

As Corporate Parents we are committed to doing everything we can to make sure you are set up for life. We strive to be ambitious for all our care leavers and we work alongside "**Community**" our care leaver participation forum to keep our local offer under review.

This leaflet summarises the key messages in our local offer but there is more detailed information available on the care leaver app and website including the monthly Hub timetable. You can scan the QR code to take you to our care leaver App or visit the website www.gcsw.co.uk.

Your entitlements and our offer will vary depending on your age and care leaver status. Many of these entitlements (especially the financial ones) are available to former relevant care leavers up to their 21st birthday[1]. If you are unsure you can speak to your personal adviser or a duty worker on 0800 6940168. There are separate leaflets summarising our offer if you are a **Qualifying** care leaver or are **aged 21 and over**. The full offers can be found on our care leaver app and website.

Support and planning.

We know that preparing for and leaving care can be a difficult time and we want you to know that we are here when you need us. There are a team of people available to help you that includes a social worker, personal adviser, engagement workers and community skills workers and there are groups, social events and partner drops ins available at the Hub. You can also contact us via the freephone duty number 0800 6940168 if you need help.

- **Your social worker**: will meet with you regularly before you turn 18 to develop your pathway plan to make sure that you have all the help and support that you need ready for becoming an adult.
- **Your personal adviser**: will be allocated when you turn 17 and will work with you and your social worker to provide extra support and advice as you transition to being a care leaver. Your personal adviser will continue to support you as an adult so will have lots of knowledge about housing, work and learning opportunities, managing finance and applying for benefits as well as information about adult services that you might want to access for support. Your personal adviser will support you until you are 21, when you can continue to access support for as long as you need it through our 21+ service.
- **Engagement worker**: run groups and social events at the hub and can provide some extra support for specific pieces of work identified in your pathway plan such as support to attend job fairs or college open days.
- **Community Skills worker**: Jerry and Rob can offer support to young people who move home in Bristol. This can include moving belongings and measuring and fitting carpets and blinds. If you live outside of Bristol we can arrange for a van to move your belongings.
- You will be invited to be involved in creating your digital pathway plan when you turn 16, which will be updated every six months or when there is a big change in your life. The plan should include all the people in your network who can help you to achieve your plan and support you to be ready to live interdependently, most importantly this means knowing how and where to get help. Your plan will also help you think about where you want to live, how to keep safe, support

[1] *You may be a former relevant care leaver if you were in care for more than 13 weeks after your 14th birthday, and you were still in care on your 16th birthday. If you returned to live with your family before you turned eighteen you may be a qualifying care leaver.*

your physical, emotional, and mental health needs, help you find work or learning, and stay in touch with the people who are most important to you.

Core financial entitlements[2]:

- £25 birthday voucher.
- £25 festival voucher[3].
- Setting up home grant of £2000 (or £3000 if you turned 18 after 1 April 2023).
- Cost of one adult passport.
- Cost of a birth certificate.
- Cost of a provisional driving licence and one driving theory test.
- Cost of your first television licence.
- You will be exempt from paying council tax until you are 25. If you live in Bristol you must complete an application form to get this entitlement. If you live out of Bristol we will reimburse you monthly, please give your paperwork to your personal adviser.
- You are entitled to a 95% discount with Bristol Water; your personal adviser can support you to apply for this.
- When you make your very first benefit application (often when you turn 18) we will pay a bridging allowance of £70 a week (maximum of six weeks) until your first benefit payment is received. If you do not make your application on time, you will be offered a £25 supermarket voucher and £10 a week (maximum of four weeks) added on either your electricity or gas account to give you chance to make the application.
- Support to access a local foodbank and £10 a week on either gas or electricity may be offered if you lose your employment, or your benefits are sanctioned (in exceptional circumstance a supermarket voucher may be offered) please discuss this with your personal adviser or the duty worker.
- Financial support (up to £50) is available to buy clothing e.g., a winter coat, winter shoes, interview or maternity clothes. Please speak to your personal adviser or the duty worker to discuss this.

Preparing to leave care:

We want to support you to be as prepared as you can be when you turn eighteen and start living more interdependently. Our support can include:

- Allocation of a personal adviser when you turn 17. Your personal adviser will work alongside your social worker for a year to get to know and you support you to plan for turning eighteen. They will be part of your pathway planning and attend your child in care reviews.
- Interdependence training groups run from our care experienced HUB. These include specific sessions to support you to develop financial literacy skills and to help you know where you can go to get help when need it.
- Help to apply for your national insurance letter and identification e.g., birth certificate, passport, and a provisional driving licence and to set up a bank account.
- Making an application on your behalf for supported accommodation in Bristol. This needs to be done by the time you are 17 ½ if you are not going to be staying put of living with family or friends

[2] *available to former relevant care leavers up to and including their 21st birthday.*
[3] *you can request this once a year at a festival of your choice e.g., Christmas, Eid; Hanukah; Diwali.*

when you turn 18.

