The Local Offer for Care Leavers

Working in partnership with

Department for Work & Pensions  |  NHS  |  virginCare  |  Essex County Council
What it’s about?

No one said it was easy being a young person, let alone a young person in care!

This document (like the Leaving Care Guide) tells you about all the support we have in Essex for you as a Care Leaver.

We want to help you achieve the best you possibly can. This offer has been put together with the help of local young people leaving care and other agencies. It explains, where the Leaving and After Care Team can be contacted, and tells you where you can get help, further information and support. To be able to get the support set out in this leaflet, you must have been in care for a period of at least 13 weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks) which began after age 14 and included some time after your 16th birthday. If you are not sure whether you qualify for support ask your Personal Adviser.

You will have an allocated Personal Adviser up until you are 21, the support of a Personal Adviser can now continue up until the age of 25 if you wish. The amount of support that you receive from your Personal Adviser will depend on what you want and your circumstances.

Once you have discussed your ideas and wishes with your worker, together you will draw up a Pathway Plan to cover the different parts of your life you need support with, such as where you live, your education, training and employment, your health, wellbeing, money and your personal support needs. We will consider with you what extra support you may need depending on your personal circumstances i.e.

- You are at university
- You are on an apprenticeship
- Young parent
- Leaving Custody
- Have special educational needs
- Are an unaccompanied asylum seeking young person

This guide will also contain useful websites, agency advice and information about various key issues with extra contacts and web links which you can find at the back of this guide.

You have a right to be involved in all decisions about your plans for leaving care. You have a right to support from an independent advocate if you want to challenge decisions about the support we give you. Independent advocates can inform you about your rights and help you to be heard.
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You can contact us on:

West:
Leaving and After Care Team West,
Goodman House
Station Approach
Harlow
CM20 2ET
Telephone: 0333 013 9932/0333 013 9939

South:
Leaving and After Care Team South,
Ely House
Basildon
SS14 2BQ
Telephone: 03330 013 8935

North:
Leaving and After Care Team North,
Stanwell House
Stanwell Street
Colchester
CO2 7DL
Telephone: 03330 013 9980

Mid:
Leaving and After Care team Mid,
E3, Zone 2
County Hall
Market Road
Chelmsford
CM1 1QH
Telephone: 03330 013 8941

The information contained in this leaflet can be translated, and/or made available in other alternative formats – take a browse and read the section of interest to you.
Accommodation
The way Leaving and After Care work with you is very much as a partner, but perhaps some of what you want, might not be possible or even suitable. You will have rights to be given suitable accommodation to live in whether you stay in care or leave before turning 18.

**What is suitable accommodation?**

Suitable accommodation is somewhere that is safe and right for you, that helps you develop the skills that you need to live independently. You should talk to your worker about where you want to live, and what is in your Pathway Plan.

Many young people feel like they must be given their own flat by law, but this is not the case, and having the responsibility of a flat might not be right for you now.

Your worker can access Semi-Independent Accommodation for you if you are aged 16-18 through the ART 16+ team. (Access To Resources) if this is identified in your Pathway Plan.

Leaving and After Care work with local councils to plan for Care Leavers, usually at 18, moving to accommodation that they can manage, do well and thrive. This can be a flat or bed-sit, but other housing options may include the following:

- **Foster Care/Staying Put**
  If fostered you don’t always have to leave at 16 or 17, especially if you can learn the skills you need, helped by your carer, you may be able to stay on after 18 years (Staying Put arrangement). This is an arrangement that can be considered for young people to stay with their carer after 18.

- **Supported Lodgings**
  This is where you live in someone else’s home where ‘the provider’ gives you a place to live, and some support but you can be more independent.

- **Residential Care**
  You might stay on after you are 16 if you need to, it is important that the Residential Care team and your worker help you to live independently.

- **Supported Accommodation**
  Once you turn 18 your worker can help you apply to the Essex Young Peoples Partnership who provides a range of Supported Housing Options. Your worker will assist you in accessing supported accommodation, based on assessed need when you approach 18.

- **Shared Lives**
  This is an option for those with greater support needs and would enable young people who cannot live alone without support, to remain with their previous carer.

- **Supported Living**
  This is also for those with greater support needs, details can be found in the SEND Local Offer.

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“Thinking about budgeting and finding out how much things cost really helped me manage the money I had to spend.”

