

**The Right Side
of Care**

Wirral Council's Local Offer for

Care Experienced Young People

**Positive Impact,
Achieving Aspirations**

 **WIRRAL**

Contents

Wirral Council's Local Offer tells you about support that we have for you as a Care Experienced young person.

We want to make sure that you feel safe and supported and know where to go for advice and help.

- 4 Am I a Care Leaver?
- 6 Support for Care Experienced Young People
- 8 Corporate Parenting
- 9 Our Space
- 10 Your Voice
- 11 Advocacy
- 12 Health & Wellbeing
- 14 Education, Training and Employment
- 17 Participation
- 18 Relationships
- 19 Accommodation
- 21 Finances
- 22 Complaints and Compliments
- 23 Preparing to Leave Care

This document is available in your first language.

ئەم بەلگەنامەيە بە زمانى يەكەمەت بەردەستە

Ev belge bi zimanê we yê pêşîn heye.

دا سەند ستاسو پە لومەری ژبه کي موجود دی

هذا المستند متاح بلغتك الأولى

hudha al-mustand metah belghetke al-awla.

این سند بە زبان اول شما در دسترس است

ain sand bay zaban awal shama der dastres st.

Tài liệu này có sẵn bằng ngôn ngữ đầu tiên của bạn.

Dokumentigan waxaa lagu helayaa luqadaada hooyo.

Wirral Care Leavers and the Care Leavers Council have been involved in developing the Local Offer. The Local Offer will be reviewed every 12 months. **The Local Offer should be read along with the Wirral Care Leavers' Guide.**

Am I a Care Leaver?

If you have ever been looked after by someone other than your parents or by Social Services, or through Education or the Health Service; or remanded in custody as a child or young person, you may be a Care Leaver and entitled to services and support; in some cases up to your 25th birthday.

Some rules apply and it can be a bit complicated.

If you aren't sure whether you are a Care Leaver contact the Wirral Leaving Care Service to check:

☎ Tel: **0151 666 3777** (9am-5pm, Monday to Friday)

✉ Email: leavingcareduty@wirral.gov.uk

If you aren't a Care Leaver, the Local Offer for Care Leavers does not apply to you, however;

If you are under 18 and need help you can still contact Children's Social Care to discuss your situation:

☎ Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm - Tel: **0151 606 2008**

☎ Outside of these hours - Tel: **0151 677 6557**

Legal definitions of Care Leaver status

It's important to know which Care Leaver definition applies to you, as the type of support and services you are entitled to will depend on this. Your age and circumstances are also relevant.

Eligible Young Person

If you are a young person aged 16 or 17 and have been looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and you are over 16; and have been looked after for at least 1 day since your 16th birthday.

Relevant Young Person

If you are a young person aged 16 or 17 and have been looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and you are over 16 and have been looked after for at least 1 day since your 16th birthday but have stopped being looked after 'left care' before your 18th birthday.

Former Relevant Young Person

If you were an Eligible or Relevant Young Person and have reached the age of 18, you will continue to be offered support up to your 21st birthday. It is your choice if you want your support to continue after this; or you can come back any time; until your 25th birthday.

Qualifying Care Leaver (Any of the following)

- ☐ If you have ever been the subject of a Special Guardianship Order and were looked after immediately before the making of the order.
- ☐ If you were already a Care Leaver but returned to the care of someone who has Parental Responsibility or has been given Parental Responsibility for you via a Court Order and then lived with them for at least 6 months before your 18th birthday.
- ☐ You don't meet the 13 week criteria for being a Care Leaver but were looked after for at least 1 day since your 16th birthday.
- ☐ You were privately fostered with registered private foster carers.
- ☐ You were accommodated for at least 3 months via either Education or Health Service.
- ☐ You have had 'Short Breaks'

If you meet any of the above you are a Qualifying Care Leaver. If you are a Qualifying Care Leaver we must assess your need if you require this and can offer you appropriate advice, guidance and assistance. Support for Qualifying Care Leavers ends at their 21st birthday unless they are in education in which case it may continue up to their 25th birthday.

