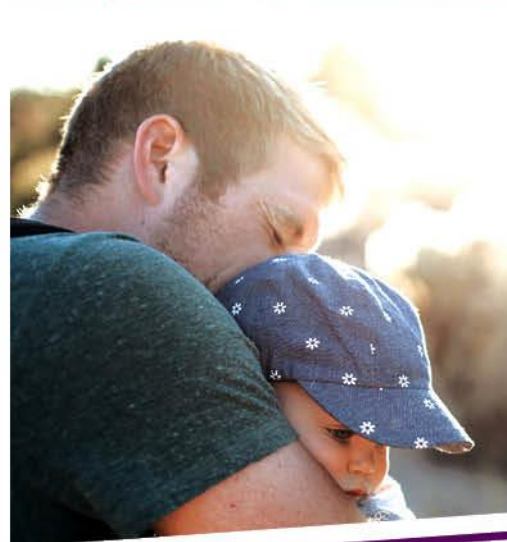


**be the change**  
for children and young people in croydon

Early Help and Children's Social Care

# Local Offer for Care Leavers

2021/2022



English Version (also available in Albanian, Pashto, Tigrinyan, Dari and Arabic)

To provide feedback on our Local Offer, click [here](#).

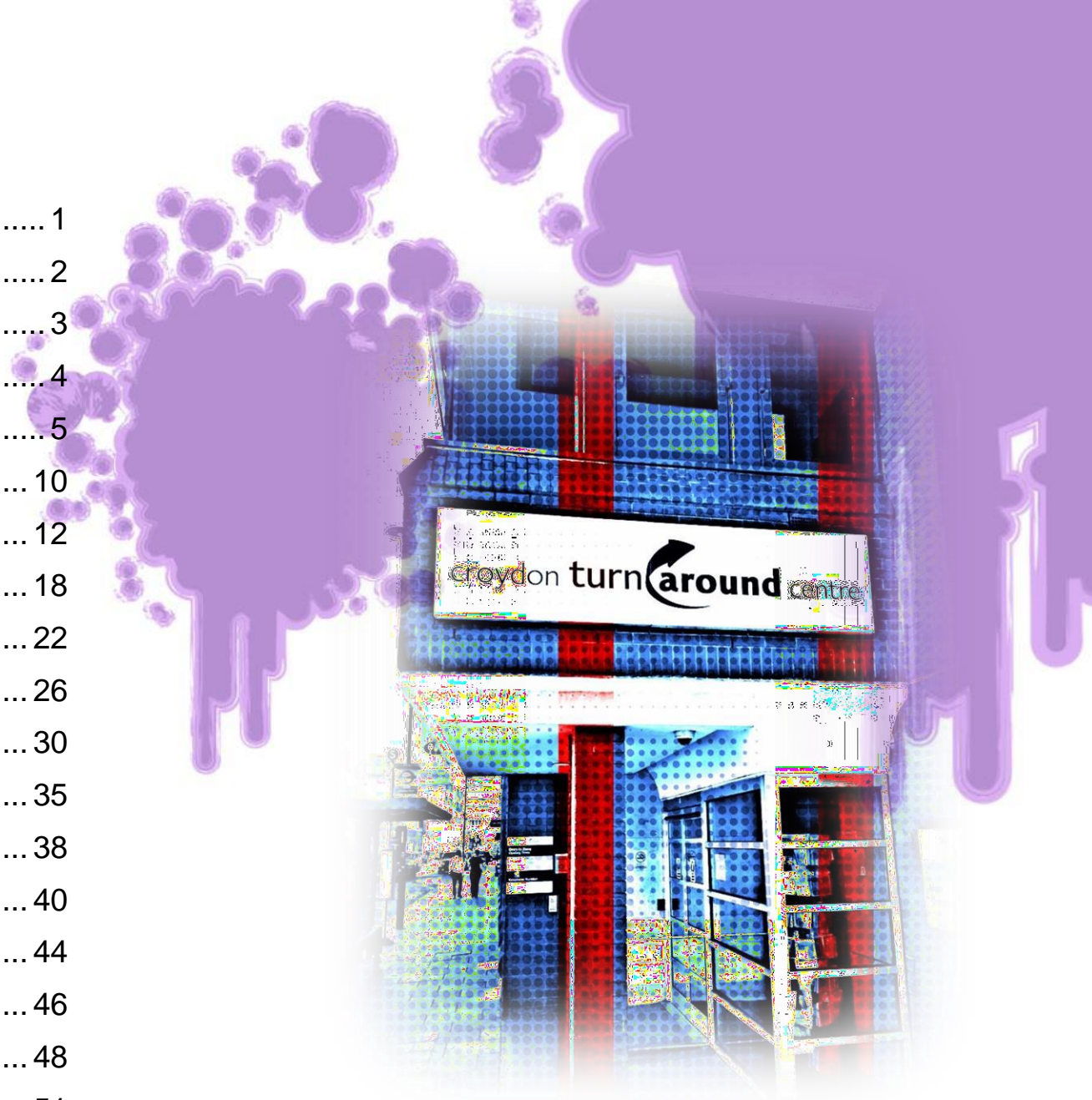
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## A WORD FROM YOUR LEAD CORPORATE PARENT

I have great pleasure in being able to introduce the Croydon Council Local Offer for Care Leavers and to outline to you the commitment the Council has made to delivering, and developing further, the support available as you move into adulthood and independence.

This Council remains committed to, and ambitious for, its care leavers and wants to ensure that children looked after and care leavers receive priority in our services. This Local Offer was updated in 2020 to take account of the views you put forward during our Corporate Panel Meeting and other consultations.

In my role as the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel of the Council, I will be keeping a very close eye on how we implement this offer in practice, and essential to that will be getting the views of care leavers and care-experienced young people.

Please be sure to look at the offer carefully with your social worker or Personal Adviser and also give us feedback on where we are getting things right, and where we need to improve.

**Councillor Aisa Flemming**  
**Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Learning**

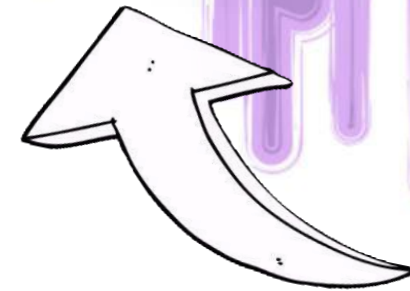


# OVERVIEW OF THE LOCAL OFFER

This Local Offer has been produced to give you, as a care leaver, an idea of what services Croydon Council provides. It has been written with the aim of describing exactly what you can expect from our organisation: expectations against which we, as a council, can be held to account.

The need for a Local Offer arises from the introduction of the **Children and Social Work Act 2017**, which basically says that we, as a council, have to publish information about the services we provide you. However, we feel, in Croydon, that our published Local Offer should go *beyond* our legal requirement and should, rather, be a more comprehensive document. Our publication, therefore, builds upon the basic requirements as stated in the Act to provide you with a more detailed overview of exactly what we offer and how we will deliver it, as well as other information about services for care leavers provided by others.

At the heart of our practice, we will aim to identify and promote what is working well in your life, while exploring concerns, assessing the impact of these and planning in partnership with you.





## OUR CORPORATE PARENTING PRINCIPLES

The term 'Corporate Parent' isn't particularly warm, is it? But it does stand for the very positive idea that Croydon Council as a whole should act as your parent. What this means is that we have the same

hopes, wishes and aspirations for you as we would for our own children. We want you to have access to the same opportunities and chances that any other child or young person would – being care experienced does not mean you do not have the same potential as those who

are **not** care experienced.



- ✓ To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of every care leaver.
- ✓ To help care leavers gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- ✓ To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for care leavers.
- ✓ For care leavers to be safe, with stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
- ✓ To prepare care leavers for adulthood and independent living.

That all sounds very nice but what does it actually mean?

It means that we have a set of principles to frame our relationship with you – principles we return to time and again to ensure that we are doing our very best as your parent. These principles are as follows:

- ✓ To act in your best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of all care leavers.
- ✓ To encourage every care leaver to express their views, wishes and feelings.

## GUIDANCE FOR READING THIS DOCUMENT

This document is designed to be quite easy-going with a focus on keeping things clear for you.

In this guide, you will read about all the services that you can access. But before you start, let's just review how this document works and how you can use it effectively.

First of all, you will find lots of links to other organisations, Council procedures and even other locations in this document. The links are colour coded as follows:

- **Red:** these links will take you through to other websites and, sometimes, Croydon procedures. Use these links when you want a little more explanation on how we do things in the Council or how another organisation can help.
- **Green:** these links will send you to relevant pieces of the law and even directly to specific sections in Acts of Parliament (e.g. to Section 23c of the Children Act 1989).
- **Blue:** these links transport you to other sections in this document where relevant (e.g. you may see a link in the Keeping In Touch section to Personal Information and Data Sharing).
- **Purple:** these open up an email contact.



# THE LEAVING CARE SERVICE

## Overview

Our Leaving Care Service is the key team for you to know, as they will be your first contact point for pretty much all your needs. You will be supported by a Personal Adviser or Social Worker from this team when you turn 18 but they will be involved with you well before that.

## Who can receive a service?

If you've been Looked After, it doesn't automatically mean you'll get a Leaving Care service or if you do, it's the same for everybody. There are some important distinctions to make on who **can** receive a service.

The key terms to be mindful of are: **Eligible**, **Relevant**, **Former Relevant** and **Qualifying**. These are terms that can be used in different ways to describe young people aged between 16 and 25, and serve to distinguish the levels of support that will be offered.

**Former Relevant** means the you are aged 18 to 21 and were Eligible or Relevant. you continue to be Former Relevant until you are 25 if you remain in an agreed course of education or training.

**Qualifying** means you are aged under 21 (or under 24 if in education) who was *not* looked after for 13 weeks or more after turning 14, but were looked after for a period when you were 16 or 17.

## What do all these terms mean?

**Eligible** means you are 16 or 17 and have been looked after by the local authority for 13 weeks or more *after* turning 14, and are *still* being looked after.

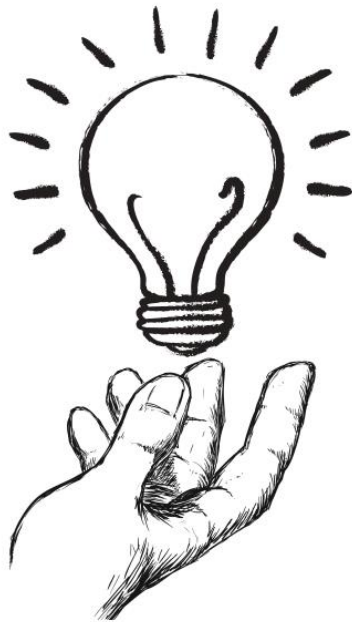
**Relevant** means the you *were* Eligible, but no longer looked after and age 16 or 17. You may have returned home but not been settled there for more than six months. This will also include young people who were detained after turning 16 (e.g. in a psychiatric hospital, youth offending institution, etc.) and *had* been looked after immediately prior to this happening or when sentenced.

## What services are available?

This document will explain in detail exactly what support and services are available to care leavers in Croydon but, as a brief overview, young people who are eligible, relevant or former relevant can expect the following:

- ✓ Personal Adviser or Social Worker
- ✓ Needs Assessment
- ✓ Pathway Plan
- ✓ General advice and assistance

There are plenty of other entitlements, but they will relate quite specifically to areas such as housing or education and will be covered later.



But let's take a moment to give you a bit more information on the difference between the service you will enjoy if you are former relevant or qualifying:

<b>Former Relevant</b>	<p>We have to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Provide you with a Personal Adviser who visits you at least once every two months.</li><li>✓ Provide you with and review a Pathway Plan at least once every six months.</li><li>✓ Help you with expenses relating to getting into, or remaining in, education, employment or training.</li><li>✓ Offer you advice and support.</li><li>✓ Keep in touch with you.</li><li>✓ Offer or pay for somewhere for you to live during the extended university holidays (summer and Christmas) if you have no other home.</li><li>✓ Provide you with a £2,000.00 Higher Education Bursary and a Setting up Home Allowance (SUHA).</li><li>✓ Provide a home for you.</li></ul>
<b>Qualifying</b>	<p>We have to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Offer you advice and support.</li><li>✓ Keep in touch with you.</li><li>✓ Offer or pay for somewhere for you to live during the extended university holidays if you have no other home.</li></ul>



## 16 and 17 Year Olds

The Leaving Care Service itself only starts to take a *leading* role on working with you when you turn 18. However, the Leaving Care 'journey' begins before adulthood, and each young person who qualifies for a service is matched to a Personal Adviser or Social Worker by the time you are 17. The idea of an earlier match is to ensure you get to know the worker who will provide post-18 support *before* you become an adult. The worker will also have a much stronger idea of your support needs before you turn 18 and can better prepare for what is to come. A Personal Adviser will usually take over at the time which is right for you and your Social Worker may stay involved after you turn 18.

Work with an Eligible or Relevant 16 or 17-year-old will still be led by a Social Worker in a Child Looked After team or, in some cases, a different team, but the matched worker from the Leaving Care Service will also help the Social Worker prepare and plan for your independence.



