

Suffolk Leaving Care Offer



“We want the very best for you and for you to be happy, safe and well”

*Leaving Care Service
Suffolk County Council 2021*

The Offer for Care Leavers

Describes what you are entitled to, what Suffolk offers you and how you can make the most of the Leaving Care Service.

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What is the local offer to care leavers and what does it mean?

Local authorities have the legal duty to support care leavers making the transition from care into adulthood. It is our responsibility to make sure you know what services are available to you as a care leaver.

The offer is delivered by the Leaving Care Service in conjunction with other specialist staff and teams.

All care leavers have the same entitlements, but how these are delivered may differ according to personal circumstances.

For example, ***until you are 18***

- *if you have a disability* and are open to the Disabled Children and Young People's team (DCYP) you may continue to receive a service from them up to the age of 25 or from Adult Community Services if your case transfers to them.
- *if you have been in trouble with the police* you will be supported by the Youth Justice Service (YJS)
- *if you are an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker* you will be supported by the Fostering Changes for Children Team.

Your Journey Through Care.

Age and care leaver status	Support
15 Eligible You are looked after, are aged 16 or 17 and have been looked after by a local authority for at least 13 weeks after your 14 th birthday, including time after the age of 16. In law you are described as an "eligible child"	You and your social worker start planning what will help you to prepare for leaving care. This is your assessment of need and will start your pathway plan. We will meet you at least once every six weeks
16 Eligible or Relevant You are aged 16 or 17 and have left care after your 16 th birthday. By law you are described as a 'relevant child'	Usually around this age you will transfer to the Leaving Care Service, who will support you to achieve the goals in your pathway plan. We will meet you at least every 6 weeks.
16+ Qualifying	You are aged between 16-25. You were looked-after by Children's Services for a period of time between your 16th and 18th birthday.
17 Eligible or Relevant	At 17 your social worker will go to a Transitions panel where we will talk about the best way to support you towards full independence and adulthood at 18. We will usually meet you every 6 weeks or depending on what is agreed with your pathway plan.

<p>18</p> <p>Former Relevant</p> <p>You are over 18 but have previously been an “eligible” or “relevant” child. In law you are described as a “Former relevant child”.</p>	<p>When you turn 18 you will no longer have a social worker; your personal adviser (PA) will help you from here.</p> <p>We will meet you at least every 2 months.</p>
<p>21-25</p> <p>Former Relevant</p>	<p>At 21 we will re-assess your needs and can decide together whether you need continued support from the Leaving Care Service. Up until the age of 25 you are entitled to advice and guidance as a returning care leaver.</p>

What does 'Corporate Parenting' mean?

We are your 'corporate parent'. It is a strange term but the meaning is simple; it is our responsibility to be good parents to all young people in our care.

Being a good parent means keeping you safe and providing you with the highest possible level of support to meet your individual needs.

We will:

- ✓ Ensure you know the contact details for your social worker or personal adviser.
- ✓ Only pass on information that is relevant to keeping you safe and well.
- ✓ Listen and talk to you about decisions that affect your life.
- ✓ Help you to make the most of services available to you, so you can make the most of your independence.

Preparing for Leaving Care

Pathway Plan

Your Pathway Plan is important because it gives you and everyone who supports you a clear understanding of what you want to happen in your life over the next few years and how we can work together to make it happen. It should be developed with you and the people who know you including your social worker, teachers, and carers. It will be reviewed regularly so that if your ideas or circumstances change, then your Plan can be updated.

It should include:

- ✓ A long-term plan about where you will live (your permanence plan)
- ✓ Information about what everyone is doing to make sure we have the right support in place for you post-18. All the right people are aware of any moves or changes to ensure you continue to receive support.
- ✓ Information from your Personal Education Plan (PEP) about your educational abilities, skills and interests that will help you to continue in education, employment or training.
- ✓ Help to stay in touch with family and friends, and to develop new contacts and a support network of people.
- ✓ Activities which you, your carers and/or accommodation providers will take part in to develop your independent living skills such as budgeting and managing personal finances, shopping, and meal planning, being able to take on commitments and be responsible for paying bills.
- ✓ How to make best use of what is available in the local community, including opportunities to develop new interests and to volunteer.

Who does what?

As a Child in Care or Care Leaver you can make this work best for you by:

- ✓ Taking part in writing your plan.