Support for Care Experienced Young People

If you are a Care Leaver we will make sure you have a leaving care Personal Advisor to support you.

It is their job to:

- Keep in touch with you
- Check you are alright
- Help you get what you need
- Ensure your accommodation is suitable
- Encourage and support you in your education, training and employment.

Your Personal Advisor is there to help and advise you and make sure you have support while you move from being a young person to a young adult.

We will allocate a Personal Advisor to support you from your 16th birthday, or shortly after. We will try not to change your PA, which means you might have the same PA for nine years!

You will have a Pathway Plan to set out your aspirations, views, support needs and help plan for your future. This will include who is going to help you, anything you or others are worried about and what your next steps may be.

Your Pathway Plan will be reviewed with you at least every six months. It will be updated to reflect your circumstances or any significant changes regularly.

Your Personal Advisor will keep in touch with you; at least once every 56 days until you are 21, but more often if needed. After 21 you can decide and agree how often your Personal Advisor contacts you.

If you need extra support after you turn 21, the Leaving Care team will work with you to find out what extra support you may need. Some examples of extra support needs are:

- You have special educational needs or a disability. If you currently have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) or have had in the past you may find the SEND local offer helpful: www.localofferwirral.org
- You are an Asylum-Seeking Child (UASC) and your immigration status is unclear.
- You are in or leaving custody or you have had contact with the criminal justice system.
- You are a young parent.
- You are going through a difficult time in your personal life.

Your Personal Advisor is there to help and advise you with your plans and make sure you have support while you move from being a young person to a young adult.

Corporate Parenting

There are seven corporate parenting principles that councils must keep in mind. They are:

- 1** To act in the best interests and **promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing** of children and young people.
- 2** To encourage children and young people to **express their views**, wishes and feelings.
- 3** To take into account the **views, wishes and feelings** of children and young people.
- 4** To help children and young people **gain access to and make the best use of services** provided by Wirral Council and its relevant partners.
- 5** To **promote high aspirations** and to seek to secure the best outcomes for children and young people.
- 6** For children and young people **to be safe and have stability** in their home lives, relationships, and education or work.
- 7** To prepare children and young people for adulthood and **independent living**.

Our Space

Our Space is a building dedicated to you. This was one of the most important things Care Experienced young people told us they wanted. **It is a safe, friendly place that you can come to for events, staff support, and more.**



Here at Our Space we offer:

- Personal Advisors available every weekday 9am-5pm.
- Facilities including games, chillout room, kitchen, washing facilities and internet access.
- A café with free drinks and snacks.
- Computers with free WIFI in our fully equipped digital suite.
- OUR SHOP where you can find cupboard essentials, cleaning supplies, fresh meat, fruit and veg. This is funded by the government Household Support fund.
- Every two weeks a freshly cooked meal will be available with other young people, plus games.
- Celebration events including Listen to Me awards, Open Mic nights, Care Leaver's Week and lots more.
- Social evenings, sewing and cooking courses and a SKILZ course where you can learn essential skills for life.
- 'Stay and Play' for parents with babies/toddlers.
- Sexual health Brook advisory drop-in sessions.
- Education, employment and training support and advice.
- Job Centre plus appointments with a dedicated Care Leaver work coach.
- Details of free helplines, apps and websites.

Your Voice

It is your right to be involved and to have a voice in the decisions made about your life. Using your skills, talents, and experience to make a difference to others is something many Care Leavers and young people feel is important to them.

We can help you by:

- Listening and taking account of your views about how we support you.
- You could join the Care Leaver Council.
- Asking you about your views in surveys and taking account of what you say.
- Asking you to be on an interview panel when we recruit new Social Care staff.
- Recognising and celebrating your achievements in awards ceremonies and events.
- Attend Corporate Parenting Board so that senior leaders can hear feedback about the service directly from a Care Leaver.
- Giving you information on groups and clubs you may want to join.

- ✓ You have a right to be involved in decisions about your plans for leaving care.
- ✓ You have a right to be supported by an independent Advocate to talk about or challenge decisions about the support we give you.

