
- Basic cooking and healthy eating workshops offered at Leaving Care Base





“Now I’ve got my own place, I am really enjoying having my independence.”



2. HAVING A HOME (ACCOMMODATION AND TENANCIES) – OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

A place to live

Our duty is to make sure that you have somewhere ‘suitable to live’. This means that it has to be right for you and, above all, safe. It is important that wherever you prefer to live, you make sure that your local authority puts this into your Pathway Plan. You can decide to return home if this is what you and your family wish. Our aim is to help you become independent and able to manage your own living arrangement.

The work we do with you whilst you are looked after (under 18) will help us to decide whether you are ready to take on the responsibility of having your own tenancy. We don’t want you to take on and then lose a tenancy as that is likely to have a bad impact on your rights to social housing for a long time afterwards.

Before you are ready for your own tenancy, we will continue to support you with somewhere to live. If you have been in foster care, you can “Stay Put” with your foster carer until you are ready to move on, or until your 21st birthday at the latest. You will change your status in the foster home and be expected to contribute to living there and to work towards being ready to move on. So you will need to work, study or claim benefits and to contribute to your living costs because this is how you learn to budget and take responsibility for looking after yourself. (See the section on Money and Finances for more details).

There are several different types of accommodation some with more support and some with less, This will depend on your needs. In semi-independent accommodation you will also need to make a contribution to your costs and claim benefits so that you learn to manage money and understand how to be responsible for keeping a tenancy. We work with colleagues at Waltham Forest Homes to ensure that you are given priority to bid for your own tenancy.

What it means

The following support has been identified to help you with Housing Costs.

Housing costs are those costs which are directly related to the cost of your home.

This means:

- Your regular payments of rent.
- Until you are 21 you are exempt from payments of Council Tax and a sliding scale will be used to prepare you for paying Council Tax in future
- The hardship fund will be available to help Care Leavers who get into difficulties.



- There is support in place for one-off payments such as;
- Deposits and rent in advance when entering into a new private rented tenancy (if you need one)
- Administration fees charged in relation to entering into a new tenancy
- Removal costs associated with moving home

The Council runs three schemes to help people with these types of costs;

1. Council Tax Support: This is a means tested scheme, meaning that we will look at your personal circumstances and income and apply a set calculation when deciding if you should receive an award and, if so, how much you will be paid. Any award will be made by reducing the amount of Council Tax you have to pay and gradually increasing so you learn to manage your money.

2. Discretionary Council Tax Support:

Is a scheme which allows the Council to reduce the Council Tax bill of people who have applied for Council Tax Support by more than any amount they receive under the Council Tax Support scheme. You will automatically receive this help for as long as the Council retains parental responsibility for you although the amount you receive will reduce as you become more independent.

3. Discretionary Housing Payments

(DHP): DHPs are paid as an addition to any Housing Benefit or Universal Credit you receive to help you pay your rent. We cannot make a payment to you unless you are already receiving this type of help although you may be able to get help from the local Social Fund. DHPs can be made to meet the following expenses;

- a. Any shortfall between the help you receive towards your rent and the amount you actually have to pay.

b. Deposits and payments of rent in advance you have to make when moving into a new property.

c. Administration fees charged by letting agencies associated with entering into a new tenancy agreement.

d. Removal costs associated with moving into a new home.

e. In very rare cases, rent arrears if a landlord is trying to evict you.

We will nominate you for to Waltham Forest Homes so that you can bid for a council tenancy when you are ready and your Leaving Care Coach will support you with this.

You are entitled to a leaving care grant to be spent on items that you will need when you move into your own accommodation when you take up your permanent tenancy. Some of this will come from Social Fund and will be topped up to a total of £2000 by Children’s Social Care.





“Thinking about budgeting and finding out how much things costs really helped me to manage the money I had to spend.”

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3. BEING ABLE TO MAINTAIN YOUR HOME (MONEY BUDGETING, BENEFITS, TAXES, RENT & BILLS) – OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

Because there are lots of elements in this section, we have a written Finance Policy which tells you, your social worker or Leaving Care Coach or the people supporting you what your entitlements and responsibilities are. You can access this by [clicking here](#).

