

# NORTH SOMERSET'S OFFER FOR OUR CARE LEAVERS

June 2023

# FOREWORD

Welcome you to our care leavers local offer.

Corporate parenting means acting how any parent would do for their child: giving their child the support, guidance and care to allow them to fulfil their dreams. It is important to me that our offer supports young people in all aspects of their lives. It is driven by the voice of the young people who have experiences of what it is like to be in care and then leave care as they know best the support that they need both now and in the future.

We are really proud of what our young people have achieved in making this booklet and we hope it will help you in making the very most of all the support that is available to you.

Best wishes,

*Sheila Smith*

Sheila Smith (One of your corporate parents)



Councillor Gibbons

Executive Member for  
Children's Services



Sheila Smith

Director of Children's  
Services



Bethany Swan

Young Director

Personally, I think it's worth reading this leaflet because it tells you exactly what you're entitled to and explains who is there to help you get those entitlements.

When I moved out of my foster home, I had no idea the kind of help I would get, I truly thought I had to fend for myself and then one day I was shown this document which wrote about all the support I could get. Help with getting onto more college courses, a savings account ready for me, and my leaving care grant meaning I could get nice flooring, a fridge and a bed amongst many other things. If I could pass on any kind of wisdom for anyone leaving care, it would be: You're going to be given a lot of documents and leaflets and every single one of them will contain at least one thing that can help you and you'll only find that if you look through them.

*Bethany Swann*

Bethany Swann, Young Director

# INTRODUCTION

This is our local offer for care experienced young people in North Somerset.

Here is information about the support we can offer to you in our role as your corporate parents. This booklet will let you know what you are entitled to and how we will support, guide, and help you towards a successful life as an adult.

We understand that leaving care can be a difficult time for many young people. It can be scary and feel like you are suddenly on your own. We want you to know that you are not lone and that you are important to us.

# WE ARE YOUR CORPORATE PARENTS

**So, it means that care experienced young people are entitled to have the same experience of care and support that other young people would expect from a good parent. We take our responsibilities as corporate parents seriously and are committed to the following principles which have been set out in law**

## **To show we are, we aim:**

- to act in the best interests and promote the physical, mental health and wellbeing of our children and young people
- to encourage our young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of our children and young people
- to help our children and young people 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 our children and young people
- to help our children and young people to be safe, and to have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- to prepare our children and young people for adulthood and independent living

# YOUR RIGHTS

## YOUR RIGHTS

- you have a right to be involved in all decisions regarding when you leave care and your plans for leaving care
- you have a right to tell us how you feel about the services you are receiving and expect an answer
- you have a right to see all information about you including all the files North Somerset Council kept when you were in care
- we will support you to apply for the financial support you are entitled to

## MENTORING AND ADVOCACY

- You can ask for a volunteer mentor to meet you regularly to offer ongoing help, support, and advice
- You have the right to have an independent advocate who can offer confidential advice and help you understand your rights. You can ask your Personal Adviser for a referral so you can self-refer to

### **Junction 21 Mentoring and Advocacy**

- Steve Coggins 01275 888 360
- [Junction21@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Junction21@n-somerset.gov.uk)

# PATHWAY PLAN

Your Pathway Plan is a continuation of your Care Plan.

**With you, your social worker or personal adviser will prepare a Pathway Plan that sets out how we will help you to achieve the things you want to. We will start to do this while you are still in care, around your 16th birthday. We will review it with you at least every six months until you are 21. It is designed to help you make the most of life and develop useful skills that could help you in the future.**

## **It will include things like:**

- where you will live
- any education or training
- jobs, money, financial management, such as opening a bank account
- applying for a National Insurance number
- your health and lifestyle
- support with developing your individual identity including understanding your life story
- offer you an assessment for support if you become a parent
- group activities to reduce the risk of feeling isolated and increase your well being
- provide specific support to unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people who cannot access benefits
- an opportunity to join the Care Leavers' Forum



# ADVICE AND SUPPORT FROM A LEAVING CARE PERSONAL ADVISER (LCPA)

## Personal Advisers are part of the Leaving Care Team.

Your Personal Adviser will support you until you are 21. Your Personal Adviser will be in contact with you at least every two months or more often if you need this. From age 21 to 25 you can request support from the Leaving Care Team, and we will seek to help you as best we can.

Personal Advisers are responsible for ensuring that your Pathway Plan is written in consultation with you and important people in your life. It will be reviewed regularly until you reach age 21. Your Pathway Plan sets out your needs, views, future goals, and identifies exactly what support you will receive.

Your Personal Adviser can help you with independent living and a wide range of advice and support.

