A Guide to Leaving Care in Northamptonshire

August 2017
1. Introduction 5
2. What Happens/When 6-7
3. Know Your Rights 8-11
4. Pathway Planning 12-13
5. Preparation for Independent Living 14-15
6. Accommodation 16-20
7. What Happens if Something Goes Wrong After I Leave Care? 21
8. Money Matters and Benefits 22-29
9. Health and Wellbeing 30-38
10. Education, Training and Employment 39-41
11. Having Your Say 42-43
12. Useful Contacts 44-49
1. Introduction

Whether you are just starting to prepare to leave care or have already left care, you will have lots of questions and important decisions to make along the way. There can be a lot to learn and find out about when you are preparing for independence or leaving care.

If you are at least 16 years old, and have been in the care of Northamptonshire County Council for at least 3 months past your fourteenth birthday and at least 1 day past your 16th birthday, you will be entitled to a range of services and financial support, until the age of at least 21 but sometimes up to 25.

It is extremely important to Northamptonshire County Council that our children and young people have the best start in life as possible, and are happy and successful. This handbook is designed to give you some practical information, tell you about the help and support you can expect and explain the different options available to you.

In order for you to be properly prepared for independence, you will need to learn a range of day to day skills both financial and practical. These include:

• Applying for a job
• How to shop and how to prepare and cook food
• Applying for a course and/or training
• Sexual health/education
• How to ensure you have a balanced diet that will keep you healthy
• How to register with a doctor and dentist
• How to write a letter if you are not happy about a service you have received from Leaving Care or someone else.
• DIY and household chores
• Housekeeping such as laundry
• Budgeting
• Knowing your rights and how to get help if you need it
• Paying bills
2. What Happens

When you are 15 1/2, your social worker will start to talk to the leaving care team who work with young people aged 16+ who are in care alongside your social worker and also work with young care leavers up to the age of 21 but sometimes up to 25.

A meeting will be arranged between your social worker, your carer/keyworker, and the leaving care team to talk about what needs to happen to make your move into independence a smooth one that happens when you are ready. At this meeting a named personal adviser will be identified to work with you from the age of 16. Their role is to:

- Work with you in planning for your future and contribute to and support you in updating your pathway plan alongside the social worker
- Take over from your social worker at the age of 18 or earlier if you leave care
- Advise you of your rights and responsibilities and all the services available
- Help you get the financial support you are entitled to
- Help you to access suitable accommodation where you will feel safe
- Encourage and help you to be fit and healthy
- Help you to have positive relationships with people, such as family and friends
- Offer help in case of a crisis
- Make sure you know how to make comments, suggestions if you want to change something, or make a complaint if you are not happy with the service you receive

You may have additional needs which need to be met as well as being entitled to the same advice and support as any other Care Leaver. If you have additional needs you might also have a Transitions worker. Your Transitions worker can also carry out some of the tasks of the personal adviser if you feel there are too many people involved in your life.
A Guide to Leaving Care in Northamptonshire
3. Know Your Rights

The Care Leavers’ Charter

The Care Leavers’ Charter sets out a list of promises that Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) have committed to making to young people moving out of care and into adulthood.

We promise:

To respect and honour your identity
To treat you like an adult, respect and work with the unique potential of everybody.

To believe in you
To take each and every Young Person into account. We won’t give up on you.

To listen to you
Understand/discuss and support your needs and decisions we make

To inform you
Give you the support you need in every aspect of life.

To support you
Keep you informed on all opportunities and rights which may assist you to achieve.

To find you a home
Enhance your life skills which you can apply to find and manage accommodation.

To be a lifelong champion
To listen to the voices and opinions of all Care Leavers, and be there when you need us.


Access to Care Records

If you have been in the care of the Local Authority then the Data Protection Act gives you the right to view your records. You do not have to give a reason why you want to view your files and you can’t be denied access if you don’t want to disclose your reason. You are likely to be offered guidance by a social worker about accessing your records but you do not have to be seen by a social worker if you do not want to before or during access. It can be helpful though to have such assistance as it can provide emotional support and help to explain things that may be difficult to understand in the records.

To apply for access to your records please ask your social worker or personal adviser for further information or follow the link below:

www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/dataprotection

While for many young people accessing their records can be a very positive and uplifting exercise it can also be a daunting and emotional experience. Undertaking the task can begin to offer explanations about your life in care and help you to put your past and present circumstances into perspective. Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending.

The level of leaving care support that you are entitled to depends on the amount of time that you have spent in care, how old you are, and your plans for education and training. The Children (Leaving Care) Act (2000) describes four categories of children and young people, each of which has different entitlements under the law; eligible, relevant, former relevant and qualifying. Once you know which category of care leaver you fit into, you can then find out your rights and entitlements.

It’s really important that you understand what support you are entitled to. If you’re not quite sure, ask your personal adviser or social worker who will help you to understand the rules and work out which category you fit into.
The entitlements under each category are set out as follows:

**Eligible:**

You are aged 16 or 17 years old, have been in care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, and you are still in care on your 16th birthday and at least 24 hours after.

**As an eligible young person, you are entitled to:**

- Accommodation and living costs
- A social worker and a personal adviser
- A detailed assessment of your needs
- A pathway plan which replaces your care plan, is completed with you, which is a record of what Northamptonshire County Council will do for you
- Advice and support
- An education pathway plan (EPP) and six monthly reviews
- Money to live on until you reach 18 and advice and support to manage your finances after this age
- Statutory visits at a frequency agreed at your LAC Review
- Statutory reviews chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer every 6 months until you are 18
- A review health assessment every 12 months until you are 18
- Opportunities for social activities, hobbies and cultural activities/outings

**Relevant:**

You are 16 or 17 years old, have been in care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and have left care after your 16th birthday.

**You are entitled to:**

- Assistance in maintaining suitable accommodation
- A personal adviser
- A detailed assessment of your needs
- A pathway plan reviewed every six months
- Assistance to make sure that your needs in respect of education, training and employment are met
- Advice and support
- Visits from personal adviser within seven days of you moving to a new property and then every eight weeks

**Former Relevant:**

You are aged 18-21, or up to 25 if continuing in further/higher education or training, and have previously been eligible or relevant, or both.

**You are entitled to:**

- A personal adviser
- A pathway plan and six monthly reviews
- Assistance with education, training and employment
- Advice and support
- Visits from your personal adviser within seven days of you moving to a new property and then every eight weeks
- Financial support for equipment and costs for education
- A higher education bursary of £2000 if you are in higher education (University)
- Vacation accommodation costs if in higher education or residential further education
- Access to local health, dental and optician services
Qualifying young person:

You are under 21 (or 25 if in education or training), have been looked after or accommodated in a variety of other settings such as custody, and have returned home and stayed there for six months or more after your 16th birthday. You were under a special guardianship order.

You are entitled to:

- Advice and support
- Financial assistance if assessed as needed
- The local authority keeping in touch
- Advice and support with education, training and employment
- Advice and support with education and training up to 25 years old

Workers’ Roles

Social Workers
Your social worker is responsible for making sure you get the support you need while you are in care. They must visit you to see how you are doing and develop a care plan which outlines what support you will receive. They must also make sure your plan is reviewed, and get your views about any decisions which need to be made about your future.

When you’re almost 16, you’ll be referred to the leaving care team and allocated a personal adviser. Where you have both a social worker and a personal adviser they will need to work closely together and agree what tasks they are each going to do. Your social worker will support you to ensure that you’re prepared for leaving care and that your pathway plan is done. Your PA will help with your pathway assessment or with some of the tasks set out in your pathway plan. As you get older your personal adviser will become more involved in supporting you and making sure your pathway plan is being followed. When you turn 18 or leave care, your PA will take over as your worker.

Leaving Care Personal Adviser (PA)
By law all local authorities have to appoint a PA for young people who have been in care for a certain period of time. One of the main roles of the PA is to offer you advice and support to prepare you for when you become an adult. There are eight main things that your personal adviser has to do:

1. Provide advice (including practical advice) and support

A PA should be one of your main sources of advice and support, but they also need to ensure you are able to get support from other people who may be involved in your life, such as foster carers and mentors. In fact, depending on what you are doing, where you are living and how you are getting on, you may feel that you want to get the majority of support from someone other than your PA. What is important though is that your PA records all the areas in which you need support and advice, and who you get it from. Any changes that are made to your pathway plan must be done with your PA.

2. Assisting in assessing your needs and prepare a pathway plan to meet them

Your PA should make sure that the pathway plan is realistic and you are able to achieve what is set out in the plan. When you leave care, your pathway plan will be updated and reviewed, to make sure it is helping you prepare for independence.

3. Be Involved In Reviewing the Pathway plan

Pathway plans need to be reviewed every six months until you are 21, or longer if you are continuing with education/ training. It is vital that you are involved in the review process. You don’t have to wait six months to have your pathway plan reviewed; you can have a review meeting earlier if you want.

4. Liaise with the Local Authority to ensure the pathway plan is carried out

Your PA needs to work with the local authority and other organisations identified in your pathway plan, to make sure they deliver the services for you set out in your plan.

5. Ensure that the young person makes use of services

PAs, as well as offering advice and support, need to make sure any services highlighted in your pathway plan are being delivered, and at the right time for you.