We want you to learn how to be fully responsible for yourself and not be dependent on support. We also want to make sure that you have support when you need it. Becoming an adult is best done by taking small steps and most young people need support when they have setbacks. We don't expect that to be different for you. You are expected to

either be in full-time education, training or work and to access all of the financial support and benefits available to you. If you are not in education, training or work we expect you to be trying to be. We will arrange offers of support and courses for you to help you prepare for work. (see the section on jobs and training for more information)



We will support you when you are in full time education (the Finance Policy sets out the details) and we will support you when you are ready to access your own tenancy.

We will also support you by showing you how to deal with authorities and companies with your finances and any debts so that you understand how to do this for yourself later on in your life.

What it means

As Corporate Parents the Council have made arrangements so that you will be able to get “hardship support” with Council Tax, have access to furniture and goods when you are setting up home through Waltham Forest Social Fund and if you need to make an application for a private rented tenancy as your permanent home, you will have your deposit and first month’s rent paid. Your Leaving Care Coach will help you apply for these additional benefits and help you to understand how to make applications later in your life if you need to. Waltham Forest Social Fund is there to help you if you or your family are in severe financial hardship, especially when there’s a risk to health or safety. This application can be made on line at <https://lwa.financialassessments.co.uk/OnlineApplication/Introduction.aspx>.

IT equipment is available for you to make applications at Leaving Care Base. Your Leaving Care Coach will support you with this.

The fund **doesn’t give out cash payments** but may provide:

- food vouchers, or a referral to the local food bank
- essential household items to help you set up home, or remain in your home
- a referral to a local community project to get low cost furniture
- a referral to the East London Credit Union

Non-cash payments are used to help make sure all payments are spent on the things they are given for. The fund gives the minimum needed to help each applicant to make sure we can help as many people as possible.

We **may** be able to help you if you:

- are aged 16 or over
- have recourse to public funds
- have been continuously resident in Waltham Forest for the previous six months, unless you’re fleeing domestic violence or leaving an institution
- haven’t been housed in Waltham Forest by another local authority
- are entitled to a qualifying benefit such as:
 - Income Support
 - Income-based Jobseekers’ Allowance
 - Income-related Employment Support allowance
 - Pension Credit
 - Housing Benefit
 - Council Tax Support
- are not in a hospital, care home or prison (unless you are due to be discharged within six weeks)
- don’t have savings you could use to meet the need
- haven’t received a DWP Social Fund Crisis Loan, or a Waltham Forest Social Fund Loan or Grant, within the past 6 months
- are seeking support to pay for an approved item
- are willing to join the Credit Union prior to receiving a loan
- don’t have enough resources to prevent serious risk to your own, or your family’s health or safety
- You will need your own bank account, ask us if you need help with this



“Going to college has changed my life. It’s made me realise just how much I can do.”

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4. HAVING EMPLOYMENT WHICH ALLOWS YOU TO EARN ENOUGH TO LIVE – OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

We are supported by a lot of organisations and companies who will help you with this. The Council, NHS and other big organisations have agreed to ensure that Care Leavers are a priority and will ensure that you have opportunities for jobs, apprenticeships and work experience with them.

Your Leaving Care Coach and the Virtual School's EET Officer will tell you about them and help you to apply. If you have missed some education and need to gain skills or pass exams, they will find appropriate courses for you and help you to apply for them. They will also run regular groups that you can come to which will help you understand more and get ready for work and training. Because we understand that some young people will need more support in understanding and getting ready for the world of work, we have arranged for extra support to be available which will help you to be more prepared to apply for jobs and training.

We have been working closely with the Council's Adult Learning Service and DWP to make more apprenticeships available to our care leavers. They will be for a wide range of job types and they will try to source what you are interested in. These are a good way to be paid to train for different sorts of work. If you want to read the documents which set out our offer please [click here](#) or ask your Leaving Care Coach. They can also support you to access opportunities to get ready for working life.