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- ✓ Chairing a review of your Plan with your social worker, personal adviser and other workers and asking for help if you want to do this.
 - ✓ Whilst you are in care and aged 16 or 17 you will have an allocated social worker who is responsible for completing this work with you.
 - ✓ When you leave care – normally at aged 18 – you will have a named Personal Adviser who will continue to offer advice, guidance and support in achieving your Pathway Plan.

The **social worker** will:

- ✓ Listen to you and involve you in planning for your future.
- ✓ Support you to understand why the Pathway Plan is important for you, and how best to contribute to it. The aim is for you and the social worker to work on this together to complete your progress report and update this over time. A good Pathway Plan will include your views and choices as well as the opinions of adults who know you well such as carers, teachers, support workers etc.
- ✓ Consider all the other plans which are in place or need to be in place for you. This will include the existing plans such as the Personal Education Plan.
- ✓ Ensure that plans for your independence are reviewed at the Transitions Panel to ensure we are aware of your needs and can plan well in advance.
- ✓ Make sure there is a smooth handover to your personal adviser.

The **social worker/personal adviser** will:

- ✓ Support you to review progress against your plan, and to update it to reflect any changes needed and progress made.
- ✓ Ensure that you have an updated written copy of your Pathway Plan
- ✓ Complete, where appropriate, an eligibility consideration form for support from Adult Services

The **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)** will:

- ✓ Provide oversight of the Pathway Plan for all 16- and 17-year olds in care through review meetings and through monitoring progress between reviews. This means that there is someone independent who can step in if the Plan is not working.
- ✓ Review arrangements and detention placement plans for young people aged 16+ who are remanded by a court to Youth Detention Accommodation within 28 days of the remand.

Other Circumstances

i. If you are in a residential children's home:

You may have been there for a long time and have many worries about living on your own. Your pathway plan is where you can make clear what you would prefer to do. Currently, the staff in residential homes continue to provide support for young people who have left if they visit the home or call in by phone. 'Staying Close' can also support you to stay in touch and get support developing your independent skills.

ii. If you have been supported by the Disabled Children and Young People's Team:

Your allocated social worker will continue to work with you through the transition process to

identify appropriate services/provision within adult social care. This could be supported housing or progression to 'Shared Lives'.

iii. If you are an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC):

If you are an unaccompanied minor who is in care, you will be supported through this process by the social worker in the UASC Leaving Care Team until you are 21 or 25 years old.

iv. If you have been remanded to youth detention:

Your social worker will update your pathway plan and attend the Youth Offending Institute to complete a detention placement plan. You will be visited within 5 days where possible. You will also be supported to attend appointments with the Youth Justice Service, attend court, and we will work with our partners in the district and borough councils to extend support and find suitable accommodation upon your release.

Promise 1 – Education, Employment & Training

We will help you to do your very best in education, training, and employment.



education?

college or 6th form?

what course?

will I have the right GCSE results?

will I be able to afford it?

training?

will it be full time or part time?

who offers training for what I want to do?

what if I struggle to keep up?

will I get paid?

a job?

I don't know what I want to do...

what if I try something and don't like it?

will my employer understand I might need extra help?

can I get an Apprenticeship?

The Offer:

As a care leaver you are entitled to support from the local authority which will help you to reach your potential. This could include going to college or university, finding an apprenticeship or securing sustained employment. This plan would have usually started when you were younger (depending on when you came into care).

Who does what?

- ✓ If you are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) or simply unsure what to do next, your social worker or personal adviser will be supported by the Virtual School and other key stakeholders to discuss how to get you back on track.
- ✓ You will have access to a range of opportunities from many different providers. This way we can be confident that there is an option out there for you.
- ✓ If you are in full-time education, your attendance and achievements will be monitored to ensure that you are attending, being well-supported, and receiving your bursary money.
- ✓ If you are in education, you will have two Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings each year. These will help you to ensure that you are on the right course, making good progress, and assign education targets for you.
- ✓ If you do not have access to an appropriate device, your allocated worker will seek to provide you with one so that you can stay in touch, and engage in EET opportunities.

As a care leaver you can make this work best for you by:

- ✓ Talking about your aspirations and ambitions for the future with your social worker or Personal Adviser, who can then work with you to help set a plan that will enable you to achieve your identified goals.
- ✓ Demonstrating an interest in your learning and your ambitions so that we can help you reach your full potential.
- ✓ Identifying any areas of learning that you are struggling with and ask for and accept help and guidance so that you can continue to make progress towards your goals.
- ✓ Taking an active part in your review meetings and PEP by talking about your progress in learning and think about what could make things even better. This would include thinking about your plans to move into further learning or employment.