6. Keep informed about the young person’s progress and wellbeing

Your PA needs to have regular contact with you and other relevant agencies and individuals, so they can continue to support you to achieve your aspirations.
7. Keep written records of contact with the young person

These records should be written in a way that you understand. You have a right to see what is recorded about you.

8. Keep in touch

We have a responsibility to keep in touch with you to make sure you are ok up until the age of 21, or older if you are doing a course or undertaking training. It should be your PA who keeps in contact with you. Your PA needs to show an interest and concern in what you are doing. In addition, in discussion with you, they need to judge what is appropriate in terms of contact with you. Your PA needs to respect your wishes, but they also need to show an interest in what you are doing, like a good parent would.

Your Right to an Advocate:

An Advocate in the Children’s Rights Service is someone that makes sure you are supported to be listened to. An Advocate will also help you to express your wishes and feelings as well as making sure that you are involved in decisions that are likely to affect you.

(See Useful Contacts for further details on how to access an Advocate.)

Voting

Voting is a responsibility and important in making sure you have a say. You should vote for people who make the decisions that affect your life. You can vote in local council elections, where you vote for a councillor who represents a political party, whose aim is to try and help run the area you live in.

You can also vote in the general election, where you vote for the party you want to run the country. When you vote in the general election, you are voting for someone to stand as an MP (Member of Parliament) for your area. An MP’s job is to represent the people in your area. If you are experiencing problems or difficulties that are affecting you or members of your community, your MP may be able to help.

Who Can Vote?

There are a few facts and pieces of information you need to know about voting before you rush down to your nearest polling station:

• You have to be 18 and above before you can vote
• You need to be a British, Irish, Commonwealth or European citizen
• You cannot vote if you are serving a prison sentence, have been found guilty in the past five years for corrupt or illegal practices in connection with an election
• You cannot vote if you have mental health issues which prevent a reasoned decision or judgment
• Before you can vote, you need to put your name down on the electoral register; you can’t just turn up at a polling station

Registration forms are usually sent to all homes between September and November. If you don’t get one, see the websites below.

www.electoralcommission.org.uk
www.aboutmyvote.co.uk
4. Pathway Planning

At your statutory review just before your 16th birthday, your social worker will discuss the plan to complete your needs assessment and pathway plan. Your needs assessment and your first pathway plan should be completed within three months of your Looked After Review. Your social worker will sit with you and possibly your carers to help you to complete a needs assessment. The needs assessment will be about your abilities, your achievements, and about your needs now and in the future.

Your Needs Assessment will highlight what is working well for you, anything you or we may be worried about, and what needs to happen so that everything is working well. It is a Legal Document that not only records what support you may need now and in the future but also includes a ‘back up plan’ in case things happen unexpectedly.

It is really important that you are actively involved in making realistic plans and decisions that are right for you. Therefore your social worker and personal adviser will want to write your plan with you.

Pathway Planning for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Claiming asylum can be a difficult process. Your social worker and personal adviser will work with you and your solicitor to make sure that things are explained to you so that you understand the process of claiming asylum and the possible outcomes.

Your pathway planning, particularly if you have recently entered the UK from overseas may need to cover additional support to assist in your understanding of the cultures and systems whilst living in the UK.

While you are waiting for a decision on your asylum application, and your immigration status is unresolved your pathway plan will look at the possible outcomes and develop alternative plans until your immigration status is resolved. These plans will not influence the outcome of your immigration decision and will take into account the following likely outcomes:

a) You are granted Refugee Status (i.e. granted asylum), leave to remain for five years, and access to public funds.

b) You are refused asylum but granted Humanitarian Protection (HP) with leave to remain for five years, usually with access to public funds. HP is most commonly granted if you are at risk of ‘ill-treatment’ in the country you have left but do not meet the criteria of the Refugee Convention.

c) Your application for asylum is refused with no grant of leave. In this case you would be returned to your country of origin.

To make sure your pathway plan includes all of your hopes and goals your social worker will talk to you, and to other important people in your life. You can say who you would like to be part of your pathway plan and who you would prefer not to be. Your pathway plan will help you to think about and write down your plans for the future. This will include:

- Health and general wellbeing
- Accommodation
- Education, training and employment
- Emotional issues and behaviour
- Family and social relationships, and support networks
- Practical skills and other skills needed for independent living
- Identity, such as ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation
- Financial arrangements

Your personal adviser will assist you to contribute to the pathway plan and support you to make sure that your wishes and feelings are being taken into consideration. You will be asked what you think of the final draft and will be asked to sign it. You will have a copy of it and there will be a copy on your file. It will be updated at least every six months or if there is a major change in your circumstances or plans.
5. Preparation for Independent Living

Before you begin to live independently, you should be well prepared and have done some work on how to take care of yourself. Before you move on from foster or residential care you should have personal belongings that will be a starting point for living more independently. These should include:

- A bank account
- Essential forms of identification
- A wardrobe of clothing to cover all seasons and sufficient quantity for at least a week at a time
- Coats/jackets/footwear to cover all seasons
- At least 1 smart outfit (interviews/special occasions)
- Clothing and equipment appropriate to work, college, sporting activities, hobbies and interests, including a laptop if going into further or higher education
- A suitcase
- A school/college/workbag
- Towels and enough toiletries to cover at least 2 weeks after moving
- Mobile Phone
- Some means of accessing TV and/or radio stations/music

There are many ways that you can help to prepare yourself for independence and leaving care. One of the most important things about leaving care is knowing how to look after yourself. This know-how is often called independent living skills and includes:

- Budgeting
- Cleaning your home
- Health
- Accommodation
- Family and relationships
- Education, training and employment
When you meet your personal adviser you will be given an independent living skills handbook called My Daily Living Programme.

This handbook will provide you with all the information on the skills and abilities you need to live independently. The handbook also provides you with activities and work sheets, so you can identify the areas you need to work on, and practice your new skills so that you are ready for independent living.

In addition you may be able to attend the Daily Living Programme arranged by the Leaving Care and the Children’s Rights Service where you will be able to explore things in more depth.

**Daily Living Programme**
The Daily Living Programme will be delivered from Russell House in Northampton and is a joint venture between the Leaving Care Service and Children’s Rights. The programme will focus on preparing you for independence and there will be guest presenters and opportunities for young people to be involved in the delivery of the course. Some of the key areas of delivery will be:

- Your rights
- Benefits and entitlements
- Money management and budgeting
- Work and education
- Health and wellbeing
- Cooking
- Looking after yourself and household tasks
- Housing
6. Accommodation

We want to encourage you to remain with your carer(s) until you are really ready to live independently. You may want to move on when you are approaching or become 18. You might want to stay longer, or you may want to leave as soon as you can.

Top tip

Think about options before making decisions.

There are lots of things you and your carer can do to help you prepare for independence and the practical side of leaving care but it can be much harder to prepare emotionally and feel ready to manage on your own.

Many young people worry about leaving care. They feel scared about living alone and are often quite afraid of feeling lonely. It is okay to feel worried and it is really important that you talk to someone you trust about any concerns you have and the way you are feeling.

(See Emotional Wellbeing section and useful links.)

If you are preparing to leave care you are probably thinking about where you would like to live, your social worker and your personal adviser will help you to work out what type of accommodation meet your needs and what support will be needed and this will be recorded in your pathway plan.

When you reach the age of 18 you are no longer in care. Your PA will support you to access accommodation of your own and are legally able to hold a tenancy. For all types of accommodation, you will need to be able to evidence that you are able to manage, pay the rent or contributions regularly, and abide by the rules or conditions that are attached.

There are a number of accommodation options available to you after you reach 18 years of age. If you need any further advice or support to find out more then please speak to your personal adviser.

Staying Put (remaining with your foster carers after you are 18)

You may wish to remain living with your foster carer/s. You can remain with your foster carer after your 18th birthday if you want to and if your foster carer is in agreement.

Staying Put will have to be a decision made by both yourself and your foster carer because Staying Put means important changes for carers too. This is not the same as remaining in care because no one can be in care once they are an adult at 18 years old. You can do this for a short time if you needed to improve your independent living skills or you want to finish your college course before you leave or until you are 21, this may be an option for you.

In addition to staying put there are a number of alternative options to help you to practically and emotionally prepare for independence that will give you the chance to find out what it is really like living on your own whilst being supported.

Supported accommodation

This can range from a house with several young people sharing, a flat where you are provided with floating support (someone who will come out to your home or support you with things in the community), or accommodation with flats or rooms where staff are on site to provide help and support you towards living independently.

During this time you will be able to practice budgeting, cleaning and maintaining your daily routine to further develop your independent living skills. Support can be provided by your foster carer or a key worker and your personal adviser and this will be agreed as part of your support plan and in your pathway plan. These arrangements will help to identify anything that you may need help with. This experience will help to build your confidence and prepare you for living independently. For further details you can speak to your social worker or personal adviser.
Private rented accommodation
This is where you rent from a landlord either through a letting agency or directly. There can sometimes be problems with private landlords not accepting people who are on benefits or in college, and also wanting someone to be a guarantor for the rent (in case it is not paid and for any damage caused).