Advocacy

Independent Advocates can inform you about your rights and help you to be heard in meetings. They are separate from Children's Services and the Leaving Care team.

You can request an Advocate from **Barnardo's WAIV Service** (Wirral Advocacy Independent Visitor) with support from either your Social Worker or Personal Advisor.

To contact them, call **0151 650 5488** or email them at **wirral@barnardos.org.uk**

You can also find more information by visiting their website: **www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/services/wirral-advocacy-children-looked-after-child-protection**

Access to records

You have a right to see the information we keep about you. This includes the files and records written about you while you are care experienced.

Your Personal Advisor can support you to make a request to access your records and support you through the process.

Health & Wellbeing

We care about your health and wellbeing. We understand that looking after your mental health is as important as your physical health.

Support available to you may include:

- Help to register with a doctor, dentist, and optician.
- Attending appointments with you if needed.
- Access to information about healthy living and healthy eating.
- Information on getting help to pay for prescriptions (NHS low-income scheme).
- Support you to move from CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) to adult mental health services.
- Information about counselling services that are available, and support offered.
- Help with transport costs when attending health appointments.
- Access to sexual health support.
- Ongoing support from your former Looked After Children Nurse.
- Work with you and the Looked After Children Health Team to develop a 'health passport'.

Gym Pass

We know that physical activity is beneficial for good mental health, and we will provide you with a Wirral Leisure card. This will give you free access to some of Wirral Council's leisure services, including gyms and swimming pools.

Health Passport

We will work with you and the LAC (Looked After Children) Health Team to develop a 'health passport', which will include key information from your childhood. For example, when and if you have had immunisations, and your current health needs. Your PA can also assist you to access 'NHS App' where you can see all your health information and records.

Support for young parents

If you are a young parent, we will encourage and support you and your family. You will be welcomed to 'Stay and Play', an informal parent and toddler/baby group at Our Space. Stay and Play is led by Care Experienced young parents, with the support of a dedicated Personal Advisor. The group gives an opportunity to share and learn new skills and meet new people in a friendly environment. There will be speakers and information on Baby First Aid and Healthy Eating. We can help arrange travel if you would like to attend, including support to attend important appointments about your child.

Support if you are remanded or sentenced to custody

Your social worker and PA will continue to visit you and ensure the best plans are made for your discharge, as detailed in your pathway plan. If you are 16 or 17 you will receive a monthly allowance of £20 to purchase items from the prison canteen and shop. If you remain in custody after you are 21 you will remain open to the service, and we will continue to work with you and other agencies to plan for your discharge.

Mental Health

Your mental health is important to us, we have a dedicated counselling service for Care Leavers provided by Polaris. There are a number of free to access crisis cafés just for young people and mental health agencies that we will support you to access.

Education, Training and Employment

Whatever your aspirations are, we want you to thrive, enjoy learning new skills, and increase your knowledge.

Some of the support available to you:

- Advice and guidance from your Personal Advisor about your education and training needs and options.
- Access to a Personal Employability Coach for Careers Information, Advice, and Guidance.
- Up to date information about current education and training opportunities.
- Support to complete applications.
- Support to attend open days or interviews with colleges/training providers.
- Support you to enrol on your chosen course.
- Access to computers in Our Space.

If you are planning to attend University, your Personal Advisor or Employability Coach will support you by:

- Helping you consider your options.
- Providing information sessions with local Universities.
- Linking with local University Mentor schemes.
- Attending Open Days.
- Helping with UCAS applications.
- Helping with student finance forms.
- Researching scholarships and additional bursaries you may be entitled to and supporting you in applying for these.
- Looking for suitable accommodation to meet your individual needs.

Being Care Experienced may entitle you to access bursary payments from your college or training provider. Your Personal Advisor or Employability Coach will provide you with a supporting letter detailing your eligibility to this funding.

If you need uniforms or equipment to complete your course, then your Personal Advisor will complete a financial assessment if the college/training provider does not offer this.

Employment

Working is a great way to earn money, increase confidence, and help you get to where you want to be in your adult life.