## What is a Personal Adviser?

A Personal Adviser is, in many ways, very similar to a Social Worker – so much so that you may struggle to make a distinction between the two in your day-to-day contact.

They will befriend you, provide advice and guidance, and support you more intensely where you need it (e.g. you wish to get into education or have an issue which worries you).

The key thing to note with a Personal Adviser is that we also rely on you to say *when* you need support.

## Compliments and Complaints

If you think we've done a particularly good job with helping you, or else we've done something that you're really *unhappy* about, then you can let us know using the Compliments and Complaints form, available on the same webpage as the Local Offer or you can ask your Personal Adviser for one.

## Pathway Plan

A solid, written plan **has** to exist in order to support you properly, and that is done – as laid down in the law – through a Pathway Plan. A Pathway Plan is a document outlining how you and your Personal Adviser will jointly respond to your needs and help you develop into an independent adult. But its biggest aim is to ensure there is an ongoing and evolving conversation about how you can move forward in your life.

A Pathway Plan will talk about all your key issues (i.e. health, education, housing, money, etc.) and is as an opportunity for your Personal Adviser to say, 'Hey, what do you want to achieve and how can I help you achieve it?'. For each issue, a goal or action will be agreed with you. Each goal or action in a Pathway Plan will be SMART, so that is:

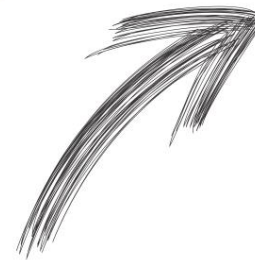
- ✓ **Specific:** clear about what needs to be done.
- ✓ **Measurable:** work out how we know when it is achieved.
- ✓ **Assignable:** tasks to achieve it can be assigned.
- ✓ **Realistic:** ensure there is a good chance it can be done.
- ✓ **Time-constrained:** state when it should be completed.

Any target that is not SMART is just going to frustrate you as it simply will not be achieved. Each target will also take account of your individual strengths, allowing you to use and build upon them accordingly with necessary support brought in where you need it.

Once the Pathway Plan is written up, you will have an opportunity to read, comment on it and sign it – so long as you agree to its content – at which point it becomes a *legally* binding document. So, signing it is kind of a big deal.

Your Pathway Plan will be reviewed at least once every six months, though it can be reviewed sooner should you wish.

Oh, and one last thing: we realise that you may think, 'A Pathway Plan? Why should I bother with it?'. Well, our thinking is that if you *are* that independent then a short plan – or one drawn up without your input – looks like everything in your life must be pretty much perfect. However, we very much doubt that that will ever be the case and feel very strongly that a plan will help you to have the things you need to be happy and successful.





## *Turnaround Centre*

The Turnaround Centre provides a single place for young people and their families to access support for a range of issues. The Centre is operated by Croydon Council in partnership with a range of expert agencies and provides a base for the Leaving Care Service, as well as several other teams.

Unique to the Centre is its Drop in Zone (DiZ) – a place where you and other young people can ‘drop in’ (hence the name) for

advice and support in a safe and secure

environment. Services on offer include:

- ✓ Access to advice, information and support with housing and potential homelessness up to the age of 21.
- ✓ Access to information on local events and activities.
- ✓ Computer and internet access.
- ✓ Events and activities held by Croydon Council and CAYSH.
- ✓ Mediation for 16-to-21-year-olds provided by CAYSH.
- ✓ Family support and advice (by appointment only).
- ✓ Help with your emotional and mental health

The Turnaround Centre can be contacted on **020 8760 5530**, is open Monday to Friday, from 9.30am-5pm, and can be found at **51-55 South End, Croydon CR0 1BF**.

You should also be aware that the DiZ does have appropriate security – including a guard and alarm system – and has a strict no friends and no hoods up policy. The safety precautions in place are to protect staff as well as other people using the building.

## *Duty System*

Things usually work best for you if you are able to talk with your allocated worker. However, the Leaving Care Service has a ‘duty’ system for responding to you if you are unable to get in touch with your Personal Adviser and need urgent help with something. All you need to do is come to the Turnaround Centre on any weekday between 10am and 4pm, and you will be able to speak with someone. You will not have to wait any longer than an hour, though you will only be seen if the matter is urgent. Alternatively, you can speak to a duty worker by phoning the Turnaround Centre and asking for them.



# THE LOCAL OFFER KEEPING IN TOUCH

## Overview

If you're a Child Looked After, then by the time you reach the age of 17, our Leaving Care Service matches a Personal Adviser to you. Your *allocated* worker (that is: the lead person responsible for supporting you) remains your social worker and this will be the case until you reach adulthood. However, your Personal Adviser will meet with you, so you know who they are.

Contact for you as a 16 or 17-year-old is very different to contact when you turn 18, as this table demonstrates:

Age	Contact Arrangements
<b>16/17</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Visit once a month</li><li>✓ Looked After Child (LAC) Reviews</li><li>✓ Emphasis on Social Worker reaching out to offer you support</li><li>✓ Professionals involved: Social Worker, Personal Adviser, Foster Carer, Supervising Social Worker and Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)</li></ul>
<b>18-25</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Visit once every two months</li><li>✓ Greater emphasis on you reaching out to your Personal Adviser to seek support</li><li>✓ Professionals involved: Personal Adviser</li></ul>

Of course, the legal guidance on how regularly you should be seen is a minimum standard. If we were worried that you were at risk of

something bad happening to you, for example, or if you needed more contact for a short time, then we'd want to see you more often – 'cos we're meant to be your parent! Remember?

## *Child Looked After (CLA) Reviews and the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)*

You will have been allocated an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) after first becoming looked after. This IRO may very well have changed over time, but you will have IRO involvement until you turn 18.

The IRO's job is as follows:

- ✓ To chair Child Looked After (CLA) Reviews (more on these in a minute).
- ✓ To check the work being done by all professionals involved with you is good and ensure it all comes together nicely.
- ✓ To be an independent person to whom you can turn when you have worries.

A CLA Review is held every six months for you and ends when you turn 18.



The purpose of the CLA Review is as follows:

- ✓ To give you a chance to privately discuss things with the IRO.
- ✓ To give the foster carer or a keyworker in your care setting a chance to give feedback on how you are doing.
- ✓ To serve as an opportunity for the IRO to check all ongoing work with you relating to the key areas in your life (e.g. health, education, preparation for leaving care, etc.).
- ✓ To agree actions between everyone to better or further support you.

Your Personal Adviser will attend the last two CLA Reviews before you turn 18 and explain the process of you becoming supported by the Leaving Care team; they will also give you their mobile and email, and their manager's contact details too.

### *Where do we meet up?*

Before turning 18, your social worker is most likely to visit you where you are living though they can meet you elsewhere as well. After turning 18, your Personal Adviser will meet you wherever you're both happy to meet – be that at your house, in the Turnaround Centre, in a café, or elsewhere. It may be that your Personal Adviser wishes to visit your house for a particular reason – perhaps he/she wishes to see how you are managing with living independently, or maybe he/she has safety concerns – and it is expected that you will welcome them into your home unless there is a very good reason not to!

### *How will we keep in touch?*

Okay, here's the legal bit: your Personal Adviser has to, by law, see you at least once every two months (unless expressly against your wishes). But between visits, you'll keep in touch through other means. As it is the 21<sup>st</sup> century, contact is very unlikely to be by letter, landline or carrier pigeon; instead, contact will be via text, mobile, email, Skype and/or app. Social media is not acceptable – nor is WhatsApp (see [Personal Information and Data Sharing](#) for reasons why).

Once again, the Personal Adviser will be led by your wishes on the subject. And if you want to see your worker's big smiling face more often then they'll be happy to see you too!



# LIFE SKILLS AND GENERAL SUPPORT

## Overview

As a 16 and then a 17-year-old, you will be building your life skills in preparation for adulthood. Before turning 18, you have a lot of support available to you from a number of people both inside and outside the Council – linked and not linked to Children’s Social Care. The goal is to help you find your own independence. But what is ‘independence’ and how do you achieve it?

### independence

*noun*

freedom from the control, influence, support, aid, or the like, of others.

At its heart, independence suggests the idea of freedom to support yourself, but clearly no one is an island and we all need help sometimes. We aim to ensure you are well equipped to tackle the demands and trials of being an adult. These demands can range from the fairly dull, such as being able to manage and pay utility bills, all the way up to securing the job or career you hope for.

## Who’s available to provide support?

As mentioned, there are a number of people who are potentially available to support you, depending on your circumstances.



Although not an exhaustive list, you may expect to receive support from any of the following:

- ✓ Foster Carer or Keyworker
- ✓ Social Worker
- ✓ Personal Adviser
- ✓ Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)
- ✓ Independent Visitor (IV)
- ✓ Support Worker
- ✓ Virtual School (please see [Education and Training](#) for further details)
- ✓ Advocate

As stated, your own unique circumstances will decide exactly who is available for you – for example, a 17-year-old in semi-independent accommodation will not have a current foster carer. Formally, the Social Worker and IRO stop working with you when you reach the age of 18, but a care leaver who has a particularly strong relationship with their foster carer may very well keep in touch or ‘stay put’ (see [Home](#) for further details) – which is a good thing. Your Social Worker may also remain involved for a time after age 18, too.



## Floating Support –

We also work in partnership with an organisation called **CAYSH** who are based in the middle of Croydon and offer a floating support service to you if you need it – no, that doesn't mean you have a support worker levitating around you; it means you have a support worker who sort of 'floats' in and out of your life as you need them but who can provide more intensive or targeted support than your Personal Adviser.

CAYSH is an organisation that supports young people in a number of ways. In Croydon, CAYSH has two workers providing floating support for care leavers who are referred to them by their Personal Adviser.

The floating support consists of:

- ✓ General day-to-day assistance, such as accompanying you to appointments, helping you set up your gas/electricity supplier, budgeting, chasing immigration solicitors, etc.
- ✓ Signposting you to other appropriate services, such as Off the Record, Turning Point and StepChange.
- ✓ Working in partnership with your Personal Adviser to meet your needs in a way that works for you.

CAYSH also has a direct link to the charity 'Mind' in South Croydon, and is commencing the first of what will be an annual skills programme in September 2018.



## Advocacy Services – Barnardo's



If you feel as though you are struggling to express yourself, or your views are not being taken seriously, then you can approach an advocacy service to support you in making yourself heard. Although there are a number of advocacy services available, Croydon has a partnership with **Barnardo's** and will always try to work together with an advocate where they are responsibly and supportively involved. They will always be asked to provide evidence that you are happy for us to speak with them though!

Barnardo's notes that there is a growing recognition of the importance of advocacy for children and young people when plans are being made for their lives. Appreciating the views and feelings of the young person helps them feel involved and can help everyone make better decisions. Working like this is not just good practice, it is also a legal requirement.

The **Children Act 1989** says young people must be treated with respect and this means (amongst other things) that young people must be listened to. If a local authority is deciding what should happen to a child or young person they have to find out how they feel and what they want. They have to tell the child or young person what is happening and why.

Listening to children is at the heart of all Barnardo's work, but their work in advocacy especially shows Barnardo's commitment to giving children and young people a voice.

To request an advocate, phone Barnardo's on 0808 800 0017 or 020 8768 5058. Alternatively, email them on [Advocacy2@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:Advocacy2@barnardos.org.uk).



We're proud to run a support group that brings both Looked After children and care leavers together in a friendly, safe environment where they can develop independent skills.

Esther Outreach is a voluntarily-run initiative that provides practical support, advice and advocacy to care leavers. The practical support covers everything from assistance in finding work all the way through to preparing meals. Past workshops have covered money management, drug awareness, parenting, cooking on a budget and creative art.

There are two regular groups that run at the Turnaround Centre from 6.30-8.30pm as follows:

- ✓ Young Men Meeting on the first Wednesday of every month.
- ✓ Young Women Meeting on the third Wednesday of every month.

To sign up you can phone either 07847 844 269 or 07783 894 358, or email [estheroutreach@wvmf.org](mailto:estheroutreach@wvmf.org).

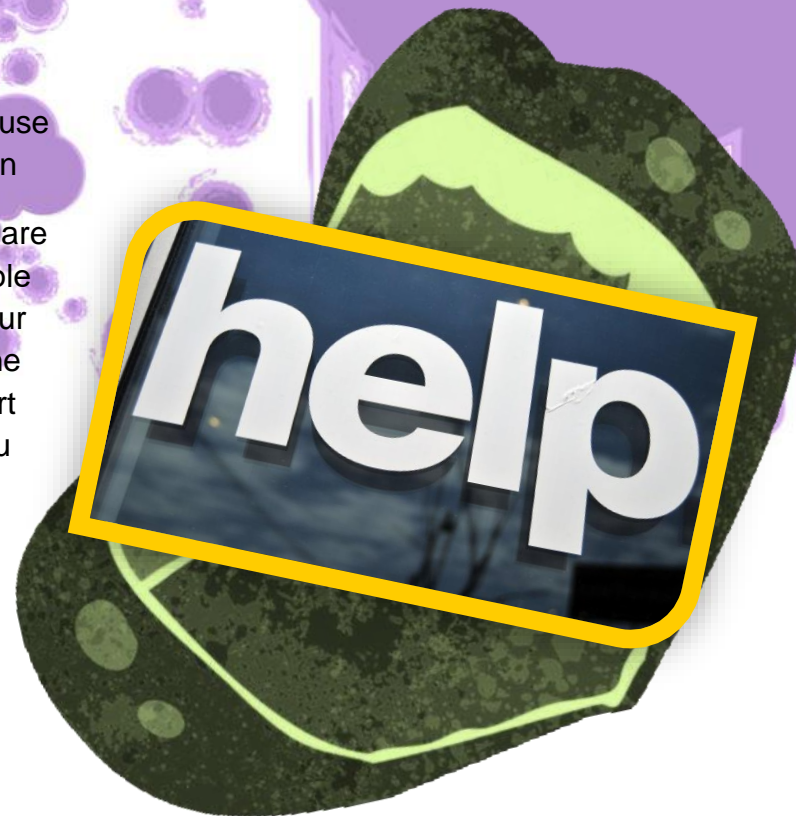


Sometimes the support you need is a little bolder in nature and that's when you can turn to **Civil Legal Advice (CLA)**, who may be able to offer you free and confidential advice as part of Legal Aid.