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**Emergency contact Shelter Advice Line**
0808 800 444
Accommodation

Having Your Own Place

Tenancy

A tenancy (or licence) is a legal document which entitles the person or tenant to live in a property, and outlines the responsibilities that go with this. There are different types of tenancy agreements, which give you legal rights. Whatever type of agreement you have, make sure that you are given a copy at the time it is signed.

Council or Housing Association flat or bed-sit

This is where the Council or a Housing Association is the landlord and usually the tenant has more security. Some District Councils are able to offer a limited number of direct nominations for social housing to Care Leavers. This is dependent on the applicant demonstrating self-management skills and the assessment of your Personal Adviser.

Private Rent

Privately rented accommodation can be a self-contained or a shared flat. Rents can be higher and landlords can be choosy about who they let their properties to. Your worker will support you to explore what is your best option and to register with the appropriate housing service.

Lodgings or Sharing

Living in someone else’s house may be cheaper and less lonely than living in a place of your own. It is a good idea to have a written agreement with the people who you are living with about your rent, bills and responsibilities.

Informally Living with Family, Friends etc.

Staying with others may also be right for you, and you will be able to seek advice from your worker and the Council Housing services if later on you need to move (especially if you are in danger of becoming ‘homeless’).

Rent and Bills

You will need to provide your own income and pay your own rent and bills through employment, benefits or a combination of both. There is a Benefits Advisor who works for Leaving and After Care who can help and give you advice alongside your worker.

Having got somewhere suitable to live is very important, remember if you have problems with for instance rent, electricity, gas etc., talk to your worker or landlord and don’t ignore official looking letters – they could be very important.

Homelessness

Local Housing Authorities have a duty to give help and advice to prevent homelessness and to people who are homeless. As a Care Leaver you are considered as a ‘priority need’ under the law, but other things need to be looked at too, such as are you homeless because of something that you have or haven’t done. The District/Borough Council may also check that you have a local connection to the area you are making an application in - while they investigate your situation you may be placed in temporary accommodation.

“Now I’ve got my own place I am really enjoying having my independence.”

Emergency contact Shelter Advice Line
0808 800 444
Education, Employment and Training
Thinking about……

We want every young person leaving care to have the support to fulfil their goals in life.

If you are thinking about higher education, you may need qualifications in certain subjects.

You may have an idea of the sort of career you want, and prefer the idea of on the job training plus some college time.

Whether you are thinking about doing A Levels, a training course, going to University or becoming an Apprentice, getting your hands on some much needed money is going to be high on your list of priorities. If you continue to learn and develop your skills, you could receive some financial support to help you out with things like books, travel and equipment.

Apprenticeships are available within the local business community as well as Essex County Council. These are available to young people who are Care Leavers (sometimes before they are offered to anyone else). We can advise you on who can give you more information on this and help you with the application process including advice on form filling, letter writing and making the most of interviews.

This can be a great way of training if you don't want to be in a classroom on a full time basis and it does give you a real insight into what the job you are doing is really like. You also end up with a great qualification and some good experience.

We have Targeted Youth Advisers, and Employment Advisers who can help you access the best options for you.

Essex County Council and some of our partners can offer work experience and apprenticeships to Care Leavers.

Contacts:

www.essex.gov.uk
www.direct.gov.uk (education and learning)
www.apprenticeships.org.uk
www.gov.uk
www.princes-trust.org.uk
https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/ Pages/Home/aspx
http://propel.org.uk
www.indeed.co.uk www.reed.co.uk
www.total-jobs.com
www.jobsite.co.uk
www.monster.com
www.jobs4u.uk.com
www.fish4.co.uk

“Without The Prince’s Trust I’d be stuck. I’m determined to make a better life for myself.”
Some young people leaving care go to College and may go to University, others may repeat some of the school work they have missed so that they can re-take their GCSE’s or take A Levels.

**Look out for**
- Open days where you can visit Colleges or University to get a feel for the courses available and what it is really like.
- Prince’s Trust information about benefits and support.

