WALTHAM FOREST CARE LEAVER'S OFFER OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

Waltham Forest

RELATIONSHIPSMAKINGTHEDIFFERENCE

RELATIONSHIPS
making the difference

CONTENTS

	FOREWORDS
1	INTRODUCTION
2	PREPARING TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY
3	A PLACE TO LIVE
4	BUDGETING FOR YOUR HOME
5	EMPLOYMENT
6	HEALTH SUPPORT
7	KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS
8	YOUNG PEOPLE IN SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES
9	CONTACTS

Foreword from Cllr Kizzy Gardener

For all of us, becoming more independent in life as we grow up is a journey, not a fixed destination. To ensure we offer our care experienced young people best possible offer LBWF agreed to accept care leavers as a protected characteristic. All our journeys will be different as we develop skills of resilience, confidence and resourcefulness to ready ourselves for whatever life has in store for us next. At Waltham Forest we are here to support you in making choices and plans to build the life you want for yourself.

Knowing what choices and support are available to you as you leave care is important. The purpose of this guide is to make it as clear as possible what you are entitled to and how you can get 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.

Your leaving care coach will answer all your questions about this offer, and together you will create a personalised pathway plan to take you from the point of leaving care through the choices you will need to make to build an independent life for yourself. You will be able to rely on your leaving care coach, other professionals, and the Council for support – from apprenticeships and training opportunities to health offers and continued support from foster carers – so that you can confidently navigate your way to independence.

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.

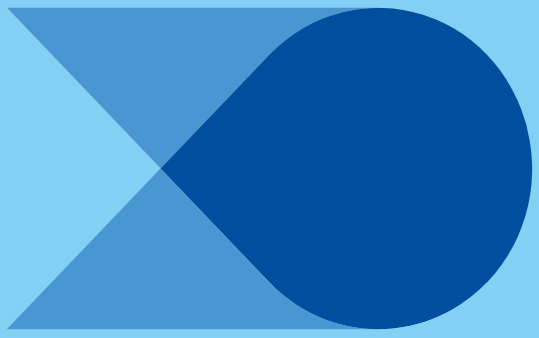
We will keep in touch with you to offer you support until you are at least 21 and, in some circumstances, until you are 25.

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
- keep you safe

1



1. Introduction

Our commitment to you

When you turn 18 or are no longer in care, you become a 'care leaver' (also known as 'Care Experienced'). At this point you will be allocated a leaving care coach who will offer advice and support, and help you prepare to live independently. Even though you are no longer 'in care', we absolutely still care about you and want to provide every resource available to help you succeed and live a healthy, happy life.

Your pathway plan

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.

Your pathway plan is personalised to you and is intended to help everyone who supports you stay up to date on your wishes and goals, and how you're going about achieving them. This is why the government has determined that you and your leaving care coach must update the pathway plan at least every six months, so that the plan changes in response to your needs. You can change it more often if you like.

The key thing is that your pathway plan is yours, and if you ever have any questions about it or want to know how to achieve what's on it, ask your leaving care coach– they want to help you succeed!

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.

Your leaving care coach

Your leaving care coach will support you with lots of things, including housing, money, education, employment, and training. They can also help you establish links with your family or extended family, and if you are an unaccompanied asylum seeker, your leaving care coach can provide emotional support and help you re-establish links with family you've lost touch with.

They will talk with you about what support you need and record this information in your pathway plan. This support will be available to you until reach the age of 25 or until you decide you no longer want a service. This guidance will give you a better idea of the support that your leaving care coach provide you with.

Celebrating Identity, Culture and Belonging

At Waltham Forest, we recognise how important identity, culture and a sense of belonging are in the lives of care-experienced young people. As your corporate parent, we are committed to helping you feel valued, remembered and connected.

We make sure your birthday is acknowledged and celebrated, recognising this as an important milestone and a chance to show that you matter to us. We also recognise and celebrate religious and cultural festivals throughout the year, including occasions such as Christmas, Eid, Diwali, Hanukkah, Vaisakhi and other significant faith and cultural events.

These celebrations reflect our commitment to respecting your individual identity, promoting inclusion, and ensuring you feel seen, supported and connected to your communities and heritage.

We also take pride in recognising and celebrating your achievements — whether through our annual Care Leaver Gala, awards and events, or simply by showing up to support and encourage you as you reach your goals.