The school will:

(Before you turn 16)

- ✓ Provide an assessment of your educational progress and needs and identify any specific educational input that is being provided.
- ✓ Complete a PEP to feed into your Pathway Plan/Care Plan.
- ✓ Provide access to impartial careers information, advice and guidance to help you think through your options for employment or further study.
- ✓ Encourage and support you to make the most of the learning opportunities available to you after 16 which will improve your career opportunities and future financial security.

The Social Worker will:

- ✓ Be responsible for ensuring you have an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP) from school or your education provider so that it can feed into your care review meetings/Pathway Plan review meetings.
- ✓ Attend an EET Panel in your local area to discuss your aspirations.
- ✓ Encourage you take part in your reviews.
- ✓ Encourage and support you to make the most of the learning opportunities available to you after 16 which will improve your career opportunities and future financial security.

The Personal Adviser will:

- ✓ Support you from age 18 until the age of 21 (or 25).
- ✓ Encourage, enable, and assist you to access education, employment, or training.
- ✓ Attend an EET Panel in your local area to discuss your aspirations.
- ✓ Get specialist information and knowledge about training and learning opportunities from other professionals who can help you, such as the Early Help Team.
- ✓ Encourage and support you to make the most of the learning opportunities available to you after 16 which will improve your career opportunities and future financial security.

Post-16 Education Providers will:

- ✓ Have a designated person who is responsible for your learning experience and who will contribute to your Post 16 PEP.
- ✓ Communicate with your Social Worker/Personal Adviser to celebrate success and achievement and raise any worries that could impact on your progress e.g. attendance, punctuality, attitude, lack of resources, emotional wellbeing etc.
- ✓ Encourage and support your learning to improve your career opportunities and future financial security.
- ✓ Provide impartial advice to help you to think through your options for progression into employment or further study.

If you have an Education Health & Care Plan - this will identify the level of support that has been identified to meet your ongoing needs through Education, Health and Social Care services. The provision to meet your continued education will be reviewed annually and could remain in place up to the age of 25.

If you are an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young Person - you may have arrived in the UK very late into the academic year. Your educational needs will be assessed with you by the social worker in the UASC Leaving Care Team and we will work with education providers to best accommodate your educational needs.

The Virtual School will:

- ✓ Chair the monthly EET Panel where your worker is encouraged to attend should you need assistance with education, employment or training.
- ✓ Challenge and support services and providers to ensure that you have every opportunity to make good progress in your post-16 options.
- ✓ Liaise closely with those professionals supporting you with your post-16 options to identify any barriers that may be impacting on your progress.
- ✓ Promote and encourage the completion of Pathway to EET plans young people who are not currently engaged in education, employment or training.

Apprenticeships and Traineeships

- ✓ We are working with our partners to implement apprenticeships, work experience, and voluntary work placements for care leavers.
- ✓ We will develop relationships with local businesses through the Suffolk Youth Pledge to ensure opportunities are available and employers are aware of how to provide support to care leavers in their employment.

Support During the Covid-19 Pandemic

2020 has been a challenging year.

We are working closely with partners to try and make sure that we can provide young people with the right devices to help them access opportunities in education, employment, and training and to feel less isolated.

Your social worker and PA will be there for you wherever possible (not just online!).

Promise 2 – Accommodation

We will find you a home where you are safe and well-cared for and can be happy.



The Offer:

We Will:

As a Child in Care

- ✓ Provide a home which is suitable, and above all safe for you.
- ✓ Prepare you for independent living when you are ready to make this move.
- ✓ Have a placement plan for every place you live detailing the support you need and how the placement will develop your skills and confidence on the path to independent living.
 - Where possible this will be with your family or friends near to your home area and education/training. If this is not possible the reasons why will be explained to you.
- ✓ Before any move, tell you why you are moving, listen to your views, and make sure you are supported throughout. Your worker will plan the move with you unless it is in an emergency.
- ✓ Share your views at County Resource Panel where decisions regarding your accommodation will be made.
- ✓ Provide a social worker until you are 18
- ✓ Review your accommodation after 28 days then every 6 months after that to make sure you are happy and feel supported.
- ✓ Listen to your thoughts whilst you are in placement, and act upon feedback received.