In short, the Council have a number of apprenticeship offers to local young people, but because we are your Corporate Parents, we have made some

arrangements that are kept just for our Care Leavers. We have done this by using our contracts and working with our partners who are big employers in Waltham Forest to create apprenticeships that Care Leavers have first choice of. Your Leaving Care Coach will tell you about them and support you with making applications.

There is a Leaving Care base at Leyton Cricket Ground where we have computers, cooking and laundry facilities. There is a Leaving Care Coach there every day so that you can drop in if you need to use the equipment. Your Leaving Care Coach might also arrange to meet you there as it is a more private and informal place than our offices for you to talk and get support. We have provided this space because you have told us that you do not like coming to our offices and that you often do not feel able to relax and talk about problems or issues you may be facing. This is a good place to come if you need support in looking for work or courses and if you want to make applications for anything that has to be done online. We also run some groups here and at other places to help and support you with learning how to manage your life.



We understand that sometimes you need some extra help in understanding how to access the world of work. This might be especially true if you have a goal or aspiration to get into a specific profession or trade. We have arranged for senior officers and elected Councillors to offer you individual support through mentoring. We have also arranged a wider mentoring scheme so that you can have 1:1 support from people that have skills and knowledge that might help you. Your Leaving Care Coach can help you to access this mentoring.

What it means

- Ring-fenced opportunities for apprenticeships within the council (through Job Brokerage) and some guaranteed interviews
- Care leavers included in the business growth team's charter for all the organisations that supply us giving
- opportunities for internships or work in the Council and with partners
- DWP bid includes care leavers' pathway to work
- Council's Procurement team add a requirement to advertise jobs, apprenticeships and work experience to care leavers into the contracts of suppliers
- Careers advice available from suppliers through procurement
- Career opportunities in the registered care sector and health
- Volunteering opportunities in the third sector
- Mentors available to help you think about careers and what you need to do to get into the sort of work you aspire to.
- Possible bridges to employment built into large Council contracts so that you can learn skills and experience what the work is like
- Your leaving care coach can put you in touch with other young people who have made a successful transition into adulthood
- Your leaving care coach can get you in touch with someone from virtual school who will look into the right opportunities for you



“It’s important to see your Doctor and Dentist regularly – It’s a great way to MOT your body.”

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5. BEING HEALTHY AND KNOWING HOW TO ACCESS SUPPORT – OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

When you leave care, it is important that you know about your health history. Working together with our partners in the NHS we have created a “Health Passport” for our Care Leavers to help them have access to the important medical information that they can use when talking to health staff. The Health Passport is universal offer to all Looked after children aged 15–17 years.

This promotes continuity of care during placement changes and supports them into adulthood. The Health Passport also includes helpful information which signposts Care Leavers in relation to local health services and national support networks and helplines.

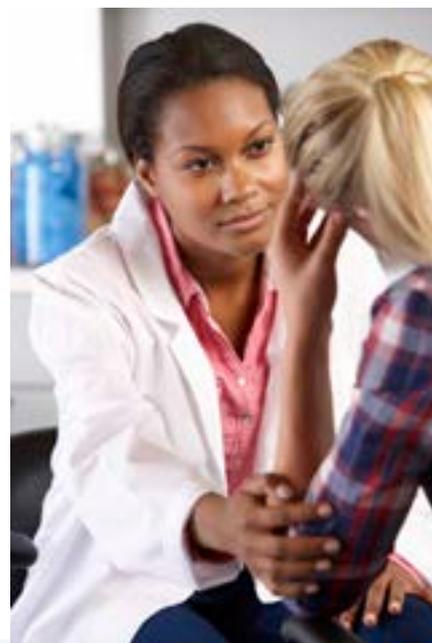
We also know that for lots of young people leaving care there are emotional issues which can be hard to deal with. It is important that you are registered with a GP wherever you live. Your Leaving Care Coach will support you in registering and show you what to do so that you can do it for yourself later on in life. Most health services for adults are accessed through the GP so being registered is very important.

