

Our Local Offer For Care Leavers in Southampton City Council 2023



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**Children's
Services**
Making a difference





Our vision

“We want all children and young people in Southampton to get a good start in life, live safely, be healthy and happy and go on to have successful opportunities in adulthood.”

Our approach

After your 18th birthday, we remain your Corporate Parent and are still committed to you.

We want you to be and feel safe, have strong lasting relationships, be healthy, financially secure and achieve your goals. Just because you are leaving our care, we are not leaving you, and we will be with you every step of the way. This offer sets out the framework of the support and services that we and other partner services can and will offer to you. We will work with you to help you become a successful adult.

On or around your 16th birthday an assessment of need will be completed, and a pathway plan will be developed. Your well-being, achievements, aspirations and hopes are important to us. We want to support you so you can establish yourself as an independent and successful member of the local community. We will work hard to ensure you have access to the opportunities, services and support you need to achieve your goals.

What's a 'local offer'?

Services and support provided to you as a care leaver by Southampton City Council and other agencies.

Statutory Responsibilities

The responsibilities that all Local Authorities have towards care leavers are set out in the Statutory Guidance and Regulations called 'Planning Transitions to Adulthood for Care Leavers'.

These responsibilities include:

- Keeping in touch with you
- Keeping your Pathway Plan under regular review
- Providing you with a Personal Advisor to offer advice and support
- Providing financial assistance to help with employment, training or education where needed.
- Pay a higher education bursary if you are at university

When you turn 21 years old, the support will change depending on your circumstances. Care leavers under the age of 25 years old, who tell their Local Authority that they have returned, or want to return, to education or training are entitled to an assessment of their educational needs.

Who is a care leaver

A care leaver is a young person who has previously been in care. Your right to support as a care leaver will depend on when and how long you were in care. The Leaving Care Act has defined four categories of Care Leavers - eligible, relevant, former relevant and qualifying. See details below, your worker will help you to understand which category is relevant to you.

Eligible

A young person aged 16 or 17 years old who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 years old and who is still looked after.

Former relevant

A young person over 18 who was previously 'eligible' or 'relevant'. Children's Services must support this group until aged 21, or longer if they are in education or training.

Relevant

A young person aged 16 or 17 years old who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 years old and who has left care.

This also includes young people who were detained (e.g. in a youth offending institution or hospital) when they turned 16 but immediately before they were looked after.

Qualifying

Any young person aged under 21 years old (or 24 years old if in education or training) who ceases to be looked after or accommodated in a variety of other settings including privately fostered, after the age of 16.

A young person who was in care with a Local Authority at the point that they became subject to a Special Guardianship Order, or were relevant children, but returned home for a period of 6 months.

What is the 'extended offer'

If you were previously looked after by Southampton City Council, and any of the above explanations are right for you, then under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 you are entitled to continue to receive support and advice until your 25th birthday. If after the age of 21 you have not accessed this you are entitled to return to us for support and advice until your 25th birthday.

Services and support

Support with your accommodation; education, training & employment; health & wellbeing; relationships and participation in society.

There are a wide range of services and support available to you as a care leaver in Southampton. Some of these services are provided by the council and some are provided in partnership with other agencies. Services are available for all care leavers, but you might not need to access all of them, it will depend on your circumstances. The types of services offered to care leavers include support with accommodation, education, employment and training, higher education, health, wellbeing and finances including access to an allocated Personal Advisor.

What is a Personal Advisor?

A Personal Advisor is a person who is dedicated to working with you to support you on your care leaver journey. They will build a relationship with you, any relevant family members, and any professionals that you are working with to support you with your leaving care journey. They will work with you to create and write your Pathway Plan.

What is a Pathway Plan?

A Pathway Plan sets out your needs, future goals, and helps to identify exactly what support you will receive from us. It will detail how to achieve your goals. We will review your Pathway Plan with you every six months, so that it is kept up to date. Importantly it will have your views and wishes in it because it is about you. Your Pathway Plan will focus on supporting you with areas such as relationships, home and housing, being able to participate in society, your health needs and your education, training and employment needs and your budgeting and finances.

What if I want support or a Pathway Plan after I turn 21?

