

LEAVING CARE LOCAL OFFER & ENTITLEMENTS



A GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE 2025-2026

Entitlements

You are an
Eligible Care
Leaver if:

- You are currently looked after; and
- Aged 16 or 17; and
- You have been looked after for a period of 13 weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks) which began after you reached 14 and ended after you reached 16.

You are a
Relevant Care
Leaver if:

- You are no longer being looked after by the Local Authority but you have been 'Eligible'; and
- Aged 16 or 17 years old;
- Immediately before being detained or in hospital you were 'Eligible' OR
- Lived for continuous period of 6 months or more with parent, someone with parental responsibility and where those arrangements break down.

You are a
Former
Relevant Care
Leaver if:

- You are aged between 18 and 25 years and have been a Relevant or Eligible child before turning 18.
- If your case was closed in agreement with yourself between the age of 21 and 25 years and you want to have your case re-opened.
- If you are in an agreed programme of education or training that ends after your 25th birthday.

You are a
Qualifying
Care Leaver if

- You are at least 16 but under 21 **and**:
- You were looked after immediately prior to the making of a special guardianship order which was in force when you reached 18; or
- If at any time after you reached the age of 16 you are no longer looked after, accommodated or fostered; or
- You were privately fostered and assessed to be in need.
- As a Qualifying Care Leaver you are able to access advice and assistance based on a needs assessment completed by the Leaving Care Team.

INTRODUCTION

This leaflet tells you about all the support that is available to you as a care leaver. We know that it's a big step moving on into adulthood. We want to make sure that you feel supported and know who to go to for advice and help.

Care leavers have helped us to design this leaflet and we will continue to listen to your views to make sure that the services we offer are what you need. If you want to get involved in our care leavers forum so you can have your say, please speak to your Personal Adviser about this.

To be able to get the support detailed in this leaflet, 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. Page 2 sets out the different types of status for care leavers, but don't worry if you don't understand them – just ask your Personal Adviser!

This leaflet and all the information you need about our offer for care leavers is available on our website: www.stockport.gov.uk/careleavers

or you can ask your Personal Adviser to give you a copy and talk to you about it.

The rest of this booklet tells you about your entitlements as follows:

- The role of your Personal Adviser and how they can support you;
- The fact that our offer of support continues up to 25 years – your PA will talk to you about this before you turn 21 years. This is about having contact with your PA even if you are not in education, employment or training (EET), but you want them to continue a mentoring role with you.
- How your Pathway Plan works and how important it is for you to be actively involved in it – it is **your** plan!
- What your rights and entitlements are as a care leaver, including financial information;
- How we can support you with all areas of your life, including Accommodation, Education, Training and Employment, Health and Wellbeing, your Relationships and Finances – more details on all this are available online on our website www.stockport.gov.uk/careleavers
- Useful contacts and services that offer further support, including information about Pure Insight, a local charity that provides a mentoring scheme and other emotional support services for care leavers in Stockport: www.pure-insight.org.uk

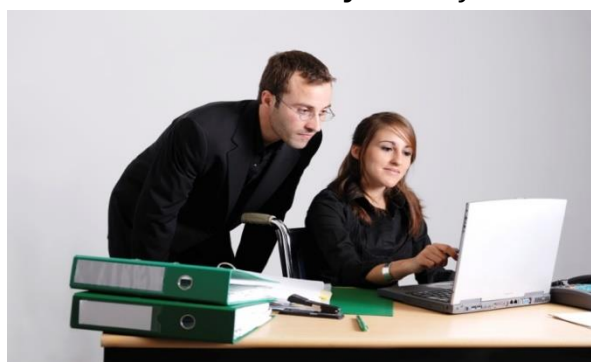
SOCIAL WORKERS AND PERSONAL ADVISERS



As an **Eligible** Care Leaver, you will be allocated a **Social Worker** from Stockport Council's **Children Social Care**. Your Social Worker will hold case responsibility and will be responsible for the preparation of your **Pathway Plan**. You will be supported by your Social Worker until you are 18 and become **Former Relevant**. At 16 years you will also be introduced to a named **Personal Adviser** from the Leaving Care Team who will work alongside your Social Worker. They

will work together to support you in preparing for your transition to adult life. Your Personal Adviser will then take over as your key worker when you leave care at 18 years and become a **Former Relevant** Care Leaver, or if you become a **Relevant** care leaver before 18 years.