Accommodation we will provide if you are 16 or 17

- ✓ **A foster placement** – for you to live in a family environment where you are cared for by a foster family.
- ✓ **Semi-independent living** – We have a range of accommodation across the county which varies from supported accommodation to supervised units. An assessment will take place to ensure that we get the right accommodation that is available, so providers can understand your needs.
- ✓ **Supported lodgings** – this will allow you to lodge in a home. It is also possible for you to lodge with friends, or family if approved.
- ✓ **Short-term emergency beds** – a suitable short-term placement for when you are in-between moves

We Will:

As a Care Leaver

- ✓ Help you to find a home that is safe and secure and where you feel happy.
- ✓ Support you to attend appointments, complete application forms and accompany you to housing interviews.
- ✓ Help to make sure you have the correct documents, such as your National Insurance number and birth certificate.
- ✓ Help you to make sure you know about all the bills you will need to pay if you are in independent accommodation such as water, gas and electricity; ensuring you do not get into arrears by helping you to resolve problems on time.
- ✓ Support you with your housing needs during term-time (if at university) whilst you are studying.
- ✓ Advocate on your behalf to potential housing providers.

How we can help post-18

- ✓ **Gateway to Home Choice/Home Link** - We will support you to register and activate your GWTC or Home Link application, so you are able to apply for social housing when you are 18.
- ✓ **Staying Put** - We will give you the option to 'stay put' if you are settled in a foster placement until you are 21.
- ✓ **Staying Close** - We will support you if you are leaving your residential accommodation by supporting you to 'stay close' to ensure you receive continued support from your known residential staff and where possible allow you to continue to co-habit with your peers from the residential home.
- ✓ **Housing-Related Support** – Care Leavers are given priority need for housing and floating support under this system. This service is open to you from 16 years of age and you can continue to reside there after you are 18.
- ✓ **Guarantor** - If you are assessed as eligible for independent living, prior to 18, there is a possibility we will guarantee your tenancy; however, this is in exceptional circumstances. If you are over 18 you may need a guarantor in certain circumstances such as living in university accommodation.
- ✓ You may wish to consider private renting as a means of securing accommodation when you are 18. You would need to talk about this with your Personal Adviser to ensure this is the right option for you, and if you can afford it.

As a Care Leaver you can make this work best for you by:

- ✓ Asking your worker what accommodation choices are available and what you can do to secure the type of accommodation you would like.
- ✓ Working with your social worker and your carers to develop the skills you need to look after yourself such as managing a budget, cooking simple meals, taking pride in where you live and getting along with other people.
- ✓ Creating a good placement history reference

Your PA will:

Help you plan your living arrangements by:

- ✓ Explain the reason for any move to you and consider your views on this carefully. You should be involved in preparing for any moves except in emergencies.
- ✓ Develop a Pathway Plan that will state what you need and how we can help you to maintain your home and sustain your education or training, maintain your personal networks of support, and develop your skills for independent living.
- ✓ Arrange registration on the local council's Choice-Based Lettings System as soon as possible, to make sure this is completed in a timely way.
- ✓ where additional support can be anticipated, register you with the Suffolk Coordination Service.
- ✓ If you are in custody, your social worker will endeavour to let you know where you are going to live at least 10 days before release where possible.
- ✓ Make sure your case goes to our Transitions Panel to ensure we have the right plan for you and that the right people are there to make sure this can happen. We do this when you are 17, so you will know in advance what options are available to you when you are 18.
- ✓ Your social worker will support you to work with landlords if you want to consider private renting and can also advocate on your behalf.

We will work with you if there are problems

- ✓ If you are living in independent accommodation and are struggling, we can discuss other options with you around supported housing
- ✓ Support you to find alternative accommodation if the problems cannot be resolved.
- ✓ If you do not use your accommodation regularly, you could be at risk of losing it.
- ✓ If you or your worker feels the placement or accommodation is not right for you, they will talk to you if there are any difficulties that are causing problems.
- ✓ **FIAS** - We are aware of the financial difficulties you may face and are working in partnership with FIAS (Financial Inclusion Advice Service) to ensure that housing and benefit problems are addressed and to ensure that the correct benefits and entitlements are received.
- ✓ **SUHA** – You will have access to a Setting Up Home Allowance to ensure your independent accommodation is adequately furnished.
- ✓ We strive to prevent homelessness and continue to support people who become homeless. Your Personal Adviser will support you to challenge an intentionally homeless decision made by the housing department and we will support you to seek alternative accommodation.