Renting privately is not recommended and will not generally be supported for young people under the age of 18. Private tenancy agreements are often more expensive, short term tenancies are renewed on a 6 monthly or yearly basis. You will be expected to pay a deposit (usually the equivalent of a month’s rent) and at least a month’s rent in advance. Assistance with deposits for private rented accommodation will only be considered where all other alternatives have been explored and it is clear there are no other suitable alternatives to renting privately.

Social needs housing
The Leaving Care Service works in close partnership with the District and Borough Housing Authorities in Northamptonshire, and your PA will assist you in registering for social housing if appropriate. Social housing is accessed by registering with your local District or Borough Council Housing Register. Care leavers are a priority group for this sort of housing. It can take some time to find what you want, where you want it. You will need to attend a meeting with your Housing Officer and your PA will support you to attend this meeting before being offered a place and you will need to wait for a place to become available.

Most care leavers start off with supported provision before they move into their own independent accommodation. When they first move into their own accommodation they have floating support, if this is appropriate, to help them through any difficulties they might experience and make sure they are able to manage.

Top tips when looking for independence
• Don’t choose the first flat you view!
• Read your contract!
• Do it because you want to, not because you can!
• Work out what you can afford and be realistic
• Take your time making decisions
• Work out a budget to see what you can afford
• Think ‘eviction’ before partying

Going back to live with your family
Depending on the reasons why you came into care, you might consider returning to live with your mother, father, or another member of your family when you leave care. If this is something you are considering it is important to talk to your social worker, personal adviser and the members of your family that you are planning to live with. Don’t forget that if you go back to live with your family there are different rules that apply to claiming benefits so you need to look into this first before making a final decision.

Support costs for care leavers during the transition to independence
Under certain circumstance the leaving care service will pay for:
• Additional costs associated with the individual staffing support provided to care leavers who live in semi supported living accommodation
• Startup costs of a tenancy such as the costs of deposits and retainers for privately let tenancies

Your PA will assess your need for such additional costs and will provide you with further advice about support with housing costs.
Leaving care grant
All relevant and former relevant care leavers are entitled to a Leaving Care Grant (Setting up Home Allowance) i.e. money for such things as furniture, cooker, fridge and other essential household items. In Northamptonshire this is £2000. Your personal adviser will discuss the sort of things the money can be spent on and will make the purchases with you.

The more prepared you are to leave care the more successful your move will be and the more confident you will become. When you move into your own flat you’ll need to furnish it. It can be exciting buying what you need, but it can also be stressful if the costs pile up and you haven’t planned for it. We want this to be as stress free as possible for you and in order to take some of the initial pressure away we will pay for your first year’s contents insurance, purchase you a TV licence for the first year, and provide you with a starter pack for your home. If you have been with a foster carer or supported accommodation provider we may have deducted money from your YPA as a contribution towards your cost of living. If this is the case, for every week that we have deducted money from you £10 will be added to your Leaving Care Grant towards purchasing things for your first home.

You can prepare yourself before you move by having a clear idea of what you need and how much it will cost. The most expensive household items will probably be kitchen appliances and flooring. It’s not a good idea to get a loan from a bank or enter into a higher purchase (HP) agreement. Repayments can be high, and you may end up paying back more than the items actually cost.

Suggested list of items needed for moving into a tenancy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kitchen</th>
<th>Lounge</th>
<th>Bathroom</th>
<th>Bedroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooker</td>
<td>Sofa</td>
<td>Mirror</td>
<td>Bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fridge</td>
<td>TV stand</td>
<td>Cabinet</td>
<td>Wardrobe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freezer</td>
<td>Coffee table</td>
<td>Door hooks</td>
<td>Chest of drawers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing machine</td>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Bath mat</td>
<td>Blinds/curtains and fittings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blinds</td>
<td>Curtains, blinds and fittings</td>
<td>Toilet seat</td>
<td>Bedside tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crockery</td>
<td>Lamp shades</td>
<td>Towels</td>
<td>Bedding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saucepans</td>
<td>Table/chairs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bin</td>
<td>Carpet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutlery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utensils</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lino/floor covering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kettle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microwave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mop/bucket</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Try to save for these kind of purchases - it’s cheaper in the long run, and you’ll get a sense of achievement.

Talk to your worker about your Leaving Care Grant and use the list above to work out what items you’ll need and how much it will cost.
There are lots of other things you need to think about when moving into your first home apart from buying things which are equally important. Use the worksheet below with your personal adviser to work out what you need to do and when so that your move into your own accommodation is smoother.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things to do when I get my tenancy</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Further action</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrange to view flat and make sure it is right for you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend to sign tenancy agreement with PA present</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree with PA what items you will be purchasing for your new home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrange with PA purchasing items from leaving care grant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas meter reading / phone gas company</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric meter reading / phone electric company</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone water board informing them of my details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change address for income support/child benefit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change address with your doctors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change address for TV (license)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrange TV license</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrange contents insurance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget plan with PA for essential bills and food each week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. What Happens if Something Goes Wrong After I Leave Care?

If you are living in independent accommodation you are responsible for the rent and paying all the bills. You would still be offered support from your personal adviser and floating support if required. It is important that you discuss a back-up plan or a contingency plan with your personal adviser to make sure that if something goes wrong with your accommodation, or in any other area of your life, that you know where you can go to for help.

It is important that you pay your rent and bills regularly and if you are unable to pay your rent, you need to contact your landlord and get advice from your personal adviser straightaway. Do not ignore the problem as it will only get worse and it could mean you losing your home. You also need to make sure that you look after your property and that you do not cause any nuisance to your neighbours. This means that you are responsible for making sure that there is no noise late at night and your garden is kept clean and tidy. It is also your job to make sure that anyone who visits you does not cause any nuisance because you will be held responsible. Sometimes it is hard for young people who are living alone as other young people might want to take advantage of you having your own place. You need to be strong and make sure that you only allow people who you know and trust into your home. If you have any problems you need to speak to your personal adviser as soon as possible.

We understand that sometimes young people will make mistakes and we will want to help you to sort out any problems you may be experiencing. By talking to your PA or social worker we can help you to find different ways of dealing with things and explore all options as well as advocate for you. Most young people who leave care and move onto independence will continue to receive a level of support in addition to the PA support they are entitled to. This is to make sure you have someone to help you on a day to day basis with those things that you hadn’t been expecting and to help you to develop routines.

No matter what the problem is big, small, or confusing there is someone always there for you. You may not want to talk to your PA or social worker and might find it easier to talk to your foster carer, key worker or other family members, it is important that you share your problems.

Sometimes you may not like the advice that you are given by the people who are there to support you, but they are not trying to make your life difficult, they want to help you prepare for independence. It is ok to get things wrong sometimes. It is ok to get things wrong sometimes and we are here to support you not to judge you. Everyone becomes independent at their own pace but it is more likely to be successful if you are prepared and have thought things through and planned for it.

There are times when things can go wrong and you can sometimes get in trouble with the police. If you have a criminal record it doesn’t mean all doors are closed to you. Having a criminal record doesn’t necessarily prevent you from getting a job but it can sometimes make it more difficult. However, your PA can support you to explore all employment options and sometimes help to turn a negative experience into a positive outcome.

If you get in trouble with the police or are detained in custody then you are entitled to legal representation. This can be either a solicitor you already know or if you don’t have one, then a Duty Solicitor is always available.

In addition, there are also free advocacy services available to offer advice, support and if needed an Appropriate Adult (please see Useful Contacts towards the end of this guide).

Remember
If you do find yourself in custody you are entitled to the same leaving care support as you would if you were not in custody. If you spent 13 weeks or more in care and on your 16th birthday you will be entitled to a leaving care service until at least 21 years old. You should have a personal adviser who visits you and reviews your pathway plan.
8. Money Matters and Benefits

When you are living in a foster placement or in residential care, your foster carer or staff will give you some money to spend on some of the things you need and they will buy or provide you with other things. You don’t need to worry about bills or if anything goes wrong such as the property flooding.

Relevant young people (16/17 year-olds), in many cases, will not be entitled to claim the major means-tested benefits income such as Income support. If you are 16 or 17 years old and in some form of education, employment or training you may be entitled to receive financial support which can be up to the equivalent of Job Seekers allowance. The Leaving Care Service will also provide an incentive payment each week depending on your college course/ training, hours of attendance and your employment salary/ wages. This will be assessed on an individual basis.

Budgeting Tips

It’s important to try and get in the habit of saving up for your future.

• When you receive your money, remember to first prioritise what you need for bills and food.

• Electric heating is usually more expensive than gas.

• Look out for promotions at shops and supermarkets, e.g. “buy one get one free” and note that some supermarkets are cheaper to shop in than others.

• Buy your fruit, vegetables, household goods and clothes from markets as this is usually cheaper than shops

• Buying a weekly / monthly travel card works out cheaper than paying for single fares if you travel regularly.