If you are a looked after child supported by the **Children with Disability Team** your Social Worker will support your transition to Adult Services. At 16 years the Leaving Care Team will give you a named **Personal Adviser** to work alongside your Social Worker. Your **Personal Adviser** will take over responsibility for the preparation of your Pathway Plan when you leave care at 18 years and become Former Relevant and will continue to work closely with Adult Services.



PATHWAY PLANNING

We will prepare a pathway plan for all **Eligible**, **Relevant** and **Former Relevant** Young People. Your pathway plan will replace your care plan from the age of 16 years. Your Pathway Plan is about your needs and what we all need to do to ensure your successful transition to adult life.

How will I be involved?

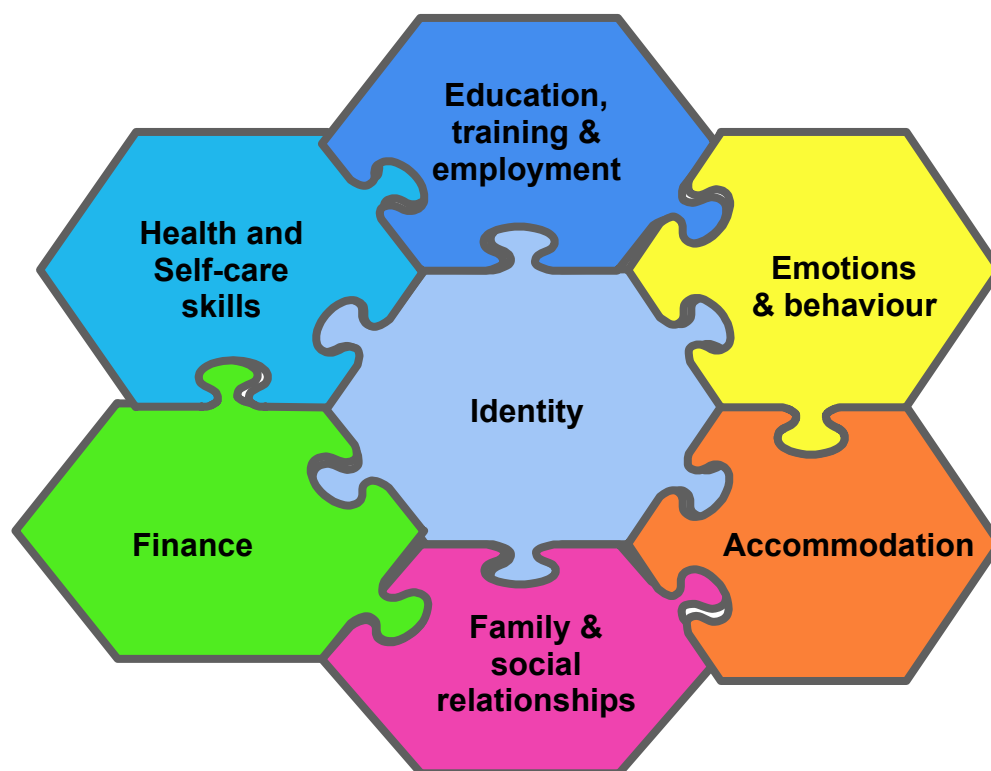
For your Pathway Plan to be effective it will be based on an up to date needs assessment; setting out the support that will be offered to you to achieve your aspirations. We aim to fully involve you in the development of your Pathway Plan. You will be offered support by your social worker/ personal adviser to express your wishes and views for your pathway plan review meeting.

Who else will be involved?

With your agreement, we will seek the views of our partner agencies when completing your Pathway Plan. This may include Housing, Education, Training and Employment providers, Benefits, Health Services and Youth Offending Service to ensure we all work together to provide you with clear and consistent advice and support.

What will be included in my pathway plan?

The following diagram sets out some of the areas covered in your plan;



**family and social relationships includes contact with your brothers, sisters and family that are important to you*

When will my plan be completed?

