



Sandwell
Children's Trust

A GUIDE FOR CARE LEAVERS

Your Local Offer

**What you are entitled to by law,
and what other things Sandwell
can do to help you.**

**Moving into adulthood is a big
step, and we want to make sure
that you have all the information
you need, feel supported and most
importantly know where you can
go for help.**

**We hope that this information will
be useful to you.**



<https://careleavers.sandwellvoice.co.uk>

First things first

It can be complicated to know what support you should be getting from Sandwell Children's Trust, so the first thing you should do is 'check your status' on the handy tool provided by **Coram Voice**.



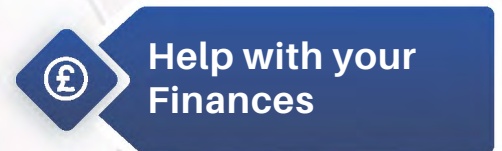
You can visit their website at <https://coramvoice.org.uk>



Your Health & Wellbeing



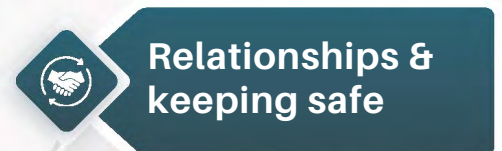
Education, Training and Career



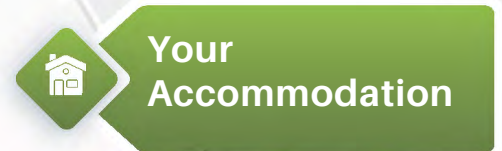
Help with your Finances



Participation in Society



Relationships & keeping safe



Your Accommodation



An eligible care leaver means you are aged 16 or 17 and you are still in care.



A relevant care leaver means you are aged 16 or 17, but you left care on or after your 16th birthday.



A former relevant care leaver means that you are aged 18 up to age 25 and you were in care on or after your 16th birthday.



If you are a qualifying care leaver, you are aged 16-21 (up to age 25 if in education) and were in care for a short time on or after your 16th birthday.

We have put these icons around some of the information to identify what help is applicable to you.

You should always get some professional advice about your leaving care status and your rights. You can ask your personal advisor (PA) or social worker, an advice service, or Coram Voice.



Children and young people with a disability have access to the **Send Local Offer** which is tailored specifically to your needs.

Visit the Sandwell SEND Local Offer site at: <https://fis.sandwell.gov.uk/kb5/sandwell/directory/localoffer.page>

You can contact them at SEND_LocalOffer@sandwell.gov.uk



We want you to have a healthy and happy life where you keep active.



This section lists all the things we will do to make sure you are fighting fit!



- We will tell you about the places and organisations that can help you
- A specialist nurse who works with Care Leavers is there for you when you need support and advice.
- We will tell you how you can access counselling services and mental health services.
- We will tell you where you can get help with childcare.
- You will be given a 'One Card' pass that gives you access to all leisure facilities operated by Sandwell Leisure Trust. This includes swimming pools, gyms and exercise classes. You can find out more on the Sandwell Leisure Trust website at <http://www.slt-leisure.co.uk>
- We will tell you where you can get sexual health advice including free contraceptives.
- If you are having your first baby, you will be able to access support for essential items up to the value of £70 – we call this a baby bundle. This is available to both mothers and fathers.

When you are 16-17 years old



- You will be offered an annual health assessment by our Looked After Children nurse.
- You will have access to DECCA who can support you if you think you have a problem with substance misuse.
- You will have access to Kaleidoscope, who can support you with any emotional health issues. Your social worker will tell you about this.

<https://careleavers.sandwellvoice.co.uk>



When you are 16-17 years old



- You will have access to DECCA who can support you if you think you have a problem with substance misuse: <https://www.ourguideto.co.uk>
- You will have access to Kaleidoscope, who can support you with any emotional health issues. Your social worker will tell you about this.

When you reach 18 years old



- You will be provided with a 'Health Passport' so you know and understand your health history This is also available as an app for your smartphone, computer or tablet.
- We will help you register with a GP, dentist and opticians if you haven't already done this.
- You will have access to alcohol and substance misuse services if you need them. You can access these services by visiting: www.cranstoun.org/service/cranstoun-sandwell
- We will help you get help to attend hospital or doctor's appointments.
- If you need additional services as you become an adult, we will support you alongside Sandwell's Adults Services where the need for continuity of care exists.
- You will be able to access psychological therapies, counselling and low level therapeutic services. You can speak to your doctor about this or go through the Sandwell Wellbeing Hub.



