

Our Local Offer for care leavers

Wokingham Borough Council



What's a 'local offer?'

In the local offer you will find information about services and support that Wokingham Borough Council will provide for you as a care leaver.

The local offer contains information about services which may assist in preparing for adulthood. This includes: support with your accommodation; education, training & employment; health & wellbeing; support to manage your finances; relationships and participation in society.



What does it mean to be a care leaver?

- To be able to get the help and support outlined in this document you must have been in care for at least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 16 (including your 16th birthday) or for 13 weeks after your 16th birthday. If you're not sure, your social worker or personal advisor can help you work this out.
- You will also receive our support if:
 - You've lived or are living with a family member, relative or friend, under a Special Guardianship Order.
 - You were adopted and you've come back into care for at least 13 weeks.
 - You've been looked after for at least 13 weeks by Wokingham Borough Council as an unaccompanied asylum seeking child.

The level of support we give you depends on your age, when you were in care and for how long.
There are four categories of care leavers:

1 You are an **Eligible care leaver** if:

- You are aged 16 or 17, and
- You were looked after by children's services for a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14
- You are currently looked after

2 You are a **'Relevant' care leaver** if:

- You are aged 16 or 17, and
- You are no longer being looked after by the Local Authority, but you have been eligible.

3 **'Former relevant' care leavers:**

- Are aged between 18 and 25
- Were previously an 'eligible' and/or a 'relevant' care leaver

If you are an Eligible, Relevant, or Former Relevant care leaver, this Local Offer contains detailed information about the support available to you.

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"Qualifying" care leavers:

- Are aged between 16 and 25 and
- Were a cared for young person prior to the making of a special guardianship order which was in place when you reached 18 or
- Were looked after by children's services on, or after, their 16th birthday and are no longer looked after and
- Spent less than 13 weeks in care since their 14th birthday, i.e. they do not fulfill the criteria for 'eligible' or 'relevant' child or
- Were privately fostered and assessed to be in need

The support offered to Care Leavers who do not meet the requirements of the above maybe eligible for a service as a **'qualifying care leaver'**

If you are a **qualifying care leaver** you will not receive all the support outlined in this document, however you can be allocated a PA who will give you advice and support and keep in touch with you.

What's a Pathway Plan?

Your pathway plan is a plan that sets out your needs, views and future goals, and identifies exactly what support you will receive from us. Your pathway plan will replace your care plan from the age of 16. We will review your pathway plan with you regularly so that it is kept up-to-date.



What's a Personal Advisor?

A Personal Advisor (sometimes called a PA) is someone who is there to help and support you to develop a pathway plan as you move into adulthood.

A Personal Advisor will be allocated to you at the age of 17 to work alongside you and your social worker to prepare you for adult life.

At the age of 18 you will no longer have a social worker, but just a PA who will be there to support you.

Health & Wellbeing



We want all children and young people to be healthy, and we want to make sure that you are able to get the help that you need when you want or need it.

Your Personal Advisor can advise and support you with:

- Information on **healthy living**.
- Registering with a **GP, dentist or optician**.
- Your **Health Appointments**.
- **Moving on from CAMHS** (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) to adult services.
- Accessing other **mental health support** in the area.
- Providing you information about **counselling services** that are available in your area.
- Providing information about **health drop-in centers and sexual health clinics**, and supporting you to access sexual health advice, guidance and **contraception** when needed.
- Referrals to **local drug and alcohol services** for young people.
- **Access to leisure services**, like local gyms and sports clubs.



Your health passport: All care leavers will receive a Health Passport. This is a small booklet which contains information about your health history and present medical conditions, like birth details, your immunisation history and lots of other useful health information.

Your health information will be given to you at your last child in care review, and you will be offered a last health review with a nurse before you are 18 to discuss your health history.



Housing



Wokingham Borough Council believes that you should always have a suitable and safe place to live, in or out of the area.

If you're between 16-17 years this could mean with a foster carer or in supported accommodation.

When you reach 18, if you wish to, you can often continue to live with your foster carer, under what is called a '**Staying Put**' arrangement. This will be discussed with you and your foster carer to see if it is possible.

If you're over 18 years old we'll give you advice and support in helping you find a **suitable place to live**. Don't worry, as you'll have a Personal Advisor to help you every step of the way.