Some of the issues you can ask their support for include:

- ✓ Debt
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Domestic Abuse
- ✓ Discrimination

If they decide you are eligible, you'll be able to discuss your issues with someone and get their expert thinking on what you can do.





## *SEND Local Offer*

The Council publishes a Local Offer for young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). This website (see the link in red below) gives a wealth of information about local services and opportunities for young people with special needs. It is worth a look if you have ever had a Statement of Educational Needs, or an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) as you may be able to make use of some of the services offered.



## *Transitions Team*

It is important to let you know that we have an enhanced offer of support for young people with physical and mental health disabilities, as well as those with learning disabilities. This support comes from our Transitions Team who, if you meet the criteria for Adult Services support under the **Care Act 2014**, will take a lead role in providing you with a service. As well as a Personal Adviser, your support also comes from a Social Worker or Care Coordinator who specialises in working with young people with disabilities. However, you will still be legally entitled to all the rights and entitlements outlined in this document as any other care leaver. Parts of your service will, necessarily, be different to that received by other care leavers – for example, you will receive enhanced support with housing. For full information on the available support, have a look at our **SEND Offer**.

## *Independent Visitor (IV) Service*



We also have the Independent Visitor (IV) Service, which recruits, trains and manages volunteers who meet with children looked after one on one to build a supportive friendship. IVs give children looked after a chance to have fun, take a break from their daily lives with someone who is just there for them, and to model positive behaviours. They also

offer a form of continuity – with many matches lasting years – that often cannot be offered by professionals and carers in social care.

In terms of what they *actually* do, IVs do what you want to do! They travel with young people for cinema trips, cycling in the park, days out, an ice cream or a burger – but they're really there to listen, to chat, to reflect and to care. They might meet a child in central Croydon or further afield.

If you're 16 or 17, an IV is really worth considering and even after you turn 18, they can be in your life for a further six months. Result.

## 21-25 Year-Olds' Service Offer

Now, if you are between the ages of 21 and 25 our service may look a little different to how it was when you were 18, 19 and 20. This slight change is because of the **Children and Social Work Act 2017 – Section 3** which means you can ask for support from us up until you turn 25, whether you are in education or not. It used to be that, at 21, if you were working or not in education or training, we would say goodbye, but that is no longer the case if you still need support. Also, if we do say goodbye to each other then you can still return to us before your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday to ask for more support.



We recognise that a 21-to-25-year-old is likely to be a lot more independent than someone younger. So, as you approach your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, your Personal Adviser will sit down with you and work out the following:

- ✓ Whether you still need our support.
- ✓ If you do need support, what tasks you need support with.
- ✓ If you do need support, how often we will keep in touch and how we will keep in touch.

After this has been discussed, your Pathway Plan will be updated accordingly. If you would like support with a lot of things, then you may require a full needs assessment and a pathway plan; if you only want support with a couple of things – such as finding a job or accessing a

an activity or club – then a full needs assessment is going to be overkill.

But if you decide you're happy for us to say goodbye at 21 then – guess what? – we're going to write to you on each of your birthdays until you turn 25 just to remind you that we're still here ready to support you if you need it! And, if a few years pass and you think, 'Yeah, actually I could do with a little help at the moment,' then you can come into the Turnaround Centre during duty hours and the following happens:

- **Request:** firstly, you tell the receptionist that you'd like to see the duty Leaving Care worker to talk about your current needs.
- **Needs Assessment:** the duty worker will talk with you about what tasks you'd like support with. Perhaps you only want help with something small or perhaps you'd like quite a lot of assistance. Either way, the duty worker will write all the important information down. You will then provide your contact details and leave the building (unless you need emergency support).
- **Allocation:** you will be contacted within two weeks and told who your allocated Personal Adviser will be, and they will meet up with you and start providing support. We will try our best to make sure your worker is the last Personal Adviser you had before we said goodbye.



# HOME

## Overview

One of the key forms of support we will give you is an offer of accommodation. Housing in Croydon, to put it bluntly, is hard to come by and very expensive. There is also a big shortage of 'council houses' and 'council flats' (sometimes called social housing), and this means that care leavers should expect to be renting privately for a number of years. However, our Housing Department does help care leavers by finding landlords who will provide accommodation for care leavers where you won't have to fund lots of up-front costs such as deposits or rent in advance. This may also include accommodation for young people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). Our Housing

Department also makes available at least 15 places in social housing each year.

In addition, there is supported accommodation available to young people who have a higher level of need which may have staff on site or on call to provide extra support.

Finally, looked after children aged 16 or 17 will have foster care and semi-independent homes available to them, and there is also a Staying Put option available for young people who wish to remain with their foster carers after turning 18.



## Foster Home

The most common form of accommodation for 16 and 17-year-olds in Croydon is foster care. The support of a foster carer is absolutely vital to ensuring you are ready for adulthood, and the foster home itself can be treated as a 'practice arena' for tackling issues as an adult might: for example, budgeting to limited finances; shopping for the right kinds of food; learning to prepare meals; and understanding and responding to letters and documents (e.g. utility bills, tenancy agreement, etc.). The wisdom of an experienced foster carer will make the difference to whether you make a successful start to adulthood or not.

## Semi-independent Home

We believe that foster care is the best place for 16 and 17-year-olds but for those who cannot live in foster care, a semi-independent home monitored by Croydon Council offers young people an opportunity to live independently with *other* young people under the same roof. We work with several semi-independent providers to ensure that young people who are ready for this step will be given the opportunity to have a go at it.

## Staying Put

If you and your foster carer agree, one option that might be preferable is for you to remain with your foster carer *after* turning 18 and even up to age 21. Such an agreement is called Staying Put and is an option to consider if you are not yet ready or do not want to leave what has become your home. It may be short as well as long term. For example, if you had a year left on your college course and intended to go to university; you, your Social Worker and foster carer might consider



Staying Put as the first choice for housing once you become an adult, so as not to disrupt your learning. If you have a physical or learning disability and can receive services under the Care Act 2014, your foster carers could become Shared Lives carers which has no time limit on it.



## *Independent Accommodation*

At the age of 18, as with the majority of care leavers, you may move into your own accommodation which is most likely to be a private-rented room in a shared house – or house with multiple occupants (HMO), as it is often called. Very few young people are fortunate enough to be offered a studio or one-bed flat and so the expectation should be that you might have to live with other young people.

The independent accommodation is offered by our Housing Department and must be requested through something called a

Housing Panel by your Social Worker before you become an adult. An effort is made to find somewhere in your preferred area to live – so if you were studying at Lambeth College, for instance, then we will try to find you somewhere to live nearby; however, there is never a guarantee that this can be done and you run the risk of running out of options and even homelessness if you refuse multiple offers of accommodation. You will be able to move in as soon as you sign the tenancy agreement and receive the keys. Unless there is good reason not to, you will be given the opportunity to see what is being offered before you move in.

Oh, and on that point: what is a tenancy agreement? A **tenancy agreement** is basically a legal contract between you and a landlord stating what *your* rights are and what your landlord's rights are.

There are different types of tenancy agreement, but the most common type is an assured shorthold tenancy (AST) which means your deposit is protected under a government-approved tenancy deposit scheme and, at the end of the tenancy period (as stated on the agreement), the tenancy will just carry on going unless you or the landlord choose otherwise.

But you may not live in an accommodation under a tenancy agreement at all – you may instead have a *licence* agreement, which is similar to a tenancy but is very specific about a (usually) *short* period of time you can live in a property. Generally speaking – and being perfectly honest – you tend to have fewer rights with this type of agreement, so be careful!

Accommodation will also be found by us for young people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), though there are some key differences between how this property is handled versus how property is handled for care leavers with recourse to public funds (please see [Money](#) for further details).

You will have to sign and maintain your tenancy agreement, but should make sure you read it through first to be certain you are comfortable with it. You will also be expected to pay rent on the property in a timely manner and will be able to access a Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA) to furnish it (again, please see [Money](#) for further details). Your Personal Adviser will make sure that you have the things you need when you first move in, including something nice from them and your carer to mark the event.

Finally, support from Housing to find independent private rented accommodation will not stretch to 22, 23 and 24-year-olds, and so they will have to access Croydon's [Independent Living – Young Adults Support](#) page for advice. However, you can approach the Council for support with a deposit or rent in advance (please see [Money](#) for further details).

### *Supported Accommodation*

Supported accommodation is, as the name suggests, housing where there is some type of on or off-site support. There are occasions where it is more appropriate for you to be offered this type of accommodation – perhaps you have learning difficulties and do not feel confident living independently right now, but were unable to enter into a Staying Put or Shared Lives agreement. Alternatively, we might be worried that you are at risk of exploitation or substance misuse and feel you would benefit from a higher level of support. All of the supported accommodation that the Council uses is located within the borough of Croydon.



### *Council Houses and Council Flats*

Owing to high local pressures on limited housing stock, we – in Croydon – cannot guarantee you a council property so you should be prepared to rent privately and we will give

you support in doing this. We will also support you to apply for a place on the Housing Register. The council gives priority in our Allocations Scheme to care leavers. If you were previously on the Housing Register, you may have been removed and should ask your worker to confirm this for you, so we can look at getting you added again. If you live outside of Croydon, we will happily explore whether living in a council house or flat is a possibility and help you to apply.

### *Vacation Accommodation*

Legally, we have to offer accommodation to care leaver university students during the extended holiday periods (Christmas and summer) if they have nowhere else to live. If you are at university and your accommodation is not for 365 days a year, then you will be entitled to support from us. Alternatively, if you find somewhere yourself for the holiday then you could be given up to £400.00 per month as a contribution towards your rent. Other care leavers may be able to make arrangements with family members or friends, however, and will not need support. Remember: this duty also applies to care leavers at university who are qualifying, as well as former relevant.



## *Release from Custody*

If you are in custody – be it a prison or a young offender institution (YOI) – we will make plans for where you will live once you are released, so long as you are still entitled to a Leaving Care service. We'll begin by liaising with Offender Management in your prison who will update us on your release date. Your Personal Adviser informs our Housing department and they will find you an appropriate home. We will take into account the fact that there may be areas in which you may not be safe and find supported accommodation if you require it. If you were not receiving a service from us when you went into custody but are still under 25 when released, please ask for our support if you need accommodation.

## *Homelessness*

The protocol for supporting you if you're homeless or need emergency accommodation differs depending on your age. If you are looked after and aged 16 or 17 (or are 16 or 17 and a relevant care leaver) we will find appropriate accommodation as follows:

- ✓ Night stop-type or short-term supported lodgings in homes of trained and vetted hosts.
- ✓ Emergency beds in specialist young peoples' supported accommodation services.
- ✓ Other specifically designed crash pad services with on-site support.
- ✓ Emergency foster home or semi-independent accommodation.

However, if you are aged 18 to 21 and homeless you should present at the Turnaround Centre as early in the day as possible and your application for emergency support will be completed by a member of staff in the Drop in Zone (DiZ). You will then be able to attend a same-day appointment with a member of our Housing department at Bernard Weatherill House (BWH). Depending on the reasons for homelessness, we may offer emergency accommodation until housing issues can be resolved.

However, if you are aged 22, 23 or 24, you are unable to declare yourself homeless at the Turnaround Centre but you will still be able come to BWH and be assessed the same as anyone else.

## *Out of Hours Support*

If you find yourself homeless outside of office working hours (9am-5pm / Monday to Friday), or in need of emergency Social Worker support that cannot wait until the next working day, then you can ring our Emergency Duty Service by calling the Contact Centre on 0208 726 6400 and asking for the Out of Hours social work team. This is really for emergencies only and you must make contact with your Personal Adviser as soon as possible to advise them of your situation and follow the homelessness procedure (see above).





# MONEY

## Overview

We take our financial responsibilities to you very seriously and do our best to make sure that you do not have to go to bed each night wondering where the next meal is coming from because your bank account is empty. Financial support does not mean that we pay you money every week; it instead describes a range of ways in which Personal Advisers and other Council employees are expected to help you get your money situation looking healthy.



