Northamptonshire
Care Leavers' Local Offer

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CARE LEAVERS’ OFFER

INTRODUCTION

We want to make sure that young people in care and care leavers feel safe and supported and know where to go to for advice and help. We know that it is a big step to move out of care and start living independently or with friends. This guide sets out what support and services Northamptonshire County Council provides to young people leaving care and making this journey. This includes information about both statutory entitlements as well as any discretionary support that the local authority provides.

To be able to get the support set out in this offer, you must have been in care for a period of at least 13 weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks) which began after age 14 and included some time on and after your 16th birthday. If you are not sure whether you qualify for support, ask your Social Worker or Personal Adviser. Personal Advisers will share and promote the local offer and ensure young people are aware of it and of the services they are entitled to. The offer also applies to those young people who have been in the care of Northamptonshire, but live out of the local authority area. Where possible, we will make available our services to those young people who were placed in Northamptonshire by other local authorities.

We have undertaken consultation as this offer is being developed and will continue to do this through a range of methods. We aim to consult with care leavers and other stakeholders in a way that is meaningful and that will help us decide in which formats the local offer should be available and what it should contain. The offer must be easily available and accessible to all care leavers in the local authority. This may mean that it is made available in a number of formats including printed hard copies, online digital copies and in different languages. The offer will be updated on at least an annual basis. We will also continue to use the Young Northants website to promote news and information of relevance to all young people including care leavers. Further details about your entitlements are also available in the Leaving Care Guide at https://goo.gl/CCeX1R.
1. A PERSONAL ADVISER

When you are aged 16 to 21 you will be supported by a Personal Adviser. As you approach your 21st birthday, you will be asked if you need further support. If so, support will be based on an assessment of your needs, up to age 25. You can come back to us and ask for this support even if you say no at first.

Your Personal Adviser is there to help you to prepare to live independently and to offer advice and support after you leave care. Personal Advisers get involved in discussions about your needs and your pathway plan. They will tell you about and help put into place the support you are entitled to at the right stage.

Your pathway plan is written with you in consultation with important people in your life. It sets out your needs, views and future goals, and exactly what support you will receive from us. We review your pathway plan with you regularly so that it is kept up-to-date.

We will try to let you keep the same Personal Adviser, though this will not always be possible. The amount of support that you receive from your Personal Adviser will depend on what you want and your circumstances. The Leaving Care Team will consider with you what extra support you may need. You might for example, need extra support because:

- You have special educational needs or a disability;
- You are an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC) and your immigration status is unclear;
- You are in or leaving custody or you have had contact with the criminal justice system;
- You are a young parent; or
- You are going through a difficult time in your personal life.

As well as support from a personal adviser, we may be able to offer you additional practical and emotional support, such as help to maintain or regain contact with people special to you or who cared for you in the past, like your birth parents, former foster carers or social workers. Where appropriate, we will continue to support contact with the independent visitor you had while you were in care. We will also give you advice and support in preparing for parenthood.
Young people from our Care Leavers’ Council have created a poster which shows what they expect from a Personal Adviser. We will strive to meet these expectations.
2. SUPPORT WITH WORK, LEARNING AND YOUR CAREER

Every young person leaving care should have the support to achieve their goals in life.

We want you to succeed in your education, training and employment. We will ask you how you are doing and be ready to celebrate your achievements with you.

We will offer you:

- Careers information and advice;
- Support around exam time;
- Assistance with expenses linked with employment, education and training, such as support buying tools, equipment, essential clothing, and books;
- Support to meet your transport costs when travelling to training, school/college, apprenticeships or job interviews;
- Help choosing the right course and university that matches your talents and interests and help obtaining tuition fees and maintenance loans as well as support with your travel costs at the start and end of term;
- Advice to ensure your applications for college or university are as good as possible;
- Help to prepare for job interviews and to enable you to learn from previous interviews you may have had;
- A Higher Education (HE) bursary of at least £2,000 if you go to University;
- Somewhere for you to stay during university holidays (or funding for this if you would prefer to make your own arrangements) if you are in Higher Education or in residential Further Education;
- Opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships and employment within the council and partner organisations; and
- The chance for you to attend and help organise celebration events for other young people who have achieved success in the areas of work or learning.

SEND

If you have Special Education Needs or a Disability (SEND) you can see all of the support available to you at the SEND Local Offer website. Go to https://goo.gl/9U4riH
3. ACCOMMODATION

As a care leaver, you will be treated as a high priority if you are applying for a home through the council or a housing association. Your Personal Adviser will help you with your housing needs. This might involve:

- Working with housing services to come up with suitable housing options for you, including supported accommodation if you are not ready or don’t want to have your own tenancy;
- Supporting you to remain with your foster carers under what’s called a ‘Staying Put’ arrangement, if this is what you and your carers want. This can last until you are 21;
- Support to access different housing options including social housing (this is affordable housing managed by the council or a housing association) or a ‘training flat’;
- Advice about holding down a tenancy, including budgeting and paying bills to ensure your home is secure;
- Helping you to claim housing benefit/universal credit;
- Practical and financial support with moving into and furnishing your new home;
- Supporting you to keep a roof over your head and preventing you from becoming homeless now and in the future; and
- Helping you resolve problems with your landlord such as repairs, poor condition of the property or problems with the rent.
4. STAYING HEALTHY AND SAFE

Below are some of the ways our Leaving Care Team and your Personal Adviser can support you to stay healthy and look after your physical and mental health.