We have high aspirations for you, you can use this section to find out about the ways that you can stay in education or get into work.



- You will have access to a dedicate Connexions adviser who will help you with careers information and advice.
- We will give you information and support you to apply for apprenticeships and other employment opportunities through Think Sandwell and Connexions.
- We will help you get ready for interviews. If you need clothes for interviews we can help you with that too.
- We guarantee an interview for any job in Sandwell Children's Trust providing you meet the person specification.
- We are working with our partners to develop a Sandwell pledge for Care Leavers.
- We will provide work experience opportunities at Sandwell Children's Trust.
- You can receive a bursary of £3000 if you become an apprentice (Bursary is the name given to a grant that you receive to help you study).
- We will help you celebrate your achievements and successes, and host an annual event for you to share this success with people that are important to you.
- We will support you if you want to do voluntary work or gain work experience

When you are 16-17 years old



- You will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and Sandwell's Virtual School will help you to succeed in your learning.
- We can help with transport costs when travelling to school, college, apprenticeships and job interviews.
- If you are in education or employment you can access a 16-18 photocard that means you can buy bus, tram and train tickets at child prices.



If you are in further education (16-19)



- You can apply for a discretionary learner bursary from the education provider.
- We can support you to buy tools, equipment and clothes.

If you are in higher education (18-25)



- If you go to university we will give you a £2000 bursary to help with the costs of books, materials and equipment. This will be split across the number of years that the course lasts for.
- We can visit University open days with you or help with your travel costs.
- We will support you to claim the maximum entitlement from Student Finance for tuition fees and a maintenance loan.
- We will help pay your rent when you are on holiday from University.
- Universities also offer bursaries for Care Leavers. You can see which universities offer this by visiting www.propel.org.uk.



We want you to be financially secure, and make sure that you can manage your money now and in the future.

Help with your Finances

- We will provide financial advice and debt management support.
- We can help you if times get difficult, for example:
- Emergency gas and electric top up cards
- Food and drink
- Clothing allowances
- Emergency crisis payments

Your PA will help you with these.



When you are 16-17 years old



- We will help you open a bank account.
- If you are living independently (not with a foster carer or in a children's home) you will receive a rent allowance.
- If you are in hospital or custody we will give you £10 per week pocket money.
- We will support you to put your benefit claim in 6 weeks before your 18th birthday to make sure it is ready in time to start when you turn 18.
- **We will give you a birthday present and a festival allowance.**

When you are 16-17 years old



- We will help you open a bank account.
- We will support you to put your benefit claim in 6 weeks before your 18th birthday to make sure it is ready in time to start when you turn 18.



<https://careleavers.sandwellvoice.co.uk>



When you reach 18 years old



Help with your Finances

- Your PA can support you to claim the benefits you are entitled to. If there are any problems with your benefits we can help you sort these out.
- We will support you to access your Junior ISA and any other savings you may have.
- We will give you an educational incentive if you are in full time college of £15 per week. If you are at University this will rise to £20 per week.
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Coaches will be able to support you with benefits, accessing employment and training opportunities.
- You won't have to pay any council tax until you are 25 years old if you are living in Sandwell. We are working with councils across the West Midlands to see how we can support Care Leavers that live outside of Sandwell, your PA will be able to talk to you about what this means to you.



Help with you setting up home



We will provide a leaving care grant of up to £3000. Your PA will help you use this to furnish your new home. It can be used for things like:

- Furniture.
- Washing machine, fridge.
- Television and licence.
- Pots & pans and other kitchen things.

We will tell you about the other people that can help, like local charities who sell used and reconditioned furniture at cheap prices.

We may be able to help you when you move home, you can speak to your PA about this.



We know that if we work together, things will be better for all of us. This section tells you about the ways that you can get involved to make life better for Care Leavers now and in the future.



Participation in Society

We will tell you about clubs and groups that you can join to meet other Care Leavers and young people.

We will ask you how you feel about the way we run Sandwell Children's Trust and see if we can work together to make things better.

We will help you get advice and guidance to secure British Citizenship if you need to apply.