- Education – getting a job
- We will find you somewhere to live
- Tenancy Skills – getting ready to be in your own home
- Oh! the biggie – how to manage your money
- Help you get fit and join a gym – it's free
- We will help you have your say

Talk to us about how we can make your experience as a care leaver better

# WHERE YOU LIVE

We will support you to stay with your foster carers until you are 21 if that's best for you. This is called 'Staying Put' and your social worker and leaving care PA will work with you and your foster carers to make that happen. Even if you go to university we will help you find accommodation there.

We are here to help you find somewhere that you can call your own. We want you to be safe and feel settled. Once you are ready to be in a home all of your own, your Personal Adviser will help you to look at housing options and choose the most suitable home for you. We will:

- support you to stay in your foster placement until you are 21 if that's best for you and your foster carers
- support you to access your setting up home grant that can be used to furnish your first home
- support you in securing and maintaining your own tenancy through our Rent Guarantor Scheme
- advocate for you if you need help or support with your housing
- pay your Council Tax until you are 25
- offer advice and training about how to manage your money
- help you to enrol on the Electoral Register so you can vote in Elections
- work with our Housing Advice Officer to find suitable housing where you feel safe including supported accommodation if you are not ready or don't want to have your own tenancy
- provide you with advice about maintaining a tenancy, and support you if you get into trouble, such as debt, paying bills etc
- if you are at risk of homelessness, we have two specialist workers who will support you back into stable housing

**You can access our Housing Protocol to learn more.**

# YOUR FINANCES

Becoming an adult and living independently can be complicated and expensive. As a Care Leaver you are entitled to financial support.

## FINANCIAL ENTITLEMENTS/SUPPORT

Your Personal Adviser can support you to budget your money or they can signpost you to more specialist advice if that is what you need and help you to claim all you are entitled to.

Please look at our Entitlement Guide for more detailed information on what financial assistance is available to you.

### **Some examples of financial entitlements are included below:**

- support towards paying your Council Tax
- support for driving lessons
- contribution to WIFI costs
- emergency payments if you are in financial crisis
- financial support for higher education
- free gym pass
- leaving care grant to help you buy essential items to set up home e.g. bed, cooker
- money on your birthday
- support to access your Junior ISA if you have one

## IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

As adults we all need some form of identification to show who we are, so we can travel abroad or even get into an 'over 18' at the cinema!

**We will help you to obtain the following:**

- Birth certificate
- National Insurance number
- Bank account
- Passport
- Citizens Cards
- Provisional Driving Licence
- Asylum Registration Card (ARC)

# EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

We have a range of support available to help support you with education, employment, and training.

**We run:**

- a weekly drop-in on a Wednesday for support and advice on education, employment and training options
- a Next Steps panel - this offers funding for specialist training or equipment to help care leavers access employment
- an Education, Employment and Training panel, with links to colleges, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities to help you to meet your career aspirations

- A specialist job coach who can support you with careers advice and help supporting you into education, employment and training

**We can also help you with:**

- opportunities for further education such as college or A Levels
- apprenticeships
- a generous financial support package if you go into higher education courses such as university, including a master's Bursary

- job searching
- financial support with travel and clothes for interviews and employment
- first month subsidy if in employment
- support to buy equipment, essential clothing, and books
- a celebration of your individual achievements in a personal way, for example by taking you out for a meal when you complete significant qualifications

# HEALTH & WELL-BEING

## HEALTH

We want to help as much as we can to ensure you look after your health and get the support you need to stay healthy. We will provide you with a health passport at the age of 18 which includes a summary of your health history while you were in care.

### **We also offer you:**

- a free gym pass
- we will support you to access counselling
- an assessment by a health trainer
- support to access specialist services such as the Rees Foundation

- information on clubs and groups you may wish to join
- help with the cost of leisure activities.
- advice about healthy living
- support with registering with a GP, dentist and optician
- support to complete the form if you are exempt from prescription charges
- support to maintain good sexual health and advice about contraception.
- support to help you access Adult Social Care or Adult Mental Health services if you need these.
- transport costs when you are attending hospital or doctors' appointments.

## BECOMING A PARENT

There may be additional support we can identify for you if you are expecting a child such as:

- SureStart Maternity Grant to help towards the cost of having a child
- Support to attend parenting groups at your local Children's Centre

# MAKING A COMPLAINT/ SHARING A COMPLIMENT

We want to know what you think about the service you are receiving from us.

