



Leaving Care – Local Offer



Contents

www.westsussex.gov.uk.....	1
Contents	2
Young Care Leaver – Foreword.....	6
How we will support you when your time in care comes to an end?.....	6
Local offer for care leavers.....	6
Overview.....	6
Corporate Parenting Principles	7
How Have We Developed the Local Offer?	8
Our Leaving Care Service	8
Overview.....	8
Who can receive a service?	8
What services are available?	9
Former Relevant.....	10
Qualifying	10
16 and 17-Year Old’s	11
Planning for your future.....	11
Leaving care: Who's there to help?.....	12
Social workers.....	13
Changing your social worker	13
Independent Reviewing Officer	13
Youth justice system	14
Personal Advisors (PA’s)	14
Visits from your Personal Advisor (PA)	14
Where do we meet up?.....	15
How will we keep in touch?	15
How to Contact us	15

Social Worker.....	15
Personal Advisor (PA).....	15
Independent Visitor (IV) Scheme	16
Advocacy – what is an advocate?	16
What can an advocate help with?	16
What happens when you meet your advocate?.....	17
How to request advocacy	17
Contact the Advocacy Team:	17
21 – 25 Service Offer	18
Money and benefits	19
Overview.....	19
Financial Entitlements	19
Help with your first home	21
Budgeting.....	21
Income Maximisation	21
Leaving Care Discretionary Payments	22
Savings.....	23
Looked After Children (LAC) Junior ISA.....	23
No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)	23
Care Leavers in Prison	24
Migrant Support.....	24
Overview.....	25
No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)	25
Deportation	26
Other Agency Support	27
Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) and British Citizenship.....	28
Somewhere to call home	28
Overview.....	29

Health and wellbeing	33
Overview.....	34
Health assessments	34
Registering with a doctor	35
Registering with a dentist	35
Mental Health Services	35
Sexual Health Services	36
Drugs and Alcohol.....	36
LGBTQ support.....	36
Definitions and commonly used words	37
Coming out.....	37
Bullying, discrimination and domestic abuse	37
Local LGBT+ Support	37
Young Parents Pathway	37
PAUSE Offer.....	38
Domestic Abuse.....	38
Life Centre Offer.....	38
SEND and Disabilities SEND Offer.....	39
Transitions Team	39
Education, Training and University	39
Overview.....	40
Personal Advisor Support.....	40
Personal Education Plan (PEP)	41
Virtual School.....	41
University.....	41
Local Support.....	42
Find It Out Centres	42
ASPIRE Offer.....	42

Jobs Overview	43
Personal Advisor Support	43
WSCC Apprenticeship Offer	43
Careers Advice	43
Career Tasters	44
Social Values and Local Support.....	44
Getting Involved	45
Your Voice matters	45
Other resources.....	46

Young Care Leaver – Foreword



Hello. My name is Michelle, and I am a West Sussex County Council care leaver. I entered care at 5-years of age and began my transition into independent living at 18 years old. I am now 23 years old, studying medicine at King's College London University and still receiving support from WSCC. I see my personal advisor every few months where we have a catch-up over coffee or lunch, and I also collaborate with the Leaving Care Team and Children in Care Council to help improve services for care-experienced individuals.

Because of my life experiences, I am very passionate about improving social outcomes such as education, housing, employment and health regarding care-leavers. This has led me to volunteer with organisations dedicated to enhancing the prospects for care-leavers and other disadvantaged groups.

My voluntary work includes working as a policy forum ambassador at Drive Forward Foundation, bridging the gap between policymakers and care-experienced individuals to help improve the social outcomes for care-experienced individuals. For the last two years I have sat on the Alumni Leadership Board of one of the largest educational charities in the UK, Sutton Trust, which aims to widen access into higher education through its programmes, policy and research. My future aspirations are to complete my degree and become a Doctor, continue to work within public policy to improve social outcomes for care experienced individuals.

From here, we are going to follow me and other care-leavers experiences of receiving support from WSCC. The aim of this document is to explain the West Sussex County Council Local Offer for an individual who has lived and experienced their services. This will give you a better understanding of what support you are entitled to.

How we will support you when your time in care comes to an end?

Preparing for independence can be both scary and worrying and is one of the biggest steps you will take on your journey to become a successful adult. Living independently isn't easy and if you've also spent time in care, you may feel that you've had more than your fair share of difficult experiences to deal with. The earlier you start to prepare and put some of the skills you will need into action, the easier it will be when you do move into independence.

Local offer for care leavers

Overview

This Local Offer has been produced to give you, as a care leaver, an idea of what services West Sussex County Council provides. It has been written to outline exactly what you can expect from our organisation: expectations against which we, as a

council, can be held to account.

The need for a Local Offer arises from the introduction of the **Children and Social Work Act 2017**, which says that we, as a council, must publish information about the services we provide you. In West Sussex we feel that our published Local Offer should go *beyond* our legal requirement and should be a more comprehensive document. We are working on this to build upon the base requirements as stated in the Act to provide you with a more detailed overview of exactly what we offer, how we will deliver it, and give information about other services for care leavers.

At the heart of our practice, we will aim to identify and promote what is working well in your life, while exploring any concerns, assessing the impact of these, and planning in partnership with you. This document is accessible to 16 & 17 year olds, but only outlines what you can expect from the Leaving Care Service. Information about what can be expected from your CLA team can be found in the New into Care card & booklet available from your Social Worker. When unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) come to West Sussex, we look after them, they are 'accommodated'.

Once an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child has been accommodated under S20 of the Children Act 1989 and initial Home Office procedures have been completed, the case will be eligible to be transferred to the Leaving Care Service. If you are an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child, you will therefore be allocated a personal advisor and be eligible for support from the Leaving Care Service.

Corporate Parenting Principles

The term 'Corporate Parent' isn't particularly warm, is it? But it does stand for the very positive idea that West Sussex County Council should act as your parent. What this means is that we share the same hopes, wishes and aspirations for you as we would for our own children. We want you to have access to the same opportunities and chances that any other child or young person would – being care experienced does not mean that you don't have the same potential as those who are **not** care experienced.

We frame our relationship with you on a set of principles – principles we return to time and again to ensure that we are doing our very best as your parent.

These principles are as follows:

- To act in your best interests and promote the physical and mental health and well-being of all care leavers.
- To encourage every care leaver to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To hear and consider the views, wishes and feelings of every care leaver.
- To help care leavers gain access to, and to 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 care leavers.

- For care leavers to be safe and stable in their home lives, relationships, education or work.
- To prepare care leavers for adulthood and independent living.

How Have We Developed the Local Offer?

Putting together our Local Offer has involved big discussions at West Sussex County Council and with organisations in the Districts and Boroughs we work with. Most importantly, we have talked and listened to the care leavers we support, like you.

This Local Offer is a *live* document. This means that the version you're about to read is only the beginning, and we will keep looking at it, building on it and really working out how we can be better for you. We want you involved in this, so don't be shy about telling us what you think, so we can offer something that is not just good, but outstanding...

Our Leaving Care Service

Overview

Our Leaving Care Service is the key team for you to know, as they will be your first contact point for all your needs. You will start to work with an allocated Personal Advisor or Social Worker from this team when you turn 18.

Who can receive a service?

If you've been Looked After, that doesn't automatically mean you'll get a Leaving Care service. There are some important distinctions to make on who can receive a service.

The key terms to be mindful of are: **Eligible, Relevant, Former Relevant** and **Qualifying**. These are terms that can be used in different ways to describe young people aged between 16 and 25 to distinguish the levels of support that will be offered.

What do all these terms mean?

Eligible child:

- Aged 16 or 17
- Looked after by children's services for a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14
- Currently looked after

Relevant child:

- Aged 16 or 17
- Looked after by children's services for a period of 13 weeks since the age

- Looked after for a period after their 16th birthday
- No longer looked after

Former relevant child:

- Aged between 18 and 21 OR between 18 and 25 if still in full-time education
- Previously an eligible child and/or a relevant child

Qualifying child:

- Aged between 16 and 21 OR between 16 and 25 if still in full-time education
- Looked after by children's services on, or after, their 16th birthday and no longer looked after
- Spent less than 13 weeks in care since 14th birthday, i.e. do not fulfil criteria for eligible or relevant child

For a description of each category and what you are entitled to, visit the [Child Law Advice](#) website.

What services are available?

This document will explain what support and services are available to West Sussex care leavers. As a brief overview, young people who are eligible, relevant or former relevant can expect the following:

- Personal Advisor or Social Worker
- Pathway Plan
- General advice and assistance

There are plenty of other entitlements, but they will relate to specific areas such as housing or education and will be covered later in this document.