Your initial Pathway Plan will be completed around your 16th birthday. If you are over 16 when first accommodated, then this will be within 3 months of the date of you being accommodated.

What about changes to my plan?

Your Pathway Plan will then be updated and reviewed at least every 6 months or within 28 working days of any significant change to your plan such as a change of address or if you request a review meeting. Your Pathway Plan will be written and available at your review meeting chaired by your **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)**, a review must take place before making a decision to confirm that you are ready to leave care.

CARE LEAVER ENTITLEMENTS

The following figures are accurate as of 6th April 2025 and may be subject to change and will be reviewed annually.



Eligible and Relevant care leavers living independently will receive a **16+ maintenance allowance of £73.15 per week** (Equivalent to the Universal Credit rate)

Your Social Worker or Personal Advisor will support you to access advice and claim benefits the month before your 18th birthday. Once you turn 18 you will be financially supported while you wait for your 1st payment.



Eligible care leavers will receive allowances for costs associated with corporate parenting; birthdays, religious holidays and festivals, clothing and holidays from your carers.

Relevant and Former Relevant care leavers aged 18-21 years will receive a personal budget of £315.00 for the year for costs associated with corporate parenting; birthdays, religious holidays and festivals, clothing and holidays.

This will be made up of £25 for birthday, £25 for religious holidays and festivals, and the remainder of the budget (£265) will be planned with you by your Personal Advisor. Your Personal Advisor will help you to budget this money.

Former Relevant care leavers aged 21-25 years who are still being supported by a Personal Advisor or are in touch with us will receive **£25 for Birthday and £25 for religious holidays and festivals.**



If you are an **Eligible or Relevant** care leaver aged 16 or 17 years old in custody or on remand you will receive **£10 per week.**

If you are a **Former Relevant** in custody, aged 18 to 25 years, you can receive financial support up to £25 per month to enable you to keep in contact with those people who are important to you.

If aged 18 to 21 you can also continue to access your personal budget (as long as you are in contact with your PA).



Eligible and Relevant care leavers will receive a **Maternity Allowance of £150** as required.



Former Relevant Care Leavers attending university will receive a **Higher Education Bursary of £2000 per course**, the payment of which to be agreed with you in your Pathway Plan. Further assistance may be provided towards essential books and materials whilst studying.

Former Relevant care leavers will also be entitled to **52-week university accommodation costs**, if required. These costs will be in line with the local housing allowance rates in the area where you live. Your PA will be able to offer advice about this.

Qualifying care leavers attending an agreed course at university will be entitled to a needs assessment that may include financial support with vacation payments at **£100 per week** and **£2000 Higher Education Bursary for the course**.

On graduation, all care leavers will receive a **Graduation Gift of £100**.



Relevant and Former Relevant Care Leavers may access a **Setting up Home allowance up to £3000** to help furnish your independent accommodation. From the 1st April 2023, the Setting Up Home Grant increased to £3000 for those taking on their first tenancy. If you live in Stockport, your Personal Adviser will also support you to make an application to **Stockport Support Funds** additional support for white goods/ starter pack (**RRP £1000**).

**WIFI support will be funded for the first 12 months of your tenancy as part of your pathway plan.*

What is included in the Setting Up Home Grant?

Your **Setting Up Home Grant** will be held by the Leaving Care Team and your Personal Adviser will be able to support you to purchase items that you may need to live independently, for example:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| • TV & TV licence | • Wi-Fi | • tv stand / wall mount | • aerial / extension |
| • washing machine | • fridge/fridge freezer | • ovenware & dishes | • chopping boards |
| • laundry basket | • tea, coffee & sugar pots | • mixing bowl & measuring jug | • mop & mop bucket |
| • clothes airer | | | • brush & dustpan |
| • bin | • sieve | • cooker* | • kitchen utensils |
| • microwave | • kettle | • dining table/chairs | • toaster |
| • pots, pans & trays | • plates | • cups | • glasses |
| • cutlery | • tea towels | • washing up bowl | • dish drainer |
| • sofa | • coffee table | • lamps & shades | • carpet |
| • mirror | • clock | • curtains or blinds | • curtain rails |
| • bed base & mattress | • bedside table | • iron & ironing board | • wardrobe |
| • chest of drawers | • pillows & cases | • duvet & bedding | • bath towels |
| • shower curtain | • bath mat | • soap dispenser | • Contents Insurance |

*Gas or Electric with connection with a certified fitter

What help can I get for Education, Employment and Training ?