• Remember, if you have a student card you may be entitled to discounts on travel cards, cinema, restaurants and many high street shops

• If you need to phone abroad, you can buy ‘international phone cards’ which are much cheaper than directly using landline or mobile phones.
Money Matters for Relevant Care Leavers

If you are relevant care leaver and you are not engaged in employment, education or training, then the level of financial support that you will receive will be less than the amount of money that you would receive if you were in education, training or employment. In such circumstances you will only receive the equivalent of Job Seekers allowance, the Leaving care team will also pay:

- Your rent
- Any costs associated with transport to and from interviews
- The cost of special clothes or expenses associated with attending interviews or associated with starting a job or a training course (e.g. special clothes or equipment).
- Your PA will help you to claim any benefits that you are entitled to, inclusive of the education bursary

Your PA will provide you with a copy of your pathway plan which you will have been central to, and it will include a description of the financial support you will receive from the Leaving Care team. Your PA will provide you with advice on how to manage your money and you will be encouraged to complete an individual budget plan which will help to ensure that you manage your money effectively and do not get into debt. The pathway plan will be reviewed regularly so it can be adapted to any change of circumstance you experience.

Money Matters for Former Relevant young people (care leavers aged 18-25 years old)

If you are a care leaver aged 18 or over, living away from your family and you are studying a full-time non-advanced education course, (up to and including A-Level and equivalent) then you will be entitled to claim Income support, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. You can enroll on a full-time course at any time up to your 21st birthday and can continue to receive these benefits until the end of your studies or the end of the academic year in which you become 21.

If you are 18 years old or above and you are not in employment, education or training, then the level of financial support that you will receive will be less than the amount of money that you would receive if you were in education, training or employment. In such circumstances you will be expected to claim the appropriate benefits available to you. This will include Housing Benefit to cover your rent. We may also pay the cost of special clothes or expenses associated with attending an interview.

Financial support for studying a further education course

The 16-19 bursary is a guaranteed £1200 per year for all care leavers attending a further education college or a learning provider. The bursary is paid directly from your college or learning provider; they also decide how they will pay the bursary to you. For more details speak to your college or learning provider. The Department of Work and Pensions disregard the bursary which means that they do not include it as part of your income so it will not affect your benefits. If you are in some form of employment you will not be entitled to a bursary.

Older students may also seek financial support from the Discretionary Learner Support Fund. Speak to your college or learning provider for more information. If you are a lone parent, a young person with additional needs or are unable to work due to sickness, you can usually continue to claim income-based benefits such as Income support and Employment Support Allowance whilst attending full-time further education. If you are a young parent under the age of 20 you can apply to ‘Care to Learn’ to help with the cost of your child care whilst you are attending further education. You can find out more information about ‘Care to Learn’ from your social worker, personal adviser, careers adviser or at: https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn

The local authority may also be able to provide you with financial assistance to support you with your education or training. Make sure that you discuss your plans for education and training with your social worker or personal adviser and that the agreed support is written down in your pathway plan.
Are you attending higher education?
If you are at university you will not usually be able to claim benefits unless you are a part time student on a low income, a parent or a disabled student. Young people attending university can access student loans and grants from student finance. These are known as tuition fee loans and maintenance loans. If you are not living with your family it is important to select the option which says ‘you are estranged from your family’ when completing your student finance application forms as you might be entitled to further financial support such as a maintenance grant which is non-repayable. You will be responsible for paying your own rent and living costs and will need to pay for these out of your maintenance loans and grants.

When you are at university you are entitled to financial help from the local authority. You will receive a £2000 higher education bursary paid in equal separate payments over the time of your course. Whilst you will receive funding from the Student Finance department to cover the cost of your accommodation whilst attending university, the Local Authority will also provide you with support to cover your accommodation costs over the Christmas and Summer holiday periods, if this is something that you require. You can also ask for financial support with any equipment or books you may need.

If you are a care leaver there are also many bursaries to financially support you to go to university. The National Scholarship Scheme helps with fees, accommodation or cash and is managed by individual universities. Your PA will support you to check this out with the university you are planning to attend as some universities give priority to care leavers and may offer bursaries or extra support. It may be a good idea to get a part time job whilst you are at university because it will provide you with some extra money and give you valuable experience to add to your CV.

The Buttle UK Quality Mark for care leavers
The Frank Buttle Quality Mark is a set of standards created by a charity called Buttle UK (www.buttleuk.org). Colleges and universities can sign up to achieve the Quality Mark to demonstrate their commitment to supporting young people in care, and leaving care, in further and higher education. Each college and university who has the Quality Mark should provide:

- A named contact - This person will tell you what support the individual college or university can offer.
- Money - The college or university should advise you about available bursaries or any extra funding that you may be entitled to.
- Accommodation - If you need help with accommodation while attending education, there should be someone you can speak to.
- Support - Each college and university offers lots of support to young people who have been in care, this may include during the application stage, as well as when you are studying. There should also be someone that you can talk to if you are worried or upset about anything. All you need to do is ask the named contact.

Students and trainees programme
Buttle UK also runs a grant programme which young people studying at further education and higher education can apply for to help with the costs of studying. You can find out more information about this on the Frank Buttle website (www.buttleuk.org).

Are you an apprentice?
If you are undertaking an apprenticeship course, you will be classed as being employed. Most apprenticeship wages start at about £100 per week for the first year and then gradually increase. Being employed means you will not be able to claim an income based benefit such as Income support, however you may qualify for Benefit support with your rent and council tax if you are over the age of 18. If you are thinking about starting an apprenticeship, speak to your social worker or personal adviser to find out what support is available. You can also find our more at https://www.gov.uk/education/becoming-an-apprentice.
Are you in full-time or part time employment?
If you have a full time job you will be financially responsible for paying your own rent, council tax and living costs. If you are on a low income you may be entitled to some support with your rent and council tax. You can seek advice from your personal adviser and local authority. If you are working part-time or on a low income you may be entitled to an income based benefit, housing benefit and council tax benefit. Your personal adviser can help you with your budgeting skills to help you get used to paying bills and managing your money.

Are you looking for work?
If you are unemployed and looking for work you may be entitled to claim job seekers allowance (JSA). When you are 16 and 17 years old the local authority is responsible for paying for your accommodation and living costs, therefore you are not entitled to claim benefits. If you are unemployed when you are 18 or over you are then entitled to apply for JSA. In order to receive JSA you must be available for work and actively seeking work. If you are not available to attend job interviews, Job Centre Plus courses or appointments at short notice, you could receive a sanction which means your JSA will be stopped. If you claim housing benefit too this will also be affected. If this applies to you, please contact your local Job Centre Plus for more information as well as speaking to your PA for further support and advice.

You will be still eligible to claim JSA if you are working or studying for less than 16 hours per week but this will affect the amount you receive. You can apply for JSA online at www.direct.gov.uk/jsaonline or by phoning 0800 055 6688 or ask at your local Job Centre Plus for a paper form. Your personal adviser or support worker can help you to complete your application.
Housing Benefit

Housing benefit can help to pay for all or part of your rent depending on your circumstances. As a care leaver you can only claim Housing Benefit once you are 18 and over. You may be eligible to claim housing benefit if you are studying a full-time or part-time further education course, on a low wage like an apprenticeship, or not working. There are certain rules and regulations about claiming housing benefit and these are as follows:

- Care leavers aged 18-21 can claim housing benefit for one bedroom accommodation until the age of 22. If you think that you will still need to continue to claim housing benefit after your 22nd birthday then you will only be entitled to claim the amount for shared accommodation. This means that you will need to contribute to your rent should you be living in a 1 bedroom accommodation at age 22 or consider moving to shared accommodation.

- If you live in private rented accommodation from a private landlord then housing benefit is called local housing allowance (LHA). Each local authority sets out how much LHA a person is entitled to claim. You need to check this out before renting your accommodation from a private landlord as private rent is more expensive than council housing. You could be expected to contribute to your rent if you have more bedrooms than you need. You can check out how much LHA you can receive for the area you are considering living in, by contacting the local authority that you live in, speaking to a benefit adviser or by visiting https://www.gov.uk/.

- LHA is also paid directly to you and so you would be responsible for paying your landlord. If you think that this would be difficult, you can request that your LHA is paid directly to your landlord by explaining why you are unable to pay directly. Remember that if you don’t pay your rent you could be evicted. You can always speak to your personal adviser who will help you decide the best option for you.

- Bedroom tax (under occupancy reduction in housing benefit): Your housing benefit will be reduced if you are of working age (over 18 and under state pension age) and have more bedrooms than you are assessed as needing. One bedroom will be allowed for:
  - Each adult or couple living in the household
  - Two children under the age of 16, of the same sex
  - Two children under the age of 10, regardless of sex
  - A carer who provides overnight care to a person with disabilities

How will this affect you?

If you have one more bedroom than the government thinks you need, you will lose 14% of your housing benefit. If you have two or more bedrooms than the government thinks you need, you will lose 25% of your housing benefit. Remember, you will be responsible for paying the difference between your rent and the amount of housing benefit you receive.

How do I apply for housing benefit?

If you are making a claim for a benefit for job seekers allowance, or employment and support allowance, through the Jobcentre Plus they will help you to make a claim for housing benefit at the same time. If you are not claiming any other benefit you will need to contact your local council to make an application for housing benefit. If there is anything you are unsure about speak to your personal adviser.
Council tax
If you are of working age and claim council tax benefit, you may not receive the full amount of benefit to cover your yearly council tax bill and will be expected to pay the difference. You can find out more information about this from your local housing benefit office and ask for support from your personal adviser. If you are in full time education and living independently you are not eligible to pay council tax. You will need to provide evidence to your local authority by getting a certificate from your college or learning provider.