Promise 3 – Health

We will help you to stay healthy, well and happy as you can be.



The Offer:

You are entitled to a health check every year until you are 18. This standard health assessment will be done, as far as possible, at a time and place that suits you and will be completed with you by a specialist CIC nurse.

If you have any worries about your health or wellbeing, this is a good opportunity to talk to the nurse in confidence. You might have concerns about your mental health, questions about sexual health or substance use, or want advice on how to stay well. Whatever your questions, the nurse will work with you to address your concerns. In your final health check before your 18th birthday, you are entitled to an enhanced health assessment which will include:

1. Information and advice on how to access health services that will be useful to you in the future.
 2. A health summary which will have a record of your basic health details including details and summary of services to support your transition into adult services. This can be used and filed inside your health passport. Should you lose your Health Passport or health summary you can ask your GP to assist you with this or request a Health Summary from your social worker.
- ✓ You can contact a designated Emotional Health and Wellbeing Lead Nurse to discuss any worries you may have around your mental health. Regular drop-ins sessions are hosted. Contact your allocated worker for more information.
 - ✓ You can also access support from Turning Point through your social worker or PA. They are specialists in working with problems around substance misuse and will work with you up to the age of 25. You can either self-refer or talk to your worker.
 - ✓ We also run a café every Wednesday at the Infobar*¹ where all are welcome to attend.
 - ✓ Leaving Care also run activities across the service throughout the year*². You can talk to your social worker or PA to find out what's going on in your local area.

*¹The café will resume once Covid 19 restrictions are lifted

*²Activities will resume once Covid 19 restrictions are lifted

Who does what?

As a care leaver you can make this work best for you by:

- Getting to know where useful sources of information can be found.
A good place to start is The Source www.thesource.me.uk. This has up-to-date and accurate information and signposting for health and wellbeing matters.

The Social Worker

- Will be responsible for checking that your health check happens and that you are registered with a GP, dentist and optician.

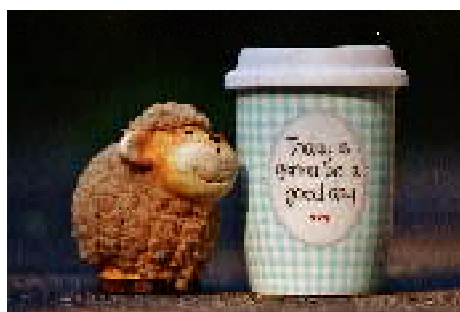
The Children in Care Nurse

- ✓ Will carry out the annual health assessment and be able to provide you with information and advice on maintaining and improving your health and wellbeing.
- ✓ Will ensure your health assessment records are kept safely.
- ✓ Will offer a nurse-led service for young people over the age of 18 should it be required. This service will offer information, advice or signposting to adult services.

If you are a care leaver with a disability, a Mental Capacity Assessment may be carried out to identify any support that you may need to enable you to make safe life choices. If identified through this process that there is a deprivation of your liberty an application may be made to the court.

Promise 4 - Emotional Health

If you have any problems or worries you can talk to your carer and they will work hard to sort them out with you.



The Offer:

- **Wellbeing Hub** - Offers direct referral route for care leavers into the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Hub to support young people up to 25.
- **CAMHS** - If you are worried about your feelings and emotions and would like someone to talk to, you can request a referral to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service to help you make sense of how you are feeling. CAMHS offers support to Care Leavers up to the age of 19 with a clear pathway into Community Health Teams post-18 via Youth Pathway.
- **CONNECT** – This service is specifically designed for working with children and young people in care where there are concerns about mental health. If you or your workers feel that you might need specialist support, a referral will be made on your behalf.
- **4YP** - Offers web-based information and support on emotional wellbeing through *Ask the 4YP Expert*, Monday to Friday evenings 5 – 7pm. (details via **The Source**)
- [Suffolk Wellbeing Service](#) is available to anyone 16+ in Suffolk and you can make a self-referral online or by phone if you would like help with feelings of anxiety, stress or low mood.
- **Counselling through the Leaving Care Service** - We have a counsellor available in the Leaving Care Service that you can be referred to by your social worker. You can see them at the Infobar by appointment*. If you would like to be referred, please talk to your social worker or PA

Support During the Covid-19 Pandemic

We realise that the current pandemic may have left you feeling lonely and isolated. During lockdown, we created an out-of-hours service for care leavers.