2

Preparing to Live Independently

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

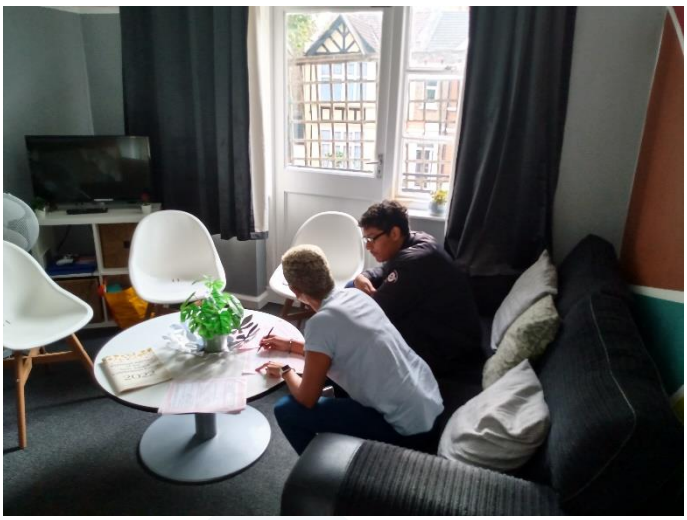
2. Being prepared to live independently (the skills you need)

Our commitment to you

We are committed to helping you develop the skills you need to help you be ready to live independently.

Why this matters

Most young people need to practice things like budgeting, cooking, laundry, and keeping a space tidy as they enter into the adult world, and we expect it to be no different for you.



How we prepare together

We will start preparing with you 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 pathway plan. If they are not, talk to whoever is writing the plan with you – your carer, your social worker or your leaving care coach.

Make sure you know and understand what is in your pathway plan. This becomes even more important after you turn 18. Remember that you will review it twice a year with your leaving care coach, but you can review it and make changes more frequently if you like.

The details of your offer

We use a tool called My Guide. 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 a 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.

The Hub

The Hub is a young people's space at Leyton Cricket Ground. It was designed and decorated by care leavers, for care leavers.

We have various sessions available for you to be able to learn life skills that you can come along to. Sessions include budgeting and life skills, and basic cooking and healthy eating workshops.

Check our Instagram and WhatsApp group for session updates - **hub_4life2022 Instagram account**

As well as skills sessions, you can come and join us at The Hub for support or just to chat during our drop-in sessions, weekdays from 2-4pm. We have cooking facilities, computers, a washing machine and a shower that you can use if you need.

In addition to this we also offer these at The Hub:

- Revenue benefits experts will discuss with you your entitlements and how to claim them
- Opportunity for you to meet other young people who have made a successful transition into adulthood
- Rents Team to enable you keep your account up to date.
- Sexual Health guidance/screening, free condoms, and sanitary items
- Substance misuse services
- CAMHS 18+ and Talking Therapies

3

Place to Live

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

3. Having a home (accommodation and tenancies)

Our commitment to you

We are committed to making sure that you have a safe and stable place to live. It is important that wherever you prefer to live, you make sure that your local authority puts this into your pathway plan. You can choose between returning home, staying put with your foster parent, moving into your own council accommodation, or moving into semi-independent accommodation.

Why this matters

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.

How we prepare together

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 parent until you are ready to move on, or until your 21st birthday at the latest. This will change your status in the foster home, and you will 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 contribute to your living costs (housing benefit component) because this is how you learn to budget and take responsibility for looking after yourself. (See section 4 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. At 18 and in semi-independent accommodation you will need to contribute to your rent costs and claim benefits so that you learn how to manage money and 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.

The details of your offer

Housing costs are those costs which are directly related to the cost of your home, such as rent and Council Tax.

- Until you are 25 years old, whether you live within Waltham Forest or outside the boroughs boundaries you will not be liable to pay Council Tax and the leaving care service will support you with this by ensuring appropriate discounts are in place, then claiming council tax support before reducing your bill to nil.
- The Local Welfare Assistant fund will be available to help care leavers who get into difficulties with support towards household items.
- 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
  - Costs associated with setting up a home

The Council will support you with this in the following way:

1. *Council Tax Support:* Ask your leaving care coach to assist you applying to have your liability to pay Council Tax reduced to nil, as there is an agreement in place with LBWF that care leavers within the borough do not have to pay Council Tax. If you live outside the

boundaries of LBWF ask your leaving care coach to assist you to pay the Council Tax that you are responsible for.