You will only be offered a place to live independently when you can prove you're ready to live alone as it's a big step to take and we want you to succeed. We will help you as much as possible to prepare for living alone:

- You'll be invited to **workshops** so that you know more about being able to live independently successfully.
- We will help you with learning **how to budget your money**.
- We will help you to **make sure you know about all the bills** you will need to pay
- We will make sure you know how to make **appointments**.
- We can help you with a **Leaving Care Grant** to set up your home, **pay your tv license for the first year** and we can help you **hire a van** to support your move

Did you know that care leavers, up to the age of 25, can be **exempted from paying council tax**? Speak to your PA to see if you meet the criteria for being exempt and for details on how to apply.



Your PA can give you more information about housing options and our support for you.

Education and Training



We'll encourage and support you to be able to study, train or work.

To support you whilst studying or training the following incentives are available:

- We can provide funding of school trips for those under 18.
- We can support you in applying for education bursaries.
- We offer £25 on completion of GCSE's or equivalent qualifications.
- We offer £50 on completion of A levels and equivalent qualifications.



The virtual School is an additional learning resource and works with your school to ensure you're getting any extra support you may need. For example, the Virtual School can help you with : A **laptop** to support education or job searching, a **block of Maths and/or English GCSE tuition** for exam retakes, access to **careers advice** and **Personal Education Plans**. Care leavers are also supported by the virtual school with **some course fees**.

If you would like to go to **university** we'll help you with **university fees, travel** and will make sure you have **somewhere to live** both at university and during the holidays. Your Personal Advisor will be able to tell you all about the wide range of support that is available. Your PA van can also support you with applying for **student finance, loans and/or bursaries** if needed.

Employment



We'll encourage and support you to be able to study, train or work.

- We can help you seek career's advice, prepare a CV and find a job.
- We'll help you build the confidence to be able to attend job interviews or start a new course.



Elevate: We help care leavers to prepare for employment by offering monthly drop-in sessions with 'Elevate' - a service that seeks to help young people find a job, training or an apprenticeship.

We can offer the following **additional financial support** with preparation for employment:

- Support with costs for interview clothes.
- Support with costs to travel to a job interview if needed.
- Support with travel to work for the first month if not in walking distance.
- Support with fees gaining industry accreditation, for example a CSCS card or equivalent.
- In some circumstances we can support you to purchase equipment to ensure you are ready to start your job. e.g work boots.

Relationships



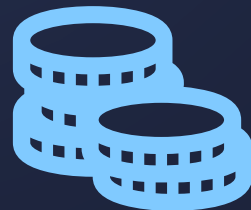
We know that relationships are really important to our children in care and care leavers. We will support you to have meaningful contact with the people that are special to you.

- Your Personal Advisor will be able to support you and point you in the right direction for getting the right help at the right time.
- We can offer you support to **understand your life story and care experience**. We can do this at your own pace. This can include support with **requesting your records**, being alongside you as you read these documents for emotional support and/or writing you a **later life letter**. You will also be offered the opportunity to complete **life journey work**.

We will also support you to **maintain and strengthen important relationships**:

- We can support you with costs to **visit family members** up to the age of 18.
- If your **family members are abroad** we will support you to have phone contact with the people that are important to you.
- If you are up to 18 years old we can help with referral and support to **access an independent visitor**. They will be there for you to talk to about things, they might take you out to places and give you help and advice.
- A **reunification assessment** will be explored if you want to return to parents, family or a connected person before you turn 18.
- You will be supported to **manage your family relationships in a safe way** as adults.

Financial support



Your PA can advise you and help you understand what financial support might be available.

Examples of support that might be available are:

- A £60 personal allowance can be paid whilst you are waiting for your benefit claim to process or are waiting to start employment.
- Discretionary financial support depending upon your circumstances.
- Help with accessing an Individual Savings Account if you're eligible.
- A single point of contact for care leavers is available at the Job Centre.
- We can support you to access recourses in the local community.

We can also support you with a range of personal allowances, for example:

- You will receive £50 birthday money up to the age of 21.
- This will be £100 on your 18th and 21st birthday. Your PA will support with purchasing a special present for your 18th and 21st with the £100. e.g. jewellery.
- If you are 16/17 and living in a semi-independent home, you will receive a £60 per week allowance.
- Between 16 and 18 you will receive £10 per week clothing allowance.
- If you are living in foster care at 16/17 years of age, you will receive £25 per week pocket money - this includes money for toiletries.



Participation in your community and society



We will help you to follow your culture, identity, interests and hobbies.

Activities: We will support you to take part in activities that you've got an interest in, and we'll give you information about groups in your area that you may wish to join.