## Financial Entitlements

There are several legal entitlements for you to be aware of with regards money. So, here's what you can expect to receive from us. A full financial policy can be made available to you for more details about your specific eligibility:

- ✓ **Five weekly payments** upon turning 18 of up to £60.00 (£240.00 in total) upon turning 18 to help you out until benefit or your salary payments can commence.

- ✓ **Setting Up Home Allowance** of £2,000.00 to be used for furnishing your first home.
- ✓ A **Higher Education Bursary (HEB)** of £2,000.00, usually paid in instalments of £666.67 over the three academic years of university (obviously, you have to be at university to get this!).
- ✓ **Support to make an application to Student Finance England** for tuition and maintenance loans.
- ✓ A **Graduation Grant** of up to £1000.00 to cover the cost of the graduation ceremony and gown hire etc., and to cover relocation, deposit and rent in advance costs when leaving university.
- ✓ **No Council Tax to pay** up to age 25 if you have a council tax liability.
- ✓ **Expenses** linked with accessing and remaining in education, employment or training (for example, the cost of a suit for an interview).
- ✓ **Support to open a bank account** if you've not already done so.
- ✓ **Support to get a National Insurance (NI) number**, which you will need for any benefit applications and work.
- ✓ **A financial gift on birthdays and/or holidays.**

## Budgeting

Budgeting is a vital skill we all need to be developing from as young an age as possible. Help is at hand though. You can expect advice from your Personal Adviser on how best to use your money and how to make sure you're getting all the money you're entitled to. This support will be ongoing, but in times of crisis it will be more focused, and you will have a **Financial Assessment** to look very carefully at what is going on with your money – this is how it works:

- ✓ **Assess:** firstly, we work out all your regular income and outgoings using an exciting form available on the same webpage as the Local Offer, but also available through your Personal Adviser.
- ✓ **Analyse:** secondly, you and your Personal Adviser will work out where the problem areas are and decide what needs to change.
- ✓ **Amend:** finally, the Personal Adviser will help you 'maximise your income' (e.g. looking at whether there are any extra benefits you can claim, or whether there are any bursaries for which you are eligible); and you will start to make changes to your spending habits, else you'll be eating tins of baked beans forever.

If you are attending university, you will have to make sure you budget to live on your student loan/grant for a 12-month period.

## Income Maximisation

Income maximisation is the term we use when we talk about helping you get all the money you're entitled to.

Now, your financial entitlements will depend on a few things, including your legal status, your age and whether you're a student, working or neither of these. However, some of the support that *may* be offered to you is outlined below:



- ✓ **Benefits:** referral to our friendly Income Maximisation Team who can help sort out any issues with your benefit payments through direct links with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (they're the guys who manage the Jobcentre). They can also work out whether there are any other benefits you can claim that you didn't already know about.
- ✓ **Bursaries:** there are several bursaries available to which you may be entitled, including the **16 to 19 Bursary Fund**, which can be accessed while you're at college. Again, the sheer range of bursaries reflects the fact that everyone's situation is different. We will also consider other bursary or grant options, such as **Buttle UK** or the **Jack Petchey Foundation**.
- ✓ **Ongoing Support:** in exceptional cases, we *might* consider offering you temporary financial support – usually when we are worried about your immediate safety (please read on for specifics).

## Croydon Council Gateway Service

We simply *have* to mention our Gateway service (it's won awards, y'know!), which is all about solving problems with money and housing as early as possible to stop things getting worse for you. If you have any benefits questions, you can phone them on 0800 731 5920 or go to a **benefit surgery**. And if money is still tight, you can consider applying for some form of **discretionary support** to help with general living and housing payments, including a **deposit or rent in advance**.

## Leaving Care Discretionary Payments

As a rule of thumb, we will not make any ongoing payment to you – nor to any other care leaver with recourse to public funds – as it is

expected that if you are not earning you will be accessing benefits (**Universal Credit** in Croydon) to support yourself. However, there are exceptional circumstances where we think you may need some help – but we make our decision by thinking about the following ideas:

- ✓ Are there genuine safeguarding concerns and you would be placed at immediate risk if you do not receive financial support?
- ✓ Is there a SMART plan in place (ideally reflected in a Pathway Plan) of how you and your Personal Adviser will try to overcome your current money issues?
- ✓ Have you provided a bank statement to confirm that you have nothing in your account?
- ✓ If your Universal Credit payment has stopped, have you tried to fix the issue and/or access an **Advance Payment** from your local Jobcentre?

If we decide to help you, you will be offered one or more of the following:

- ✓ Food Vouchers (Tesco or Iceland)
- ✓ Food Bag and toiletries
- ✓ Referral to a food bank
- ✓ Direct payment to your bank account
- ✓ Oyster card or top-up

Your request will be entered into your Pathway Plan as well, so there is a record. But, more importantly, there will be a discussion, within your Plan, of your money situation and how we can work together to improve it.

And another thing: if we do offer to pay money to your bank account you will not receive the payment immediately; it will take at the very least a week owing to the way our financial systems work. There is nothing your Personal Adviser can do to change that.

## *Children Looked After (CLA) Savings, Child Trust Fund and Junior ISA*

You might be able to access three different types of savings depending on the length of time you have been in care and how much the carers saved for you:

1. Children Looked After (CLA) Savings are savings your care providers (foster carer, residential home etc.) would have made for you and should have been returned to Croydon Council when you left their care, so these can be paid to you when you turn 18. The Council recommended that providers save £5.00 per week for you while you are in care and 0-10 years old, and £10.00 per week while you are in care and 11-18 years old. The Social Worker and Personal Advisers would trace down any savings made by carers and these will be paid to you as soon as received by the council. Some of the savings are stopped at source so these are held by the council or are in your JSA.
2. The **Child Trust Fund** is another form of savings that Croydon takes care of for you and you can request the money from it by speaking to your worker when you turn 18. However, the fund will only be available to you if *all* of the following criteria apply:
  - a. You were born *between* 1st September 2002 and 2nd January 2011.
  - b. You were looked after by Croydon before 3rd April 2011.
  - c. You were living in the UK.
  - d. You weren't subject to any immigration restrictions or, if you were, your restrictions were no longer active before 3rd April 2011.



3. The **Junior ISA** is sorted out by the Share Foundation on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE). When it's set up for you, £200.00 is put in it by the government and, over time, that amount grows a little. At the age of 18, you can request for some or all of the money to be paid to you. However, the ISA will only be available to you if *all* of the following criteria apply:
- You must have been born *before* 1st September 2002 or *after* 2nd January 2011.
  - You must have been in care for at least 12 months uninterrupted.
  - You must be under the age of 18 (on application).



## *No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)*

If you have NRPF, you are unable to claim benefits and have access to social housing. You may not be legally able to work as well (please see the **Migrant Support** section for full clarification on NRPF). However, we have a duty to support you, so we make the following provision available until a final decision is made about your immigration or asylum status:

- ✓ The **provision of a prepaid card** to be used in place of a normal debit or credit card.
- ✓ **Weekly subsistence payments** of £45.00 to be used for food, drink, toiletries, clothing and other essentials.

- ✓ **Weekly subsistence payments for your children** if you have NRPF, as follows:
  - £40.39 per child *under* the age of 1.
  - £38.39 per child aged between 1 and 3 years.
  - £35.39 per child aged *over* 3.
- ✓ **Fully subsidised rent and utility bills** in accommodation sourced by Croydon Council.
- ✓ **Travel payments for getting to college** as this should not come out of your weekly subsistence.

However, this support with money is conditional, which means we can stop paying you in the following circumstances:

- ✗ You fail to comply with a Removal Order.
- ✗ Your application for extended leave is refused.
- ✗ Your appeal against refusal is dismissed.

Oh, and we *do* expect you to stay in contact with us if we're providing you a subsistence payment so that we know you still need our support.

And here's the legal bit: we have made this decision in line with the **Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 – Schedule 3**. A Human Rights Act assessment will be conducted by the local authority to assess eligibility for further support.

If you have NRPF we may be unable to pay university tuition fees, so if your immigration status allows you to be in higher education you will need to source funding for this by way of a scholarship or other charitable means. Don't forget: you will have to pay tuition fees at the International Student rate!

## Care Leavers in Prison

Care leavers who are in prison can receive some financial support from us, depending on what the prison might be providing (see the entitlements policy for details). You can also take up work inside prison to pay for any additional items you want.



# MIGRANT SUPPORT

## Overview

Many of our Personal Advisers and Social Workers are extremely knowledgeable about immigration and asylum. They will do their utmost to support you if you do not yet have leave to remain in the UK. Let's have a look at what that support looks like.



## No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

If you have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), you are not entitled to benefits or social housing and you might not be permitted to work either. To be certain, check your biometric residence permit (BRP) – if it says **FORBIDDEN FROM TAKING EMPLOYMENT** then you will be treated by us as having NRPF.

Much of the support you will receive from us is going to be the same as for other care leavers but your pathway plan will address the fact that your future in the UK is uncertain. So, you're going to have a Personal Adviser, a Pathway Plan and general advice and assistance. In fact, the main differences are only financial (see the [Money](#) section), accommodation (see the [Home](#) section) and work-related (see the [Jobs](#) section). There are other restrictions regarding the type of education or training available to you.

If you have NRPF and have exhausted all your appeal rights, it is likely you will have to return to your country of origin at some point. We will help you to plan what will happen next. In your Pathway Plan, therefore, you can expect discussion around the following:

- ✓ What happens if your claim is either successful, unsuccessful or while you are waiting for a decision.
- ✓ If unsuccessful and all appeals are exhausted, the arrangements to help support you when you return.
- ✓ What dangers or risks you may face in any situation
- ✓ How you could engage in education/training in the UK to give you skills for use back home.
- ✓ How you will comply with any Home Office conditions, such as attending weekly meetings at Lunar House.
- ✓ What voluntary return schemes there are and how you could take advantage of these.



And so one thing you do need to know about is...

## *Deportation*

Under UK immigration law, a Deportation Order may be made against a foreign national, such as yourself if you have exhausted appeal rights. This not only allows for you to be removed from the UK but also means you can be kept in custody until you are removed. The Order also means you can't return to the UK, so long as it remains in force – it doesn't matter what previous leave to remain you may have had.

A Deportation Order may be made for any of these reasons:

- ✗ It's been decided that it would be in the public's interest for you to be removed from the UK.
- ✗ You are the spouse, civil partner or child of someone who has a Deportation Order.
- ✗ You are over 17 years old, have been convicted of a crime which carries a prison sentence and the court recommends you be deported after you've served your sentence. The prison sentence can be bypassed altogether and you are simply deported – the more serious the crime, the more likely this is to happen.

A Deportation Order should not be made if it breaches your **Human Rights** or **The 1951 Refugee Convention**.



Once a Deportation Order has been made against you, you may be held in a detention centre without any warning, but you will also be advised of your right to appeal. This will be particularly unnerving if an Order has been made against you and you also have a child. The reality is that your child would also be at risk of being removed with you, unless they live separately with the other parent and **they do not** face deportation – in such circumstances, the child may avoid deportation.

Where a Deportation Order is usually reserved for someone who has been convicted of a crime, Administrative Removal is another term you may hear and it is exactly the same as a Deportation Order except it is for someone who breached the conditions of their leave to remain or who obtained permission to stay in the UK through deception. You can appeal an Administrative Removal decision if you have the right to do so, else you can choose to leave the UK. There is some additional helpful information available on the **Citizens Advice** website.

Now, if you're reading all of this and you recognise it as your situation, then you may be tempted to 'go underground', which is to go into hiding in the UK. It's illegal to hide from the Home Office, but even if you did it successfully life will always be difficult for you. You'll never be able to legally work, you won't be able to open a bank account, rent a flat, buy a house and you will always be looking over your shoulder, because if the Home Office find you they will remove you. So, it's your choice, but we strongly urge you not to do it and will never support you in your decision to do it. You need to be clear about that.

Anyway, if you're subject to a Deportation Order or to being removed, one day you are likely to be...



## *Detained*

You'll only be taken to a detention centre when you're going to be deported in the near future, unless the Home Office thinks you might try to avoid it. You're most likely to be taken into detention when you visit your reporting centre, but it can happen at any time. If you have children they'll be detained with you, so it's important to prepare them.

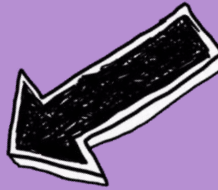
Once you're in detention, you won't be deported for at least 72 hours. You should be given information in your own language explaining your rights while you're there. If you don't receive this, you should ask for it.

Here are your rights though:

- ✓ Have visitors, receive post and telephone calls.
- ✓ Apply for bail.
- ✓ Keep your personal property.
- ✓ Communicate with the outside world – for example, to tell people in your home country that you may be returning.
- ✓ Live in accommodation with your family, if they are detained with you.

You can also ask to see a legal adviser while you're in detention. They'll help you apply for bail and make further appeals if new information about your situation is uncovered.

## *Other Agency Support –*



There are a number of organisations that are able to offer more support to you with regards your immigration claim.

The **Refugee Council** is one of the leading charities in the UK offering support and advice to people who are seeking asylum.