We can:

- Give you information on practical and healthy living;
- Be available when you just need to speak to somebody or are feeling lonely;
- Give you information on getting help to pay for prescriptions;
- Support you to register with a local General Practitioner (GP), Opticians, Dentist;
- Support you to access mental health services and other social care adult services;
- Support you to access advice from drug or alcohol support services;
- Give you information about counselling services that are available locally;
- Give you help with transport costs when attending health appointments;
- Give you information on sexual health and healthy relationships;
- If you are a young parent, take an interest in your child/ren and support you to do the best for them;
- Give you information about health drop-in centres; and
- Work with you to make a ‘health passport’ containing key information from your childhood (for example, when and if you have had immunisations) and your current health needs.

Feeling low?

We know that loneliness, anxiety and depression can be really difficult for young people, especially care leavers. Help is available:

CAMHS Live is a chat service available Monday to Friday 10am to 4.30pm, to help you access the help you need. See www.nhft.nhs.uk/camhslive

The Samaritans is available 24 hours a day and is a safe place for you to talk any time you like, in your own way. Call 116 123.

Crisis cafes are drop-in cafes for anyone over 18 who are in crisis or need help with their mental health. See www.nhft.nhs.uk/crisis-cafe to find your nearest one.
5. LOOKING AFTER YOUR MONEY

When you are first becoming independent we know that managing your money can be difficult without guaranteed help, support and advice from others.

The offer of help includes:

- Providing a leaving care grant of at least £2000 to help you buy essential things when moving into your own home;
- The full cost of a TV licence for the first year of moving into a place of your own;
- Providing or telling you about relevant money management courses;
- Support to open a bank account;
- Information on how to access your Junior ISA, if you have one (a fund of money set aside by the government and the council);
- Support to gain important identification documents, such as a passport and/or provisional driving licence, before your 18th birthday;
- Support to get your National Insurance number;
- Exceptional financial support in emergencies;
- Providing a financial gift on specific birthdays and at Christmas or other festival celebrations; and
- Financial contribution towards the cost of driving lessons, licence and test fee.
- Financial support (where appropriate) to support you when attending an academic course of Further or Higher Education.

More details about the help available can be found in the Financial Guide for Care Leavers, available at https://goo.gl/CCeX1R on the Young Northants website.
6. PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY

We want our care leavers to be active members of society, and to have all the chances in life that other young adults have.

We can help you participate in society by:

- Keeping our websites up to date with information on groups and clubs you may wish to join;
- Informing you about relevant awards, schemes and competitions you can enter, in line with your talents and interests;
- Arranging special events for care leavers through the year;
- Encouraging and helping you to enrol on the Electoral Register, so you can vote in elections;
- Offering work experience with our councillors and other partner organisations;
- Informing you about voluntary work that we think you may be interested in;
- Informing you about and possibly helping with the cost of leisure activities; and
- Giving you advice and helping you to challenge any discrimination you face as a care leaver.

7. ACCESS TO RECORDS

You have a right to see the information we keep about you, including the files and records written about you when you were in care. If you would like to access your records, speak to your Personal Adviser and they will discuss specific information with you so we can be sure you get what you need as quickly as possible.
8. LISTENING TO YOU AND TAKING YOU SERIOUSLY

You have a right to be involved in all decisions about your plans for leaving care. You have a right to support from an independent advocate if you are thinking about challenging decisions about the care we give you. Independent advocates can inform you about your rights and help you to be heard in meetings. They are separate from the Leaving Care Team.

The Children’s Rights Service provides help and advice face to face, over the phone or by letter. Contact the service by email on childrensrights@childrenfirstnorthamptonshire.co.uk or via the Young Northants Website at https://goo.gl/QpEM6Z. We will make sure that your voice is heard even if you are living out of Northamptonshire.

The Care Leavers’ Council is a group for young people aged 16-25 and is a chance for you to have a say about things that really matter and affect your life when you’re at the point of leaving care. Whether you live with a foster carer, in a supported accommodation or you live in your own home, your ideas can make a big difference. The group meets regularly to discuss ideas and plans, take part in fun activities and events and works on projects such as websites, events, newsletters and activity organising.

If you would like to join the Care Leavers’ Council complete the simple online form at https://goo.gl/s2LykQ
9. WHO CAN HELP?

**Leaving Care Service**
Russell House, Rickyard Road, Northampton, NN3 3QZ (Near Booth Lane College)

You can contact a duty worker via the following phone numbers 9am – 5pm, Monday to Fridays:
01604 364778 / 01604 364779

If you require assistance outside of these hours you can speak to a duty social worker on 01604 626938.