Let's take a moment to give you a bit more information on the difference between the services you will enjoy if you are former, relevant or qualifying:

Former Relevant

We will:

- Help you find suitable housing.
- Provide you with a Personal Advisor who visits you at least once every two months.
- Provide you with and review a Pathway Plan at least once every six months.
- Help you with expenses relating to getting into, or remaining in education, employment or training.
- Offer you advice and support.
- Keep in touch with you.
- Offer or pay for somewhere for you to live during the extended university holidays (Easter, Summer and Christmas) if you have no other home.
- Provide you with a £2,000.00 Higher Education Bursary and a Setting up Home Allowance (SUHA).

Qualifying

We will:

- Offer you advice and support.
- Keep in touch with you.
- Offer or pay for somewhere for you to live during the extended university holidays (Easter, Summer and Christmas) if you have no other home.

16 and 17-Year Old's

The Leaving Care Service starts to take a *leading* role on working with you when you turn 18, however the Leaving Care 'journey' begins before adulthood, and each young person who qualifies for a service is matched to a Personal Advisor or Social Worker from the age of 16. The idea of an earlier match is to ensure you get to know the worker who will provide post-18 support *before* you become an adult. The worker will also have a much stronger idea and understanding of your support needs before you turn 18 and can better prepare you for what is to come.

Work with an Eligible or Relevant 16 or 17-year-old will still be led by a Social Worker, but the matched worker from the Leaving Care Service will also help the Social Worker prepare for your independence.

Our charter for care leavers means that we will treat you with respect, listen to you and support you every step of the way to ensure you have the best possible start in life.

Planning for your future

At some point before or just after your 16th birthday, you will have sat down with your social worker and other adults who play an important role in your life to write a Pathway Plan for your future.

Your Pathway Plan will contain lots of different things that matter to you including:

- Where you are going to live and your accommodation
- Mapping out what needs you have
- Setting out how your needs can be met in the future
- Your health, wellbeing and development
- Your education, employment and training
- Your family, social relationships and personal support
- Practical skills and how you are going to develop them
- Financial support you are receiving
- Your future goals and how you are going to achieve them
- Helping you move towards independence
- How the County Council will provide you with the support you need.

Your [Personal Advisor \(PA\)](#) will take the lead with the Pathway Plan when you turn 18 years old. It is important that everyone around you knows what is happening and what plans you have.

When the Pathway Plan has been written up, you will have an opportunity to read it, comment on it and sign it. If you agree to its content –it becomes a *legally* binding document, so signing it is kind of a big deal.

Your Pathway Plan will be reviewed at least once every six months, though it can be reviewed sooner should you wish. You can think about what has happened over previous months, what you may like to do next, what you have achieved and any goals you have for the future. It will also give you a chance to discuss how you are getting on and how you feel about where you are living.

Your Pathway Plan can be changed at any time. Things can happen in life that you don't expect, so you might find that you want different things, or your circumstances change.

It is important you work with your PA on your Pathway Plan, as they won't know what you would like them to help you with.

Leaving care: Who's there to help?



While I was living with my foster carers they helped prepare me for independent living. They taught me how to cook, clean and budget my money from a very young age. At 18 years old, I was confident in my independent living skills and ready to live in independently. My social worker understood my vision to study medicine and checked in regularly to ensure that I was on track. She encouraged my goals and was my moral support. She ensured that I was aware of the support available to me as a care-leaver and introduced me to my personal advisor. My personal advisor explained that she would take over from my social worker and will help support me until I am 25 years old. She also gave me a booklet to read informing me of my entitlements as a West Sussex City Council care leaver and checked to see if I have any questions. If I need help with anything, she is my first point of call.

I have built strong relationships with secondary school friends and foster family. My foster cousins and best friends are a large support system for me and are always there when I need them. They give me advice and encourage me when I feel like giving up, I do not know where I would be without them. At university, I have built good friendships with some of my peers, and we continue to support one another at university and in our personal lives. My university has an excellent outreach department that helps support groups such as care-leavers, estranged students and forced migrants. The engagement officer is beneficial, she texts and calls to check-in and is available to help throughout a student's university journey.

My advice for when you meet your PA for the first time is to meet at locations that you are comfortable with and talk openly to your PA. Don't be scared to talk to your PA about what support you want from them and how often.

Social workers

Every young person who is looked after by the County Council will have a social worker until they are 18 years old. Their role is to ensure you receive appropriate care, education and health services and they will always treat you with respect and dignity. Your social worker will be there to support you with any problems you might have and can answer questions about living away from home. They will be there to listen to what you have to say and will [advocate](#) on your behalf.

Your social worker is the person who is responsible for:

- making sure you're properly cared for
- visiting you
- helping you to keep in touch with your family
- being there to help if you have problems
- making sure you're healthy
- supporting you with your education.

Changing your social worker

Most young people get on with their Social Worker, but sometimes they don't. If you don't get on with your Social Worker, it is important to know why.

You can always tell your social worker or any other adults you are living with that you're not happy and you can ask for a different one. This is not always possible, but your wishes will be listened to.

Independent Reviewing Officer

As well as your social worker who will manage your case, an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is a very important person for you as a looked after child, as they are in charge of monitoring your case.

You will be given the contact details of your IRO and they should meet you before your first case review. An IRO must make sure the local authority is doing what it is supposed to do for you while you're in care, making sure your placement is right for you and that you are happy and safe. Every looked after child will be allocated an IRO within seven days of becoming looked- after and where possible, you will have the same IRO throughout your time in care. This is so that you can build a good relationship with them and trust them to help you if things need to change about your situation in care.

If you stop being looked after, but then become looked after again, you will be given the same IRO as before.

If you have brothers and sisters who are also in care, even if they are in a different

placement from you, they should also have the same IRO as you.

Youth justice system

If you are being cared for within the youth justice system, your IRO should specifically check that:

- your social worker is working in partnership with the youth offending team, sharing information and contributing to the youth offending team's assessment
- you have been given expert legal help
- your social worker is going with you to court hearings
- your social worker has provided all the necessary information that will help the court to reach a decision, including anything in your defence and plans for your future
- your placement is supporting you and complying with bail conditions

Personal Advisors (PA's)

From the age of 16, you will be working with both your Social Worker and a Personal Advisor. Your Personal Advisor will be responsible for working with you to prepare you to live in independence where you are healthy, happy and safe.

Your Personal Advisor will provide you with advice and support to help you on your journey to living independently successfully and keep you informed about the support we and other services can offer you.

If you are worried about anything or have any problems, you can talk to your Personal Advisor who will do their best to support you. They will treat you with respect, dignity and will be there to listen to what you have to say.

The key thing to note with a Personal Advisor is that the onus is very much on **you**, as a care leaver, to say *when* you need support – you are an adult after all and more is expected of you!

Your PA will also:

- meet with you to write and review your [Pathway Plan](#)
- support you in looking after your health and wellbeing
- support you in education, employment and training
- keep in touch with you until you are at least 21 years old, or 25 if in education
- keep an eye on any difficulties you may be having.

Visits from your Personal Advisor (PA)

Your Personal Advisor will attend the last two LAC Reviews before you turn 18 and

explain the process of you becoming supported by the Leaving Care Service; they will also give you their mobile number and email address.

Where do we meet up?

Before turning 18, your Social Worker is most likely to visit you where you are living, though they can meet you somewhere different. After turning 18, your Personal Advisor will meet you wherever you're both happy to meet. It may be that your Personal Advisor wishes to visit your house for a particular reason, as they wish to see how you are managing with living independently.

How will we keep in touch?

Your Personal Advisor must, by law, see you at least once every two months (unless expressly against your wishes). They may not see you as often as you would like, but they will do their best to see you as often as possible, and when you are in most need of support. Between visits, you'll keep in touch through other means like text, mobile, email, Skype and/or app. Once again, the Personal Advisor will be led by your wishes, and if you want to see your worker's smiling face more often then they'll be happy to see you too!

Most young people get on with their Personal Advisors, but sometimes they don't. If you don't get on with yours, it is important to know why. You can always tell your PA or someone you trust that you are not happy, and you can ask for a different one. This is not always possible, but your wishes and feelings will be listened to.

How to Contact us

Social Worker

To speak to your social worker, you should call the office where they are based. If they are not in their office, you can leave them a message. Your social worker does not work 24 hours a day, so may not always answer their phone.

If the office is closed and the matter is urgent, you can contact the Emergency Duty Team by telephoning 0330 2226664 during the following hours:

- Monday-Thursday - 5.00pm to 8.00am
- Friday - 5.00pm to 8.00am on Monday (includes all day Saturday and Sunday)

Personal Advisor (PA)

You can call your PA on their mobile phone and talk to them during office hours, Monday-Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm.

If your PA is not available or is in a meeting, and you need to talk to them urgently, leave a message and they will call you back as soon as they can. Your PA does not work 24 hours a day, so may not always answer their phone.

If it really is urgent and you can't wait for your PA to call back, you can contact the helpline on 0330 2222004. Remember, the person who answers your call may not

know you or your circumstances, so be patient and explain fully why you are calling and how they can help you.