The charity offers a range of helpful services to asylum seekers and refugees, including **destitution support** to those with NRPF and **therapeutic services** that encompass the following:

- ✓ Psycho-social Groups
- ✓ Creative Focus
- ✓ Safer Refugee Women
- ✓ Epione Project
- ✓ Mother & Toddler Group
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Volunteers and Student Placements

The Refugee Council also offers practical support that, in addition to other services, includes:

- ✓ Signposting to helpful services for asylum seekers by phone, in person or through its online resources directory.
- ✓ Classes to help with learning English.

Finally, it is involved in a great deal of policy work, research, parliamentary work and campaigning to try and improve the lived experiences of all young people who have claimed asylum in the UK.

## *Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) and British Citizenship*

For those of you with the legal right to stay in the UK, you'll be considering making an application for **Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)** once your Refugee status expires. We'll be right behind your bid to get the permanent right to live in the UK and will be able to offer you a long list of immigration-specialist solicitors who can help you make an application. We anticipate most of you will be able to access Legal Aid to fund the application and ask that you be as patient as you can, as it takes the Home Office six months (give or take) to make a decision. When you send off your application, you'll have to return your expired Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) – so please be aware of

that! We are not able to fund your application if you are not able to access Legal Aid.

The absolute pinnacle of settling in the UK, however, is getting **British citizenship**; once you have this, you will have all the same rights as anyone who was born in the UK – that includes the right to vote and the right to get a passport. However, there are two

big obstacles you need to be aware of: the cost and the test. To apply, you will need to pay around £1,250.00 out of your own pocket (Legal Aid does not cover the cost and we may not pay for it either, but ask your Personal Adviser to make sure). You will also need to sit a test. Here are a few genuine examples of questions you can expect to test your **vital** knowledge of this country:



You'll probably be pleased to hear that there are apps available for you to do some practice questions – try testing your Personal Adviser and see if they'd be granted citizenship.

If you're successful, you can expect to enjoy a ceremony commemorating your achievement, which will involve singing the National Anthem while looking at a picture of the Queen's face (below).



# HEALTH AND STAYING SAFE

## Overview

The most important thing you have is your health and because of that we do offer a range of support options to you. Some of that support is offered at quite a 'local' level by Personal Advisers, but plenty is offered at a more 'corporate' level too. The Council has a number of initiatives already up and running that will benefit care leavers. It also has links with organisations in Croydon who are ready with some important help should you ever need it. As a starting point though, you can find a complete directory of services available in the borough by going to the **Croydon Health Services** website.



## Personal Adviser Support

Every care leaver will have different support needs when it comes to health and it will be for you to ask your Personal Adviser for help where you need it. For example, if you feel there are things in your past that you really need to talk to someone about, then your Personal Adviser can direct you to services and perhaps attend some of the initial meetings with you, if you'd like some moral support.

However, there are some key things that you might want to consider asking your Personal Adviser to help you with:

- ✓ **Registering with a GP, Dentist and an Optician** if you have not done so already or if you have moved to a new area. You have the right to choose your primary healthcare providers and cannot legally be refused treatment based on any outstanding application for leave to remain in the UK. To check for your nearest health service go to the **NHS Service Search** tool.
- ✓ **Signposting** you to appropriate services for your physical, mental and sexual health.
- ✓ **Attending hospital appointments** with you for non-routine health concerns, as these can often be stressful and so it is good for you to have someone there with you. Also, if you do end up as a patient at hospital then your Personal Adviser should come in and see you.
- ✓ **Advice on healthy living** which will include anything from being smart about having safe sex all the way through to having a balanced diet.
- ✓ **Leisure and Fitness** passes to Croydon facilities are available to all 16/17 year olds and if you are 18+, can be requested through your PA.



In Croydon, we have the expertise of someone called the designated Looked After Children (LAC) Nurse who supports you until you turn 18. They are responsible for several things, including booking you in for your annual health assessment and sometimes even travelling up to 20 miles out of the borough to visit you if there is an urgent need (this is discretionary though).

Shortly before you turn 18, the LAC Nurse will put together a Care Leaver Summary, which is basically your health autobiography with details of all the major events in your life that relate to your physical and mental health, as well as other important information for you, such as:

- ✓ NHS records
- ✓ CLA Health Assessments
- ✓ Current GP

The CLA Nurse, after putting together the Care Leaver Summary, will send it out directly to you before you reach adulthood.

## *Croydon University Hospital (CUH)*

We're lucky enough to have a big, local hospital here in Croydon with a brand new state-of-the-art Accident and Emergency department, a very well-respected maternity unit and a whole host of other services.

**Croydon University Hospital** can be contacted on 020 8401 3000 and is open 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. It can be found at **530 London Road, Croydon CR7 7YE.**



*Play Me!*



# Mental Health Services



Just as we all have physical health, *everyone* has mental health: sometimes it is pretty good, but other times it's *not* so good. We are experienced in supporting care leavers with a very wide range of diagnosed conditions, including:

- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Anxiety Disorders
- Bipolar Disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Dissociative Disorders
- Personality Disorders

If you also happen to have one of these diagnoses – or another diagnosis – then your Personal Adviser will ensure that the support offered is suitably tailored to something that works for you. If you are a former UASC, we have additional support available to you through our team of UASC & Care Leavers Project Coordinators. Just ask your Personal Adviser.

**Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)** is a free service provided by the South London and Maudsley (SLaM) NHS Foundation Trust and is a popular way of accessing 'talking therapy' for more manageable mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety.

All you need is to be registered with a GP in Croydon and at least 18 years old. You can self-refer or ask your GP to do it for you and a member of the service will contact you to make an initial phone

assessment, before deciding what support would be best for you – whether that is with IAPT or someone else.

And there's more...

**Off The Record Youth Counselling Croydon** was founded in 1994 to provide free, independent and professional counselling for 14-25 year olds in the Croydon area. Since then the charity has expanded to include further areas of work including Black and Minority Ethnic group and mental health work; a young carers service offering support to young people under 26 who are caring for a parent or sibling; a specialist counselling service for young refugees; online counselling and workshops; and counselling services for young people in the boroughs of Sutton and Merton.

To discuss the possibility of receiving their support, call 020 8251 0251 or email them at [croydon@talkofftherecord.org](mailto:croydon@talkofftherecord.org).



## Sexual Health Services

We encourage you to be smart about sex and your Personal Adviser will discuss this issue with you in a non-judgemental way – so be prepared for it! As with any other health matter, your Personal Adviser will be supportive of you and happy to offer their advice, but the borough does have ample support for its residents in the form of the **Croydon Sexual Health Centre** based at Croydon University Hospital (CUH). Croydon's sexual health team also do 'drop ins' at local colleges to talk with young people about keeping safe. Croydon also has its own **Condom Distribution Scheme** called the C Card, which will allow you to pick up free condoms from a number of places in the borough. Remember: if you're having sex, always be prepared!



## Drugs and Alcohol –



Again, we encourage you to be smart about drugs and alcohol and your Personal Adviser will discuss this as well in a non-judgemental way, but if you ever have issues along these lines then we will urge you quite strongly to get the help you need. Once again, we value your health and hope you would too.

Croydon is fortunate enough to have specialist support available if you do ever have need of it. **Turning Point** is a national service that provides support across a broad spectrum but, in Croydon, it runs the Croydon Recovery Network, which includes a service for substance misuse.

The organisation will provide you with a support worker who links you to other organisations who can help you turn things around. Nothing changes if you don't put in the hard work as well, but there is always someone there to help and guide you.

## Healthy Eating and Living

Your Personal Adviser will talk to you about shopping for a balanced diet, ensuring you're getting enough fruit and veg and the importance of not stuffing your face with a takeaway every night...and yes, Croydon does have a lot of takeaways, unfortunately, but it does also have **Surrey Street Market**, where you can pick up good food every day. The **NHS Eat Well** site is also definitely worth a look.

The Live Well Croydon programme, which is the healthy lifestyle service for residents has a website called **Just Be Croydon** which offers advice, hints and tips on six health topics such as being happy, active, alcohol aware, sexually safe, food smart and smoke free.



Nom, nom, nom, nom...





## Family Justice Centre

The Family Justice Centre brings together different people who can help you if you're a victim of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence (DASV). This service is open to all those experiencing abuse and can offer support at any stage of need. The Centre offers you all the support you need in one place so you don't have to go from agency to agency, telling your story over and over, in order to get help.

The Family Justice Centre is run by a multi-agency team that helps you access support by:

- ✓ Listening and responding to your needs in a safe environment.
- ✓ Helping you access a wide range of DASV expertise, support and services.

The team itself provides:

- ✓ Fully-rounded assessment of need and risk.
- ✓ Advice and support on all aspects of DASV.
- ✓ Legal advice and support to obtain injunctions.
- ✓ Support and advice to access emergency safe accommodation.
- ✓ Support to access specialist services and advice for:
  - No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)-related issues.
  - Support for children.
  - Rape and sexual abuse.
- ✓ A drop-in and appointment service.
- ✓ A domestic abuse helpline for survivors and practitioners.

The Family Justice Centre can be contacted on **020 8688 0100**, or emailed at [familyjusticecentre@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:familyjusticecentre@croydon.gov.uk). It is open Monday, Tuesday and Friday, from 9am-5pm, and Wednesday, from 8am-5pm. It can be found at **Park Lane, Croydon CR0 1JD**.

# EDUCATION AND TRAINING

## Overview

We're keen to see you achieve all you can through education, as it provides the foundations for finding a higher-skilled job but, more than that, education helps build your overall knowledge, teaches you new skills and lets you meet other like-

minded people. If you are not in education or work then we will do everything in our power to change that.

Croydon itself has a number of local colleges and other opportunities for studying. Croydon College, for example, not only runs further education courses, but also offers some higher education courses. You don't have to be academic and acing exams to get something out of education, and there are more than enough vocational courses available too – so whatever you want to do, we're right behind you and we'll do our best to see you achieve your goal.

## Personal Adviser Support

As ever, your Personal Adviser and your NEET Officer (Care Leavers) will be your main supporters in finding a course of education or training, or indeed being there to advise you if you're already doing it.

But what exactly can they help you with? Here's an overview:

- ✓ **Signposting** you to education and training opportunities that match your interests.
- ✓ **Planning** your overall route from education to employment with you and assisting you in your applications for further or higher education where you need any help.
- ✓ **Attending parents' evenings and college/university open days** with you so your Personal Adviser stays an active participant in your educational progress.
- ✓ **Liaising with college/university tutors** to provide more joined-up support to you while you are on a course of further or higher education.

## Personal Education Plan (PEP)

If you're 16, 17 or 18 you can expect to have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). A PEP is a good opportunity for your Personal Adviser and your college or 6th form tutor to meet to discuss and review your academic progress and identify any other form of support you'd like and/or you are entitled to. The Virtual School will also track and monitor your attendance and progress to enable us to intervene and advocate when required.

## Virtual School

Like many other local authorities, we have a Virtual School in our Education department. What is a Virtual School, you might say? Well, it sort of suggests some kind of big cyber classroom with computer-generated teachers. As splendid as that would be, it's not the case.

The Virtual School is a small team of people who ensure you get all the help you want to make informed decisions about what you want to





do next in education, taking into account your aspirations, skills and potential. They also make sure there are termly Personal Education Plan (PEP) review meetings until you turn 19.

The team's experienced Education Advisors will support you to find up-to-date information about careers, jobs, education courses, volunteering and training opportunities – so you'll never be short of help!

## Local Support



Croydon  
College



There are lots of education opportunities in Croydon and it would take quite a while to list them all, so we're going to give you some of the key possibilities that might interest you – however, please do speak to your Personal Adviser, as they will have plenty more!

First up, **Croydon Adult Learning and Training (CALAT)** is a local authority adult learning provider, delivering a wide range of academic, pre-vocational and vocational courses. Courses are offered in three main locations (Central Croydon, New Addington and Strand House in Thornton Heath); two of these centres are located in areas with pockets of high deprivation to reach priority groups. Targeted provision is also delivered at children's centres, schools and community venues to support access to learning and family learning. A key focus is to prepare learners for employment, through embedding employability skills across the curriculum. The service also works with businesses and employers to raise the skills level of employees.

CALAT currently delivers a programme of apprenticeships in:

- ✓ Business Administration
- ✓ Early Years
- ✓ Health and Social Care
- ✓ Teaching Assistants (this area is being developed further and the service is working in close collaboration with Croydon's Employment Pathways Team).

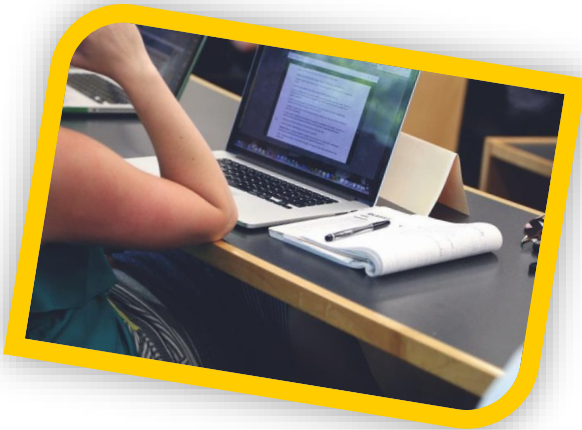
Another key education provider in the borough is **Croydon College**, which is situated close to East Croydon Station and takes in 8,000 students each year. It has an Ofsted rating of 'Good' and provides both college and university-level courses. The courses can be studied part-time, full-time or in the evenings and, as well as academic pursuits, there are vocational or industry- and work-based options too.