**Support**
- We want to help you make the most of your opportunities and will support you through higher education as much as we can, it is important that you do well. We would like to attend open days and graduations (with your permission) to show you how much your achievements mean to us.
- Essex County Council Children’s and Family Services have a range of workers to support you. Your worker, Targeted Youth Adviser, Employment Adviser and Benefits Adviser will provide advice to find out as much as you can about higher education and what it can offer. Your Local Job Centre will also be able to advise you on further education opportunities.
- The Targeted Youth Adviser and Employment advisers work alongside your worker and have links to Local Employers – Each of the 4 teams in Essex hold Job Clubs or drop ins where you can get advice and support on all areas of Job Seeking or Study to give you the best chance of sustaining your employment or training
- The finance section of this document has detailed information on support you can access.

- Going to College or University will increase your chances or choice of employment and help develop your confidence and friendships.
- We will support you while you are completing your course of education while it is agreed in your Pathway Plan.
- If you decide to return to study between the ages of 21 and 25 a Personal Adviser will be available to advise you if needed.
- We will help you to find accommodation during University breaks if you need it and will also help with funding for this.
Your Finances
Essex Leaving and After Care services have a Benefits and Finance Adviser who can offer advice and support and produces a Finance Handbook which is updated annually.

Included in this document is information about the financial support the Leaving and After Care service may provide to you in specific circumstances, which includes

- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
- Young people in Further Education (College)
- Young people in Higher Education (University)
- Post Graduate Study
- Training and Apprenticeships
- Young people seeking work
- Young people who are sick or disabled
- Young parents and pregnant women
- Rent deposits/rent in advance/rent guarantee
- Setting up home grant
- Christmas/Festival/Birthday Gifts
- Clothing Allowance
- Travel Documents
- Transition payments
- Payments and Emergencies
- Staying Put

This provides detailed information on all aspects of money and financial support for young people leaving care. A copy of this can be obtained from your worker or online.

Support

We will support you to

- Formulate a budget plan
- Open a bank account
- Make a claim for benefit, there are dedicated advisers within the Job Centre who work with Care Leavers (these are called Single Points of Contact or SPOCS)
- A claim for Universal Credit can be made up to 21 days in advance of your 18th Birthday if you are a Care Leaver- your worker will help you with this.
- Start thinking about saving perhaps just a small amount regularly, for help later on.
- Debt advice

Contacts:

www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk
www.gov.uk/benefits

“My Personal Adviser has helped me set up a bank account, so my benefits can be processed and paid in on time.”
Your Health
Support

- We can help you register with a GP and attend appointments with you as appropriate
- We can provide you with information on healthy living
- If you are anxious or depressed and someone notices this, we can offer you advice and guidance on who would be best placed to help you
- Each Leaving Care Team has a Mental Health Coordinator who can support you and help you access local services if needed
- A Health Passport containing key health information is provided to each Young Person by the Looked After Childrens Nurse as you reach 18
- We can support and offer advice and guidance on who would be best placed to help you with other health issues including sexual health, healthy teeth, drugs and alcohol and generally looking after yourself
- We can help you with information on how to access prescriptions
- We can support you when you are changing from children’s mental health services to adults.

Having strong and supportive relationships is crucially important for everyone, including Care Leavers. The support from your worker will help you to understand how to establish and maintain healthy relationships.

In addition wherever possible we will offer you additional practical and emotional support such as:

- Help to maintain or regain contact with people who are special to you, including those who have cared for you in the past
- Providing support from our Mental Health Co-ordinator, such as counselling and advice around relationship issues
- Re-connecting with family, where it is in your best interest
- Virgin Health in Essex provide health services for young people up to the age of 25 [www.essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk](http://www.essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk) (search looked after children)
- Kooth is an online mental health services for children, young people and adults in Essex. [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)

Contacts:

- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- [www.ru-ok.org.uk](http://www.ru-ok.org.uk)
- [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)
- [www.healthline.com](http://www.healthline.com)
- [www.fdf.org.uk](http://www.fdf.org.uk)
- [www.sportessex.com](http://www.sportessex.com)
- [http://kidshealth.org/teen](http://kidshealth.org/teen)
- [www.essexsexualhealthservice.org.uk](http://www.essexsexualhealthservice.org.uk)
- [www.essexdrugaction.org](http://www.essexdrugaction.org)
- [www.youthaccess.org.uk](http://www.youthaccess.org.uk)
- Essex Young Peoples Drug and Alcohol Service (EYPDAS) 01245 493311

“It’s important to see your Doctor and Dentist regularly – it’s a great way to MOT your body.”
Participation in Society
We want our Care Leavers to be active members of society and to have all the chances in life that other young adults have.