Independent Visitor (IV) Scheme

The West Sussex Independent Visitor Scheme is a befriending scheme for children and young people between the ages of 8 and 17 years, who are looked after by the local authority and will not be returning home.

Independent visitors are not professional care workers. They are adult volunteers who enjoy spending time with children and young people. They are suitably matched with a child and visit them once a month, building up a friendship with them and doing things together which the child or young person enjoys. This can be going for a bike ride, having a chat over a hot chocolate, watching a film together, visiting a museum - whatever the child or young person is interested in and wants to do.

Most visits naturally take place at weekends or in school holidays when children and young people are free.

Advocacy – what is an advocate?

An advocate is an **independent** person who helps you speak up for yourself. They also give advice, make you aware of your rights, listen to you and represent your views, wishes and feelings. An advocate will support you so that you can have your say about the care and services you receive.

You can get an advocate if you are a:

- child or young person in care,
- care leaver,
- child or young person who has a disability and receives help from a social worker,
- child or young person aged 12 or over involved in a child protection conference,
- child or young person aged 7 or over involved in your first Child Looked After review,
- child or young person wishing to make a complaint about West Sussex Children's Services.

What can an advocate help with?

An advocate can help you when:

- you're too scared to speak up in your review meeting because there are adults there talking language you don't understand,
- you're angry that a decision has been made and you don't agree with it,

- you want to move from your current placement, carer or supported lodgings,
- you don't want to move again,
- you're confused about what is going to happen in your child protection conference,
- you really want others to understand how you feel about something,
- you want to complain about something.

What happens when you meet your advocate?

- The advocate will listen to you and find out if you have a problem or worry.
- The advocate will help you understand what your choices are and what people are saying.
- The advocate will ask you what help you want.
- You can ask the advocate to speak to people on your behalf or come with you to meetings.
- The advocate will help you sort out your problem or worry the way you would like them to and make sure you are listened to.

How to request advocacy

If you would like to request help from an advocate you can [complete the online form](#).

Contact the Advocacy Team:

If you would like to find out more about what we do, you can contact the team.

- Email: AdvocacyService@westsussex.gov.uk
- Tel: 033 022 28686
- Address: West Wing, Centenary House, Durrington Lane, Worthing, BN13 2QB

Find out more:

- [The Advocacy Service and you \(PDF, 515KB\)](#)
- [Your Voice Advocacy Child Protection Conference \(PDF, 1.1MB\)](#)
- [Advocacy flyer \(PDF, 1.8MB\)](#)
- [What is an advocate? \(with symbols\) \(PDF, 250KB\)](#)
- [What is an advocate? \(with symbols - short version\) \(PDF, 166KB\)](#)

"Having an advocate helped me get my voice heard better" – A female aged 15.

“I felt like I wasn’t alone by having an advocate. An advocate will fight for you, give you a voice and will stand up for you” - A male aged 21.

21 – 25 Service Offer

If you are between the ages of 21 and 25, our service will look a little different to how it was when you were 18, 19 and 20. This change is due to the **Children and Social Work Act 2017 – Section 3** which means you can ask for support from us up until you turn 25, whether you are in education or not. If we do say goodbye to each other before you are 25, then you can still return to ask for more support up to your 25th birthday.

We recognise that a 21 to 25-year-old is likely to be a lot more independent than someone younger. As you approach your 21st birthday, your Personal Advisor will sit down with you and work out the following:

- Whether you still need our support.
- If you do need support, what tasks you need support with.
- If you do need support, how often we will keep in touch and how we will keep in touch.

After this has been discussed, your Pathway Plan will be updated accordingly. If you would like support with a lot of things, then you may require a full needs assessment; if you only want support with a couple of things – such as finding a job or accessing a course – then a full needs assessment is not needed.

If you decide you want to say goodbye at 21, then we will write to you each year until you reach 25 just to remind you that we’re still here ready to support you if you need it! You can contact the Leaving Care Service during duty hours and the following happens:

- **Needs Assessment:** The duty worker will talk with you about what tasks you’d like support with. Perhaps you only want help with something small or perhaps you’d like quite a lot of assistance. Either way, the duty worker will write the important information down. You will then provide your contact details and we will get back to you (unless you need emergency support).
- **Allocation:** You will be contacted within two weeks and told who your allocated Personal Advisor will be, and they will meet up with you and start providing support. We will try our best to make sure your worker is the last Personal Advisor you had before we said goodbye.

Money and benefits

Hi I'm Dan. I'm 19 and currently at college doing mechanics.



When I turned 18, I had to apply for universal credit and housing benefit to pay for my rent. This was a bit of an adjustment for me, but my PA helped me with doing this online and came with me to my appointment at the job centre to make sure I understood everything- I've got the hang of it now!

It was hard in the beginning remembering all the things I needed to pay for, but my PA helped me work out a budget plan so I can keep on track and make sure I have money to pay for my bills and food, and not just spend everything all at once. It also helps that I get my 16-19 bursary from college, so this is a bit of extra money to help with travel. Once I have finished my course, I'm hoping to get a full-time job in a garage so I can come off benefits.

My advice to other care leavers would be, don't bury your head in the sand if you have money worries - talk to your PA or to the job centre. I use a banking app on my phone so it helps me keep up to date with how much I have left in my account and I can see where my money is going. Money will be tight so I would say start practicing budgeting before you turn 18 and start saving as well if you can. I have saved up a bit of money and plan to use this for driving lessons.

Overview

Becoming an adult and becoming independent is financially challenging for anyone, but you may face the extra challenge of having few or no relatives to support you. We take our financial responsibilities to you very seriously and do our best to make sure that you do not have to worry because your bank account is empty. Financial support does not mean that we pay you money every week; it instead describes a range of ways in which Personal Advisors and other Council employees are expected to help you get your money situation looking and staying healthy.

If you are waiting to find out the outcome of your asylum claim or British citizenship application, different arrangements will apply, and this will be explained in your Pathway Plan. Please also refer to the section below called Migrant Support.

Financial Entitlements

There are several entitlements for you to be aware of with regards money. So, here's what you can expect to receive from us:

When you turn 18, you will no longer get pocket money, or a personal allowance paid to you by your Social Worker. You will, however, be entitled to claim Universal Credit if you are not working and earning a wage. While you are waiting for your Universal Credit claim and so you don't have to accept the advance payment which will put you in debt, we will pay you *Five weekly payments* of Universal Credit

equivalent upon turning 18 to help you out until benefit payments can commence, as long as you have made a valid claim.

- **Setting Up Home Allowance** of up to £2,000.00 to be used for furnishing your first home and, if relevant, funding rent in advance for a private rental.
 - Up to £300 towards health costs, such as glasses, dentistry or accessing medical appointments
 - Up to £500 to help you with accessing education, employment or training. This could include course materials or books for a college course or uniform for a new job. We will also help you with transport costs for the first month when you start your first job, if the Job Centre+ don't meet the cost.
- **Higher Education Bursary (HEB)** of £2,000.00, usually paid in instalments of £666.67 over the three academic years of university
- Support to make an application to Student Finance England for tuition and maintenance loans.
- **Graduation Fund** (when graduating from University) towards the cost of gown hire and mortar, graduation photos etc.
- **No Council Tax to pay** up until the age of 22, anywhere in the Country. This payment does not happen automatically, so you must speak to your PA or call Leaving Care on 033 022 22004 to ask us to make the payments on your behalf.
- Support to open a bank account if you've not already done so.
- **Support to get a National Insurance (NI) number**, which you will need for any benefit applications and work.
- **A gift on birthdays and the cultural celebration of your choice, including your children, if you have any** - Personal Advisors can purchase small gifts for young people for their birthday and at Christmas or other key religious festival up to a value of £15. We will also buy a small gift for birthday and Christmas for any children of our care leavers. Personal Advisors should recognise key events and points of celebration by sending you a greetings card.
- **Cultural allowances** - You may require help to take part in religious or cultural festivals. If these are included in your pathway plan, we can support you through payments to a maximum of £50 per year. We do not support travel costs for regular worship or attendance at church / mosque.
- **Identification Documents**
 - Leaving Care Service now has an internal arrangement for the provision of birth certificates at no cost to you. If you need a birth certificate the normal £10 fee will be waived on application by stating on the application that the young person is a care leaver.

- We will pay for one form of ID.
- **Vacation allowance for University accommodation** – we will pay your accommodation costs outside of term time (Christmas, Easter & Summer)
- **Moving** - We will pay for any agency fees for renting privately and cover your removal costs
- **TV License** - Your first year's TV licence (deductible from your Setting Up Home Allowance)

Help with your first home

As well as your Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA) to fund the items for your new home, the County Council may also help pay your deposit and first month's rent (the latter will be deducted from your Setting Up Home Allowance). There may be other ways to get your deposit such as through a Local Authority deposit scheme. Your PA will work with you to find what's best for you.