Qualifications on offer include:

- ✓ Skills for Life
- ✓ ESOL Certificate
- ✓ Foundation Learning
- ✓ BTEC Level 1, 2 and 3 Diplomas
- ✓ NVQ Level 2 and 3
- ✓ Intermediate, Advanced and Higher Apprenticeship
- ✓ Higher National Certificate (HNC)
- ✓ Foundation Degree (FdA)
- ✓ Bachelor's Degree (BA)



The college also offers an **Enrichment Programme**, which lets you get involved in a number of different activities both locally and more widely. There is also the all-important **Employability Hub** which is there to help you take your next steps after getting a qualification. If you fancy support with job hunting, completing a CV, applying for university through UCAS or preparing for an interview, then all you need to

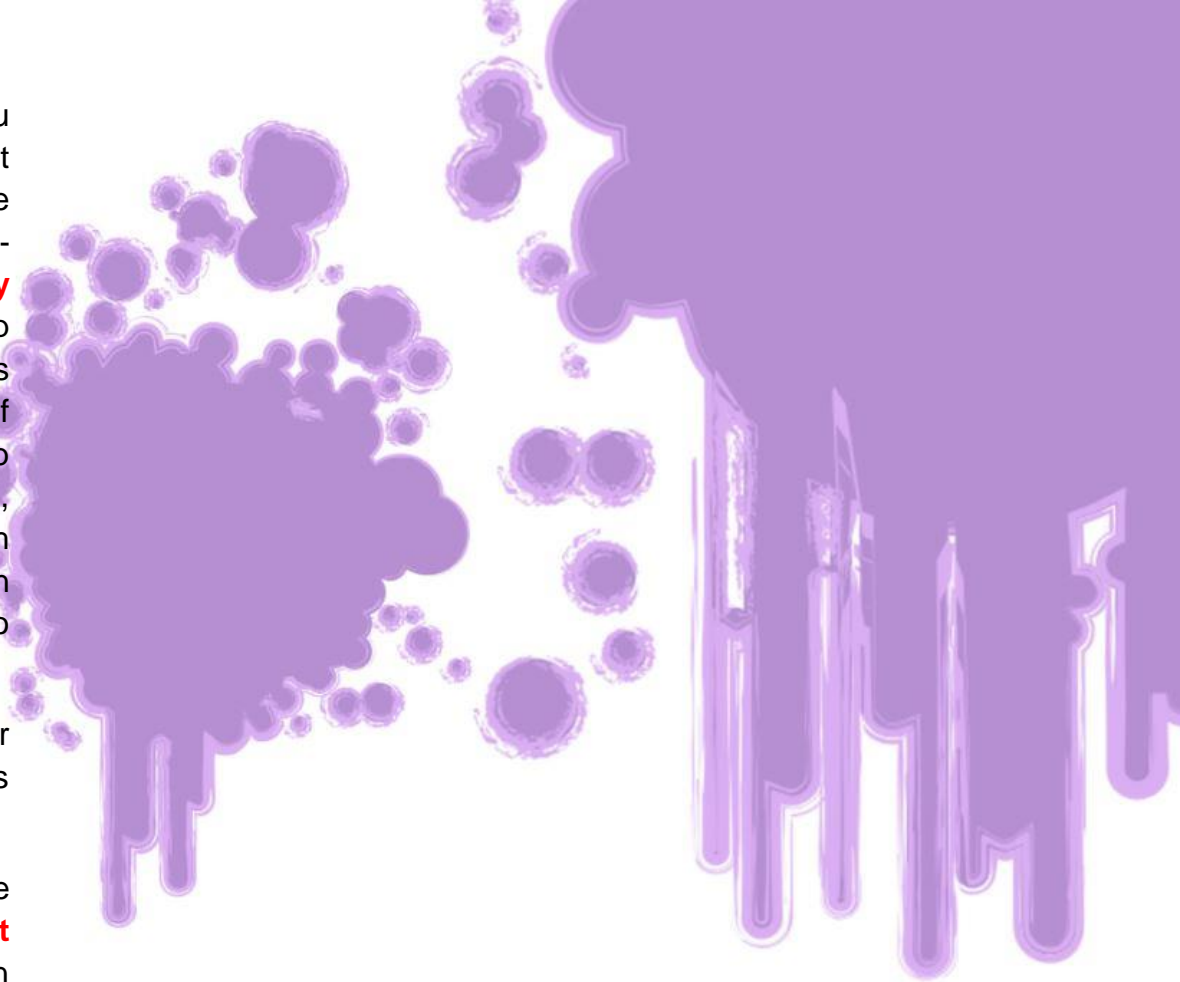


do is ask.

So, whether you want to liven up your language skills, beef up your bricklaying or hop into health and social care, Croydon College has something for you.

A huge campus isn't for everyone, and for smaller classes with more personalised support, you can't go wrong with **Sutton and District Training**, which has sites in Croydon, Sutton, Rosehill and Brighton and supports up to 250 learners at a time. Course delivery includes Construction, Health & Social Care, Customer Service, Employability, Floristry, Hairdressing, Beauty Therapy and English & Maths, and you can enrol at **any** time in the year.

The teaching is tailored to what works for you and the atmosphere is relaxed, with a focus on how training with Sutton and District can help you on your way to college, employment or an apprenticeship.



# JOBS

## Overview

We offer a range of support options to you if you're looking to get into employment. Some of that support is offered at quite a 'local' level by Personal Advisers and NEET Officer

(Care Leavers), but plenty is offered at a more 'corporate' level too. We have a number of initiatives already up and running that will benefit you as well as links with partner agencies who are ready with some exciting opportunities as well.



## Personal Adviser Support

Every care leaver will have different support needs when it comes to seeking out employment and it will be for them to ask their Personal Adviser for help where they need it. For example, if a care leaver is uncertain as to how to search for work, or lacks confidence in attending work coach appointments at the Jobcentre, then the Personal Adviser may wish to undertake some job searches with them

or go with them to a Jobcentre appointment. The goal is always to help each care leaver achieve independence, but if a little support is required then that will be offered.

The Personal Adviser's other function, in terms of employment, will be to signpost care leavers to employment opportunities that are brought to their attention and they feel it would suit a specific care leaver. For example, if a Personal Adviser knows that Dave the care leaver has always dreamed of become a sous chef at a Michelin-starred restaurant in Soho, then when an apprenticeship opportunity at a food outlet in Croydon Boxpark rocks up in his email inbox, he will probably want to bring it to Dave's attention.

## Social Values and Local Support



Croydon is a massive borough with a huge amount of opportunity and an exciting future. The Council works in partnership with a wide range of organisations to deliver growth for the borough and at the heart of all its work is a very simple, but very important, concept: social value. What this means is that everyone the Council does business with has to show how they will deliver social, economic and environmental growth in the borough.

The Council's flagship offer is **Croydon Works** – a jobs brokerage service set up to support Croydon residents to address barriers to employment and facilitate access to job vacancies (and apprenticeships) identified through engagement with employers in the borough. There are two key aspects to the service; the first is engagement with employers to identify and source job vacancies. The service allows developers to deliver on employment and training and



for the Council's third party contractors to deliver against social value targets.



The second aspect of the service is working with residents – specifically those who are harder to reach – to identify those who would benefit most from employability support

and enable these residents to access appropriate vacancies identified through the service. This includes working with a number of referral partners in the borough including Council services, Job Centre Plus, key training providers including CALAT and Croydon College and the voluntary sector.

**Better Working Futures – The Work and Health Programme** is an employability support programme run by REED which aims to support people who are long-term unemployed (2+ years), have a health condition or disability, or who are from a number of identified disadvantaged groups (one of which is young people in care, and those leaving care) into employment.

The Programme provides personal advice and guidance, skills training, health support and job search support to eligible residents across the five South London Partnership boroughs (Croydon, Merton, Sutton, Richmond and Kingston).

The Programme can also help those interested in self-employment and has specialist self-employment advisors who can help with developing business plans.

If care leavers are interested in taking part in Better Working Futures, they can speak to their Jobcentre Work Coach.

**Palace for Life Foundation** has been working with the South London community for over 25 years. It exists to use the power of football and the Crystal Palace FC brand to change the lives of young people across South London, particularly the most hard-to-reach and hard-to-help.



For Croydon care leavers, the Foundation offers the ongoing Talent Match Croydon Programme, which is a dynamic, new and personalised service where young people aged 18-24 years old are matched to a mentor, who will support them towards their chosen pathway – be that education, training or employment.

In addition, the Foundation offers programmes on an annual basis, such as the Premier League Works Employability Programme, as well as the Palace for Life Foundation Traineeship Programme, which involves a 100-hour work placement.

You need only speak to your Personal Adviser to register an interest.

Finally – though not a local resource, strictly speaking – care leavers will be boosted by a new £1,000 bursary payment if they choose to do an apprenticeship from August 2018.



The extra financial support will be for those aged 16-24 and help them in the first year of their apprenticeship as learners jump into the workplace for their practical studies.

The £1,000 bursary will be paid once to each care leaver in the eligible age range, when they start an apprenticeship after 1 August 2018. This comes in addition to the £1,000 we provide to both employers and training providers when they take on 16 to 18 year olds or 19 to 24 year olds who were in care or who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

## GETTING INVOLVED

### Overview



As you become an adult, you will find that there's quite a lot available for you to do in wider society. Croydon is a huge borough and – even ignoring the fact that Central London is only a short train journey away – there is plenty to do right on your

doorstep. A Google search will

give you ideas, but you can always chat to your

Personal Adviser about what they think might interest you, as there are specialist groups and organisations that work specifically with

young people of certain backgrounds – for example, the Shpresa Programme works with the Albanian community.

Your Personal Adviser is a fount of knowledge and should be able to give you plenty of options. We do want you to be active members of society, which means getting out there and getting involved, so don't be shy!

### *Personal Adviser Support*

Let's start by being a *little* bit more specific on what, realistically, you can expect from your Personal Adviser.

- **Voting:** they can help you to **register to vote** (note that you *do* have to be a British Citizen to do this) so if you are interested in politics and the future of the UK, you can get involved and have a voice. We can't promise that the politicians will keep their promises though!
- **Leisure:** if you want to find out where your local parks, leisure centres, activity groups and clubs are, then approach your Personal Adviser for support.
- **Awards/Competitions:** whether you're a potential poet, a wannabe weightlifter or something else entirely, your Personal Adviser can pass on information on competitions and awards relevant to you and your talents/interests.
- **Discrimination:** believe it or not, some absolute dinosaurs in society may negatively discriminate against you because you are care experienced. If you ever have to face this, then get your Personal Adviser involved – they're always in your corner and will not accept this happening to you.

## Local Support – **YOUNG** CROYDON

Let's look at what the Council *itself* offers. One of its services is Youth Engagement through the **Virtual School**, which provides a range of universal and targeted link-up opportunities, pop-up events and projects for 4-25 year-olds across Croydon through **Young Croydon**. This team exists to support children and young people to feel included in their communities, have a voice about decisions that affect them, access positive activities across the borough, get opportunities that will support them to be engaged in education, training and employment and have fun!

The flagship offer from the Virtual School that will interest you is E.M.P.I.R.E the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and the Care Leavers' Forum. This is open for care leavers to join a programme of fortnightly sessions, activities and events which provide opportunities for them to share their views, discuss topical and thematic matters related to the leaving care journey. The group is a key way that these views and any proposals that emerge are shared with the corporate parenting panel from September 2018. The project contact for care leavers/professionals is [Porsha Robinson](#).



E.M.P.I.R.E (Croydon's Children in Care Council & Care Leavers Forum) is a collective of young people who are all cared for by Croydon. The purpose of E.M.P.I.R.E is to empower children looked after and care leavers with the confidence and power to influence policy change, shape the service and have their voice heard.

E.M.P.I.R.E will provide young people the chance to identify common issues with the care they receive and make proposals for improvements. All of which are presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel at Croydon Council, Chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Education.

E.M.P.I.R.E SENIORS is a care leavers' forum, meeting on a monthly basis. It has access to a dynamic programme to support you leaving care and living independently.

Our offer is that all children and young people will automatically become a member from the day they become looked after by the Local Authority.

- ✓ Free Day Trips – E.M.P.I.R.E members will benefit from free day trips throughout the year including: Cinema, Theme Parks, Go-Karting, Restaurants and many more.
- ✓ Dynamic Training Programme – Life skills, First-Aid, Healthy Relationship, Sexual Health, Money Management, Cookery, Confidence Building and many more.
- ✓ Legacy Youth Zone – We will pay for all children looked after and care leavers Legacy Membership for young aged 8- 19, and up to 25 for those with disabilities. <https://www.legacyyouthzone.org/>
- ✓ Refreshments/Hot Meal - There will be free refreshments and/or hot meal provided at every session.
- ✓ Travel – If you are concerned about travel please do contact us so we can work with your Social Worker/PA/Foster Carer to arrange a plan to ensure you can attend sessions.