You can join our 'ICONS' Programme which will reward you for helping us to make our service better. The things you could be doing may include:

- Helping us recruit staff by being a part of the interview panel
- Helping us deliver induction sessions to new staff
- Delivering training to staff and foster carers
- Helping us put on events throughout the year
- Checking our work to make sure it's good quality
- Inspecting children's homes
- Talking to other Care Leavers and looked after children about their experiences – you can even train to become one of our Care Ambassadors

We will involve you in planning and invite you to events that celebrate your achievements. These could be things like:

- Care Leavers week
- Care Leavers festival
- Care Leaver's Celebration event (FIYA Awards)





We will tell you all about the Care Leaver Covenant and the opportunities that can help you.



Participation in Society



You will have the chance to help with election processes that Sandwell Council run. This could be when new councillors or MPs are elected. You will be rewarded for this.

You will have the opportunity to sit in the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) to represent other Care Leavers. The CPB is a meeting between young people and the partners that are working to make things better, like the Children's Trust, the council and Health.

We will invite you to help organise and enjoy events where you can meet other Care Leavers.

You will have the opportunity to take part in the National Take Over Challenge.



The Forum for Independent Young Adults

We will invite you to join the Forum for Independent Young Adults (FIYA) which is a group of Care Leavers working with us to make things better.

If you join, we give you a reward and help you with transport costs to get to the meetings.



<https://careleavers.sandwellvoice.co.uk>





Citizens Advice provide a drop in service at our METSEC Building offering specialist support and advice to care leavers. Speak to your PA about this.

Participation in Society

You have the right to see the information that we keep about you, including the files and records written about you when you were in care. Your PA can help you access this information if you would like to.

You will have free access to any events that Sandwell Council normally charge entrance for. These include the fireworks display and Christmas events.

We will also help you celebrate Christmas with a gift and invite to a Christmas party for care leavers.

When you are 16-17 years old



- We will help you apply for important documents before your 18th birthday, such as your passport, provisional driving license, birth certificate and national insurance number
- We will help you access programmes run by the National Citizen Service if you need them

When you reach 18 years old

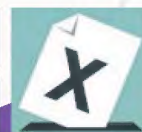


- We will help you to register to vote
- You could be entitled to an English National Concessionary Pass if you are registered disabled. This gives you free off-peak travel between Monday to Friday available at: <https://www.tfwm.org.uk>
- We will support you with a laptop and help to get online. Speak to your PA about this



YOUR VOTE MATTERS

MAKE SURE YOU'RE IN



<https://careleavers.sandwellvoice.co.uk>



We know that it can be scary sometimes but there is always someone that can help you.



Relationships & keeping safe

We will help you keep in touch with people that are special to you or used to care for you in the past.

You will have a PA (from 18) that replaces your social worker. They will be able to help with most things and should be the first person you talk to.

You will be supported by lots of other people. There are too many to list, but they include:

- Staff at the virtual school
- Youth workers
- College staff
- Connexions and career advisers
- Foster carers
- Housing workers
- Health workers



You will receive a regular newsletter designed by Care Leavers for Care Leavers. It will have lots of information, advice and useful tips.

You can contact the Emergency Duty Team if you need to talk to somebody out of hours. They can be called on 0121 569 2355. If you tell them that you are a care leaver they will help you. You can receive support from a mentor. Your PA will be able to tell you about this.

When you are 16-17 years old



- You will have a social worker who knows you and knows how you are feeling
- You will have an independent visitor. They will be provided by an organisation called Sova. If you need to keep in touch with this person when you reach 18, we can help you do this

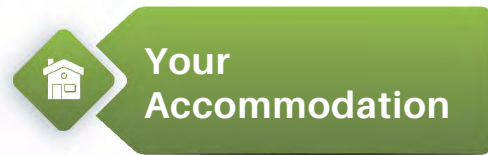
When you are 16-17 years old



- You will have a Personal Adviser who knows you and knows how you are feeling



Being safe and secure where you live is important, this section tells you about the help and support you can get to make your own happy home.



Your PA will give you information about the types of accommodation that may be available for you

- Supported lodgings
- Semi-Independent
- Independent Living
- Staying put

We will tell you who the link person is between the Children's Trust and the Housing Department at the council.

We will support you if you have a housing crisis or think you are at risk of becoming homeless.

We will give you £30 to help buy luggage if you need it to move your things.



When you are 16-17 years old



- We will make sure you have a safe home that meets your needs.
- We will work with you to make sure that you understand what your rights are and what you are entitled to.
- We can help you register with Sandwell council for your own property, although you won't be able to have your own property until you are at least 17 years old.
- You may be able to join our 'House Project' which supports young people to live independently. Speak to your PA about this.