This is available Mon-Fri 5pm-10pm.*

If you need to talk, we are here to listen.

*only available throughout local and national lockdown

Promise 5 - Finance and Self-Care

We will work with you to give you all the help and support you need to make a success of moving on from care to adult life

The Offer:



Young people leaving care are entitled to understand what money is available to them and how best to budget to cover their living costs. This is an essential part of the preparation for leaving care.

Whilst aged 16 or 17, the local authority is responsible for all costs of accommodating children in care; and there is also an allowance to meet day-to-day needs as they are generally not entitled to claim benefits.

Young people who have been in care should also have a savings account set up for them (see SCC Saving's Policy). You will have access to this when you are 18 years old.

How this works:

Budgeting

Your Social worker or Personal Adviser will discuss with you the financial support available. If there are any concerns regarding whether you can manage your money, we can talk about how best to assist you in developing these skills or talk about ways money can be paid. We want to support you to spend your money wisely.

The social worker or PA will make sure that your financial support is clearly detailed in your Pathway Plan so that you are very clear about what money you are getting.

The Social Worker and Personal Adviser are responsible for checking that the money will be used as intended and not wasted.

Financial advice is available through FIAS and Welfare Rights who can help you to check that you are receiving what you are entitled to. FIAS can be contacted by the Social Worker or Personal Adviser on behalf of the young person.

Having an Income

Until your 18th birthday you will be provided with money to live on. This could be through your foster carer or where you are living i.e. supported lodgings. If you are living more independently it could be paid directly to you; this is called Income Maintenance. Sometimes it is necessary to deduct some money from this, an example would be if you are receiving meals as part of your accommodation.

Once you are 18 it is expected that you will be either working and earning a wage or in college or training.

- ✓ We will help you to access any benefits you are entitled to by working with you and JobCentre Plus.
- ✓ We will ensure you have a bank account and photographic identification such as a passport and your National Insurance number.

Education

If you are in education, you are entitled to a Further Education 'top-up' from the Leaving Care team. This is available to all young people living in semi-independence, who are engaged in full-time education or training, including apprenticeships. This rewards you for regularly attending your college or apprenticeship. It is not paid during school holidays.

If you are attending a full-time course at college or training provider, as a young person in care you will have access to the 16-19 discretionary bursary. This will help fund your travel too and from college as well as any books or materials you need.

If you are in school we will work with your carers to ensure you are able to get there.

University (Higher Education)

If you go on to attend university you are entitled to a bursary of £2,000 with the payments equally divided across the duration of your time at university. In addition you can claim Income Maintenance in term time and your accommodation costs during holiday periods. You will be helped with your books through a one-off payment of £150.

Claiming Benefits:

- When you turn 18 and have opened a benefit claim we will financially support you for the first 4 weeks whilst it is being assessed. This will depend on your circumstances and is a percentage of the Universal Credit entitlement.
- If you are claiming benefits, we will work with the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) to ensure that the correct benefits are in place for you.
- We will seek to obtain a shared agreement with your local JobCentre to ensure we can speak on your behalf to help with any difficulties with your claim.
- We will aim to ensure that job seeking arrangements agreed with a work coach are realistic and achievable.
- It is your responsibility to attend appointments with the DWP but if you have a good reason

for a missed appointment, we will advocate with your work coach so that your payments will not stop.

- All care leavers will benefit from a 100% reduction in Council Tax, meaning you will not have to pay anything towards this bill up until the age of 25. This is only applicable to care leavers residing in Suffolk.

Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA)

When you leave care, you are entitled to a discretionary setting up home allowance. This is a one-off payment, and your Personal Adviser will support you to spend this money on furnishing your home. We will now offer you up to £1,750 to set up your first home.

Financial support to keep in touch with your family

If you are under the age of 18 you will be supported to maintain contact with your family as agreed as part of your Pathway Plan.

If you are over 18, we can support with travel costs so that you can maintain contact with your family. This is usually around 4 times per year or as agreed in your Pathway Plan.

What if I return home?

If you return home or have been at home for six months and were previously looked after you would be a 'Qualifying Child'. This means that you would be able to access the benefits system (or your parents can claim for you). The Leaving Care Service will not pay Income Maintenance, personal allowance or accommodation costs.

If you are subject to a Care Order you would not be able to access the benefits system until you are 18, nor can your family claim benefits for you (except for Child Benefit), which your parent can claim for you if you are in education.