## Other Agency Support



Okay, you now know what your Personal Adviser will do and even what Croydon Council as an organisation will do...but what about all those other organisations that are available? Well, there are a lot, so here are some of the key agencies we may direct you to

The **Shpresa Programme** aims to support the Albanian community to become integrated in British society and help them access education and training to enable this goal.

Shpresa's offer includes:

- ✓ Providing advice, help and support so that Albanians can orientate, settle and gain access to education, training and employment, as well as fully participate and play an active role in society.
- ✓ A large team of supportive volunteers – usually between 35 and 45 volunteers each year. They are mostly from the Albanian community.

The Shpresa Programme runs a range of **projects** that also promote the development, education, health and well-being of the Albanian community. They also offer consultancy services to other organisations and projects who may benefit from their expertise or what they have learnt.

**Yalla Hub's** mission is to holistically improve migrant women's work-life experiences in the UK. They aim to increase the presence of migrant and BAME women in sustainable businesses by improving

their confidence, self-esteem and mental wellbeing through a tailored support system. They also aspire to provide better access to and benefit from economic resources with a drive to increase their social mobility to build a collaborative, lasting network.

Yalla Hub's offering includes:

- ✓ A five-month programme that teaches you how to start and maintain a sustainable business, which features a network of entrepreneurs ready to provide advice and support.
- ✓ A series of exciting and unusual workshops, including storytelling and tea workshops, puppetry, and more. Some workshops are run by migrant women and will go a long way towards supporting their journeys.
- ✓ Events that aim to create a sense of community within the café, as well as benefitting and expanding learning.
- ✓ A tailored support system that aims to improve the confidence, self-esteem and mental wellbeing of migrant and BAME women.

**Young Roots** works in London – and has a base in Croydon – to provide support for young refugees and asylum seekers, by running fun and educational activities, offering peer-led language learning, and providing one-to-one casework.

The activities they feature are varied, but they do have regular youth groups which bring together young people from similar backgrounds giving them a chance to socialise and build community links.

The organisation can be contacted by emailing [london@youngroots.org.uk](mailto:london@youngroots.org.uk) or calling 020 8684 9140.



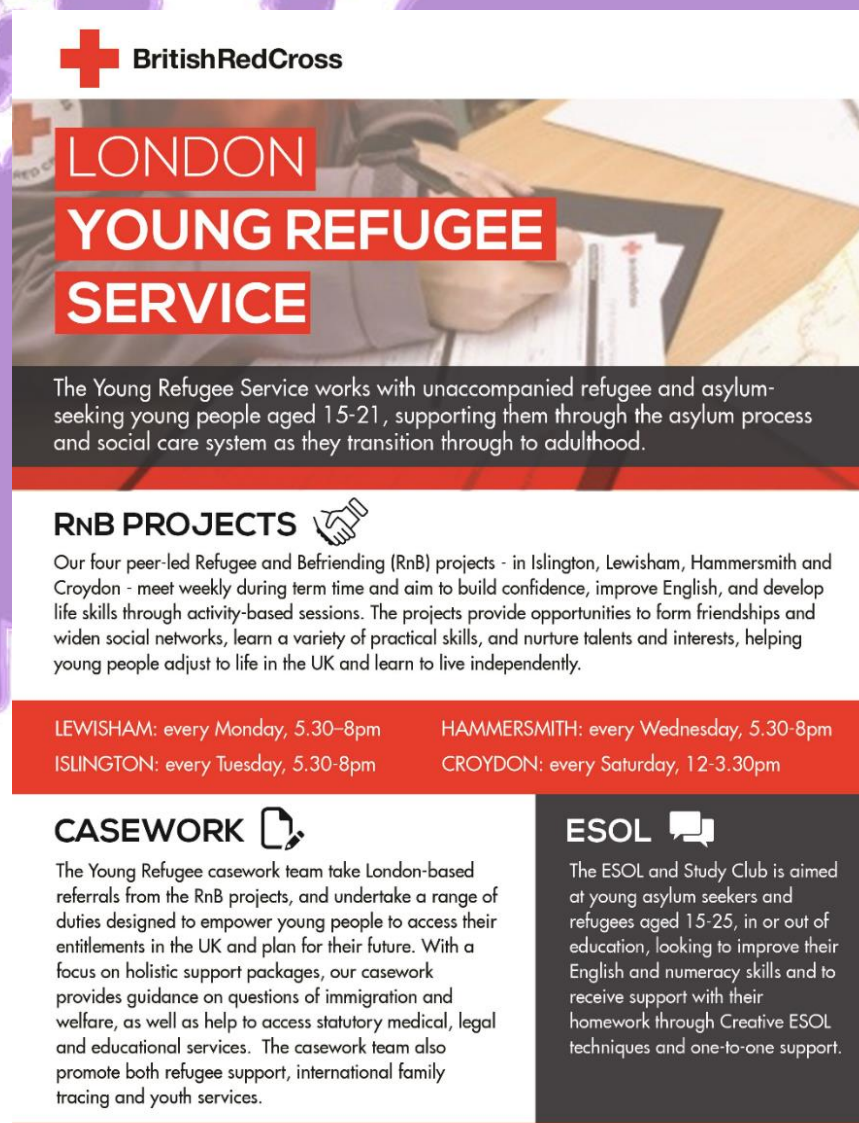
**Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA)**, based in West Croydon, is an organisation that encourages and supports local community representation through voluntary action.

CVA offers the following:

- ✓ A building in which you can hold relevant group meetings.
- ✓ A straightforward and local way of volunteering in something that interests you.
- ✓ Contact details for established groups you may wish to join.

Its website also provides details of all upcoming local events, training and voluntary sector news.

The **British Red Cross** has a base in Croydon as well and provides the following flyer for what it offers to care leavers:



The flyer features the British Red Cross logo at the top left. The main title 'LONDON YOUNG REFUGEE SERVICE' is displayed in large, bold, white text on a red background. Below the title, a photograph shows a person's hands holding a smartphone over a desk with papers. A dark grey text box contains the service description. The 'RNB PROJECTS' section includes a hand icon and a list of project locations and times. The 'CASEWORK' section features a document icon and a detailed description of the casework team's role. The 'ESOL' section includes a speech bubble icon and a description of the English and numeracy support provided.

**BritishRedCross**

## LONDON YOUNG REFUGEE SERVICE

The Young Refugee Service works with unaccompanied refugee and asylum-seeking young people aged 15-21, supporting them through the asylum process and social care system as they transition through to adulthood.

### RNB PROJECTS

Our four peer-led Refugee and Befriending (RnB) projects - in Islington, Lewisham, Hammersmith and Croydon - meet weekly during term time and aim to build confidence, improve English, and develop life skills through activity-based sessions. The projects provide opportunities to form friendships and widen social networks, learn a variety of practical skills, and nurture talents and interests, helping young people adjust to life in the UK and learn to live independently.

LEWISHAM: every Monday, 5.30-8pm	HAMMERSMITH: every Wednesday, 5.30-8pm
ISLINGTON: every Tuesday, 5.30-8pm	CROYDON: every Saturday, 12-3.30pm

### CASEWORK

The Young Refugee casework team take London-based referrals from the RnB projects, and undertake a range of duties designed to empower young people to access their entitlements in the UK and plan for their future. With a focus on holistic support packages, our casework provides guidance on questions of immigration and welfare, as well as help to access statutory medical, legal and educational services. The casework team also promote both refugee support, international family tracing and youth services.

### ESOL

The ESOL and Study Club is aimed at young asylum seekers and refugees aged 15-25, in or out of education, looking to improve their English and numeracy skills and to receive support with their homework through Creative ESOL techniques and one-to-one support.

For more information on the services we provide, please contact:  
[LONDONYRS@REDCROSS.ORG.UK](mailto:LONDONYRS@REDCROSS.ORG.UK)

# RELATIONSHIPS AND FAMILY

## Overview

We recognise that the reasons for you coming into care may very well be quite complex with family breakdown a major factor. Alternatively,

you may have claimed asylum here in the UK and have no family at all. Either way, we think that in all but the toughest circumstances, you should be supported to reconnect, or strengthen your connection, with family or others who are important to you. We may be your 'corporate parent' for the time being, but when

you reach the age of 25 we won't be working with you anymore. Hopefully, you'll live to a ripe old age, so if you *can* have a relationship with your family we do encourage it.



## Reunification

If you are estranged from family, there are three types of reunification we would always like to help you work towards – so long as it is what you want to happen:

- ✓ **Mediation:** perhaps you wish to try and repair a relationship with a family member but would like some professional help to do so. If this is the case we will support you to access the services of **Dialogue**, who are a principal mediation service.
- ✓ **Tracing:** if you have successfully settled in the UK, perhaps with Refugee status, and you had to flee your country of origin, leaving family behind, then we will support you to access the services of the **British Red Cross**, who can try to trace your family.
- ✓ **Return Home:** if you have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), we will assist you to contact family back home with a view to making a return (please see **Migrant Support** for further details).

## Fight Loneliness –



We understand that many of you simply aren't going to have blood relations who are ongoing presence in your life and, as helpful as your Personal Adviser is, they aren't going to be there 24/7, 365 days of the year. There will be times, such as Christmas, where it seems everyone else is with their family and you don't have anyone.

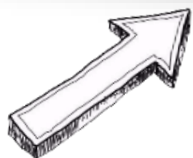
Well, you're *not* alone.

**The Topè Project**, named after a 23-year-old care leaver who took his own life in 2010, was set up to fight loneliness and give care



leavers the chance to get together with other care leavers at Christmas, have a big meal and enjoy themselves.

In Croydon, we promise to contact the Project, with your permission, to try and get you a place at Christmas time if you are facing the holiday season alone. It doesn't matter whether you are Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu or any other religious persuasion (or none at all) as the Project is open to everyone.



**Play Me!**

## LGBT

Croydon has a flourishing gay and trans community that is celebrated publicly every year with the annual **Croydon PrideFest**. If you haven't experienced it – it *really* is worth being part of!

We, at the Council, have a very strong LGBT staff group as well, so it is something we are very serious about supporting. You can find details of local events and groups **on our website** but we also want you to know that your Personal Adviser and other people helping you want to make sure you get every opportunity you can to explore your identity without fear of discrimination.

Croydon embraces its LGBT community quite passionately and so we want to be certain you feel included, respected and comfortable.





# RISK AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

## Overview

We also provide support to care leavers who have a history of, or current offending behaviour. What's important to note is that we still work with you in a supportive, non-judgemental way to ensure you have every opportunity of turning your life around and leaving offending behaviour behind. Additionally, if you are at risk of falling into offending behaviour or perhaps being criminally exploited, then we'll do everything we can to help you redirect your life. However, please be aware that if you do confide knowledge of, or involvement in a serious crime we would ask you to declare it to the police yourself but, failing that, we would be legally obliged to do it ourselves.



## Youth Offending Service (YOS)

Our Youth Offending Service (YOS) is based in the Turnaround Centre and works in partnership with other teams who directly support you – like the Leaving Care or Permanence Service. YOS is part of Croydon Council...but also separate, as it is made up of people from the local authority, police, national probation service, health authorities and other local organisations, who all work together to try and help you if you're involved in offending.

The aims of YOS are as follows:

- ✓ Work in partnership with other agencies to reduce youth crime.
- ✓ Ensure that each young person who breaks the law is dealt with without delay and in a manner that meets the needs of the individual.
- ✓ Work with young people to address the particular issues that put them at risk of offending.
- ✓ Encourage consultation with young people about the services they receive and ensure that our service reflects and values fairness, equality and diversity.
- ✓ Confront young offenders with the consequences of their behaviour in relation to themselves, their family or carer, the victim and the community to develop a sense of personal responsibility.
- ✓ Encourage young people to provide reparation to victims.
- ✓ Reinforce the responsibility of parents to help them prevent their children from offending.
- ✓ Protect the public.

## *Prisoners*

If you are in prison, then you will still be visited and supported by a Personal Adviser who will carry out a Pathway Plan with you. The focus will be on how you can make the best of your time in custody, keep yourself safe and perhaps develop some skills, ahead of your release. However, if you have a sentence that lasts five years or more and you do not wish for us to visit you, then we will say goodbye – though we will also keep in touch with Offender Management in your prison once every six months to do a health and welfare check on you. We can always start to provide support again if you wish it.

Prior to your release we will find you somewhere appropriate to live (please see [Home](#) section for further details) and Offender Management will complete a risk assessment, which will feed into our own risk assessment. Finally, individuals from the Leaving Care team and YOS, both based at the Turnaround Centre, meet to discuss how best to support you once you've been released.

# EARLY HELP

## Overview

Becoming a parent is a BIG thing. You've been looking out for yourself all these years and then, suddenly, you have this little version of you to look after too. All. The. Time. If you're a parent you may find it a challenge – whether it's your first, second or subsequent baby – and so it's important to know what support is available as a Croydon care leaver. Fortunately, we've got you covered.