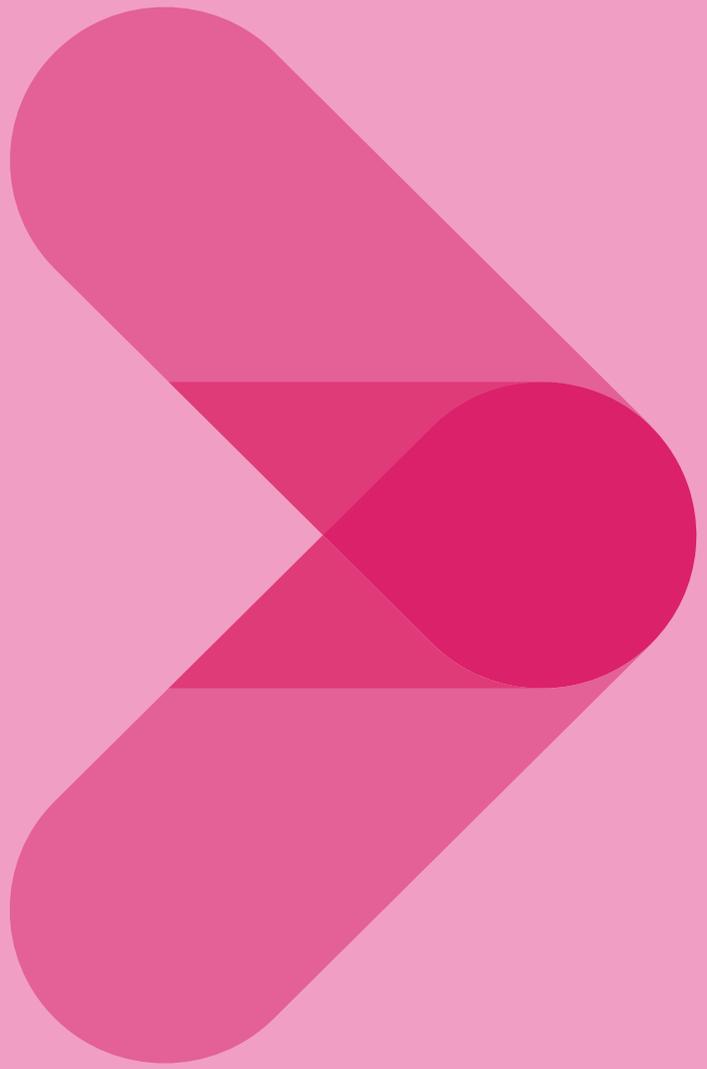
There is an offer for children who have special needs and disabilities to have a personal health budget so that they can have choice in the support that they need.

Children who have a disability and will be entitled to support as adults are supported by the Disability Enablement Service from 18 to 25 to ensure that there is a smooth pathway of support.

What it means

- Support with sexual health and contraception
- Support available for young women who become pregnant through the neighbourhood midwives team as well as family nurse partnership scheme to support young mothers.
- Health passport – is available in printed form at present with a plan to make it accessible online
- Jobs in the care industry as part of care academy pilot
- Apprenticeship roles at Barts health and the Clinical Commissioning Group
- Access to healthy leisure pursuits – some at Leaving Care Base and free swimming at Leisure and Feel Good Centres (including access at student rates – your Leaving Care Coach has details)
- First aid training through Leisure services
- Your leaving care coach will support you with accessing emotional support
- Your leaving care coach can arrange for you to ask your GP for access to a mental health worker who you can talk to





“It’s nice to know I have rights and that there are people I can talk to.”



6. Knowing your rights and knowing who can help (locally and further afield) – our commitment to you

As well as the information from the Children’s Commissioner set out above. There are a number of places you can look to find out about and get support with your rights. Please see the links below:

Children’s Commissioner – <http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/get-advice/questions/what-are-my-rights-and-entitlements-care-leaver>

Coram Voice – <http://www.coramvoice.org.uk/young-peoples-zone/are-you-care-leaver?gclid=CMr2yans2NMCFUMo0wodTQQCEg>

Shelter – https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/housing_for_young_people/help_and_housing_for_care_leavers

Rees Care Leavers Foundation – <http://www.reesfoundation.org/our-services/?gclid=CNXc7ant2NMCFRcTGwodFc4Cng>

Become – www.becomecharity.org.uk

What it means

Leaving Care applies when you are 16 or 18 and have previously been in care, but are now no longer legally “looked after” by your local authority Children’s Services. However, it does NOT mean that Children’s Services no longer has a duty to help you. You might not be “in care,” but you should still be cared for and supported until the age of 21 or 25 if you are in full time education or have a disability.