We will also make sure you have adequate means to pack and move your things. Someone can help you move; whether that's your PA or a removals company will depend on how much you need to move.

Budgeting

Budgeting is a vital skill which should be developed at a young age. You can expect advice from your Personal Advisor on how best to budget and how to make sure you're getting all the money you're entitled to.

If you are attending university, you will have to make sure you budget to live on your student loan/grant for a 12-month period.

Income Maximisation

Income maximisation is the term we use when we talk about helping you get all the money you're entitled to. Your financial entitlements will depend on a few things including;

- your legal status,
- your age,
- whether you're a student,
- whether you're working,
- none of these.

Some of the support that *may* be offered to you is outlined below:

- **Benefits:** referral to an advisor at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (they're the guys who manage the Jobcentre) who understands the

issues Care Leavers might have. They can also work out whether there are any other benefits you can claim that you didn't already know about.

Many factors affect which benefits you can apply for and the amount you'll receive. Below are two benefit calculators to help you work out what you're entitled to:

- [TURN2US](#)
- [entitledto](#)
- **Bursaries:** There are several bursaries available to which you may be entitled, including the **16 to 19 Bursary Fund** which can be accessed while you're at college. The sheer range of bursaries reflects the fact that everyone's situation is different. We will also consider other bursary or grant options such as [Buttle UK](#) or the [UNITE Foundation](#).
- **Ongoing Support:** in exceptional cases, we *might* consider offering you temporary financial support – usually when we are worried about your immediate safety.

Leaving Care Discretionary Payments

Generally, we will not make any ongoing payments to you – nor to any other care leaver with recourse to public funds, as it is expected that if you are not earning you will be accessing benefits (Universal Credit) to support yourself. There are, however, exceptional circumstances where we think you may need some help. The decision is made by considering the following:

- Are there genuine safeguarding concerns and you would be placed at immediate risk if you do not receive financial support?
- Is there a SMART plan in place (reflected in a Pathway Plan) of how you and your Personal Advisor will try to overcome your current money issues?
- Have you provided a bank statement to confirm that you have nothing in your account?
- If your Universal Credit payment has stopped, have you tried to fix the issue and/or access an **Advance Payment** from your local Jobcentre?

If we decide we can help you, you will be offered one or more of the following:

- Food Vouchers
- Food Parcel and toiletries
- Referral to a food bank
- Direct payment to your bank account

Your request will be entered into your Pathway Plan to keep a record. More importantly, there will be a discussion within your Plan of your money situation and how we can work together to improve it. If we do offer to pay money to your bank

account, you will not receive the payment immediately; it will take at least 2-3 working days owing to the way our financial systems work. There is nothing your Personal Advisor can do to change that.

Savings

Looked After Children (LAC) Junior ISA

As a Looked After child, and then as a care leaver, you'll be able to access The [Junior ISA](#).

The **Junior ISA** is set up by the Share Foundation on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE). When it's set up for you, £200.00 is put in it by the government (thank you very much) and over time, that amount grows a little. At the age of 18 you can request for some or all the money to be paid to you. However, the ISA will only be available to you if the following criteria apply:

- a. You must have been born *before* 1st September 2002 or *after* 2nd January 2011.
- b. You must have been in care for at least 12 months uninterrupted.
- c. You must be under the age of 18 (on application).

If you find yourself getting into debt, your PA will help you contact companies you owe money to and arrange a repayment plan that is affordable. Alternatively, they will introduce you to a debt advice service for help.

No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

The financial arrangements for care leavers with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) is very different to the arrangements made for everyone else. If you are unable to access benefits and housing, you are very likely not to be able to legally work, and we have a duty to support you. We will make the following provision:

- The **provision of a prepaid card** to be used in place of a normal debit or creditcard.
- **Weekly subsistence payments** to be used for food, drink, toiletries, clothing and other essentials.
- **Fully subsidised rent and utility bills** in accommodation sourced by West Sussex County Council.
- **Travel payments for getting to college** as this should not come out of your weekly subsistence, although you may have to contribute your bursary towards this.

The support with money is conditional, which means we can stop paying you if you fail to comply with a Removal Order. If your application for extended leave is refused, or your appeal against refusal is dismissed, we will continue to support you until your 21st birthday.

For the subsistence payments to continue, you must stay in contact with us so that we know you still need our support. We have made this decision in line with the **Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 – Schedule 3**.

If you have NRPF we are unable to pay university tuition fees, therefore if your immigration status allows you to be in higher education, you will need to source funding for this by way of a scholarship or other charitable means. Don't forget you will have to pay tuition fees at the International Student rate.

Care Leavers in Prison

Care leavers who are in prison receive a small amount of financial support from us. The prison itself will be providing food, drink, clothing, etc. You can also take up work inside prison to pay for any additional items you would like.

Migrant Support



Hi, my name is Dalal and I'm 21. I am currently at university studying to become a surgeon.

When I came to the UK, I was age 14, as a refugee with no English. My journey took me around 11 months from country to country, with no food and no drink and I did not know where I was going. I now have 5 years Leave to Remain.

I always think I should not give up if I want to succeed in my life, as Earl Nightingale said "Don't give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it, the time will pass anyway".

It has not felt easy for me being in care but honestly, I worked hard at school, learned the language and focussed on my goal to be in the medical field. I did my GCSE's and A levels and I really succeeded at this. Despite all the difficulties in the past, and what I had been through, today I'm one of the students at university still working on the progress to be more successful. I am studying to become a surgeon so I can save people's lives, and I work to improve things for care-leavers because this is a way of saving people's lives or making them better too.

My solicitor and my social worker helped me to do my asylum claim, they supported me to get my papers. It was really good experience, but this didn't prevent me from being anxious. To be waiting for the decision is not easy thing, but after that when I got all my papers, I started my new life and I focused on my new journey.

It wasn't always easy meeting new PA's but all the PAs who worked with me have been the loveliest people ever.

Pathway plans are one of the useful things that have helped me. I have learnt in this country how I can manage to do my own plan, which is about building my future. If plan A does not work, I can use B or C even D. But I've never changed the goal about where I want to be in 5 years' time. My Philosophy is one day I will finally be able to say "I MADE IT".

My advice to others going through the asylum process is to be patient about everything. I know it is hard as we don't always have choices, but don't worry you will get there. You need to learn to be part of the community so the important thing to do is always help other people and you will find someone to help you. I'm not saying forget about your past, remember your past has made you today - just never give up. Sometimes you may feel inside yourself there is no life to live for but keep hope in your dreams and fight every day for your life to be better person.

Overview

West Sussex is home to people from a range of different backgrounds: some families have lived here for generations; some are high-flying professionals who have been attracted by the borough's ambitious plans for the future; and others have made a home for themselves after claiming asylum after entering Gatwick Airport or one of the ports on the Coast. When unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) come to West Sussex, we look after them and give them a home with a foster carer. Once they reach the age of 18, they too receive a Leaving Care service.

Many of our Personal Advisors and Social Workers are extremely knowledgeable about immigration, with a great deal of experience in the field. They understand immigration law and procedure and they do their utmost to support you if you are subject to immigration control. Let's have a look at what that support looks like.

No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

Some of the young people we support have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), which means that they are not entitled to benefits or housing and, in most cases, they are not permitted to work either. In fact, if you're reading this and you either know or think you may have NRPF, then check your biometric residence permit (BRP) – if it says **FORBIDDEN FROM TAKING EMPLOYMENT** then you will be treated by us as having NRPF.

Much of the overall support you as someone with NRPF will receive from us, is going to be the same as for someone who is local or has recourse to public funds. You will have a Personal Advisor, a Pathway Plan and receive general advice and assistance. The main differences are only financial (see the **Money** section), accommodation (see the **Home** section) and work-related (see the **Jobs** section).

The reality for you if you have NRPF is that you are going to have to return home at some point; some people do successfully fight and overturn this status once the Home Office has issued it, but very few achieve that. The best way we can support you is to help you plan what will happen once you return to your country of origin and though you may not like to think about this, it can make all the difference if you are picked up by the Home Office and sent back home. In your Pathway Plan you can expect discussion around the following:

- Who will support you back home (if anyone)?
- What dangers you may face?
- Where could you stay and what could you do for work or education?

- How could you engage in education/training in the UK to give you skills for use back home?
- How will you comply with any Home Office conditions, such as attending weekly meetings at Lunar House?
- What voluntary return schemes there are and how you could take advantage of these.

One thing you do need to know about is...

Deportation

Under UK immigration law, a Deportation Order may be made against a foreign national such as yourself, if you have NRPF. This not only allows for you to be removed from the UK, but also means you can be kept in custody until you are removed. The Order also means you can't return to the UK for as long as it remains in force – it doesn't matter what previous leave to remain you may have had.