How do I apply for council tax benefit?
If you are making a claim for a benefit like job seekers allowance, or employment and support allowance, through Job Centre Plus they will help you to make a claim for council tax benefit at the same time. If you are not claiming any other benefit you will need to contact your local council to make an application for council tax benefit. If there is anything you are unsure about speak to your personal adviser.

Are you a parent?
If you are a parent there is support available to help you. You may be entitled to claim the following things:

Income support:
If you are 16 or 17, have a child and do not work, you may be eligible to claim income support. Income support can be claimed from 11 weeks before you are due to give birth. However, if you are still at school or college you have to wait until your child is born before you can claim income support.

Sure Start maternity grant:
A Sure Start maternity grant is a one-off payment of £500 to help to buy the things that you will need for your baby. You do not have to pay this back.

Statutory maternity pay and maternity allowance:
If you are employed full time or part time when you have your baby you could be entitled to ‘statutory maternity pay’ from your employer or ‘maternity allowance’ from Job Centre Plus. How much you receive will depend on the length of time you have been employed and how much money you have been earning. If you are unsure ask your personal adviser for advice.

Child benefit:
Child benefit is a tax free payment that you can claim for your child as long as the child is living in the same household as you. You can claim this benefit no matter what age you are.

Child and working tax credits:
You can claim child tax credits if you have a child. The lower your income is, the more tax credit you get. If you are employed you might also be entitled to working tax credit too, which can help towards your childcare costs.

Healthy start vouchers:
Healthy start vouchers are free and provided weekly. They can be used to buy liquid milk, infant formula, or fresh fruit and vegetables.

Do you have a disability or additional needs?
If you are a care leaver, aged 16-17 and have a disability or additional needs, you may be entitled to claim benefits.

Employment and support allowance:
Employment and support allowance (ESA) is a benefit for people who have a disability or additional needs and unable to go to work. You can claim ESA when you are 16 and 17 but you cannot claim housing benefit as your local authority is responsible for this until you are 18 years old. Once you are 18 you will then be able to claim for housing benefit if you need it.

To claim ESA you will need to have a medical certificate, sometimes called a ‘fit note’ from your GP showing why you are not fit for work. You will also have to attend an assessment to see if you can work, unless your medical certificate states that you have a condition that exempts you from the assessment. If you think this applies to you, find out more information from the Benefit Enquiry Line and speak to your carer or personal adviser who will support you in making a claim.
Personal Independence Payment:
Personal Independence Payment (PIP) started to replace disability living allowance from April 2013 for people aged 16 – 24 with a health condition or disability. To qualify for PIP, you must have a long-term health condition or disability and have difficulties with activities related to daily living and/or mobility. You must have had these difficulties for 3 months and expect them to last for at least 9 months.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) helps with some of the extra costs caused by long-term ill-health or a disability. The rate depends on how your condition affects you, not the condition itself. You'll need an assessment by an independent healthcare professional to work out the level of help you get. This may be a face-to-face consultation - you'll get a letter explaining why and where you must go. You may get the daily living component of PIP if you need help with things like:

- preparing or eating food
- washing and bathing
- dressing and undressing
- reading
- using the toilet
- communicating
- managing medicine and treatments
- making decisions about money

You may get the mobility component of PIP if you need help with going out or moving around.

If you think any of this applies to you, find out more information from the Benefit Enquiry Line and speak to your carer or personal adviser who will support you in making a claim. If your claim is successful, your rate will be regularly reassessed to make sure you’re getting the right support. The decision about your claim is based on the results of the assessment, your application and any supporting evidence you include. In addition, your Personal Adviser can also link you with the Young Adults Transitions Team where you may receive an assessment that identifies any ongoing support that you may require.

Health assessments as part of ESA claim:
You may get a letter telling you to go for an assessment to work out the level of help you need. The letter explains why and where you must go. The Department of Work and Pensions makes the decision about your claim based on the results of the assessment, your application, and any supporting evidence you include.

Claiming benefits if you are seeking asylum
If you are a young person (under 18 years of age) and have arrived in the UK on your own or in a group and wish to seek asylum, it is likely that you will be Looked After by the local authority and receive discretionary leave to remain until you are 17 and a half years old. When your discretionary leave to remain expires it will affect your rights to receive state benefits.

To be able to claim benefits you will need to have been granted refugee status, humanitarian protection, discretionary leave, or indefinite leave. If you have been granted one of these statuses, you will no longer be classed as an asylum seeker. You must apply for an extension of discretionary leave to remain before it expires to be able to claim benefits. Your PA will link you with a solicitor to support you with your application for an extension for discretionary leave to remain before it expires. Remember only those qualified can give immigration advice.

The benefit welfare reform - what is going to change?
Benefits such as income support, JSA, ESA, housing benefit, and tax credits are going to be replaced by one new benefit called universal credit. This should make claiming benefits simpler because all of your money will come from one place. However, you will only get paid every 4 weeks and it will be your responsibility to make sure you pay all of your bills including rent and council tax. When these future changes to benefits take place, it will be very important for you to be aware of when you are next likely to get paid in order to plan wisely how to use your money.
Your physical health, mental health and emotional wellbeing are important.

Part of staying healthy may be eating a healthy diet, getting plenty of exercise and being supported by those who care about you. Occasionally you may become poorly or need some advice about a health issue so we have included some information below about how you can access health advice whilst you’re in care and for when you have left care.

**What is a Health Assessment and why do I need one?**
While you are in care you will have been invited to attend a health assessment once a year. This will either be with your school nurse, GP or the named nurse for looked after children (LAC). The Health Assessment usually takes about one hour depending on your health needs. A Health Assessment covers both your physical and emotional health. The doctor or nurse will talk to you about your health, how you are feeling and whether you have any problems or things that you are worried about. They can give you information on health services in the area you are living and assist you with accessing any health service if you are having a problem.

**What is a health plan?**
After you have had a health assessment or have completed a health questionnaire, a health plan will be written with you to ensure that all of your health needs are identified, how they will be met and by who. The health plan will be discussed at your review with your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and shared with key people involved in providing your care, (i.e. your social worker, PA, carer, GP, etc) but this will be discussed with you first.

**What support will I get with my health when I leave care?**
When you leave care your Personal Adviser will help you to register with a GP, dentist and opticians. You will then be responsible for your own health but you can ask your social worker or PA for support. This means that you must book your own health appointments, make sure you eat healthily, get plenty of exercise and enough sleep.

If you do have any concerns regarding your health or wellbeing, then it is important that you seek support and advice from a professional such as your GP or Personal Adviser.

You can get free prescriptions, glasses and dental treatment until the age of 18 so make sure you have regular appointments with the opticians and dentist as this may save you money in the future. After the age of 18 you may still be able to receive free prescriptions, glasses and dentistry if you are still in full time education or claiming benefits. To find out if you are eligible, you will need to speak to the health provider or speak to your PA who will be able to point you in the right direction.

If you have a long term illness or disability which you need support with, your social worker and personal adviser will discuss it with you before you leave care and the planned support will be clearly written in your pathway plan.
What is a health passport?
Your health passport includes information about your medical history and some facts about your health when you were younger. You might need this information in the future if you have any medical treatment. You can take it with you when you go to see the Doctor, Dentist or anybody else you might see about your health. It contains confidential information about your health. Your health record also contains information on the NHS (who is who, and what you can expect) and some useful contact numbers and websites in case you need these in the future.

Healthy relationships
Relationships can be great and full of fun, romance, excitement and intense feelings, but they can also be painful and frustrating too. Relationships can be difficult when you’re young because you’re still growing and changing every day. Therefore it’s important that you choose carefully who you let into your life and get close to.

Key factors in healthy relationships include:
• Respect for yourself and respect for others
• Trust
• Honesty
• Support
• Being able to be yourself
• Fairness/equality
• Being able to talk about things

Unhealthy relationships
Not all relationships are healthy. It is really important that you look after yourself and your own happiness. If someone you’re in a relationship or friendship with is making you feel bad or unhappy, it can be difficult to manage but it is important that you recognise this and feel able to change things. Relationships where someone is trying to control you, being disrespectful, or hurting you are not healthy. An unhealthy relationship can sometimes display some or all of the following. Your partner or friend:
• Gets angry when you don’t drop everything for them
• Criticises the way you dress or look
• Stops you from seeing other friends or talking to anyone else
• Wants you to quit an activity, even though you love it
• Raises their hand when they are angry, like he or she is about to hit you or does hit you
• Tries to force you to go further sexually than you want to, or do things that you don’t want to
• Is offering you money, alcohol, drugs, or gifts in return for sex
• Is asking you to have sex with other people

Sometimes we can make excuses or misinterpret violence, possessiveness, or anger, as an expression of love or affection. Even if you believe the person who is hurting you loves you, it is not healthy. No one deserves to be hit, shoved, or forced into anything he or she doesn’t want to do. So if your partner or friend starts using verbal insults, nasty put-downs, hitting or slapping, or forces you into sexual activity, you must talk to your carer, social worker or personal adviser or someone else who you trust. Don’t suffer in silence.
Sexual Health
Your sexual health is important because it can have an effect on many other parts of your life such as your emotional and physical wellbeing. A decision to start a sexual relationship is something that should be carefully considered beforehand. You should never feel rushed or put under pressure to have sex with anyone and you can always say ‘no’ if you don’t feel ready.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI’s)
Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), also called sexually transmitted infections (STIs), affect people of all ages, backgrounds, and from all walks of life. Anyone who is sexually active is at risk for getting an STI. Getting the facts about STDs/STIs and sexual health is important.

