

LEAVING CARE LOCAL OFFER & ENTITLEMENTS



A GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE 2020-2021

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?

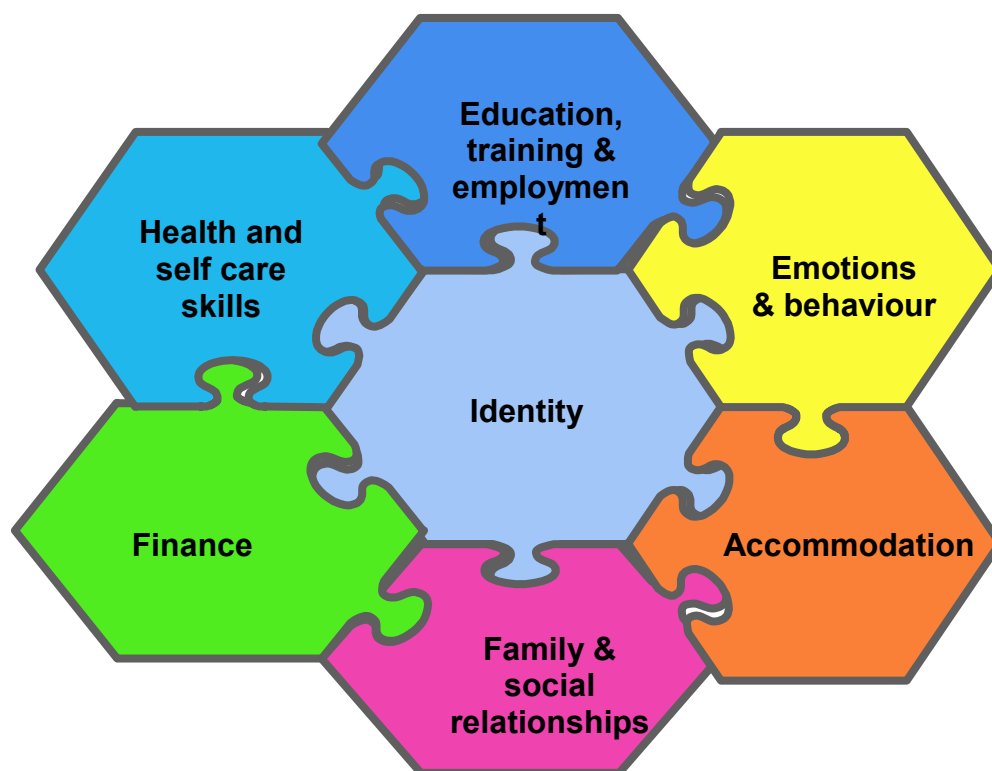
For your Pathway Plan to be effective it will be based on an up to date needs assessment; setting out the support that will be offered to you to achieve your aspirations. We aim to fully involve you in the development of your Pathway Plan. You will be offered support by your social worker/ personal adviser 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 1st April 2020 and may be subject to change and will be reviewed annually.



Care Leavers attending university will receive a **Higher Education Bursary of £2000 per year for each year of the course** and assistance towards essential books and materials for your course.

You will receive **Vacation Payments of up to £100 per week** if you need accommodation due to your term time accommodation not being available.

On graduation, you will receive a **Graduation Gift of £100.**

**this support is also extended to postgraduate courses*



Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant Care Leavers may access a combined amount of **Setting up Home allowance up to £3000** to help furnish their independent accommodation.

Your Personal Adviser will support you to make an application to **Stockport Local Assistance Scheme (SLAS)** for white goods/ starter pack (**RRP £1000**) and request your setting up home grant from the Leaving Care Team **up to £2000.**

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 licence | • tv | • tv stand | • aerial / extension |
| • washing machine | • fridge/fridge freezer | • pyrex dishes | • chopping boards |
| • laundry basket (wet and dry) | • tea, coffee & sugar pots | • mixing bowl & measuring jug | • bedding x 2 inc. fitted sheets |
| • bin | • sieve | • cooker* | • kitchen utensils |
| • microwave | • kettle | • dining table/chairs | • toaster |
| • pots and pans | • plates | • cups | • glasses |
| • cutlery | • tea towels | • washing up bowl | • dish drainer |
| • settee | • coffee table | • lamp | • carpet |
| • mirror | • clock | • curtains | • curtain rails |
| • bed base & mattress | • bedside table | • iron & ironing board | • wardrobe |
| • chest of drawers | • pillow | • quilt | • bath towels |
| • shower curtain | • bath mat | • soap holder | • 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) and have a Personal Education Plan if you are in Education, Employment or Training (EET). These will be regularly reviewed to meet your needs and update your Pathway Plan at least every 6 months. As a care leaver you will have the support of a specialist ECAW up to the age of 25 years, who is based in the Leaving Care Team

If you have additional needs and have an Education, Health and Care plan this will continue to be reviewed annually and inform your pathway plan.

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. You may also be entitled to a contribution of up to 10 driving lessons however this will be dependent on it being a recorded need in your Pathway Plan and on agreement being provided by the Senior Manager.

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 about how we can support you to get an exemption in your area.

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 our drop in session held every Thursday afternoon at the office to speak to our Job Centre Plus Adviser or visit the Job Centre Plus Website www.jobseekers.direct.gov.uk for further information.

What if I need to claim benefits?



Up to 4 weeks before your 18th Birthday, 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**, but may also be **Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance**. You can apply online at www.direct.gov.uk or ask at your Job Centre to make a paper claim.

If you are in Full Time further education, your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will assist you to claim **Income Support** you will need to be able to provide confirmation of your attendance from your education provider.

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.

Advances

If you have made a Universal Credit claim but are unable to manage until your first payment, you may be able to get a Universal Credit advance. The amount you can borrow will be the same as your first estimated Universal Credit monthly payment. You will need to pay back your advance a bit at a time from your future Universal Credit payments. You will usually pay your advance back over a 12-month period.

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. This amount is called the work allowance. Then for every pound you earn over the work allowance, your Universal Credit will be reduced by **63 pence**.

How much can you earn a month on universal credit?

Single claimant aged under 25: **£342.72** every calendar month.

If you are ill or disabled your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will be able to support you to make a claim for **Employment and Support Allowance** you can find out more by calling 0800 0556688. If you wish to apply for **Personal Independence Payment** call 0800 9172222.

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

What if I still need financial advice and assistance?

As a Former Relevant Care Leaver you can also apply to **Stockport Local Assistance Scheme (SLAS)** when experiencing hardship by calling 0161 474 2101 or completing the on-line application at www.stockport.gov.uk/slas (*Support will not include cash*).

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 8269800.

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
Tel. No.:	0161 475 6700
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 Bird Hall Lane, Stockport
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 4400
Website:	www.pure-insight.org.uk/
Pure Insight services include a Mentoring Programme , weekly drop in Cafés , parent support groups , art groups and our Care Leaver Forum	
Housing:	
Stockport Homes HomeChoice Team:	0161 474 2975
Benefit Enquiry Line:	
Calling from a landline:	0345 608 8545
Calling from a mobile:	0845 608 8545
Or online at:	www.gov.uk/

USEFUL CONTACTS

Job Seekers Allowance Online Application:	
Tel. No.	0800 055 6688
Website:	www.dwpe-services.direct.gov.uk/portal/page/portal/jsaol/lp
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