A Deportation Order may be made for any of these reasons:

- It's been decided that it would be in the public's interest for you to be removed from the UK.
- You are the spouse, civil partner or child of someone who has a Deportation Order.
- You are over 17 years old, have been convicted of a crime which carries a prison sentence and the court recommends you be deported after you've served your sentence. The prison sentence can sometimes be bypassed altogether, and you are simply deported – the more serious the crime, the more likely this is to happen.

A Deportation Order should not be made if it breaches your **Human Rights** or **the 1951 Refugee Convention**.

Once a Deportation Order has been made against you, you may be held in a detention centre without any warning, but you will also be advised of your right to appeal. This will be particularly unnerving if an Order has been made against you and you also have a child. The reality is that your child would also be at risk of being removed with you, unless they live separately with the other parent and **they do not** face deportation – in such circumstances, the child may avoid deportation.

Where a Deportation Order is usually reserved for someone who has been convicted of a crime, Administrative Removal is another term you may hear and it is exactly the same as a Deportation Order, except it is for someone who has breached the conditions of their leave to remain or who obtained permission to stay in the UK through deception. You can appeal an Administrative Removal decision if you have the right to do so, or you can choose to leave the UK. There is some additional helpful information available on the [Citizens Advice](#) website.

If you're reading this and you recognise it as your situation, then you may be tempted to 'go underground', which means to go into hiding in the UK. It's illegal to

hide from the Home Office, but even if you did it successfully, life will always be difficult for you. You'll never be able to legally work, open a bank account, rent a flat, buy a house and you will always be looking over your shoulder. If the Home Office find you, they will remove you. It's your choice, but we strongly urge you not to 'go underground' and we will never support you in your decision to do it.

If you're subject to a Deportation Order or to being removed, you are likely to be detained. If you're going to be deported soon, you'll be taken to a detention centre, unless the Home Office thinks you might try to avoid it. You're most likely to be taken into detention when you visit your reporting centre, but it can happen at any time. If you have children, they'll be detained with you, so it's important to prepare them.

Once you're in detention, you won't be deported for at least 72 hours. You should be given information in your own language explaining your rights while you're there. If you don't receive this, you should ask for it.

Here are your rights:

- Have visitors, receive post and telephone calls.
- Apply for bail.
- Keep your personal property.
- Communicate with the outside world – for example, to tell people in your home country that you may be returning.
- Live in accommodation with your family, if they are detained with you.

You can also ask to see a Legal Advisor while you're in detention. They'll help you apply for bail and make further appeals if new information about your situation is uncovered.

Other Agency Support

There are several organisations able to offer more support with your immigration claim.

The [Refugee Council](#) is one of the leading charities in the UK offering support and advice to people who are seeking asylum. The Refugee Council also offers practical support that, in addition to other services, includes:

- Signposting to helpful services for asylum seekers by phone, in person or through its online resource's directory.
- Classes to help with learning English.

The Refugee Council is also involved in a great deal of policy work, research, parliamentary work and campaigning to try and improve the lived experiences of all young people who have claimed asylum in the UK.

Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) and British Citizenship

For those of you with the legal right to stay in the UK, you'll be considering making an application for **Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)** once your Refugee status expires. We'll be right behind your bid to get the permanent right to live in the UK and will be able to offer you a long list of immigration-specialist solicitors who can help you make an application. We anticipate most of you will be able to access Legal Aid to fund the application and ask that you be as patient as it takes the Home Office around six months to decide. When you send off your application, you'll have to return your expired Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). We are not able to fund your application if you are not able to access Legal Aid.

The absolute pinnacle of settling in the UK is getting British citizenship; once you have this, you will have all the same rights as anyone who was born in the UK – that includes the right to vote and the right to get a passport. You will also need to sit a test to see if you can tell your Bognor from your Brighton. Here are a few genuine examples of questions you can expect to test your vital knowledge of this country:

1. What charity works to preserve important buildings, coastline and countryside in the UK?
2. Who was the tribal leader who fought against the Romans?
3. What is the day when jokes are published in newspapers and telecasted on TV?

You'll be pleased to hear that there are apps available for you to do some practice questions – try testing your Personal Advisor and see if they'd be granted citizenship.

If you're successful, you can expect to enjoy a ceremony commemorating your achievement, which will involve singing the National Anthem while looking at a picture of the Queen. Financial support with the cost of your British Citizenship application will be considered on a case by case basis and requires Senior Management Approval.

Somewhere to call home



Hi, I'm Dan and I'm 20. I have just moved into my first independent flat which I am renting privately.

It has taken a long journey to finally getting my own place, but I feel very happy to be here. I moved into supported housing when I was 18 and this was my first step of independence from being in care. At that time, I wasn't quite ready to live completely on my own and it really helped me to have keyworkers around as I was still finding my feet and learning to manage my money and be responsible myself for things! I have had to work with my PA and keyworker to get myself ready for having my own tenancy and getting a better understanding of bills and money etc.

Once I was ready to move on my PA and my keyworker showed me how to search

online for places to rent and contact landlords and agencies. It wasn't as easy as I thought it would be to find somewhere that was affordable and in the right area, but I didn't give up and had to just keep looking every day. I have now signed a 12-month tenancy in this flat and it feels really good to have found it myself. I'm paying with housing benefit at the moment and I have chosen to get it set up so that my rent money gets paid straight to my landlord which is better for me. It is also a bit daunting as there are bills I'm responsible for like water and electricity that I am not used to paying, but my PA has helped me set these payments up as a standing order so I know how much is being paid every month. It's also a bit weird being on my own after being used to living with other young people, I have to make more of an effort now to stay in touch with people.

My PA helped me with my move and helped me buy the essential things I needed for my first home, like a sofa and a cooker and things like that, so it is starting to look more and more like home. It's also good to know that my council tax will get paid for me until I am 22 as a care leaver.

My advice to other care leavers is getting your own place doesn't always happen quickly so be patient and take the advice from your PA. Make sure you work hard on managing your money well as there are lots of bills when you get your own place that you will need to learn to budget for.

Overview

The thought of taking a step into independence can often be a frightening, exciting and challenging experience.

Looked after children aged 16 or 17 will have foster care and semi-independent homes available to them, and there is also a Staying Put option available for young people who wish to remain with their foster carers after turning 18. This will give you the chance to learn how to manage your own home and receive help from those who can support you.

Moving into independence at age 18 is a big change, as you will have to support yourself on a set amount of money each week and:

- buy your food, clothing and household items
- cook and clean for yourself
- arrange your time daily to get to work, college, appointments, meeting friends, managing visitors to your home
- make sure you keep to the rules of where you are living.

You will get the right amount of support you need to help you develop your skills in readiness for living independently. Your PA will be able to discuss the variety of options available with you as you are approaching 18 and thinking of moving to full independence.

Housing in West Sussex, to put it bluntly, is hard to come by and very expensive. There is also a big shortage of 'council houses' and 'council flats' (sometimes called

social housing), and this means that care leavers should expect to be renting privately. Our PA's do help care leavers by helping you find landlords and supporting with up-front costs such as deposits or rent in advance (see money section for more details). In addition, there is supported accommodation available to young people who have a higher level of need which may have staff on site or on call to provide extra support. This may also include accommodation for young people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).

Living independently

Once you are 18 there are a variety of housing options to suit your needs.

- Foster Home

The most common form of accommodation for 16 and 17-year-olds in West Sussex is foster care. The support of a foster carer is absolutely vital to ensuring you are ready for adulthood, and the foster home itself can be treated as a 'practice arena' for tackling issues you may experience as an adult: for example, budgeting to limited finances; shopping for the right kinds of food; learning to prepare meals; and understanding and responding to letters and documents (e.g. utility bills, tenancy agreement, etc.).

- Staying Put

If you and your foster carer agree, one option is for you to remain with your foster carer after turning 18. Such an agreement is called Staying Put and is usually considered as an option to ensure there is no disruption to your accommodation arrangement. West Sussex will pay for this provision until you become 21 years old or until your course of education ends, up until the age of 25, whichever ends sooner. If you and your staying put provider agree for you to remain after this, you can make a private arrangement with them and this means you would pay rent independently. It is also a good idea to have your name on a housing register (see social housing below)

- Shared Lives

Shared Lives is available to adults with all different kinds of needs, such as people with learning or physical disabilities, mental health issues, dementia or vulnerable older people.

A Shared Lives carer looks after someone aged 18 or over, who is unable to live independently. They provide support for either short periods during the day, welcome someone to stay in their home for short breaks or provide a long-term home. The emphasis is on providing an ordinary family life so that they can live or stay within the community.