## Early Help Offer

In Croydon, we have an Early Help Service who link up with your Personal Adviser to help you get all the support you want or need when it comes to being a mum or dad. We do want to be clear that this support is made

available not **because** you are a care leaver and so we think you automatically need help, but because **every** parent – whether they are a care leaver or not – can benefit from some extra support. We have tailored some of the support to you though, because we are your 'corporate parent' (that horrible term again!) and we want you to be the best mum or dad to your child you can be.

So, before we get on to the services offered directly to you, we want to be completely honest about what happens 'behind the scenes' at

the Council. Here is how the Early Help Service and the Leaving Care Service interact:

- An **Early Help Family Key Worker**, with the support of the Early Help Senior Practitioner, has oversight for supporting care leavers who are parents. Their job is to offer specialist advice and support to your Personal Adviser on services available where you live for care leavers with children under 4. They do this to ensure you get the right specialist advice and support from your Personal Adviser.
- Once you tell your **Personal Adviser** that you are going to be a mum or a dad, they will inform the Early Help Family Key Worker and discuss whether you could do with the help of an allocated key worker for yourself to provide what is called 'targeted support'.
- If your **Personal Adviser** has concerns about your unborn child being at risk of harm, or that they may have already suffered harm, they have to speak to their manager and make a referral to the **Single Point of Contact (SPOC)** for your unborn baby.
- If we all think it would help your **Personal Adviser** will support the **Early Help Family Key Worker** to do what's called an Early Help Assessment (EHA) with you. This assessment may help to develop a plan of support for you, which is then written into your next Pathway Plan update, and reviewed. The EHA is also reviewed by your Personal Adviser's manager and the Early Help Senior Practitioner.

And that's all there is to it! The Early Help and Leaving Care Services will continue to work together to support you in what is called a **Whole Family Approach**. Remember: we *want* you to be a successful parent and will do everything we can to help you make that happen.





Let's say you are a mum or dad to be – what actual support can you expect? Well, that depends on whether you simply access what are called 'universal services' (services available for everyone – care leaver or not) or if you're receiving targeted support. Here are the differences, so you

know:

- ✓ Universal Support
  - Health
    - **Maternity services** with midwife support from conception all the way through to 14 days after birth.
    - **Health Visitor support**, which includes visits both before and after birth.
  - Community
    - **Parenting programmes** for pro-parenting tips and a chance to meet other mums and dads.
  - Education
    - **Croydon-based children's centre programme** from birth to the age of 5.
    - **Funded early years education** from the age of 3.

- ✓ Targeted Support (all the above and some juicy extras below!)
  - Health
    - Referral to the **Family Nurse Partnership (FNP)** where the FNP Supervisor decides whether the programme is right for you (if it isn't, you get a named Health Visitor instead).
    - **Perinatal Community Service support** who can help you if you have mental health difficulties.
  - Education
    - **Funded early years education** from the age of 2.

**Best Start** is the key service in Croydon that offers support to all mums and dads throughout the borough from pregnancy until your child turns 5. Different organisations work together under the Best Start banner to offer the following:

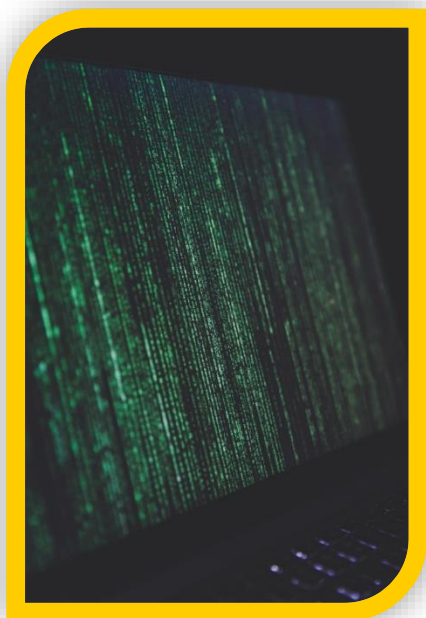
- ✓ Children's centres that offer baby massages, stay and play sessions, speech and language development support and lots more.
- ✓ Health support, including breastfeeding cafés and a 'Time For Me' group to help you cope with distressing thoughts and feelings.
  - ✓ Community support in the form of specialist courses that cover things like employment, budgeting and beauty.

- ✓ Parenting support in the form of programmes with a focus on things like managing bad behaviour, promoting healthy development, etc.



*Play Me!*

# PERSONAL INFORMATION AND DATA SHARING



## Overview

Croydon Council has access to a lot of sensitive data with regards care leavers and it has a duty to ensure that this data is used appropriately. In line with the **Data Protection Act 2018**, data collected on care leavers will be stored securely on the Council's Case Recording System (CRS) and will not be transferred to any third party without the express consent of the care leaver – unless there are genuine safeguarding

concerns that take precedence over

data protection. For example, if a care leaver was missing, Croydon would share appropriate details with the police to try and trace them. However, if there is a situation where a Personal Adviser finds an apprenticeship that he thinks a care leaver would be interested in, he will ask the care leaver's permission to share details with the apprenticeship provider. A lot of it is just common sense.

## Access to Files

Every care leaver has the right to access all records the Council holds on them – from initial referral all the way through to the most recent case note for a telephone call to them – and can do so by making a Subject Access Request (SAR). The request must be put in writing and sent to **Data Protection, 7th Floor – Bernard Weatherill House, 8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA.**

Alternatively, the request can be emailed through to the Data Protection team. Croydon's procedures can be read in full in the **Access to Records** online procedure.

## Prepaid Cards and Oyster Cards

Care leavers with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) have the use of Council-managed prepaid cards (see **Money** for further information) and activity on these, in turn, can be checked by the Council via an online portal. Checks are not arbitrarily made and care leavers will be informed when a check has been carried out. In addition to this, if there's ever a situation where we've given you an Oyster card, then there may be reasons for us to carry out a check as well.

Checks on prepaid and Oyster card activity can be made in the following circumstances:

- ✓ There are safeguarding concerns for you and card activity may help to determine your location, whether you are being financially exploited, etc.
- ✓ It is believed you may have been deported and card activity may indicate whether it is being used abroad (prepaid card only).
- ✓ It is believed the prepaid card is being used fraudulently.
- ✓ It is believed you are misusing your finances and suffering as a result – for example, a Personal Adviser may have reason to suspect you are using your weekly subsistence money to gamble and are not buying adequate food to survive (prepaid card only).



# GLOSSARY

## A

### **Advocate**

Someone who helps you voice your opinions and thoughts where you feel they are not being listened to.

### **Appeal Rights Exhausted (ARE)**

Where you have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and you cannot appeal the decision in the UK.

### **Asylum**

The protection granted by a state to someone who has left their home country as a political refugee.

### **Asylum Seeker**

A person who has left their home country as a political refugee and is seeking asylum in another.

## B

### **Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)**

A form of ID you receive when you apply to settle in the UK. It will have your photo, name, place of birth, whether you have recourse to public funds and details of any status and conditions of stay.

### **British Citizenship**

When you live and work in the UK free of any immigration controls.

## C

### **Care Leaver**

A young person who was previously Looked After and has now left the care system.

### **Children and Social Work Act 2017**

A recent piece of legislation that – with respect to you – introduces new duties to care leavers, including the need for a Local Offer and the requirement to work with you until you turn 25 whether you are in education or not.

### **Children Act 1989**

The core piece of legislation that serves as the legal framework for all children's social care responsibilities in the UK.

### **Corporate**

Relating to a large company or group.

### **Corporate Parent**

An organisation that fulfils the role of parent.

## D

### **Data Protection Act 2018**

The recent legislation outlining new laws with regards to the protection of data in the UK – in mainland Europe it is known as GDPR.

### **Discretionary**

Something that is only done at your discretion (i.e. it doesn't have to be done – only if you decide it will).

## E

### **Early Help Assessment (EHA)**

An assessment that is carried out on pregnant care leavers or care leavers with children aged 5 or under to decide whether any Early Help support is needed.

### **Early Help Service**

The team in Croydon Council that supports parents and families with young children – this support can be in the form of advice or something more practical.

## EET

When you are in education, employment or training.

## Eligible

Where a young person is 16 or 17 and has been looked after by the local authority for 13 weeks or more after turning 14, and is still being looked after.

## F

### **Former Relevant**

Where a young person is aged 18 to 21 and was Eligible or Relevant. They continue to be Former Relevant until they are 25 if they remain in education.

### **Foster Carer**

An individual who opens up their home to care for a Looked After child, potentially up until the age of 18.

## H

### **Home Office**

The department of the British Government which is responsible for things such as the police, broadcasting, and making decisions about people who want to come to live in Britain.

## I

### **Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)**

An immigration status granted to a person who does not hold the right of abode in the United Kingdom (UK), but who has been admitted to the UK without any time limit on his or her stay and who is free to take up employment or study, without restriction.

### **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)**

An individual responsible for making sure the work done by the social care professionals in your life is of a high standard and your life is progressing according to plan. They also chair Child Looked After (CLA) Reviews.

## **Independent Visitor (IV)**

An adult who befriends you and takes you out for activities, providing a kind of support very different to that which you receive from your allocated worker.

## **J**

### **Jobcentre**

The place where you go for your benefit meetings.

## **L**

### **Leaving Care Act 2000**

The key piece of legislation that tells local authorities what their duties are to care leavers.

### **Leaving Care Service**

The main service that works with you after you turn 18 – it is where your Personal Adviser sits.

### **Looked After**

When a child has been accommodated by the local authority for a period of at least 24 hours because, for whatever reason, their parents are unable to provide suitable care.

### **Looked After Child (LAC) Review**

A meeting chaired by the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) which gathers all the relevant professionals as well as the foster carer and Looked After child together to review general progress in their life.

## **M**

### **Multi-agency Approach**

Where two or more 'agencies' (i.e. organisations) are working together.

## **N**

### **National Health Service (NHS)**

The government-funded organisation responsible for delivery a healthcare service in the UK that is free at the point of use.

### **Needs Assessment**

Where a judgement is made on how you are doing and what support you might need.

## **NEET**

When you are *not* in education, employment or training.

### **No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)**

It means you will not be able to claim most benefits, tax credits or housing assistance that are paid by the state.

## **P**

### **Pathway Plan**

A plan drawn up between you and your worker to set out achievable life goals toward which you work with an effective strategy. The plan covers all areas of your life including housing, money, health and immigration. It is a legal document



## Personal Adviser

Your allocated worker after turning 18; they will be your primary contact and the person to whom you should turn when you need support.

## Personal Education Plan (PEP)

A plan drawn up between you, your worker and, usually, your college or 6<sup>th</sup> form tutor, which sets out specific, achievable targets in relation to your education.

## Prepaid Card

A debit card given to care leavers who have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) which is owned by the Council and is topped up with weekly subsistence payments.

## Professional Network

The linked agencies who work together to support you.

## Q

## Qualifying

Where a young person aged under 21 (or under 24 if in education) who was not looked after for 13 weeks or more after turning 14, but was looked after for a period when they were 16 or 17.

## R

## Refugee

A person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster. It is also an immigration status for those who have been granted five years' leave to remain in the UK.

## Relevant

Where a young person was Eligible, but is no longer looked after and has *not* returned home and settled for at least six months. This will also include young people who were detained after turning 16 (e.g. in a psychiatric hospital, youth offending institution, etc.) and had been looked after immediately prior to this happening.

## Removal Order

A court-issued directive giving the enforcement arm of the UK Visas and Immigration department the right to remove you from the UK.

## Risk Assessment

Where a worker determines how much of a risk you pose to other people and/or how at risk you are from coming to harm.

## S

## Safeguarding Concerns

When a person or agency is worried about your welfare and wellbeing.

## Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA)

A pot of £1,000.00 used to pay for furniture, white goods and other items that you need as you move into independent accommodation.

## Signposting

Directing you to another agency or organisation that can provide you with short- or long-term support.

## **SMART**

Any planned target that is specific, measurable, assignable, realistic and time-constrained.

## **Social Worker**

Professionals who support individuals and their families through difficult times and ensure that vulnerable people, including children and adults, are safeguarded from harm. Their role is to help in improve outcomes in people's lives. They maintain professional relationships and act as guides and advocates.

## **Subject Access Request (SAR)**

An official request for information on yourself that Croydon Council stores.

## **Supervising Social Worker**

A Social Worker who supervises foster carers.

## **Support Worker**

In the context of care leavers, someone who provides practical support with everyday needs (e.g. opening a bank account, budgeting, paying utility bills, etc.).

## **T**

## **Targeted Service or Support**

More than general support, a targeted service or support specifically addresses identified issues where you need, or want, help.

## **Tenancy Agreement**

A contract between you and your landlord. It may be written or oral. The tenancy agreement gives certain rights to both you and your landlord, for example, your right to occupy the accommodation and your landlord's right to receive rent for letting the accommodation.

## **Turnaround Centre**

The Council building in South Croydon that is home to the Leaving Care Service, Youth Offending Service (YOS), Adolescent Service, Early Help and the Family Resilience Service (FRS).

## **U**

## **Universal Service or Support**

A type of service or form of support that is available to everyone.

## **V**

## **Virtual School**

A service within Croydon Council that provides education support to Looked After children and care leavers. It also liaises with local colleges and provides additional support to Social Workers and Personal Advisers.