We can help you with:

- Courses that teach you about independent living can be accessed through the Targeted Youth Adviser based in the Leaving Care teams
- Children in Care Council offers volunteering opportunities, support, opportunities to be around young people from similar backgrounds, and facilitates for you to have a chance to have your say
- Drop In – run in each quadrant by the teams where you can access the Targeted Youth Adviser/Employment Adviser and Mental Health Coordinator, Looked After Nurse.
- Challenging any discrimination you face

Contacts:

Children in Care Council (CICC)

Advocacy – an advocate can help you to put your thoughts in to words. You can access advocacy at Rethink, essexadvocacy@rethink.org
Tel: 03007900559

or ask your Personal Adviser

https://www.rethinkessexadvocacy.org/

www.nyas.net

www.rights4u.org

www.coramvoice.org.uk

involvement@essex.gov.uk

https://Essex.younglife.org

www.essexconnects.org.uk

“My advocate helped put my thoughts across in words.”
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

You are entitled to a personal adviser up to the age of 25, whether or not you are in education or training. The Local Authority will also have to conduct an assessment to determine whether you need advice and support to help you to obtain Local Authority Services.

Triple planning

There may be uncertainty around your immigration status, particularly if you have claimed asylum, have UASC leave or are awaiting a decision on an immigration application. It is impossible for anyone to predict in which way claims or applications will be resolved. As a result, Social Workers need to plan for three possible outcomes for those turning 18. This is known as Triple Planning and is part of the regular statutory planning through the Care Plan, Pathway Plan and review process.

Planning for three possible outcomes after reaching 18 involves:

- Equipping a young person to have a future in the UK if they receive some form of leave to remain in the UK past their 18th birthday
- Preparing a young person to be returned to their country of origin either if they are refused an extension to remain in the UK and are being returned, or if they decide to return of their own accord, and
- Supporting young people who have been refused leave to remain in the UK and who have exhausted all appeals but are not removed.

Human Rights Assessments

Former unaccompanied children who qualify as Care Leavers and who have been granted leave to remain, or who have an outstanding asylum or other human rights claim or appeal, are entitled to the same level of care and support from the Local Authority as any other Care Leaver.

Currently, if an individual with no leave to remain or outstanding application is receiving leaving care support, the local authority must carry out a human rights assessment in order to determine whether removing someone’s leaving care support would breach their human rights.

Young People with Disabilities

If you have been in care and have received a service from the Children with Disabilities Team or the Young Person with Disabilities Team you are still entitled to a service under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 the same as all Care Leavers.

In these circumstances you will have received support directly through these teams and not the Leaving Care Team. Essex County Council has a comprehensive Local Offer for people with Special Educational Need and Disabilities which can be accessed here.

http://www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/

“It’s great to chat to people who are interested in the same things I am.”
Useful contacts

**General**
www.cicc.essex.gov.uk
https://www.essexeffective support.org.uk/
https://www.rethinkessexadvocacy.org/
www.essex.gov.uk
ChildLine 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk
Essex Police 0300 333 444 (non- emergency)
NSPCC 0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk
www.2smart.co.uk
www.essex.younglife.org
www.citizensadvice.org.uk

**Education**
www.apprenticeships.org.uk
www.direct.gov.uk
www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk
www.princes-trust.org.uk

**Legal**
www.adviceguide.org.uk
www.childrenslegalcentre.com
www.refugeecouncil.org
www.shelter.org.uk
www.themix.org.uk
www.ukimmigration.com

**Health**
www.essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk
Ask Brook 0808 802 1234 www.brook.org.uk
ChildLine 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk
Cruse Bereavement Care 0808 808 1677 www.cruse.org.uk
Drinkline 0800 917 8282
FRANK 0800 77 66 00 www.talktofrank.com
NHS Smoking Helpline 0800 022 4 332 http://smokefree.nhs.uk
Samaritans 08457 90 90 90 www.samaritans.org
www.actionforchildren.org.uk
www.fpa.org.uk
www.healthline.com
www.ru-ok.org.uk
www.sportengland.org
www.teenagehealthfreak.org
www.thesite.org.uk
www.youngminds.org.uk
www.kooth.com