Some discretionary payments can also be paid in certain circumstances such as if the family has a low income. This would be a decision for the Practice Manager, and it would need to be recorded clearly and agreed in your Pathway Plan.

Care leavers with disabilities may be in receipt of the following benefits:

- Personal Independence Payments (PIP) for care and/or mobility
- Universal Credit. Employment Support Allowance (ESA) (this is a legacy benefit which has since been replaced by Universal Credit (UC). It is there to support you if you are struggling to find employment due to ill-health. New claimants can only apply for UC).

From the age of 18, if you receive funded services from Adult and Community Services you will be required to complete an assessment form with the support of your Social Worker or Personal Adviser.

Current Table of Allowances (correct as of June 2021)

Allowance	Entitled	Age	Amount	Frequency	How Paid	Notes
Income maintenance	YP living independently	Under 18	£59.20*	Weekly	Directly into bank account or cash to assist with budgeting	In line with DWP benefits. Deductions can be made if receiving meals in accommodation
Education top-up	All young people living independently including college and apprenticeships beyond year 11	16+	£10	Weekly	Directly into bank account	Not paid in holidays, can be paid over 18 th birthday as an incentive to continue in education.
Clothing allowance	Young people living independently	Under 18	£400	Annually	Not paid directly to young person. Social worker to support twice a year	Shopping trips to enable social worker to have positive contact with young person
Birthday	Young people living independently	17 & 18	£100	Annually	Gift purchased by worker	
Christmas/Eid	Young people living independently	17 & 18	£100	Annually	Present purchased by worker	
Post-18 Birthday	All young people leaving care	19 & 20	£10	Annually		
Post-21 Birthday	All young people leaving care	21	£23	One-off		
ID	All young people	16+	£50-£90	One-off		
Setting Up Home Allowance	All young people	16 to 21	£1,750	One-off	Items purchased from an essential list	If not accessed by 21 it can be lost. Includes one annual TV license fee

*In-line with government Covid-19 funding guidelines, Income Maintenance has been temporarily increased to £79.20 until September 2021.

Support During the Covid-19 Pandemic

If you have been financially affected as a result of the pandemic, please speak to your social worker or PA. We may be able to help you with your money difficulties. Do not struggle in silence.

We have access to food banks and charities that can support you to get through this difficult time.

Promise 6 –

We will help you to follow your interests and hobbies and to be the best you can possibly be.

Culture, Ethnicity, Identity, Your Past, Hobbies and Interests



- ✓ We will celebrate your successes and achievements with you
- ✓ We will support you to take part in activities you enjoy

Who you are and what you like to do is important to us

We will support you to continue with any interests and hobbies you have. If you don't feel you have any, we will work with you to find some. From baking to basketball, there are a range of activities for you to get involved in that we can support you with. We run lots of activities from our Leaving Care hubs in Ipswich, Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds, so keep an eye on Facebook for any opportunities.

We recognise your history is a part of who you are. When you come into care, it is likely to be a confusing and stressful time and we want to assure you that we will always do our best to help you understand your past and your culture.

Support to access your records

We recognise that accessing your records is often a really difficult process to go through so we have some tips and ideas to help you:

- ✓ Firstly, speak to your Personal Adviser or Social Worker; it may be that they can answer your questions.
- ✓ There is a form to fill out if you decide to access your records. Your YPA or Social Worker can help you with this, or you can do it yourself with the following link: www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/privacy-and-data-protection/
- ✓ There is no fee for this request.

Please be advised that when you request your records, any third-party information (information not directly about you) must be taken out unless the third party agrees to the information. This means that sometimes there will be information you cannot see which can be frustrating. It may mean that at times you find it hard to find the answers to the questions you have.

Sometimes you may find information that you were not aware of and this can be upsetting. The Leaving Care Service have trained counsellors available to support you through the process of accessing your files. They strongly advise you to set up some counselling to run alongside this. Even if you feel this is not necessary it is still a good idea to have it arranged; we can always help you to cancel it if you feel you are managing well.

Promise 7 - Contact

We will help you, where possible, to stay in touch with your family, friends and other people who are important to you



This means:

- ✓ You will know when, where, and how you will see your family and friends as this will be part of your Pathway Plan
- ✓ You will be supported to take part in outings and do the same activities as your friends, where possible.