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 Welfare Assistant Fund. Talk to your leaving care coach about setting up these other types of help first if you need them. DHPs can be up to £2000. 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 that you have to make when moving into a new property.
c. Removal costs associated with moving into a new home.
d. In very rare cases, rent arrears if a landlord is trying to evict you.

We will nominate you to Waltham Forest Homes so that you can bid for a council tenancy or social housing when you are ready, and your leaving care coach will support you with this.

4. Leaving Care Grant: You are entitled to a leaving care grant of £3000 managed by your Leaving Care Coach to be spent on essential items that you will need when you move into your own accommodation when you sign your tenancy.

4

Budgeting for Your Home

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

4. Being able to maintain your home (money budgeting, benefits, taxes, rent & bills)

Our commitment to you

We are committed to helping you learn how to budget and access resources and available funds. Because there are lots of elements in this section, we have a written Finance Policy which tells you what your entitlements and responsibilities are. You can access this by clicking here. You can go over this in detail with your leaving care coach, social worker or the people supporting you.

Why this matters

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.

How we prepare together

You are expected to either be in full-time education, training/apprenticeship, or work – or trying to be – and to access all of the financial support and benefits available to you. We will arrange offers of support and courses for you to help you prepare for work (see section 5 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 the authorities and companies with regards to your finances and any debts so that you learn and understand how to do this for yourself.

The details of your offer

Moving-on workshops are held at The Hub and online using MS Teams. These workshops for example provide information on your benefits entitlements, budgeting courses like Money Matters workshop. The DWP (Job Centre) also offer drop-in sessions once a month virtually and staff from Waltham Forest Housing Department provide monthly rent arrears drop-in sessions and Council Tax drop-in session are held quarterly.

The DWP work closely with the Leaving Care Service team and offer workshops at the Hub to help you understand your benefit entitlements, what is expected of you should you make a claim and what support is available to you as well as supporting you to apply for all benefits that you are entitled to.

As Corporate Parents, the Council has made arrangements so that you will be able to get "hardship support" from the Council. This is to help with access to furniture and goods when you are setting up home through the Local Welfare Assistant 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. The 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 online at https://lwa.financialassessments.co.uk/ OnlineApplication/Introduction.aspx.

IT equipment is available for you to make applications at The Hub. Your leaving care coach support you with this. You will need your own bank account, so ask your leaving care coach if you need help setting one up.

The Local Welfare Assistant 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

You will not receive cash. This will ensure that the payments are spent on the things they are given for. The fund will provide support specifically in accordance with your assessed needs, 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.

5

Employment

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

5. Having employment which allows you to earn enough to live

Our commitment to you

We are committed to helping you find employment, which is a big part of building a stable, happy life. We are supported by a lot of organisations and companies who will help you with this.

Why this matters

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.

How we prepare together

Your leaving care coach and the Virtual School's Employment, Education and Training Officer will tell you about the career opportunities 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 The 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. Apprenticeships 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.

The Hub at Leyton Cricket Ground is a base for care leavers, 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 must 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 who have skills and knowledge that might help you. Your leaving care coach can help you to access this mentoring.

The details of your offer

- Ring-fenced opportunities for apprenticeships within the council (through Job Brokerage) and some guaranteed interviews
- If you attend University, we will provide you with an additional £2000 bursary payable in instalments across the life of the course.
- Care leavers are included in the business growth team's charter for all the organisations that supply us to ensure opportunities for internships or work in the Council and with partners exist.
- The DWP work collaboratively with your leaving care coach to offer you pathways into work.
- Council's procurement team have added a requirement to advertise jobs, apprenticeships, and work experience to care leavers into the contracts of suppliers.
- Careers advice is 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
- 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 investigate the right opportunities for you.
- Accommodation during University vacation.

6

Health Support

“It’s important to see your doctor and dentist regularly – it’s a great way to MOT your body.”

6. Being Healthy and Knowing How to Access Support

Our commitment to you

We are committed to helping you access resources that allow you to lead a happy, healthy life.

Why this matters

We work closely with local health services to make sure that you are able to access good quality health and mental health services. It is important to know your health history and to be able to access the health services that you need.

How we prepare together

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” to help you have access to the important medical information that you can use when talking to health staff, such as the vaccinations, medications and conditions you have had. The Health Passport is a universal offer to all looked after children aged 15–17 years.