Celebration of achievements: Your individual achievements will be recognised and celebrated, for example with a celebration meal.

We have a **dedicated care leaver space** available: You will have access to Here4U, where you can access free Wi-Fi. Here4U run events throughout the year, for example workshops, a BBQ and an outdoor activity event. Our **Children in Care Council website** is also full of information and resources.

Identity documents: we can give you financial support with passport / travel document and/or birth certificate fees. We can keep a copy of your ID documents at the office. We can also support you with opening a bank account, and help you to join the electoral role so you can vote.

Support with learning to drive: we can support you with the costs of driving lessons, your first driving theory test, first driving test and the costs of your provisional license. Or we can support you with Compulsory Basic Training for a moped.

Participation and engagement with the council



Your views, wishes and experiences are important to us, and we want to ensure all Care Leavers' voices are heard by the people making the decisions.

This helps us understand how we are doing and how our services are impacting you.

Children in Care and Care Leavers have the opportunity to **meet with the Lead Member** for Children's Services on a regular basis.

This gives you the opportunity to share your thoughts, and your ideas can help improve your experience and those of others in Wokingham.

There are frequent Children in Care and Care Leaver **activities and events**, where you can meet with other care experienced young people, take part in activities **and have fun**.

We also have a **Children In Care Council**, a group of young people who represent the voice of all Children in Care and Care Leavers in Wokingham in relation to their rights and entitlements. There are frequent CIC Council meetings which you can attend.



We understand employment opportunities are important for Care leavers. We offer a **Summer Internship programme** for a Care Leaver with the council, and we aim to establish more internships for Care Leavers in the future. We are also looking into the possibility of offering Apprenticeships for Care Leavers.

Identity



We will offer you support and guidance to explore your identity

- **LGBTQIA+:** we will offer you support explore your LGBTQIA+ identity and we can refer you to support services.
- **Care leavers who are parents:** Your PA can give you advice regarding maternity grants / benefits, and can help you with a referral to gain parenting support if needed.
- **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People:** we can offer you a range of support options, including emotional support, support with immunisation if needed, support with Home Office meetings, translators for all meetings, support making referrals to relevant agencies, support with obtaining documents and latent TB testing if required.
- **Care Leavers in custody:** We will offer you support if you are detained in custody. Your PA will have contact with the care leavers lead in prison.
- **Religion:** We can offer support to find local places of worship, and financial support to purchase religious items such as prayer mats and bibles.
- **Care leavers with SEND:** Wokingham Borough Council has a specific offer for all 0-25 year olds with special educational needs and / or disabilities (not just care leavers). This offer can be found on our website. Your PA can give you advice and help you participate in planning, making choices and developing your life as an adult.



Keeping Safe

- We want you to be safe and to ensure you have somewhere suitable to live.
- We will support and encourage you to make safe lifestyle choices.
- If you have got into trouble with the law, we'll continue to support you. If are in prison we'll visit you and support you to make the changes you need to make sure you live a healthy, happy and safe life.
- If you're struggling with drug and/or alcohol use, we'll work closely with other agencies who can support you with this.



Our promise to you as a Care Leaver



We will:

- Support you to find a home.
- Support you to be able to study, train or work
- Help you have a healthy lifestyle.
- Make sure you have fun.
- Respect you, listen to you and take what you say seriously.
- Help and support you as you become young adults.
- Never forget about you.

A Thank You

Some of Wokingham's care leavers were given the chance to tell us what and how they need help, to make becoming an adult easier.

Their feedback, and the involvement of the Children in Care Council, has shaped our local offer and we'd like to thank them all for taking part and giving us their views.

We want to continue to listen to our care leavers' views to make sure our services meet your needs, rather than our views of what you need, so we'd love to hear from you if you have any ideas of your own.

You can contact Here4U on 0118 908 8386

Copies of this document can be provided in large print, easy read, Braille or in other languages. Please telephone 0118 9088386 and ask to speak with a Personal Advisor for an alternative format.



This presentation has been produced by Here4U.

Here4U is Wokingham's Children in Care service and we:

- act as 'a corporate parent' to make sure care leavers are safe and supported until the age of 25 years;
- give care leavers the skills and opportunities to succeed in life;
- may not always be able to give you what you want but we'll listen to and respect your views;
- will be there when things get tough as well as celebrate with you when things go well.

For more information about the Care Leavers Service please contact **Here4u** on **here4u.duty@wokingham.gov.uk** or **0118 9088386** and ask to speak with a Personal Advisor.

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