How are STIs spread?
STIs usually are spread through sex and can be spread through any type of sex: from a male to a female, a female to a male, a male to another male or a female to another female.

Some STIs can be spread even if there is no penetration. For example, genital herpes is transmitted through direct skin-to-skin contact, and can be transmitted even if there is no penetration. Some STIs can be spread in other ways also. For example, HIV and hepatitis B are also spread through sharing needles for injecting drugs or medicines.

Some STIs will cause very obvious symptoms. But many STIs cause no symptoms or only mild symptoms, so you could not know you have an infection. In fact, most people who have an STI have no symptoms. A test from your healthcare provider may be the only sure way to tell if you are infected. If you do have symptoms, they may appear right away, or they might not show up for weeks or even months. They might come and go. Even if the symptoms disappear, you may still have an STI.

If you’ve had unprotected sex, have a new partner (or more than one partner), or for any reason are worried you have been exposed to an STI, talk to your healthcare provider or your personal adviser about getting tested.

Sex and the Law
As a young person, you have rights and responsibilities when it comes to sex. The age at which it is legal to have sex is called the age of consent. In the UK the age of consent is 16 years old for everyone, whether they have sex with someone of the same or opposite sex.

Remember that if you have sex with someone under the age of 16, even with their consent, you could get into trouble with the law. The age of consent is designed to protect young people from harm rather than prosecute them, however when it comes to sex you need to act responsibly and make mature decisions.
Using contraception

Using contraception, like condoms can help protect against unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (also known as STI’s and STD’s). The contraceptive pill is also a popular method of contraception for women, but it gives no protection against infections so always use a condom.

If you want to talk to someone about having sex for the first time or contraception, you can contact ‘Ask Brook’ which is a confidential text and web chat service providing sexual health advice and information to young people. You can visit their website at www.brook.org.uk.

Need contraception?

Although contraception is free on the NHS in the UK, this may not always be instantly available via your GP but there are other places near to you in which you can obtain free contraceptives and advice, i.e. your local health clinic. If you are not sure which type of contraception you want to use, it’s a good idea to talk it through with someone you trust. You can pick up free contraception and get confidential advice on which method might be right for you from:

- A family planning clinic
- Your GP
- Your carer
- Your named nurse for looked after children
- Your school nurse

Don’t forget if you need help or support you can always speak to your carer, social worker, or personal adviser.

Facts & advice about alcohol

- The legal age to drink alcohol is 18 years old.
- If you are under 18 years old then it is illegal to buy alcoholic drinks from anywhere.
- It is illegal for someone over 18 to buy alcohol for anyone who is under age.
- If you are intending to drink alcohol, remember pace yourself, keep safe and drink water to keep hydrated.
- Never leave your drink unattended in bars and clubs.
- Never accept drinks from complete strangers.
- Plan how you are going to get home before you go out.
- Don’t put yourself in risky situations if you have been drinking, such as swimming, climbing or going off with strangers.
- Don’t get in a car with someone you know may have been drinking or taking drugs.
- Drinking very large amounts in one session can lead to alcohol poisoning, unconsciousness, coma or even death. If it all goes wrong, it’s essential to get emergency help; call 999.

The main thing is to drink responsibly, make sure that you are in a safe environment when drinking and with people you trust.
**Smoking**
- Stopping smoking gives better all-round health and improves physical fitness such as, easier breathing / better at sports.
- Healthier looking skin and hair, fresher breath and whiter teeth.
- Did you know - half of all long-term smokers die prematurely of a smoking related disease.
- The risk of cancer continues to fall with every year of not smoking
- Food tastes better
- Back in control of your life, no more cravings
- Have lots of money to spend on other things - smoking 10 a day costs around £1460 per year

Smoking can be hard to quit as nicotine (one of the chemicals in cigarettes and smokeless tobacco) is proven to be highly addictive.

This is how the addiction starts. According to the experts, the younger you are when you start smoking, the more likely you are to become strongly addicted. Smoking is also extremely expensive, you could be spending your money on better things such as driving lessons, day outs, or clothes. You can get more advice from your carer, social worker, gp or personal adviser. You can also seek advice from https://kidshealth.org/en/teens

**Legal Highs**
Legal highs are substances which produce similar effects to illegal drugs but that are not controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act. A number of substances previously referred to as legal highs have now been banned under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

**Remember**
Remember, just because this type of drug is called a 'Legal High' - it doesn't mean that this drug is safe. In fact Legal High often state on the packet that they are 'not for human consumption'.

Some of these drugs mimic the effects of drugs such as cocaine and ecstasy. The main difference is that they’re not controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act. One of the biggest problems with legal highs is that little, or no, research has gone in to their effects, especially their long-term effects. However, it’s reasonable to assume that if they produce similar effects to cocaine or ecstasy, they are also likely to carry similar risks. And some will have new risks that we don’t yet know about.

Drugs that are not prescribed for you can have unexpected and dangerous consequences on your physical and emotional wellbeing and in serious cases can even result in death. There are many reasons why some people begin taking drugs but one of the most common reasons is peer pressure. Remember, you can always say ‘no’ and should never feel pressured to do anything you do not want to. People may also use drugs sometimes thinking drugs will help them to escape their problems. The truth is, drugs don’t solve problems; they simply hide feelings and when the drug wears off, the problems are still there.

**Need some help?**
Worried about drugs or want some information? You can call FRANK confidentially and free of charge from a landline, 24 hours a day on 03001236600, or visit http://www.talktofrank.com. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you can also use FRANK’s text phone number which is 0800 9178765. FRANK offers confidential, non-judgmental drugs advice, information and support about legal and illegal substances. The helpline is open to people of all ages. You can now text FRANK anytime with drugs related questions. It’s completely confidential and you will receive a reply from a trained expert. Text your question to 82111. Don’t forget you can also talk to your carer, social worker or personal adviser. Alternatively you can contact https://kidshealth.org/en/teens.
Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing
Many of us don’t like to ask for help. We don’t like to burden other people and we are worried about what they will think of what we tell them. We don’t want them to tell other people and we are scared they will judge us. Yet most of us would want to help our friends and family if we thought they were having a hard time, so why would they feel any differently towards you?

People offering support will not judge, they are there to support you. If however, you do feel you are not being listened to, don’t give up, seek alternative support from your doctor (GP), named nurse, counsellor, help lines, friend, teacher or college tutor or a family member. It’s your right to be listened to and supported.

Most of us feel overwhelmed or like we can’t cope with things at least once in our lives, and most people feel like that a lot more frequently. It is at times like that, that you need to be able to talk to someone and not be afraid to ask for help.

Who can you ask for help?
- Personal adviser
- Support worker
- Family member
- Close family friends
- A colleague at college or work
- A professional such as a social worker, doctor or nurse
- A support group in the community
- A helpline
Asking for help is important and can be anything from talking to someone about your bad day, confiding in someone about a long-term mental health problem, or discussing some therapy you are receiving. Whatever you are dealing with it is important for you to have support. It is not good for any of us to spend too much time on our own, especially if we are feeling low and vulnerable.

Tips about asking for help

- Think about who would be the best person to talk to. Only you can decide who you feel most comfortable talking to. It may well be someone in your family, or a friend, but if you don’t feel comfortable talking to friends or family, there are online discussion forums, help lines, support groups and professionals that you can talk to instead.
- Choose a good time and place for this discussion to take place so that you are not interrupted and don’t feel uncomfortable in the surroundings.
- Think about the outcome that you want from this discussion. Do you simply want to tell someone how you are feeling? Or would you like more practical or emotional support?
- Write things down before you talk to whoever you choose to talk to, in case you forget exactly what you want to say so it can act as pointers during the chat.
- Try to explain exactly how you are feeling and the type of support you feel would help you.
- Remember, however difficult it is to talk about your feelings, you will probably feel better just for talking about your problems and it is important that you are not on your own and struggling when you are feeling low. People who care about you will want to help you.

Self-harm and self-injury

Self-harm covers a wide range of things that people do to themselves in a deliberate and usually hidden way that causes harm. This includes things like; cutting, hitting, taking excessive risks, and self-injury. Self-harm is often a way of coping with painful and difficult feelings and distress. Someone may harm themselves because they feel overwhelmed and don’t know how else to deal with things. It is usually a very private issue and reasons vary from person to person. Sometimes it can help to find things that distract you or to cope with how you are feeling. This could include drawing, writing, listening to music, or maybe just creating a box of things that make you feel better.