If you are a Relevant or Former Relevant care leaver, then this is not a problem because we would like you to stay with us until the age of 25! You will be able to ask for support from the service or a Personal Advisor up to the age of 25 years old, including if you are in Higher Education. You may only want a short period of support about one thing, or a full Pathway Planning Service. The amount of support that you receive from your Personal Advisor will depend on what you need and your circumstances. Importantly, even if you have decided to stop working with us, you have the option to come back to us for help and support until the age of 25 years old.

Our minimum standard of seeing you is every two months, when you are first living independently, we will want to see you more often. If you move address, we will see your accommodation within seven days and then by 28 days as we will want to spend time with you reviewing your pathway plan. We will therefore see you at least every four weeks for the first six months to make sure things are going smoothly. The above visiting patterns are what we do as a minimum, however we are not restricted to this and we will see you more often if it is needed.

What's in the local offer?

Housing – Basics

Southampton City Council believes that you should always have a roof over your head and somewhere safe and suitable to live, in or out of the area. If you're over 18 years old, we'll give you advice and support in helping you find a suitable place to live. Don't worry as you'll have a Personal Advisor to help you every step of the way.

Housing – Support

We'll make sure you know how to apply for any benefits you're entitled to so you can pay for food, rent and bills. A Leaving Care Grant of up to £3,000 will also be provided to a young person who has eligible, relevant or former relevant care leaver status, which is used to set up your home so you can afford basics like furniture, a bed, washing machine and furnishings. We'll give you practical support in helping you to move in, look after and maintain your home. Advice and support will be given about managing your money and your tenancy (the agreement between you and your landlord).

Your accommodation and housing needs

As a young person who has eligible, relevant or former relevant care leaver status with Southampton City Council, you will automatically be able to join the Southampton Housing Register. This does not mean that you will necessarily be ready to have your own tenancy at 18, and most young people remain living within their family or friends' networks at this age. We will work with you to consider how to best support your housing needs. There are various options for your housing, and these will include:

- **Staying put** - young people in foster care are encouraged to "stay put" with their carers when they turn 18 years old.

This arrangement allows you to remain with your foster carer until the age of 21 years old. You would then move to alternative accommodation at a later stage when you feel more ready.

- **Supported Accommodation** - We work with a range of different supported accommodation providers, where you can live "semi-independently." This means that you will have your own space in shared accommodation, but that there will be different levels of support available to you to help you get used to living in a different way. Your Social Worker, or Personal Advisor will work with you to discuss the different options that are available to you and help plan what is right for you.

- **A Social Housing or Council Tenancy** - Once you have reached the stage where we both agree that you can live independently and maintain a tenancy without risk of this being lost, you will have the option to apply to Southampton City Council for social housing (this is accommodation managed by the council).

Our Care Leavers Service already has access to several available tenancies a year for our care leavers, and as a care leaver when you and your Personal Advisor think that you are 'tenancy ready', you will be given priority. Your Personal Advisor will work with our housing services to support this transition to a social housing tenancy.

If you live outside of Southampton, then we cannot award you priority status for another Local Authority. However, we will work with you and your local housing authority to ensure that they recognise your care leaver status, and we will advocate for you.

- Return home to birth or extended family - If this is safe for you to do and this is a decision that you make, then we will support you to do this and work with your birth or extended family to make sure that you are ok and that the transition goes smoothly.

We will work with you to look at your budget, help you consider what you can and cannot afford. We will work with you to ensure that you claim any entitlements that could support you to fund any part of your accommodation such as housing benefits, rent and deposit schemes etc.

Care leavers living in Southampton do not pay council tax until they reach the age of 25.

If you do not live in the City, then we cannot make other local authorities exempt you from paying Council Tax, however we will talk to them to see if there is any council tax relief that you are entitled to as a care leaver living in their authority.

Education, employment and training

In Southampton, we have very high aspirations for children in care and care leavers. We believe that everyone who leaves our care should be supported to have the best life possible.

Your Personal Advisor and our Young Persons' Employment Hub will work with you to ensure that you have all the information that you need about the different education, employment and training opportunities that are available. We are able to provide numerous opportunities for care leavers that include work placements, apprenticeships and access to Further Education colleges.

Also care leavers aged 21 or over are encouraged to come back to request support to access education or training opportunities. Southampton City Council will work with you to develop a new education and training focussed Pathway Plan including information about any financial support you may receive.

We work closely with our local Universities to provide opportunities for care leavers to experience university life.