This promotes continuity of care if you had frequent home changes supports you 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.

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.

We also know that for lots of young people leaving care there are emotional issues which can be hard to deal with. You might also have mental health issues come up, and we have established services specifically tailored to the 18–25-year-old age group; your leaving care coach can help you access these.

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 age 18 to 25 to ensure that there is a smooth pathway of support.

The details of your offer

- Free prescriptions
- Mental health services specifically for 18–25-year-olds (this is not specific to care experienced young people but is specific to this age group).
- Support with sexual health and contraception.
- Support available for young people who become pregnant through the neighbourhood midwives’ team as well as the family nurse partnership scheme to support young mothers.
- When you turn 18 years of age you will be provided with a discharged letter from health (that include all health resources/contact details) and a copy of your last Review Health assessment.
- 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 The Hub, leaving care service will pay for you accessing the Leisure and Feel-Good Centres. If you are living outside Waltham Forest, please talk with your leaving care coach about how to access gym facilities where you live.
- 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.

7

Knowing your Rights

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

7. Knowing your rights and knowing who can help (locally and further afield)

There are a number of places you can look to find out about and get support with your rights. Please see the links below.

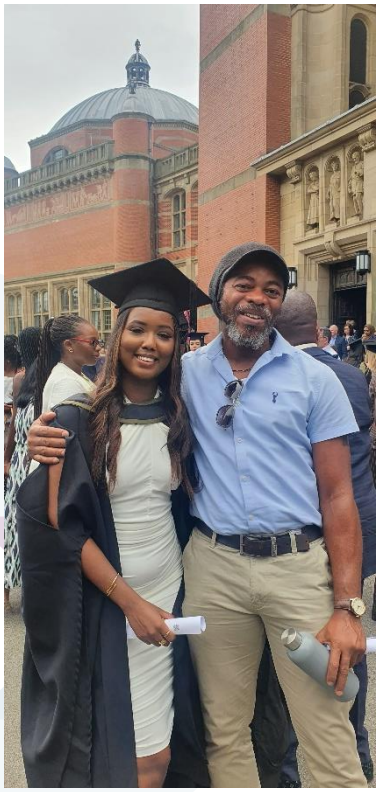
Children's Commissioner: http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/get-advice/questions/what-are-my-rights-and-entitlements-care-leaver

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 supported until the age of 25 years.

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 parent.

The right to a pathway plan

You should have a pathway plan, started on 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 support you with your pathway plan, your leaving care coach 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 leaving care coach. 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 leaving care coach 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 section 8 on contacts.

Maintaining Relationships

Your leaving care coach should help you to stay in touch with your relatives and friends that you have met whilst in care.

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 leaving care coach 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

To have your say

Although you have left care, you are still entitled to let Children's 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.
https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/Childrens%20Complaints%20Leaflet%20May%202023.pdf

You also have the right to have an advocate who can help you do this.

The Voice & Influence Teams work with care experienced people

What is the Champions Group?

The group is open to care leavers aged 18-25 years and gives care leavers a chance to meet other care experienced people.

What are the aims and objectives of the Champions Group?

The main aim is to hear from you and use your voice to influence change and development in the services that work, or have worked, with you.

We consider you to be experts as you have lived experiences of the care and support provided to you. This means you can tell us what works well and what needs to be changed.

We share your views with social care managers, staff and decision makers and try to make improvements to the services young people receive.

We try to make every meeting interesting and fun. The group is facilitated by The Participation and Engagement workers, who are always looking for ideas of how to improve sessions.

What has the Champions Group done?

- Designed welcome packs for young people moving into their own home
- Attended and participated in the Corporate Parenting Boad (this is a meeting where the people who make the decisions discuss the services young people receive)
- A member of the Champions Group co-chairs Corporate Parenting Board with a Councillor
- Provides opportunities to help you develop life skills, like cooking and budgeting
- Group members also participate in the recruitment of new Waltham Forest employees

Why should you get involved?

You would:

- Positively influence change in services
- Have a platform to speak with the people who make the decision about services.
- Make friends and add to your support network
- Have a chance to socialise with other young people

When does the Champions Group meet?

The group meets every two weeks at the Care Leaver Hub at Leyton Cricket Ground.

Would you like to get involved?

You can speak to your leaving care coach who can help arrange a meeting with a Participation & Engagement worker.