Self-injury is a deliberate, intentional injury to your own body that can cause death, damage, or scars. This is done to cope with an overwhelming or distressing situation (and in some cases can lead to serious harm). Telling someone about self-harm can take courage, honesty, maturity, and trust. It’s a healthy step that can lead to talking more about the things that cause you stress, and in you receiving understanding and support. If you are worried about yourself or someone else, please speak to your personal adviser or someone you can trust as soon as possible.

Health - key facts

- NHS 111 is a totally confidential telephone helpline that can help anyone out with virtually any health question 24 hours a day on telephone number 111 or by visiting www.nhs.uk/111. You can go to a NHS walk-in centre, even if you have your own GP. Many universities run their own health service too, which makes it easier if you are away from home.
- Some GP’s even run special clinics for young people. Everything you talk to your GP about is kept confidential.
- In an emergency always call 999.
- All non-emergencies call 101.
- The Northamptonshire Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) hosts a live chat service at http://www.nhft.nhs.uk/CAMHSLIVE.
10. Education, Training and Employment

Education is considered very important for young people in today’s world and that is why we want to support you to stay in education for as long as you need and want to. There are many different options for learning once you leave school and it is important that you think about what you want to do in the future and what support you will need to get there. Money is always a consideration when thinking about whether you want to go to college, start an apprenticeship, find a job or go to university.

**GCSE’s**

GCSE’s are very important if you want to go on to start a further education course, study A-Levels, or start an apprenticeship. We understand that doing well at school can be difficult when you have had lots going on in your life and so we are committed in supporting you achieve the best you can. You can study your GCSE’s again at a further education college or a sixth form college. You can always speak to Prospects, the Virtual School or the leaving care team who will help you to consider your options. If you decide to stay in education support from your personal adviser and the local authority can continue until your 25th birthday.

**What If I want to go into Higher Education**

The Leaving Care Service is committed to supporting you while you are studying at university. The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that you have suitable accommodation, even during holiday periods, as well as making sure you have financial support throughout your studies. Support would usually end on your 21st birthday but if you have already started a university course before this time then we can support you until your course has finished or until you reach the age of 25 (which ever happens first).

Furthermore, if you are already 21 years old and your case has been closed to the Leaving Care Service but you would like to return to education before you are 25 years old, then we can re-assess your needs and possibly re-open your case to ensure you get the support you need whilst returning to education / training up until your 25th birthday.

If you need further information about the financial support that will be available to you speak to your personal adviser who will be able to work out with you what you will need and what financial support you are entitled to.

**Get a second chance at education**

If you are a care leaver you can start a further education course anytime up until your 21st birthday and receive benefits to support you. If you are over the age of 21 you can contact the leaving care team to tell them that you have, or would like to, return to education or training. Your local authority will then complete an assessment to decide whether they can offer you support. The assessment will look at your current situation and what kind of education or training you want to do. If you are unsure of exactly what you want to do, then the assessment can help you to decide. There are a few things that you should think about before you contact the leaving care team as this will help them to decide what kind of support they can offer you.

These include:

- Why you would like to return to education or training
- What are the requirements of the course or training you would like to do, if you know
- How you will help to financially support yourself
- What are your ambitions and what do you hope to achieve
- What are your long-term career goals

If your assessment is successful the leaving care team can support you to return to education in the following ways:

- Allocate a personal adviser (this may not be same PA that you had previously as they may be unavailable for numerous reasons)
- Help you to write a pathway plan which will record the support offered and by who
- You may be offered financial support but this is only if the welfare of your education or training requires it

Remember if you are offered support to return to education or training it is important to keep in touch with your PA as they are there to support you. You need to make sure that you tell them about any changes and let them know if you are struggling.
Training providers
If you feel that attending further education in a college setting isn’t for you then you may prefer to attend a training course with a training provider instead. Training providers offer lots of different qualifications, from English and Maths, to more practical things like woodwork and mechanics. If you think that a training course might be what you are looking for then contact Prospects or your personal adviser who will be able to support you in finding the right course for you.

Apprenticeships
Apprenticeships offer you the opportunity to work and earn, as well as gaining skills and qualifications. There are many apprenticeships available for young people aged 16-25 years old. The wage usually begins at £100 per week and gradually increases each year you continue if the option is available. You can check out the finances of an apprenticeship under the finance section of this guide. You can also find other apprenticeship opportunities available in your area by visiting: www.apprenticeships.org.uk.

Employment
Finding the right kind of employment that gives you enough money to live on and a career that you enjoy, is one of the most important things you can do to help yourself to have a happy and secure future. Having the right qualifications will help you to achieve this, so it may be that you need to go back to college or attend a training provider.

As well as having the qualifications, you also need to know where to look for jobs, have a CV, know how to complete applications forms and have good interview techniques that will guarantee that the job is yours. You can find advertisements for job vacancies in local and national newspapers; they are available to read in libraries as well as at your local Job Centre Plus. Job vacancies are also advertised on many organisations websites. You can improve your employability skills by attending an employability course with a training provider, by seeking support from your college or university, or the leaving care team.

Employment for asylum seekers and refugees
If you have refugee status, exceptional leave to remain in the UK, humanitarian protection, or discretionary leave, you can work in the UK as soon as the Home Office give you a positive decision. You will then need to apply for a National Insurance Number. If you are granted one of the above statuses then this includes the right to be able to study a vocational training scheme. If you are unsure seek advice from your PA and the Home Office.
Volunteering
Sometimes it may be difficult to find employment even when you have the right qualifications, simply because you haven’t got experience. One way of making sure you have the right experience and stand out from the rest of the crowd when applying for jobs is doing some volunteer work. You can dedicate a couple of hours a week whilst you are studying or whilst you are looking for a job. Working for free might seem like a pain at the time but it will soon pay off when you get the job you have always wanted. It will also help you to feel good about yourself and make a difference. Check out the website www.volunteering.org.uk/ or if you have somewhere in mind, check their website and go and ask if they need any volunteers.

National insurance number
When you are 18 you will need a national insurance number to begin work or to claim benefits. You pay national insurance contributions to build your entitlement to benefits and the state pension. If you have not received your national insurance number by your 16th birthday, speak to your social worker or contact the National Insurance Registrations Helpline on 0300 200 3500 for advice.

National citizen card
Young people will often need photograph identity to open bank accounts, and for education, training, and employment purposes. If you do not have a valid passport when you are 18 years old, you can ask your worker to help you apply for a national citizen card which will be paid for by the leaving care service.

The national minimum wage
Whether you are employed part-time, full-time, or undertaking an apprenticeship, you need to make sure that you are receiving at least the national minimum wage for your age. You can find out this information at https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates

Tax codes
When you are employed part time or full time you will be required to pay tax on your wages. This is usually taken from your wages by your employer before you receive them. You can check your pay slip to see how much you pay. When you start a new job it is important to make sure you are not paying too much or too little. You can find out more about this by speaking to your employer and by contacting HM Revenues and Customs.
11. Having Your Say

All our services are focused on achieving the best outcomes for young people leaving care so it’s really important that we listen to what you say about the services you receive from us. There are many ways that you can get involved, including the children in care council/care leavers forum, and interview panels. If you feel that things could be done better, have some ideas about how we could help care leavers, or just want to find out more about what you’re entitled to then contact the children’s rights service or your personal adviser.

Complaints/comments/suggestions
We always try to give a high standard of service, but if you are unhappy with the service you receive, you should talk about this first with the people who are working with you, for example your social worker, personal adviser or advocate. They will want a chance to help put things right for you. If you can’t solve the problem this way, you can make a complaint.

You can do this by contacting:

Complaints and Compliments Team
Northamptonshire County Council
One Angel Square
Northampton
NN1 1ED

Or by emailing: customerfeedback@northamptonshire.gov.uk

Or use our online form: https://goo.gl/vNcxZo

All young people should be able to have an advocate to help them make a complaint. An advocate is a person who listens to your point of view and speaks to the council for you. The complaints manager can help you access this service. The county council will try to sort the problem out within ten days, but it may take longer. You will be told why and how long it will take if this happens. If you are still unhappy after this time, then your complaint can go to the next stage (stage 2). A stage 2 complaint means that an independent person becomes involved. This person is independent and is not working on behalf of the council. Their role is to look into the details of your complaint with an investigating officer.

Following the investigation, the council must respond to you in writing and tell you if things are going to change. This should happen within 25 days of them receiving the complaint. If the stage 2 response is still not satisfactory, then stage 3 can be pursued. This involves a panel of 3 independent people who will review the stage 2 investigation.

The Local Government Ombudsman has a fast track procedure for dealing with complaints made by or on behalf of children and young people up to the age of 19 (or 25 if they have a disability).

Contact details:
Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Call: 0845 602 1983
Email: advice@lgo.org.uk
What happens when I am 21?

When you are 21 years old the support you receive from leaving care will stop unless you are still in education or training. However this doesn’t mean that you can’t ring and speak to someone in the leaving care team if you need some advice. Hopefully by this time you will have learnt most of what you need to know about living independently and will no longer need any support. However we understand that everyone needs support sometimes.

Don’t forget, if you decide you would like to return to education or training between the ages of 21-25 years old, you can ask the leaving care team for an assessment of your needs whilst you are in education.