You don’t have to leave care when you’re 16. You can stay until you are 18, unless you feel ready to be more independent. When you turn 18, you can also choose to “Stay Put” if you are living in a foster placement.

The right to a pathway plan

You should have a Pathway Plan, started sometime around your 16th birthday, that you have helped to put together and agree with. This should make clear what help you will be getting in preparing to leave care and what support you will receive after you have left. This should say how your local authority will help you achieve the things you want in life (such as a place of your own, educational achievement, having your own money to spend, going on a training course or getting the job that you want).

To enable your Leaving Care Coach to support you with your Pathway Plan they will need to do a Needs Assessment as part of this process to identify what your specific needs are in relation to your Plan.



This is very important to you, as your Pathway Plan says exactly what help you should be getting before; during and after you leave care. Once agreed, it should be kept to by all those who have signed it. When the time comes for you to leave care, you should be supported to look after yourself, keep yourself healthy, continue with your learning, enjoy and achieve things in life, stay in touch with family and friends, and be confident about who you are.

The right to a Personal Advisor (in Waltham Forest we call them Leaving Care Coaches)

Children's services should make sure that you have a Personal Adviser (referred to as Leaving Care Coaches in Waltham Forest). This could be your current social worker or a Leaving Care Coach. It is their job to keep in touch with you, check that you are alright and help you get what you need. To do this they must make sure that your Pathway Plan is followed, reviewed regularly (at least every six months) and kept up to date.

Care leavers up to the age of 25 who tell their council they have returned, or want to return, to education or training, will also be able to have the support of a personal adviser while they are on their

course (if the course is agreed in their Pathway Plan). If you have lost contact with us (or decided at that time you did not want it) you can come back to us for advice, and in some circumstances, for a service. See the section on Contacts.

Maintaining Relationships

Your Leaving Care Coach should help you to keep contact with relatives and also friends that you have met whilst in care. If you would like more information about finding friends that you met whilst in care, why not visit the Care Leavers Reunited website

To see your files

The law says that you have a right to see information that is written about you. This includes social services files. You can request access to your files by contacting your placing local authority. Talk with your social worker or personal adviser about how to do this.

To know about services you can use You have a right to be told and given information telling you about all the services that you are entitled to used once you leave care

**Source – Office of the Children's Commissioner for England website

Have your say

To have your say if you are not happy about something

Although you have left care you are still entitled to let children's social services know if you are not happy and, if necessary, to make a complaint if you are not satisfied with the support you are getting, or feel that you have not been listened to. You also have the right to have an advocate who can help you do this.

Children in Care Council and Young Ambassadors

The Children in Care Council (CiCC) exists to support Children Services in improving outcomes for Children in Care (CiC) and strengthening the resilience of CiC.

CiCC create opportunity for care leavers to influence the way that local authority support you in developing your independent life skills and creating life chances and opportunities.

CiCC is another opportunity for you to meet other children and young people who are having similar life experiences as you.

Postscript

We know and understand that leaving care is a difficult time for many young people. It can be scary and feel that you are now all alone.

Through this offer we are trying to make sure that you feel more prepared and have been helped to get into a situation where you feel stable and independent enough to manage your life.