As a Looked After Child, you will have a Young People's Education, Careers & Advice Worker (ECAW) to support you. Once you reach age 16, our specialist Careers and Education Adviser is available to offer you information, advice, and guidance, on jobs, education, and training, this service is available to you until you are 21. From age 21 onwards, there are several local organisations, whom we work in partnership with, that can offer you careers advice and support. Your Personal Adviser can provide more information and introduce you to one of these services.

As a Looked After Child, to help support you achieve your goals, you will also have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). Your PEP will be reviewed regularly to ensure it meets your needs, and will help to inform your Pathway Plan review, that will take place at least every 6 months.

If you require a Laptop or specific equipment and materials then this should be recorded as a need in your plan and your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will then be able to request this support for you. Any specific requests will be considered on an individual basis.

From your 16th birthday you will be sent a National Insurance Number and we will support you to obtain identification if you need it e.g. passport, birth certificate or from your 17th Birthday a provisional driving licence.

Young people who are Eligible, Relevant or Former Relevant care leavers may also be entitled to a financial contribution of up to 10 driving lessons and to fund your practical test, and to contribute up to half the cost of a second practical test if needed. However, this will be dependent on it being agreed in your Pathway Plan.

How can you financially support me with my further education?

As an Eligible, Relevant or Former Relevant Care Leaver you may also be able to get financial support of £1200 a year direct from your School, Further Education College or Learning Provider. The **16-19 bursary** is guaranteed for care leavers aged 16-19, and discretionary learner support can support older students. With your permission, Stockport Council will confirm your care leaver status with your Education or Training provider but you may wish to talk to your School, College or learning provider to find out more. We will further support you with essential books or equipment to support you to complete your course.

How can you help me find somewhere to live?

As part of your preparation for adult life your accommodation options will be discussed with you. Your **Social Worker or Personal Adviser** will support you to complete any Housing Applications, attend Housing Interviews and 16+ Accommodation Panel in line with your wishes and your Pathway Plan. We will offer you support to make a housing benefit claim, or to access local housing allowance if in private rented accommodation.

It is important to note that Young People under 35 are normally only entitled to rent payments equivalent to the cost of a room in a shared house. Care Leavers aged between 18 and 25 years can get the rate for 1-bedroom accommodation.

As a care leaver you are entitled to Council Tax rebate so you will not have to pay council tax in Stockport up until the age of 25 years. Your Personal Adviser will be able to give you more information about this. If you are not living in Stockport, please speak to your Personal Adviser as many other local authorities also offer council tax exemptions to care leavers.

Information about Benefits

All your benefit entitlements will need to be confirmed with the benefits agency and your Personal Adviser will be available to support you to attend appointments as required. You may wish to visit the Job Centre Plus Website - <https://www.gov.uk/find-a-job> - for further information.

What if I need to claim benefits?



Your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will be available to support you to access welfare benefit advice and to make a claim for benefits according to your specific circumstances. This is likely to be **Universal Credit**. You can apply online at www.direct.gov.uk

Universal Credit

Universal Credit supports you if you are on a low income or out of work. It includes a monthly payment to help with your living costs. When you make your first claim, there is a 5-week waiting period. We will support you financially during this waiting period until you receive your first payment.

How many hours can you work on universal credit?

When you start work, the amount of Universal Credit you get will gradually reduce as you earn



more.

How much money can you earn before it affects your universal credit?

You are allowed to earn a certain amount before your Universal Credit is affected if you have responsibility for a child or you have a registered health condition / disability. This amount is called the work allowance and is currently £335 p/month if you pay rent or £515 p/month if you have no housing costs. Then for every pound you earn over the work allowance, your Universal Credit will be reduced by **55 pence**.

How much can you earn a month on universal credit?