The Offer

How we can support you with keeping in touch

- ✓ We know that it is important for you to remain in touch with your family and friends and your social worker or PA will continue to talk to you about this during Child in Care reviews and pathway plan reviews.
- ✓ Initially, and at least until you are 18 years old, we can use the contact supervision arrangements in your Pathway Plan to support you to see family and friends to make sure you are safe and comfortable around them. You can also ask us to look at the plans again if you want to change them.
- ✓ We can have a network meeting of people of your choice. In this meeting you will be able to say how you want your network to support you and the amount of contact and help that you want from them.
- ✓ We will record the arrangements for family contact in your Pathway Plan so the support we provide you will be clear.
- ✓ We know that at 18 years old you are independent but sometimes you may still want support with staying in touch with people. We can do this by providing some money towards transportation 4 times a year until you are 21 years old so you can keep in touch.
- ✓ Sometimes we will have information about people you know and want to see but your worker will be worried about. They will give you some advice so you can make your mind up if you want to see them, and how to protect yourself.

What we need from you

- ✓ Trust us and discuss contact issues; we will give you advice, but it is up to you to take it.
- ✓ Give us enough time and information when you want support and tell us when you are confident to manage contact on your own.
- ✓ It is important that you tell us how we can support these contacts because we do not want you to be different from your friends.

Who else can help?

Grandmentors

The Grandmentors are an innovative project which has run since 2009 which is now established in Ipswich. This means there are volunteers aged 50 years+ ready to give up around 1 hour a week of their time to support you back into education, employment, or training.

You can work with a mentor if you are aged 16 to 25. They want to help you build confidence, encourage you into education or employment, and develop skills of independence and foster a supportive relationship. If you would like a mentor, you can ask your social worker or personal adviser to arrange this for you.

Up to the age of 18:

Independent Visitors

- Care Leavers up to the age of 18 years are entitled to the support of an Independent Visitor.
- The independent visitor is a long-term befriending role provided by volunteers who work to develop a relationship with the young person, normally around a shared activity. Visits would normally happen each month.
- The decision to request an Independent Visitor is normally made at the CiC review/Pathway Plan meeting and it is the allocated worker's responsibility to follow this through on behalf of the young person.

Advocacy, representations, and complaints.

All care leavers are entitled by law to the support of an **Independent Advocate** up to the age of 25 years. If you feel you could benefit from an advocate to help speak on your behalf, speak to your social worker or personal adviser.

All workers within the Leaving Care Service must ensure that young people are aware of this entitlement and know how to access these services. Workers should refer a young person for an independent advocate if they feel the young person's voice is not being heard and they need support which is independent of the local authority to ensure that their views are taken into consideration when decisions are being made about their lives.

Similarly, workers must ensure that young people are aware of their right to make a complaint and provide them with the relevant information and support to do so through the Customer Rights Team within the Council. All young people making a complaint must have an independent advocate to support them.

What Does it Mean to be a Care Leaver?

“...cared for, cared about, and able to care for myself”

(Source: *New Belongings*, Care Leavers Foundation)

Young People’s Views – New Belongings Survey

In 2016, young people were invited to complete the ***New Belongings*** questionnaire about their experiences, and several focus groups were held across Suffolk to discuss what are the biggest issues they face and what helped. This was presented to C2C, a Children in Care group, and a document has been created called ‘*You Said, We Did*’ which encourages the service to respond to the needs of our young people and co-production across the Leaving Care Service

Some points came out very clearly from this work, which will inform the way the service develops over the coming months and years.

Many young people appreciate the support they receive from their social worker and personal adviser, and care leavers over 18 said they wish they had taken more notice of what support was on offer when they were younger. One person’s top tip was:

“Listen to advice. Use the services on offer. Don’t be afraid to ask”.

Another said:

“Know what you are entitled to and utilise the support from your social worker to your full advantage”

And another gave this advice:

“Concentrate on life and stay on track!”

Whilst many were looking forward to having more independence, others were worried about it too. Young people had ideas about what could be done to help them with some of the big worries that many of them have. For example:

Loneliness. We may not be able to offer ‘*a cure for loneliness*’ that one young person asked for, but we can look for opportunities to bring young people in care together. Young people appreciate having a physical place to meet like the Infobar in Ipswich and would like to have more opportunities to do work in groups as well as have social activities.

Managing finances – When it comes to financial independence, young people highlighted the need for support when trying to do things for themselves, whether this is doing a food shop for the week or keeping their home clean. Doing things in a class helps a little but it is more useful when we can “*...make it real*”.