Some of the activities they might help with include:

- helping with washing and dressing (personal care)
- preparing food
- taking someone to clubs and activities

- providing emotional support.
- Social Housing

We will support you to apply for a place on the Housing Register. West Sussex doesn't have its own housing. There are seven different Districts and Boroughs who can give priority to care leavers in most need, but they all have their own criteria such as whether you have been living in the area for a certain length of time or have any family members living there. If you are accepted on the housing register you may have to wait a long time before you get any offer of housing and your PA may have to evidence your ability to manage a tenancy. All new tenants will get a starter tenancy for an initial one or two-year period, but longer terms are available. If you were previously on the Housing Register and think you may have been removed, you should ask your worker to confirm this for you, so we can look at getting you added again.

- Independent Accommodation (privately rented)

At the age of 18, most care leavers move into their own accommodation which is most likely to be a private-rented room in a shared house – or house with multiple occupants (HMO), as it is often called. Very few young people are fortunate enough to be offered a studio or one- bed flat, so the expectation should be that you will live with other young people.

You will work with your PA to find somewhere in your preferred area to live. If you were studying at college for instance, then we will try to help you find somewhere to live nearby. There is never a guarantee that this can be done, and you run the risk of running out of options and even homelessness if you refuse multiple offers of accommodation. Whatever accommodation you choose, it must be affordable and generally this means it must not cost more than the Local Housing Rate for that area.

- Local Housing Rates

All the Districts & Boroughs have the local housing allowance rates on the benefits part of their websites, or the link takes you to the rates for all [LA's in England](#).

You will be able to move in as soon as you sign the tenancy agreement and receive the key.

- Tenancy Agreement

A **tenancy agreement** is a legal contract between you and a landlord stating what *your* rights are and what your landlord's rights are.

There are different types of tenancy agreement, but the most common type is an assured shorthold tenancy (AST), which means your deposit is protected under a government-approved tenancy deposit scheme and at the end of the tenancy period (as on the agreement), the tenancy will just carry on going unless you or the landlord choose otherwise.

You may not live in accommodation under a tenancy agreement at all. You may instead have a *licence* agreement, which is like a tenancy but is very specific about a

(usually) *short* period of time you can live in a property - you tend to have less rights with this type of agreement, so be careful!

You will have to sign and maintain your tenancy agreement but should make sure you read it through first to be certain you are comfortable with it. You will also be expected to pay rent on the property in a timely manner and will be able to access a Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA) to furnish it.

Finally, support from Housing to find independent accommodation will not stretch to 22, 23 and 24-year-olds, and so they will have to access **Independent Living – Young Adults**

Support page for advice. You can however approach the Council for support with a deposit or rent in advance (please see **Money** for further details).

- Supported housing

These are often rooms in a project or sometimes individual flats or studio accommodation with staff on-site at various times and will include some type of support. Foyers are examples of supported living and are usually for ages 16–25 years. If you are considering this accommodation, you need to be aware that accepting regular support sessions is a conditional requirement, as is engaging in some type of education, employment or training. There are various schemes available, usually allowing you to remain for two years with a 'move-on' protocol with the local housing authority. Another type of supported housing is **Student accommodation** - This can be within halls of residence or shared housing with other students and will usually have a key staff member to support you.

Legally, we have to offer accommodation to care leaver university students during the extended holiday periods (Christmas, Easter and Summer) if they have nowhere else to live. If you are at university and your accommodation is not for 365 days a year, then you will be entitled to support from us. Alternatively, you may want to find somewhere yourself. Other care leavers may make arrangements with family members or friends and will not need support.

- Release from Custody

If you are in custody – be it a prison or a young offender institution (YOI) – we will assist you in making plans for where you will live when you are released, as long as you are still entitled to a Leaving Care service. We'll begin by liaising with Offender Management in your prison who will update us on your release date. We will consider the fact that there may be areas in which you may not be safe –and find supported accommodation if you require it.

- Homelessness

The protocol for supporting you if you're homeless or need emergency accommodation differs depending on your age. If you are looked after and aged 16 or 17 (or are 16 or 17 and a relevant care leaver) you must contact your Social Worker who will find appropriate accommodation, for example:

- Night stop-type or short-term supported lodgings in homes of trained and vetted hosts.

- Emergency beds in specialist young peoples' supported accommodation services.
- Emergency foster home.

If you are aged 18 to 21 and homeless you should contact your PA or the helpline if they are unavailable. Your PA will explore with you what happened and what options you might have, such as staying with friends or family. You may need to attend a same-day appointment at the local Housing department. Depending on the reasons for homelessness, we may offer emergency accommodation until housing issues can be resolved.

If you are aged 22, 23 or 24, we can only support you to declare yourself homeless and be assessed the same as anyone else.

- Out of Hours Support

If you find yourself homeless outside of office working hours (9am-5pm / Monday to Friday), or in need of emergency Social Worker support that cannot wait until the next working day, then you can ring our Emergency Duty Service by calling the Contact Centre on 0330 2222004 and asking for the Out of Hours social work team. This is really for emergencies only and you must contact your Personal Advisor as soon as possible to advise them of your situation and follow the homelessness procedure (see above).

Health and wellbeing



Hi, my name is Chloe, and I am 20 years old. My journey with mental health has been a tough one.

I have accessed CAMHS, and adult mental services and in-patients' services. These services have helped me by supporting me through my difficult journey. They have given me intense therapy and medication which has really helped towards my recovery.

My PA helped me by taking me to some of my appointments; they visited me and phoned me when in crisis. My PA is very good as they emotionally support me by being at the end of the phone and will take me out for a coffee when needed.

Having friends is really important and to talk too, to share and vent how I am feeling. In order to keep myself healthy I have balanced meals, I take my medication, I exercise, and I listen to music and engage with services, talk to family and friends, and self-care. My advice to others would be always put yourself first and listen to services that are trying to support you. Use helplines if you feel like you need to, as it will help.

Overview

The most important thing you have is your health and we offer a range of support options for you. Some of that support is offered by Personal Advisors, but sometimes we might need to refer you to services available in your local area. The Council has several initiatives already up and running that will benefit care leavers. It also has links with organisations who are ready with some important help should you need it. As a starting point you can find a complete directory of services available in the County by going to the [West Sussex Wellbeing](#) website.

Personal Advisor Support

Every care leaver will have different support needs when it comes to health and it will be for you to ask your Personal Advisor for help where you need it. For example, if you feel there are things in your past that you really need to talk to someone about, then your Personal Advisor can direct you to services and perhaps attend some of the initial meetings with you.

There are some key things that you might want to consider asking your Personal Advisor to help you with:

- **Registering with a GP, Dentist and Optician** if you have not done so already or if you have moved to a new area. You have the right to choose your primary healthcare providers and cannot legally be refused treatment based on any outstanding application for leave to remain in the UK. To check for your nearest Health Service, go to the [NHS Service Search](#) tool.
- **Signposting** you to appropriate services for your physical, mental and sexual health.
- **Attending hospital appointments** with you for non-routine health concerns, as these can often be stressful. If you do end up as a patient at hospital, your Personal Advisor should come in and see you.
- **Advice on healthy living** will include anything from being smart about having safe sex all the way through to having a balanced diet.

Being healthy is important for all young people and covers things like what you eat, what exercise you do and being confident and happy. It is also important that you know when and how to seek help or advice from professionals if you are feeling unwell or worried about your health or wellbeing.

You can help yourself stay healthy by keeping active, warm and eating well. Even small changes such as doing more exercise can have a big impact on your health. Depending on where you live, you may be able to access free gym membership, so speak to your PA about this.

Health assessments

In West Sussex we have the expertise of the Looked After Children (LAC) Nurse Team who support you until you turn 18. They are responsible for several things, including booking you in for your annual health assessment.

All under 18s are offered a health assessment which is an opportunity for you to meet and talk with a Looked After Children nurse who will help you with your health.

The assessment should cover things like:

- how you are feeling?
- what you can do to be healthy?
- any problems you have or things you are worried about?
- whether you have been to a dentist?
- whether you need your height and weight, eyes or hearing checked?

It might also include things about your [health and wellbeing](#).

Shortly before you turn 18, the LAC Nurse will put together a Health Summary, with details of all the major events in your life that relate to your physical and mental health, as well as other important information for you, such as:

- NHS number
- Immunisations (vaccinations) you have had
- Health professionals you have seen
- Current GP
- Useful contacts

Registering with a doctor

When you first register with a doctor's surgery, you will be asked to attend a medical examination with a nurse and complete an application form. The examination may include measuring your weight, height and blood pressure. If you have problems registering with a GP, your PA will help you.

Registering with a dentist

When you first register with a dental surgery, you may be asked to attend a check-up and complete an application form. If you have difficulty finding an NHS dentist, your PA will help you.

Mental Health Services

Just as we all have physical health, *everyone* has mental health: sometimes it is pretty good, but other times it's *not* so good. We are experienced in supporting care leavers with a wide range of diagnosed conditions, including:

- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Anxiety Disorders

- Bipolar Disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Dissociative Disorders
- Personality Disorders

If you happen to have one of these diagnoses, or another diagnosis, your Personal Advisor will ensure that the support offered is suitably tailored to something that works for you. You may also be able to get longer-term support.