As everyone's circumstances can be different, visit www.entitledto.co.uk for an estimate of how much Universal Credit you are likely to receive.

If you are ill or disabled your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will be able to support you to make a claim for Personal Independence Payments. To apply and to register for this, call 0800 917 2222.

If you are a parent, your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will be able to support you to claim Maternity Allowance (dependent on previous employment), Healthy Start Vouchers and Child Benefit.

What if I still need financial advice and assistance?

As a Former Relevant Care Leaver you can also apply to Support Funds when experiencing hardship by completing the on-line application at <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/financial-support-in-a-crisis> (*Support will not include cash but may include energy and/or food vouchers*). You can speak to a member of the team by calling 0161 474 2140, or email them at supportfund@stockport.gov.uk

You can access further advice and assistance by requesting an appointment at your local **Citizen's Advice Bureau**. You can visit enquiry@cabline.org or Tel: 0844 826 9800.

And remember there's lots more information on our website:

www.stockport.gov.uk/careleavers

USEFUL CONTACTS

Leaving Care Team:	Stockport Family Central House Grand Central Square, Wellington Road South Stockport, SK1 3TA
Duty Mobile Number:	07773 127 768
Email:	Leavingcareduty@stockport.gov.uk
Website:	www.stockport.gov.uk/careleavers
Out of Hours Service:	0161 718 2118 (emergencies only)
Independent Reviewing Officer:	Children's Safeguarding Unit LGF Floor, North End, Stopford House, Piccadilly, Stockport, SK1 3XE
Tel. No.:	0161 474 5657
Advocacy/Children's Rights and Independent Visitor Service:	
Coram Voice:	0808 800 5792
Website:	www.coramvoice.org.uk/
Pure Insight: Connecting Care Leavers	
Tel. No.:	0161 804 4410
Website:	www.pure-insight.org.uk/
Pure Insight services include a Mentoring Programme, weekly drop in Cafés, parent support groups, art groups and lots of participation activities including our Care Leaver Forum	
Housing:	
Stockport Homes HomeChoice Team:	0161 217 6016
Benefit Enquiry Line:	
Calling from a landline:	0800 328 5644
Calling from a mobile:	0800 328 5644
Or online at:	www.gov.uk/

USEFUL CONTACTS

Advice about getting ready for Universal Credit :	
Website:	www.gov.uk/universalcredit
Child and Working Tax Credits:	
Tel. No.	0345 300 3900
Child Benefit:	0300 200 3100
<i>(for enquires on existing claims only, new applications need to be downloaded from internet or Child benefit packs are issued in the bounty bag by the midwife or while on the maternity unit)</i>	
Money Advice Service:	<i>for help with budgeting</i>
Website:	www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk
Citizens Advice Bureau:	
Website:	www.citizensadvice.org.uk
National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum:	
Website:	www.leavingcare.org
Email:	nlcbf@catch-22.org.uk
Landline:	020 7336 4800
Shelter:	
Website:	www.shelter.org.uk
Tel. No.	0808 800 4444
Refugee Action Manchester:	
Website:	www.refugee-action.org.uk

COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

We want to know what you think about our services so that we can improve them. Your comments, good or bad, will help us to know how to change things for the better.

What if I want to make a compliment or complaint?

If you have something to say about leaving care services or if you are unhappy about something that is happening to you, this can usually be sorted out by speaking to someone you trust like your Social Worker, Personal Adviser, Key Worker or Carer. But, if they cannot put things right for you, then you can make a complaint in one of the following ways:

- Contact the Children's Rights Service on:
☎ Tel: 0808 800 5792 or www.coramvoice.org.uk
- Or write to us at;

Complaints Resolution Service
Services for People
3rd Floor Stopford House
Stockport
SK1 3XE
Tel 0161 474 3895 / 3898
talktous@stockport.gov.uk

LEGISLATION, GUIDANCE AND REGULATIONS

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and Regulations
- The Children Act 2004 and 2008
- National Standards for Leaving Care (March 2004)
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- The Children Act 1989 Planning transition to adulthood for care leavers Regulations 2010 revised January 2015
- Children and Social Work Act 2017