**So we all need feedback whether it's great or not so great. So if you have got something to share then let us hear it.**

**You can:**

- talk to your Personal Adviser
- contact the Care Leavers Team, Team Manager, Liza Zakheim [liza.zakheim@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:liza.zakheim@n-somerset.gov.uk) or the Head of Corporate Parenting, Carrie Yeates [carrie.yeates@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:carrie.yeates@n-somerset.gov.uk)
- email North Somerset Social Care Complaints department [complaints.manager@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.manager@n-somerset.gov.uk)
- access to [North Somerset's Council Complaints Portal](#)

If you need help making a complaint, you can ask your Personal Adviser to refer you to the Junction 21 mentoring and advocacy service.

Alternatively, you can [refer yourself to the Junction 21 mentoring and advocacy service](#).

If you need some support to let us know your view, then we hope you can talk to your Personal Advisor but if you can't there is: Junction 21 mentoring and advocacy service.

And then there is Beth – our Young Director ([bethany.swann@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:bethany.swann@n-somerset.gov.uk)) who is interested in your view.

Ella, our Participation Officer would also love to hear from you ([ella.bunting@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:ella.bunting@n-somerset.gov.uk))

# GETTING INVOLVED AND SHAPING THE SERVICE YOU RECEIVE

## THE CARE LEAVERS FORUM


The Care Leavers Forum is a group of care-experienced young people who come together to use their experiences to inspire change in the Leaving Care Service and across the council. You get to socialise and make friends with young people who have also been in care. The purpose of this Forum is to have your voice heard and help make improvements to our services and how they affect you.

This Forum is facilitated by our Young Director and our Participation Worker.

The views of this group are shared with decision makers within North Somerset Council including the Corporate Parenting Panel which you can also attend.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Care Leaver's Forum or would like to attend a meeting please contact our Participation Worker, Ella Bunting at [ella.bunting@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:ella.bunting@n-somerset.gov.uk) or our young Director, Bethany Swann at [bethany.swann@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:bethany.swann@n-somerset.gov.uk).





You can also share your views with us in other ways. We are always very interested to hear from you and understand how you think we can improve our service and offer for care leavers:

- fill in the 'Make Yourself Heard' Compliments/Comments/Complaints leaflet available in the Resource Room or download it here [North Somerset's Council Complaints Portal](#)
- speak to, or ask to speak to, the Participation Worker, Young Director or any member of the care leaving team to give your verbal comments
- complete the Annual 'Your Life Beyond Care' survey. The questions in this survey have been designed by Care Leavers to emphasise the areas of their life that affect wellbeing
- attend the Care Leavers Forum
- Be a part of interview panels for new roles in the council.
- Help with skills to foster, sharing your experiences to help new foster carers.
- Join themed Corporate Parenting Panel Meetings.
- Represent North Somerset care experienced young people at regional and national participation events with care experienced young people from other local authorities.

# USEFUL CONTACTS

## Leaving Care Personal Advisers

01934 421 900

## Care Leaver's Homelessness Prevention Officer

Claire.ward@n-somerset.gov.uk

01934 426 189

## Junction 21 Mentoring and Advocacy Service

Junction21@n-somerset.gov.uk

01275 888 360

## The Care Leavers Forum

Ella.bunting@n-somerset.gov.uk

Bethany.swann@n-somerset.gov.uk

01275 888 841

## Education, Employment and Training Officer

nigel.halliday@n-somerset.gov.uk

## Kooth

Online mental health support

## Children's Commissioner

Learn about your rights as a care leaver.

## Coram Voice

Make your voice heard.

## Shelter

Find housing as a care leaver.

## Rees Care Leavers Foundation

Learn about the Rees Care Leavers Foundation and their services.

## Emergency Duty Team

01454 615165

## Health & wellbeing Samaritans

116 123 (FREE)

## Childline

0800 1111

## NHS England

Learn how the NHS can help you.

## NHS non-emergency

111

## Crisis team (Mental Health)

Learn about the services offered by the 111 Crisis team.

111

## Police emergency

**999**

## Police non-emergency

101

## Next Link - Drug and Alcohol Service

Learn about the Next Link Drug and Alcohol Service.

0800 4700 280

## National Insurance number helpline

0300 200 3500

## Shelter

0808 800 4444 / 0808 1644 660  
(Emergency)



# OTHER SUPPORT

## Buttle

Get in touch with Buttle.

020 7828 7311

## Become

[advice@becomecharity.org.uk](mailto:advice@becomecharity.org.uk)

Check out the Become Charity website.

0800 023 2033

## National Youth Advocacy Service

Contact the National Youth Advocacy Service.

0808 808 1001

## Propel

Check out the work **Propel** does on their website to support care experience young people at university.

## The Care Leavers' Foundation

01678 540 598



# THANK YOU...

We would like to say a big  
**THANK YOU** to the following care  
leavers who gave up their time to  
discuss, create and design this  
booklet:

- Caroline
- Danni
- Demi
- Ryan