You will have access to a specialist service who provide you with a Personal Employability Coach, working with your Personal Advisor,

They can help you be 'work ready' by:

- Giving you good quality up to date careers advice.
- Access to employer talks and information sessions.
- Support with writing a CV that records your key achievements and skills.
- Supporting applications and interview preparations.
- Help with clothes that are suitable for the job you want.
- Communicate regularly about job opportunities, events, and job fairs, and support you to attend.
- Supporting you to travel to an interview or job opportunity.

Department of Work and Pensions (Job Centre) are based at Our Space twice a week and offer support about employment or benefits. An advisor from the Job Centre is on hand to help with any change in circumstances to your employment status.

Apprenticeships

Wirral Council offers several apprenticeship opportunities reserved just for Care Experienced Young people, which is subject to eligibility criteria and engagement in the recruitment process

We will support you to access apprenticeships and employment with companies who work in partnership with Wirral Council.

We will encourage you to gain experience, to achieve your aspirations and help you access volunteering or work shadowing positions. If we can do this within Wirral Council, we will do our best to progress your chosen career.

If you have Special Educational Needs, we will make sure you receive help and support to access inclusive opportunities including Supported Internships.

Support will be provided to understand your rights and entitlements when employed.

Other support available to you:

- Advice about budgeting money you get from working
- A reference for employment applications.
- Access to any internal courses or programmes we deliver to support you into employment.
- We will provide any special clothing (PPE) you may need for work if your employer is unable to do so.

Participation

Listening to Care Experienced Young People is crucial in shaping and developing our service.

The Children in Care Council (CICC) and Care Leavers Councils (CLC and CLC 21+) are groups of young people who have all been in care, who have had different experiences, and have a view of how things could change.

What CICC and CLCs do?

The CICC and CLC's are always looking for new members. Meetings are at least once a month, and they are an opportunity for you to make sure your views and ideas are heard by decision makers in Wirral Council.

The CICC and CLC's are involved in lots of interesting projects that make a difference for young people. It could give you the chance to meet new people and have your voice heard.

Reasons to get involved with Children in Care or Leaving Care Councils:

- THE CICC and CLC's contribute to recruitment, training and selection of professionals
- You will have the opportunity to attend the corporate parenting panel. Ensuring that the voice of care leavers is heard.
- You will have the opportunity to attend celebration events throughout the year.
- It encourages and helps you to enrol on the Electoral Register, so you can vote in elections.

Relationships

We understand that feeling supported and having good healthy relationships is important to everyone. We would like you to have a strong network of trusted people to support you.

Support available to you:

- ☞ Help and advice to help you regain or maintain contact with friends, family, or previous carers.
- We promote family time (where appropriate). In some circumstances we will financially support you with travel to contact immediate family members.
- ☞ Advice and support to work with specialist support services, who can help you to learn about positive, healthy relationships.
- If you are studying away at University, we may help with your transport costs to return to Wirral.
- ☞ We will invite you and encourage you to attend activities and events throughout the year at Our Space.
- Encouraging you to engage with your PA and the Leaving Care team.

Anyone that you consider to be important to you in your life can be invited to your Pathway Plan reviews.

Accommodation

We care about where you live, how you manage, and that you feel safe in your home.

Before you reach 18:

We will encourage you to stay in care until you are 18. If you choose to leave care before age 18, the law says we must provide you with suitable accommodation. If you decide you want to leave care, we will give you the best support possible.

- Your views of where you want to live will have been discussed with you by your Social Worker and recorded in your Pathway Plan. Your Social Worker and Personal Advisor will look at what you want and need and try to identify suitable accommodation.
- All Care Experienced Young People are discussed at a 16-18 Leaving Care Panel before they are 18, to ensure there is a post 18 accommodation support plan in place.
- Your Personal Advisor will encourage and support you to register with Property Pool Plus from the age of 16. You will be eligible for Band B Status (this will become Band A from September 2023) when bidding on properties within Wirral.
- You will be invited to attend independent living skills workshops (Skilz Course) at Our Space. The Gold Skilz is also available for you to complete online.
- From the age of 16 you can register for Mainstay Accommodation which enables you to access supported accommodation in Wirral, including Forum Housing, The Links Projects and Wirral Supported Lodgings.