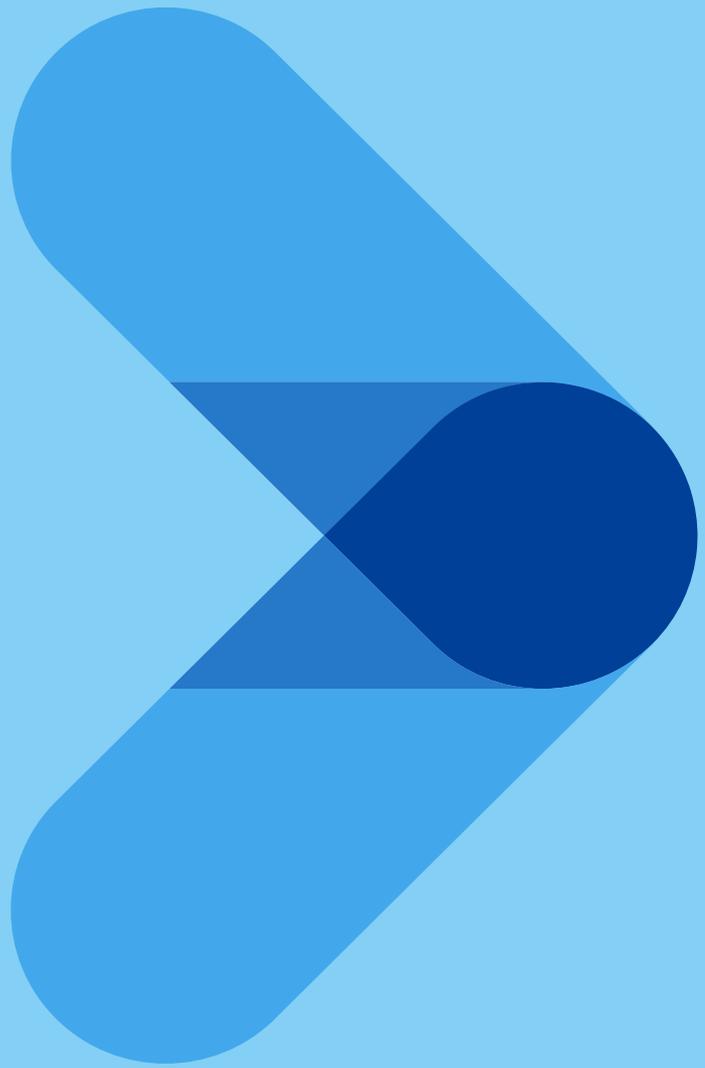
I want to tell you that you are not alone. Although we may not have a legal duty to offer you services, accommodation and money, we are still interested. Leaving Care Coaches are

available at the Leaving Care base each weekday. You are free to drop in to ask questions, get advice and talk to someone that understands.

We hope that you will feel supported and want you to tell us if you feel that you are not.

You are important to us. Even though you have moved on we will still think of you.

Lastly, I want to wish you a happy future and a good life from myself, the team and the senior managers and Councillors.



“I felt anxious and panicky about all the changes happening in life. Once I spoke to people about it, I realised I wasn't alone.”



7. Contact

Children's Commissioner – <http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/get-advice/questions/what-are-my-rights-and-entitlements-care-leaver>

Coram Voice – <http://www.coramvoice.org.uk/young-peoples-zone/are-you-care-leaver?gclid=CMr2yans2NMCFUMo0wodTQQCEg>

Rees Care Leavers Foundation – <http://www.reesfoundation.org/our-services/?gclid=CNXc7ant2NMCFRcTGwodFc4Cng>

Become – www.becomecharity.org.uk

Refugee Action www.refugee-action.org.uk/

Refugee Council https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/what_we_do/childrens_services

Waltham Forest Leaving Care – call 020 8496 3000 and ask for Corporate Parenting Service duty.

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This offer has been created with the support of many people. Some who have always supported our Care leavers and some that are doing so for the first time.

We would like to extend our thanks to our elected members for the high priority they have given to improving our Care Leavers' life chances.

We would like to thank the senior staff and managers across the Children's Partnership in Waltham Forest for their commitments, energy and passion for making a difference.

But we would especially like to thank the companies who, as suppliers and contractor and local employers, are joining our partnership and offering opportunities.

Care Leavers – remember – Contact your Leaving Care Coach to find out more and take the opportunities.

#RELATIONSHIPSMAKINGTHEDIFFERENCE