If you need referral to mental health services, you need to be registered with a GP in West Sussex and at least 18 years old. You can self-refer or ask your GP to do it for you and a member of the service will contact you to make an initial phone assessment, before deciding what support would be best for you.

Sexual Health Services

We encourage you to be smart about sex and your Personal Advisor will discuss this issue with you in a non-judgemental way – so be prepared for it! As with any other health matters, your Personal Advisor will be supportive of you and happy to offer their advice, but the County does have ample support for its residents in the form of the West Sussex Sexual Health initiative. West Sussex's sexual health team provide a range of services out of local clinics and Find It Out Centres and offer young people only drop ins.

West Sussex also has its own [Condom Distribution Scheme](#) called the C Card, which will allow you to pick up free condoms from several places across the County. Find out more about [sexual health](#) on our YourSpace website.

Drugs and Alcohol

Again, we encourage you to be smart about drugs and alcohol and your Personal Advisor will discuss this in a non-judgemental way. If you ever have issues along these lines, then we will urge you strongly to get the help you need. We value your health and hope you would too.

West Sussex is fortunate enough to have specialist support available if you do ever need it. 'Change Grow Live' provides a service for substance misuse and will provide you with a support worker who links you to other organisations to help you turn things around. Nothing changes if you don't put in the hard work to make the changes as well, but there is always someone there to help and guide you. If you do need help, please go to [Change Grow Live](#).

LGBTQ support

Advice and support for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning young people.

If you, or someone you know thinks they might be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, do not worry, you are not alone. It is estimated that 10% of the population is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

If it would help to talk to someone, use the links below to find advice and support.

Definitions and commonly used words

Your sexual orientation is a way to describe the feelings you have. There are lots of words or labels used to describe these but because these feelings are personal, you may find the words do not describe your feelings exactly.

Read more about sexual orientation and common words from [Stonewall Youth](#).

Coming out

'Coming out' is the term that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people use when they decide to tell their friends and family about sexual orientation or gender identity. This can be a difficult thing to do as people often worry that others will treat them differently once they know.

If you are worried about coming out or want support, visit [Coming out as a young person](#) on the Stonewall website. They have information on sharing your sexual orientation or gender identity with family and friends and the sources of available support.

Bullying, discrimination and domestic abuse

If you are being bullied because of your sexuality (homophobia) or gender (transphobia) you are not alone. Talk to one of the organisations below or find out more on our [bullying](#) pages.

Local LGBT+ Support

[Allsorts Youth Project](#) – A Sussex-wide project based in Brighton that listens to, supports and connects children and young people who are LGBT+ or unsure of their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

Other sites that might be useful;

[Mermaids UK](#) - Advice for young people at odds with their birth gender.

[Stonewall Youth](#) - Information, advice and support for young people. [Terrence Higgins Trust](#) - Advice on sexual health.

Young Parents Pathway

Becoming a parent can be both exciting and challenging. In West Sussex, all Care leavers have access to additional support through the Young Parent's Pregnancy Pathway. This is run by the County Council, Healthy Child Program and Midwives to support pregnant women and their partners either in groups or one-to-one. Everyone can get advice on including healthy relationships, how to bond with babies and nutrition. The support lasts throughout pregnancy and the first months of the baby's life. The Young Parents Pathway is tailored to individuals. Your PA, Midwife or Health Centre can tell you more and arrange for you to access this support.

Care leavers can apply to Care to Learn to support childcare costs while you study.

They can receive up to £160 per child, per week childcare Further information is found at [Care to Learn](#)

Information, advice and guidance on childcare in West Sussex is available from the [Family Information Service](#).

PAUSE Offer

PAUSE is a National Charity for women who have experienced, or are at risk of, repeat removal of children from their care.

What we do?

- We work with women who have experienced - or are at risk of - repeated pregnancies that result in children needing to be removed from their care.

How we do it?

- Pause Practices, working together with local authorities and other partners, deliver an intensive programme built on a relationship between a woman and a Pause Practitioner
- In West Sussex we prioritise providing support for our care leavers who have had one child removed or relinquished from their care. Our goal is to allow them the opportunity to understand their past and how it impacts on their behaviours and, through support, transform behaviours to develop confidence and hope that in the future they will be able to have a family in the future.

Domestic Abuse

The Domestic Abuse (DA) and Sexual Violence (SV) service offers support to all care leavers who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse or sexual violence either directly, or through consultation with their PA. The direct support will be provided by a Young Person Domestic Abuse worker or an IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor), who completes an initial assessment and safety planning for the care leaver and any children. The IDVA will focus on individual needs to promote safety and provide both practical and emotional support. Longer term support for any ongoing criminal investigation and support in court can also be part of this work.

If consultation is provided, this will include toolkits that can be used with care leavers directly and joint visits as required.

The DA service will also provide training for the Care Leavers workforce as agreed by the service leads which will be adapted to ensure it meets the team's requirements.

Life Centre Offer

[Life Centre](#) are a UK based charity that supports male and female survivors of rape and sexual abuse of all ages. We offer a national helpline and a counselling team based in Sussex, England.

SEND and Disabilities SEND Offer

The Council publishes a [Local Offer for young people](#) with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). This website gives a wealth of information about local services and opportunities for young people with special needs. It is worth a look if you have ever had a Statement of Educational Needs, or an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) as you may be able to make use of some of the services offered.

Transitions Team

We have an enhanced offer of support for young people with physical and mental health disabilities, as well as those with learning disabilities. This support comes from our Transitions team who, if you meet the criteria for Adult Services support under the Care Act 2014, will take a lead role in providing you with a service. Instead of a Personal Advisor, your support comes from a Social Worker or Care Coordinator who specialises in working with young people with disabilities. You will still be legally entitled to the same entitlements as other care leavers. Parts of your service will be different to that received by other care leavers – for example, you will receive enhanced support with housing. For full information on the available support, have a look at our SEND Offer.

Education, Training and University



Hi again, I'm Michelle. I introduced myself at the beginning of this document but wanted to share my Education, Training and University journey with you.

As I was doing my GCSE's I began to think about my future career prospects and decided to pursue a career that involves studying and learning about the human body. I began to research careers related to my interests which is when I discovered the job description of a doctor. I needed specific A-levels and a medical degree to become a doctor and I completed 13 GCSE's and studied

Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics at A-level. Alongside my A-levels, I participated in outreach programmes targeted at disadvantaged students such as care-leavers to help increase access into university. The names of these programmes are Realising Opportunities and Sutton Trust Summer School, and they assisted by giving me information and knowledge to help with my UCAS application and taught me skills for a smooth transition into university life.

I remember A-level results day, I was in South Africa with my brother and sister on holiday. We all travelled to the local internet café to find out if I have been accepted at King's College London university. I was screaming in excitement as I logged into my UCAS portal to find out that I will be studying medicine in September. My siblings and I went to Nando's to celebrate the great news.

My social worker and English teacher were my biggest supporters and they continuously encouraged me to fulfil my goal of studying medicine at university. My social worker and I had regular meetings to discuss any concerns I have regarding

my educational progress which helped me to feel supported. My PA has ensured I have the higher education bursary and checked in regularly to see if I am ok and if I needed anything.

My advice to others who are thinking about going to college or university is to start thinking early about your decisions so you can make the entry/or GCSE requirements for the course you want. Look for outreach programmes that are offered by your local universities/college and attend open days. Don't be afraid to email admissions or the widening participation department of the university. Also, if you are going to university, it will really help for you to disclose that you are a care leaver on your UCAS application form. This won't be used against you, instead it will notify the university of your status which means you will get the help that you need - both financial and pastorally.

Overview

We're keen to see you achieve all you can through education, as it provides the foundations for finding a higher-skilled job. Furthermore, education helps build your overall knowledge, teaches you new skills and lets you meet other like-minded people. If you are not in education or work, then we will do everything in our power and work with you to change that.

West Sussex has several local colleges and other opportunities for studying. Chichester College, for example, not only runs further education courses, but also offers some higher education courses. You don't have to be academic and acing exams to get something out of education, there are more than enough vocational courses available too - so whether you want to be a particle physicist or a construction worker, we're right behind you and we'll do our best to see you achieve your goal.

Personal Advisor Support

As ever, your Personal Advisor will be your main supporter in finding a course of education or training, or indeed being there to advise you if you're already doing it. Here's an overview of what they can help you with:

- **Signposting** you to education and training opportunities that match your interests.
- **Planning** your overall route from education to employment with you and assisting you in your applications for further or higher education.
- **Attending parents' evenings and college/university open days** with you so your Personal Advisor stays an active participant in your educational progress.
- **Liaising with college/university tutors** to provide more joined-up support to you while you are on a course of further or higher education.