When you turn 18:

- If you are in a foster placement and you would like to stay living there when you turn 18, this is called 'Staying Put'. We will promote this and do our best to make it happen.
- We can help you access to 'Supported Lodgings' accommodation. This is where you have your own room in a provider's home. They will work with you to support you as a young adult until you are ready to move on to other accommodation.
- Wirral Care Leavers who remain living in Wirral are exempt from Council Tax charges until you are aged 25.
- You will be supported to access and appropriately spend your First Home Grant allowance.

You may be eligible for the 'rent guarantor scheme'. This will provide a 'rent guarantee' via Wirral Council to a group of registered landlords who are willing to offer accommodation to our Care Leavers. Please discuss with your Personal Advisor.

A local housing officer will be available for advice and support every week at 'Our Space'.

Finances

Making sure you have the right financial support available to you is important to us.

- If you are a relevant care leaver (aged 16 or 17) you will get a weekly living allowance.
- If you are a relevant care leaver your rent will be paid in line with current housing benefit rates.
- You can meet your Job Centre Plus work coaches in Our Space twice a week to access benefits advice.
- If you do not have a Job Centre Plus work coach your Personal Advisor can support you with benefits advice.
- In winter months (1 October – 31 March) you will be eligible for a winter fuel payment; this financial support is provided via the Government's Household Support Fund. Please discuss this with your Personal Advisor.
- If you get into financial difficulties, crisis support may be available. Please discuss this with your Personal Advisor.
- You can request financial support towards driving lessons.
- A full breakdown of financial support available, including entitlements and discretionary payments, can be found in your Young Person's Guide.

If you are studying at university on an undergraduate course, we have an agreed financial package.

Your Personal Advisor will complete a budget planner with you. They can refer you to the Citizens Advice Bureau if you have any debt issues.

Preparing to Leave Care

We know it can be a difficult time and we will do our best to support your transition to adulthood and independence.

Before turning 18, we will ensure your Social Worker or Personal Advisor has supported you with:

- 🗨️ A current passport.
- 🇬🇧 National Insurance number.
- 🗨️ A provisional driving licence or relevant age ID card.
- 🇬🇧 A copy of your birth certificate.
- 🗨️ A bank account.
- 🇬🇧 Details of your Junior ISA (Individual Savings Account).

Support packages (Care Leaver Covenant)

The Care Leaver Covenant is a way companies can offer support to 16 to 25-year-olds leaving care to become independent.

There are more than 2,000 opportunities covering employment, training, support, free tickets, discounts, giveaways and help with DIY!

Some of these opportunities will be local and some will be national – you can search them online. If you are a care experienced young person aged 16 – 25, all you need to do is register with 'Connects' – it is free and really easy to use.

Your Personal Advisor can also join up so that you can use this together. Accessing Connects is really simple and takes just a few minutes.

Wirral Corporate Parenting Board is also working with employers who hold contracts with the council to encourage them to offer employment support and opportunities to our Care Leavers.

Complaints and Compliments

How to make a complaint

If you aren't happy about something, we would encourage you to talk to your Social Worker, Personal Advisor or another trusted adult. You can also contact the Leaving Care Team Manager or make a formal complaint to the Complaints Officer who will talk to you about your concerns. You can have support from an Advocate or adult you trust to help you with this.

Leaving Care Team Manager

Peter Rogan
Phone: 0151 606 2814
Email: peterrogan@wirral.gov.uk

Complaints Officer

Rob Blackburn
Phone: 0151 666 4340
Email: cypdcomplaints@wirral.gov.uk

Compliments

We welcome compliments or feedback from you if things are going well or you have been well supported.

The Care Leavers' survey is run annually. It gives you the opportunity to let us know how we are doing. We welcome any suggestions to improve our service.



If you would like to share some feedback, visit bit.ly/3L1wOpK or use this QR code.

The Right Side of Care

A dedicated website
for Children Looked
After in Wirral

therightsideofcare.com

 [@therightsideofcare](https://www.instagram.com/therightsideofcare)