You can call, text or WhatsApp on 07891 957 365 or

Email: voiceandinfluence@walthamforest.gov.uk.

Advocacy Service:

LBWF offer advocacy service for care experienced young people through Barnardo's advocacy service. They will support you for example expressing your wishes and feelings, supporting you to contributes to your plan. Advocacy leaflet.pdf

Postscript

We know and understand that leaving care is a difficult time for many young people. It can be scary and you may 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 Hub 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.

8

Young People in Specific Circumstances

8. Young people in specific circumstances

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (also known as UASC)

When you are under 18, you'll have the same entitlements as any other young person in need in Waltham Forest. When you reach 18 years old you will be entitled to a level of care and support from us, but this is subject to your immigration status. We will plan with you for three possible outcomes (also known as Triple Planning), which means:

- helping you plan for a future in the UK if you are given some form of leave to remain
- ongoing support while you wait for a decision
- helping you make a back-up plan if you have been refused leave to remain in the UK and have exhausted all appeals
- You will receive your personal allowance weekly.

Provide you with a home until the Home office make a decision in respect of your permanent status.

Care Leavers who are parents

Being a parent for the first time can be challenging. We want to make sure that you get the support you need when you are pregnant and during your first year of being a parent. We can support you in the following ways:

- Provide you with a gift hamper, of essential baby items. The gift hamper is also available to prospective fathers.
- Ensure that you have essential items for baby by accessing correct benefits, grants, charities and consideration of a discretionary grant up to £100 if required.
- Offer prospective mothers a birthing partner and someone to accompany them to pre and post-natal health appointments e.g. their Leaving Care Coach, ex foster parent, if you would like this.
- Support travel costs for a friend/family member to accompany you to appointments and the hospital for the birth.
- Provide you with the opportunity to have a Family Group Conference during pregnancy to identify support within friends and family network.
- Provide access to support to assist with claiming relevant benefits and registering the birth of the baby.

Care leavers who are over 21 years

We can continue to offer support to Care Leavers aged over 21 years until they turn 25. Post 21, if at any point you no longer require a service from us, you can ask multiple times to have a service reinstated up until the age of 25. The support we will provide includes:

- Access to a quarterly newsletter, WhatsApp group and Instagram account outlining education opportunities, traineeships, apprenticeships, internships, help with CV and clubs as well as drop ins at the HUB for advice should you need this.
- Access to the University Bursary and all other aspects of a university package including financial assistance and general support.
- Council Tax discount until 25 wherever you live in the country.
- Access to your leaving care grant if you haven't accessed it before the age of 25.
- Leaving Care Coach and Pathway Plan: If you want this, we will agree with you how often we see you and what we will help you with.

Care leavers who are over 25 years

- At Waltham Forest, we understand that parents do not stop being parents when a young person turns 25 years-old and do not believe that this should happen for care leavers. The leaving care service will sign post you to the relevant services according to your needs.
- From 25 onwards; You can still come to us at the drop-in sessions at the HUB and access the Instagram account for information, advice and guidance and we will help in any way we can.
- There will be no more pathway plans (but we can help you plan your life). We won't chase you, but we will be here if you need us. We would love to hear about how you are getting on so please do drop in or call for catch-up.

Care leavers in custody

We will be there for any of our young people in custody.

- This will include making arrangements to collect you when you are released and make arrangements so that you have somewhere to go.
- We will stay in touch by visiting or writing to you depending on what you want.
- Provide you with a payment of £40 per month.
- Ensure your leaving care coach will make a case for any additional funding for hardship support you may need.
- Be actively involved in any resettlement planning for you, working collaboratively with probation with your consent. Assist you with keeping in touch with friends and family if you want this.

Contact Details

“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.”

9. Contacts

Our Instagram *(*which will include a quarterly newsletter): @HUB_4LIFE2022

Duty telephone number: 0208 496 6310

Duty email: dutyleavingcare@walthamforest.gov.uk

Barnardos: https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/protecting-children/childrens-rights-advocacy

Become: www.becomecharity.org.uk

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

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

Refugee Council: https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/what_we_do/childrens_ services

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

Waltham Forest Leaving Care: In emergency situations out of hours, call 020 8496 3000 and ask for support

Thanks and Acknowledgements

This offer has been created with the support of many people, some who have always supported our care leavers and some who 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.