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

If you're 16, 17 or 18 you can expect to have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). A PEP is a good opportunity for your Personal Advisor and your college or 6th form tutor to meet to discuss and review your academic progress and identify any other form of support you'd like and/or are entitled to. The Virtual School will also track and monitor your attendance and progress to enable us to intervene and advocate when required.

Virtual School

Like many other local authorities, we have a Virtual School in our Education department.

The Virtual School is a small team of people who ensure you get all the help you want to make informed decisions about what you want to do next in education, considering your aspirations, skills and potential. They also make sure there are termly Personal Education Plan (PEP) review meetings until you turn 18 – though the Virtual School encourage schools and colleges to continue these review meetings until the end of Year 13. If you are in Year 13 and still have a PEP, there may be discretionary funding available to help with application costs etc for University.

The team's experienced Education Advisors will support you to find up-to-date information about careers, jobs, education courses, volunteering and training opportunities – so you'll never be short of help!

University Offer Bursaries for Education

For higher education (HE), there is a £2,000 bursary which the Leaving Care Service will fund, and for full-time Further Education, the college will provide a £1,200 bursary for those aged 16- 19 years old. For more information, please speak with your PA.

University

If you wish to pursue a course at university, we can support and advise you on what might be the right course for you given your talents and interests. Your PA will offer to attend any open days with you, and we will fund your travel costs.

We can also support with:

- ✓ Travel costs at the start and end of term
- ✓ Making sure you have somewhere to live during the holidays, which we will pay for (Christmas, Easter and Summer holidays).
- ✓ Advising how to obtain tuition fees and maintenance loans.
- ✓ Applying and advising you if there are any bursaries, or discretionary funds which can be accessed through the university to aid you in your studies. All universities have student unions which will support you with any questions you may have and ensure you are accessing the support that is available for you. We will advise you of other funding opportunities such as the [UNITE](#)

[foundation](#) who provide scholarships for Care Leavers completing courses with partner Universities;

- ✓ When you graduate, we will help you with the costs of attending your graduation day including your travel, tickets, cost of your gown, photographs and mortar.

Local Support

West Sussex is brimming with education opportunities and it would take quite a while to list them all. Here are some of the key possibilities that might interest you – however, please do speak to your Personal Advisor, as they will have plenty more!

Find It Out Centres

If you are aged 13-25 you can drop in to a Find It Out Centre to get advice and information. If you want to talk to someone in confidence you just need to make an appointment. If you have an issue that we can't help you with, we will always do our best to put you in touch with somebody who can.

For further details about what support you can access at the [Find It Out Centre's](#).

If you are 16-25 and need help looking for a job, apprenticeship, or [finding suitable education or training](#) you can visit our website and submit our online form.

ASPIRE Offer

Aspire Sussex offers courses to Adults aged 19 or over. Concessions are available for those that are on income-based benefits such as Universal Credit or Income Support. The amount of concession available is dependent on which course you are interested in doing.

You can view the [latest brochure](#) for courses and concessions online.

West Sussex Colleges of Further Education

There are several schools and colleges that offer further education in West Sussex. Further information can be found on the [West Sussex Local Offer](#).

Qualifications on offer include:

- Skills for Life
- ESOL Certificate
- Foundation Learning
- BTEC Level 1, 2 and 3 Diplomas
- NVQ Level 2 and 3
- Intermediate, Advanced and Higher Apprenticeship
- Higher National Certificate (HNC)

- Foundation Degree (FdA)
- Bachelor's Degree (BA)

Whether you want to liven up your language skills, beef up your bricklaying or hop into health and social care, West Sussex colleges have something for you.

Jobs Overview

We offer a range of support options for you if you're looking to get into employment. We have several initiatives already up and running that will benefit you, as well as links with partner agencies who are ready with some exciting opportunities as well.

Personal Advisor Support

Every care leaver will have different support needs when it comes to seeking out employment and it will be for you to ask their Personal Advisor for help where you need it. For example, if you are uncertain of how to search for work or lack confidence in attending work coach appointments at the Jobcentre, the Personal Advisor may wish to undertake some job searches with you and accompany you to a Jobcentre appointment. The goal is always to help each care leaver to achieve independence and if a little support is required then that will be offered.

The Personal Advisor's other function, in terms of employment, will be to signpost care leavers to employment opportunities that are brought to their attention which would suit a specific care leaver. For example, if a Personal Advisor knows that 'Dave' the care leaver has always dreamed of become a sous chef at a Michelin-starred restaurant in Soho, then when an apprenticeship opportunity at a local food outlet in Crawley rocks up in his email inbox, he will probably want to bring it to Dave's attention.

WSSCC Apprenticeship Offer

West Sussex County Council are committed to offering apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers. There are also many other apprenticeships with businesses available locally and nationally. If you are interested in completing an apprenticeship, please speak to your PA and they can help you explore which apprenticeship would be best for you. For more information you can also look the [Gov.uk website](#)

[National Apprenticeship Service](#) – Tel; 0800 015 0400

Careers Advice

West Sussex Careers Support Teams will support Care Leavers if they live in West Sussex until their 25th birthday. They can provide free careers information, advice, guidance and support to those that are not in education, employment or training. Care leavers can talk to the career's advisor about employment, apprenticeships, traineeships, further training and volunteering, and also get help with CVs, job hunting, and interview skills.

The service does not travel out of county and young people must be living in West Sussex.

Email the team at CareersAdvice@westsussex.gov.uk or look at [Careers Advisor Services](#) on our website (This offer will stand until 31 December and will then be reviewed.)

Career Tasters

[A career taster](#) is usually unpaid (although out of pocket expenses will be reimbursed), short-term work that gives you an opportunity to gain skills, confidence and experience and makes it easier for you to move towards a paid job. You can work flexibly with us for between 6 and 12 weeks.

Social Values and Local Support

Finally though not a local resource, care leavers will be boosted by a new £1,000 bursary payment if they choose to do an apprenticeship from August 2018.

The extra financial support will be for those aged 16-24 and help them in the first year of their apprenticeship as learners jump into the workplace for their practical studies.

The £1,000 bursary will be paid once to each care leaver in the eligible age range when they start an apprenticeship after 1st August 2018. This comes in addition to the £1,000 we provide to both employers and training providers when they take on 16 to 18-year olds, or 19 to 24-year olds who were in care or who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Don't forget, we also offer £500 to every Care Leaver towards their employment, training or education, so if you need a new suit for an interview, a uniform for training or specific course materials, please speak to your PA.

Getting Involved



Hi, I'm Noki, and I'm 22. Through the Voice and Participation Team, I have had the opportunity to engage with topics which have been highly important to my life and experiences. I have engaged with workshops that focused on what it means to be a care leaver and helped improve how services are delivered.

It has given me opportunities to meet more young people who are care experienced and I've formed long lasting friendships. I have learned a lot to benefit me for the future - I have improved my knowledge of the leaving care service and have a deeper understanding of the support available to me to develop the next phase of my life.

My name is Megi, I am from Albania and I'm 19 years old.



I have been involved with the Voice and Participation Team for at least one year. I have been involved in a meeting called APPG (the All-Party Parliamentary Group) which took place in London in Parliament. It was interesting and I was thrilled to be there. It was really good to hear the views of young people in the leaving care system.

I also achieved my Gold achievement award and got to do a presentation which allowed me to share my experience and talk about my plans for the future. The youth achievements are awards for young people to get accredited for their time helping others.

I really enjoyed meeting the Head of West Sussex County Council, they showed their support for me and other people coming into the Country.

This has made a huge difference to me; it has taught me to be more confident and has improved my public speaking skills. I feel like I have helped others.

Your Voice matters

Having your voice heard in things that matter to you is important.

The "Care Leavers Executive Group" is a group of West Sussex care leavers who meet on a virtual basis.

This group gives you the chance to be involved in having your voice heard and having your say about services that you have either experienced or feel passionate about. Your views will make a real difference to a range of services for care leavers.

There are lots of different ways to get involved such as:

- running training courses for professionals,
- attending national events,
- contributing to policies,
- social events,
- making videos for professionals and the public,
- and ultimately changing things because of what care leavers say!

Recently we've been involved in making a mental health video to improve staffs understanding of issues, helping run Christmas events, improving the leaving care helpline, helping interview new staff and speaking to care leavers on a range of different topics.

It is my job to make sure that the views of West Sussex Care Leavers are heard and acted upon. If you would like to get involved in the group and any other opportunities, let your PA know and they will arrange for us to meet. Alternatively, you can drop me an email at voice@westsussex.gov.uk.

Other resources

- [The Children's Society](#)
- [The Children's Commissioner for England](#)
- [Coram Voice](#)
- [Shelter](#)
- [Rees Care Leavers Foundation](#)
- [Become](#)
- [The Care Leavers' Association](#)
- [The National Care Leavers Benchmarking Forum](#) (run by Catch 22)