Farewell meetings

Just before your 21st birthday you will be invited to a farewell meeting with your personal adviser and/or practice manager/team manager of the leaving care team. This is an informal meeting to give you the opportunity to give feedback about your time in care, to make sure you’re aware of the support for young people aged 21-25 returning to education or training, and to say goodbye. If you don’t want to attend your farewell meeting, you can complete a questionnaire which can be sent to you by post.
12. Useful Contacts

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

You can contact a duty worker via the phone on the following numbers:
01604 364778 / 01604 364779,
9am – 5pm, Monday to Fridays (excluding bank holidays).

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

**Children’s Rights**
Russell House
Rickyard Road
NORTHAMPTON, Northants
NN3 3QZ (Near Booth Lane College)

www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/childrensrights
childrensrights@northamptonshire.gov.uk

If you’re struggling and need to talk, the organisations listed below are there to listen. Don’t suffer in silence - pick up the phone, drop them a line or visit their websites.

**NYAS advocacy service**
NYAS is a UK charity providing socio-legal services. They offer information, advice, advocacy and legal representation to children, young people and vulnerable adults through a network of dedicated paid workers and volunteers throughout England and Wales. NYAS provides specialist legal advice and assistance. Through these services NYAS provides a safety net for children, young people and vulnerable adults. NYAS are independent and confidential as long as you are safe. If you need help, information or advice, please contact the NYAS helpline on FREEPHONE 0300 330 3131 or send an email to: https://www.nyas.net/

**Time2Talk**
Information, counselling and sexual health service (Daventry and South Northants)

Phone: 01327 706 706
www.time2talk.org.uk

**Kettering Youth Information**
Phone (Kettering): 07846797836 or 01536 510089  Corby
Phone (Corby): 07402786101

**Health and healthy living**
NHS 111 is a totally confidential telephone helpline that can help anyone out with virtually any health question 24 hours a day on telephone number 111 or by visiting: www.nhs.uk/111

**Teens Health**
http://teenshealth.org/teens/

www.teenagehealthfreak.org
www.bbc.co.uk/health/treatments/healthy_living/

**Practical and other skills necessary for independent living**

- How to store food safely: http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/
- DIY tips: http://www.diynetwork.co.uk/
- Accommodation: www.centrepoint.org.uk

**Young Northants**
The advice and support you need, all in one place: work, health, safety, things to do, staying safe, education, care, rights, support www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/youngnorthants

44
Managing your money and budgeting properly

http://themoneycharity.org.uk/

Benefits.Gov
https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits

Debt advice foundation
A specialist charity offering free, confidential advice on any aspect of debt and benefit entitlements:
http://www.debtadvicefoundation.org/debt-tools/
benefit-entitlement

Sexual and mental health

The Lowdown
Counselling information and sexual health service

Phone: 01604634385
http://thelowdown.info/

Service Six
Help and advice about sexual health matters, such as contraception, pregnancy or sexual assault.

www.nhs.uk/sexualhealth/

Ask Brook

Phone: 0808 802 1234
www.askbrook.org.uk/

Talk Out Loud Mental Health

www.talkoutloud.info

Changes mental health charity

Phone: 01782 413355
Email: yp@changes.org.uk
www.changes.org.uk/

Ashwood Centre for Sexual Health
St Mary’s Hospital
London Road
Kettering

Phone: 01536 410647
http://kidshealth.org/teens/


FLSH - Feel Like Self Harm
Support for young people who feel the need to self-harm. By texting FLSH to the service the sender receives back a text message with a suggestion for something else to do that might help beat the feeling to cut. Young people who harm themselves, have provided these messages as they have found them to be helpful themselves in the past. No charge to receive a text, the sender pays usual charge to send text from their phone.

Text FLSH to: 07766363390.
Email: q2a@whatnow.lancsc.gov.uk
www.q2a.co.uk

National Self Harm Network
Survivor led organisation that campaigns for the rights and understanding of people who self-harm. The service provides support and understanding to people who self-harm and an online support forum.

Email: info@nshn.co.uk
www.nshn.co.uk

Ask Normen
The Northamptonshire Mental Health Gateway including a link to the live chat service

http://www.asknormen.co.uk/

Young Northants

Bereavement and loss

Dove Service
The Dove Service offers counselling and support to all those affected by bereavement, life-changing illness and significant loss.

Phone: 01782 683155
www.thedoveservice.org.uk/

Smoking
https://quitnow.smokefree.nhs.uk/
QUIT’s youth service are here to help young people make informed choices and provide tailored support. They offer a wide range of stop smoking advice.


Education advice and support

Right Resolution CIC
Right Resolution offers a unique scheme that supports young people long after they have found education or work. It could be anything from going to pick you up every morning if there are no local transport options, buying you appropriate clothes for an interview, to keeping in regular contact with your employers or tutors, to ensuring you are making the most of the opportunities available.

Phone: 01604 626188
www.rightresolutioncic.org

Young Northants

Alcohol and Drugs

FRANK
Free phone: 0800 77 66 00 (24 hour service, free if calling from a landline and won’t show up on the phone bill) or visit: www.talktofrank.com

If you are a non-English speakers a translation service is available.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you can also use FRANK’s text phone number which is 0800 917 8765. You can text FRANK anytime with a drugs-related question. It’s completely confidential and you will receive a reply from a trained expert. Text your question to 82111.

Recovery Focus - CAN
Confidential drug and alcohol service
8 Billing Rd,
Northampton
NN15AW
Phone: 01604 824777
http://www.recoveryfocus.org.uk/
Domestic violence

**National Domestic Violence Helpline**
The Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline is a national service for people experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf.

Phone: 0808 2000 247
[www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)

Being in care and leaving care

**NCAS - National Care Advisory Service**
Information and advice about being in care and leaving care. Free advice and enquiry line.

Phone: 020 7336 4824
Email: [ncas@catch-22.org.uk](mailto:ncas@catch-22.org.uk)
[www.leavingcare.org](http://www.leavingcare.org)

**Who Cares Trust**
Who Cares Trust is a voice for children and young people in care. Everything they do is designed to improve the day to day experience of children and young people in care and their future lives.

[www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/](http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/)
Your rights

The Children’s Commissioner for England
Promotes and protects children’s rights in England
http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/

Children’s Commissioner for England
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Phone: 020 7783 8330

Children’s legal centre

Child Law Advice Line: 0300 330 5480 (free phone)
www.lawstuff.org.uk

The Children’s Legal Centre is a charity that promotes children’s rights and gives legal advice and representation to children and young people.

Shaw Trust
Shaw Trust supports thousands of disabled and disadvantaged people across the UK to achieve their personal development and employment aims.

Free helpline: 0800 085 1001
Email: stir@shawtrust.org.uk
www.shaw-trust.org.uk

Advice for young people on managing emotions and mental health:
http://www.talkoutloud.info
https://www.youngminds.org.uk

Advice on mental and emotional wellbeing from recognising symptoms to treatment:
www.mind.org.uk/help/information_and_advice

Advice and support on anxiety, symptoms and treatment:

HeadMeds
Straight talk on mental health medication. Look up your medication to find out about side effects and things you might not feel comfortable asking your GP about, and listen to other people’s experiences
www.headmeds.org.uk

Samaritans
Phone: 116 123 (24 hrs 7 days a week)
www.samaritans.org.uk

Samaritans volunteers listen in confidence to anyone in any type of emotional distress, without judging or telling people what to do.

Savana
Savana is an organisation that offers support services and information to anyone who has encountered or experienced any form of sexual assault or violence at some point in their lives.

Phone: 01782 433 204 (24 hour message line)
Email: info@savana.org.uk
www.savana.org.uk
**Childline**
Childline is a free confidential service for young people who need to talk.

Phone: 0800 1111
Or visit: [http://www.childline.org.uk/](http://www.childline.org.uk/)

**Action for Children**
[https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/what-we-do/support-for-young-people/](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/what-we-do/support-for-young-people/)

**STONEWALL**
What's in my area? Use Stonewall's area database to find local lesbian, gay, and bisexual community groups, other generic services, and gay friendly solicitors.

**B-EAT youth helpline**
Online community - Information, help and support for anyone affected by eating disorders.

Phone: 0845 634 7650 (Monday to Friday evenings from 4.30pm to 8.30pm and Saturdays 1.00pm - 4.30pm)
Email: fyp@b-eat.co.uk

**The Mix**
The Mix is an online guide to life for 16 to 25 year-olds. It provides non-judgmental support and information on everything from sex and exam stress to debt and drugs.

Phone: 0808 808 4994
[www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

**Youth Access**
A national organisation for youth information, advice and counselling agencies. Provides information on youth agencies to children aged 11-25 and their carers but does not provide direct advice.

Visit: [www.youthaccess.org.uk](http://www.youthaccess.org.uk) to search their directory of services for help in your area.
Signposting service: 0208 772 9900
(Mon – Fri from 9am-1pm & 2-5pm)
Thank You

With special thanks to Nene Valley Care Trust (NVCT) who have sponsored the development of this guide. The Trust is an independent registered charity which funds projects outside the scope of the council’s statutory duties, providing extra help and support to care leavers.

Registered Charity Number 1126779

www.nenevalleycaretrust.co.uk