Supported lodgings or semi-independent (16+)



There are a small number of supported living and semi-independent flats in Sandwell. These can be suitable for Care Leavers that have left care and are not ready to live independently

Your PA will talk to you about these options.

Independent living



This could be a council, housing association or private landlord property. If you want to live on your own your PA will help, support and tell you where you can get other advice from.

We will work with Sandwell's housing department to support you in securing a tenancy. You will be treated as a 'band 1' priority.

If you are leaving custody we will help you to find a suitable place to live.

Your Accommodation

Staying put 18-21



If you are living with foster carers, you may have the option to stay there after you turn 18. This can sometimes be until you reach 21.

If you and your foster carer choose for you to stay put, your PA will help you get ready for the time you do move out.

If you are staying put, we will help you claim benefits to pay your rent.



Your Personal Adviser will be able to provide advice and guidance around your accommodation.



FORUM FOR INDEPENDENT YOUNG ADULTS



As a group we:

- Listen to what young people have to say about being in the care of Sandwell Children's Trust
- Tell decision makers at Sandwell Children's Trust about what works or doesn't work in our lives
- Involve young people in **events**, groups and meetings to **improve services** in the future
- Provide young people with the chance to have **their voices heard** by different professionals
- Have the opportunity to **make a difference** and change how services are run for the better
- Raise our concerns at Corporate Parenting Board
- Have a lot of **fun** too!

COME JOIN US

We meet every other Wednesday between 5pm and 7pm
at METSEC House, Broadwell Road, Oldbury, B69 4HE

HAVE YOUR SAY!



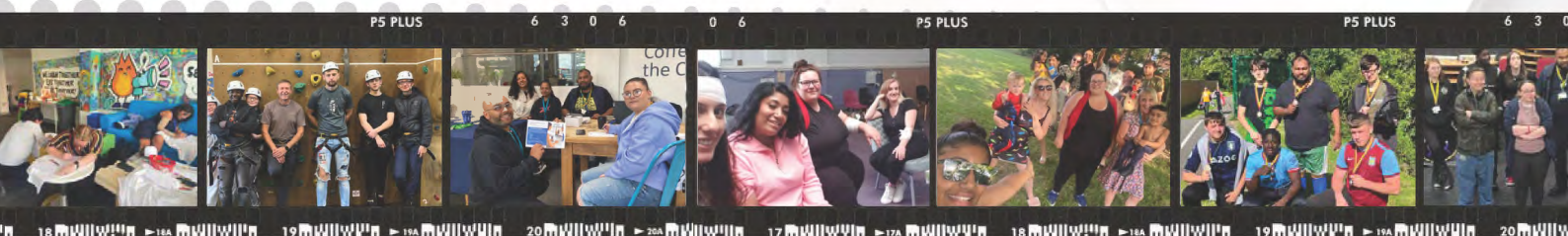
PARTICIPATION_TEAM@SANDWELLCHILDRENSTRUST.ORG



07805 816 215 (TEXT OR CALL)



SPEAK TO YOUR PA



Useful Websites

Know Your Rights!

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
<https://careleavers.sandwellvoice.co.uk/know-your-rights/>

Care Leaver Covenant

National inclusion programme that supports care leavers aged 16-25 to live independently : <https://mycovenant.org.uk>

Propel

A guide to higher and further education for care leavers:
<https://becomecharity.org.uk/get-support/propel>

Connexions Sandwell

Careers guidance to young people who live or are educated in the Sandwell area: www.connexionssandwell.co.uk

Forum for Independent Young Adults

<https://careleavers.sandwellvoice.co.uk/get-involved/>

Virtual school for looked after children

Information and resources to help you with your wellbeing and work : <https://lace.sch.life>

Help at Hand

Advice and assistance service for children living away from home and care leavers.

www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/



Further Information

Useful Contacts

Participation Service:
0121 569 5922

Childline – 24 hour advice
0800 1111

Black Country Children Society
(Advocacy Service)
01902 877 563
or (Freephone) **0800 562 3839**

Independent Reviewing Officers
0121 569 4770

Sandwell Children's Trust
0121 569 3100

Leaving Care Service
0121 569 2201

Children in Care
0121 569 5922

Emergency Duty Service
0121 569 3100



Sandwell Children's Trust HQ

Wellman Building
Dudley Road, Oldbury, B69 3DL

0121 569 2200

www.sandwellchildrenstrust.org