Financial Support with education employment and training

Employment and Training

Southampton provides a financial package of support for care leavers going on to University. We will help support you with accommodation in the university holidays, and act as the guarantor for your university accommodation.

We will provide you with a Higher Education bursary of £2,000 and assistance to access other financial and welfare support through the University. Also, your Personal Advisor will support you throughout your course, such as providing you with a bus pass to travel to training, college or university and help fund travel back to the city once a term so that you can connect with the people who are important to you.

We will ensure that you have a smart outfit to wear for any interviews and will purchase your first work uniform if you need one or contribute to the cost of 'tools for the trade'.



Health and wellbeing

We know that your physical, mental and emotional health needs are really important to become a successful and happy adult. Therefore, we want to ensure that your Pathway Plan looks at these needs with you and plans to address any areas where you may need relevant support.

Your allocated worker will help you to register with a Doctor and a Dentist and will also be able to give you advice about healthy diets and healthy lifestyles. We will provide you with information, advice, and guidance on a wide range of health and wellbeing issues relevant to you.

With the help of our health colleagues, we will ensure that you have a copy of your health passport which provides you with your health history. Provide you with information about local counselling and mental health services locally and help you to access these.

Managing money and financial support

Managing your money is important as you become more independent. Budgeting can be difficult and stressful, and we are here to help you. Your Personal Advisor will support you with this as part of your Pathway Plan. Whilst you may receive some financial support, and many of these financial supports are shown in this offer, you will be expected to manage your own finances and live within your income.

This income will come from your employment, or educational grants/student loans or if eligible any benefits. We will help you to ensure these are in place.

We will work with you to ensure that you have identification that enables you to open important things like bank accounts. This will include helping you to apply for a passport, birth certificate and provisional driving licence as well as other ID documents such as your National Insurance Number.

Support if you become a parent

When you become a parent, we want you to be the best Mum or Dad you can be. We understand that becoming a parent can be a magical but daunting time, particularly for young parents who may not always have had the best experience of being parented themselves. We will help you to attend midwifery and antenatal appointments, make referrals to the family nurse partnership so that they can work with you to help prepare you for the birth of your child.

We will help ensure that you have supportive networks that you can turn to if you need help and advice.

Participation in society

We want all young people and adults leaving our care to feel able to participate in society. This means being able to take part in the wider world and not feel isolated and alone. We'll give you information about groups and activities in your area. This includes inviting you to be part of Southampton Voices Unite care leavers forum and all the events and activities organised by them.

We will support you to access local leisure and gym activities and to take part in other activities that you've got an interest in.

Thank you

Some Southampton care leavers told us what they needed to make becoming an adult easier. Their feedback and involvement has shaped our local offer and we'd like to thank them all for taking part and giving us their views.

We will continue to listen to our care leavers views to make sure our services meet your needs, so we'd love to hear from you and any ideas you may have.

Our promise to you

Pathways Through Care is Southampton's Children in Care and Care Leavers Service and we:

- Act as 'a Corporate Parent' to make sure care leavers are safe and supported until the age of 25 years old.
- Give care leavers the skills and opportunities to succeed in life.
- May not always be able to give you what you want but we'll listen to and respect your views.
- Will be there when things get tough as well as celebrate with you when things go well.

Useful references for further advice

Pathways Through Care Duty

Tel: 023 8254 5454

Official Government Website for the UK

www.directgov.co.uk

National Care Advisory Service

www.leavingcare.org/

The Prince's Trust

www.princes-trust.org.uk/need_help/grants/development_awards.aspx

The Prince's Trust Development Award provides practical help - including financial support. It can also buy equipment for courses.

Educational Grants Advisory Service

www.family-action.org.uk/section.aspx?id=1924

The Educational Grants Services (EGS) specialises in identifying funding from charitable trusts for educational purposes, and maintains a database of trusts and charities that assist students. Advice regarding Health costs: Health cost advice line: 0300 330 1343.

www.directgov.co.uk

www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/112t5.aspx

Office for the Children's Rights Director for England

www.rights4me.org

A National Voice

www.anationalvoice.org

An organisation run by and for young people who are in or leaving care

Useful numbers you may need:

You can use this space with your allocated worker to record other important numbers i.e. your allocated workers number and the teams duty number and also local numbers in your area that may be able to support you

Name	Service	Number