**Northamptonshire Leaving Care Guide, Financial Support and Services for Care Leavers, Support for migrant children and Yong People**
https://goo.gl/CCeX1R

**National Care Advisory Service**
www.leavingcare.org
020 7336 4846

**The Rees Foundation**
Care leavers’ charity
www.reesfoundation.org

**Education, Employment and Training**

**Right Resolution**
Supporting Northamptonshire care leavers
www.rightresolutioncic.org
01604 626 188

**The Virtual School**
virtualschool@childrenfirstnorthamptonshire.co.uk

**Prospects**
www.prospects.co.uk
01604 630 033
Drop-in shops at:
4 Sheep Street, Northampton, NN1 2LU
10 Silver Street, Wellingborough, NN8 1BQ

**The Prince’s Trust**
Helping young people into education, training and employment
www.princes-trust.org.uk

**Accommodation and Housing**

**Shelter**
Housing and homelessness charity
www.shelter.org

**East Northamptonshire Council**
housing@eastnorthamptonshire.gov.uk
01832 742 000
Northampton Borough Council
www.northampton.gov.uk/info/200184/housing_options

South Northamptonshire Council
www.southnorthants.gov.uk/info/6/housing
01327 322 374 (9.15am to 5.15pm Mon-Fri)
0800 160 1022 (Out of Hours)

Kettering Borough Council
01536 410 333

Wellingborough Borough Council
housingoptions@wellingborough.gov.uk
01933 229777

Corby Borough Council
01536 464 4000

Daventry Borough Council
01327 871 100

Health
General Practitioners (GP) can act as a first point of contact for anyone with a physical or mental health concern.

CAMHS Live
Mental health online chat service
www.nhft.nhs.uk/camhslive

Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies
17+ mental health support
https://www.nhft.nhs.uk/iapt

Talk Out Loud
Northamptonshire mental health support
www.talkoutloud.info

The Samaritans
24 hour telephone support service
116 123

Aquarius
Drug and alcohol support
http://aquarius.org.uk
01604 633 848

The Lowdown
Counselling, sexual health and LGBTQ support services
http://thelowdown.info
01604 622 223

NHS Direct / 111
For medical concerns dial 111
NHS online: www.nhs.uk

Managing Your Money
The Money Charity
Money information and advice
http://themoneycharity.org.uk
020 7062 8933

Northamptonshire Financial Guide for Care Leavers
https://goo.gl/CCeX1R
Free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities.
Benefits, work, debts and money, consumer, family, housing, law and courts, immigration, health

Young Northants provides advice and support for young people all in one place. Health, education, work, things to do, staying safe and more.
The National Citizen Service is for 15 to 17 year olds, and is your chance to embark on exhilarating challenges, make your mark and build skills for work and life.

NHS choices is the UK’s biggest health website, providing comprehensive and reliable information to help you make the best choices about your health and lifestyle.

Ask Normen is the Northamptonshire Mental Health Gateway for mental health services for children and young people.
FUTURE PLANS AND PRIORITIES

Personal Advisers

- Introducing new types of support to remain a part of care leavers’ lives even after our statutory duties cease.
- Developing schemes whereby older care leavers can provide mentoring to younger people who are becoming independent.
- Increasing help with university costs for young people.
- Creating drop-in facilities in other parts of the county.
- Arranging Christmas day activities for care leavers.
- Arranging activities for young parents at Russell House and in the north of the county.
- Ensuring care leavers are made aware of local resources and services near to their area.

Support with work, learning and your career

- Working with businesses to offer jobs to care leavers.
- Offering apprenticeships within the County Council and externally.
- Encouraging all professionals to have and promote high aspirations for young people leaving care.

Accommodation

- Promoting and increasing young people remaining with their carers after turning 18 (Staying Put and Staying Close).

Staying healthy and safe

- Providing gym passes / leisure discounts to young people.
- Creating a specialist service around mental health for care leavers.
- Providing a pre-paid prescription card for young people with ongoing health issues.
- Giving smoking advice when young people come into care, and smoking workshops in care settings.
- Providing healthy eating and sleeping guides for all our young people.
Looking after your money

- Securing exemptions/discounts from council tax for care leavers.
- Working with the Department for Work and Pensions to help prevent benefits sanctions for care leavers.
- Increase support and advice for money management for care leavers (money advice officers).

Participation in society

- Providing free / discounted bus services to young people who are care leavers.
- Setting up a youth club for asylum seeking young people and other care leavers.
- Promoting the National Citizenship Service and Princes Trust to all care leavers, foster carers and residential settings.

Listening to you and taking you seriously

- Providing better information on Young Northants website about the law and support available for young asylum seekers.
- Making sure the wishes and feelings of care leavers are clear and prominent on every form relating to them.
- Further promoting the importance of the corporate parenting principles to all staff and partner organisations.
- Ensuring all relevant organisations and partners have information on Young Northants such as the Youth Offending Service and Probation services.