- Help to register with your local GP and dentist.
- Making a referral to adult social care (from 14 years old) if we think you will need extra support once you turn 18. You will need to consent to this referral.
- Help to complete your Universal Credit application six weeks before you turn 18 and introduction to the care leaver job coach at your local DWP office.

Managing Money:

We want to support you to be as prepared as you can be when you start living more independently and we know that understanding what money you will have is very important. As part of your digital pathway plan we can support you to complete a budget planner, this tool can calculate all your income and outgoings to help you consider affordability for things like rent. We also offer financial literacy sessions at the Hub; you can speak to your personal adviser or contact the Hub directly to access these. These sessions can help you

- Understand why and how to open a bank account and savings account
- Apply for a payment card
- Understand how to set up, interpret and pay a bill (e.g., water, phone, electricity etc).
- Debt recovery support and services.
- If you were born in the UK and were in care for more than 12 months you may have a Junior ISA where money will have been put in by the government. You can spend the money as you wish, it could be helpful to buy some items for your first home. Share Foundation administers these accounts and you can contact them directly for advice via email Junior.ISA.admin@bristol.gov.uk or we can support you to contact them.

Relationships:

We understand the importance of making and maintaining connections with family and friends.

We can support with:

- Arranging and facilitating a family or network meeting to help you to reconnect with the people that are important to you.
- Travel costs for up to three visits a year to family and friends in the UK. These visits must be discussed with your personal adviser and booked in advance. It will be expected that you travel on the most cost-efficient form of transport e.g., coach.
- Helping you understand your journey into and through care. This can include life story conversations or access to your records. We offer a one-year membership to "Ask Jan" if you access your records. This can include support from a mental health professional and potential for up to eight sessions of counselling.
- Opportunities to connect with other care experienced young people through our social events, groups, and activities.
- Access to free tickets for local events through BACKPASS scheme.
- An independent visitor through Reconstruct who can spend time with you to visit new places, try activities, learn independence skills or be a listening ear or role model [4].

[4] *Independent visitors are available to care leavers who did not receive this service as a child in care*

Housing:

We want you to find housing and a home that best suits your needs, where you can feel safe and a sense of belonging. You can stay in care until you are 18 unless a return to your family is the right thing for you. In preparation for turning 18 we will work with Housing Services or Adult Social Care to ensure you have accommodation that meets your needs. If you are worried about your housing or find yourself in a crisis please ring the duty number 0800 6940168 in office hours or EDT 01454 615165 outside of these times.

We can support with:

- Helping you to understand your housing options and agree the right one for you. This might be staying with your foster carer under 'Staying Put', moving into supported accommodation in the youth housing pathway or gaining your own tenancy through social or private housing. As a care leaver you are entitled to priority status (P1) for the youth housing pathway in Bristol and your social worker / personal adviser can make this application for you.
- Occasionally young people need more support than is offered through the housing pathway and you may be eligible for support from adult social care, although you will need to agree to an assessment to access this. If you are not matched to accommodation in the housing pathway and do not have adult social care needs you may be offered accommodation commissioned by children's services. Your personal adviser can talk to you about this accommodation.
- When you feel ready and have been assessed as being ready for independence in your pathway plan we can support you to apply for priority banding (Band 1) on Home Choice (Bristol's social housing list) .
- Advice and support to prepare for semi or independent living. This can include independence training groups, advice about tenancies, how to avoid rent arrears, how to pay bills and budget.
- Help to claim your council tax exemption (if you live in Bristol) or to reimburse you if you live out of areas, housing benefit or universal credit and support to apply for grants for essential items such as white goods.
- Once you are ready to move you can access your setting up home grant of £2000 (or £3000 if you turned 18 after 1 April 2023) to help furnish your new home. This grant remains available to you after the age of 25 to use when you need it and you can contact the Hub team to access it if you do not have a named personal adviser.
- Our community skills team can offer support to help you move and store personal belongings, measure and put up curtains or blinds, measure and lay carpets, or offer advice on decorating, DIY and recycling.
- Visits from your personal adviser once you have moved in to ensure you have settled and have everything you need.
- Sometimes things don't go as planned and we can offer support if you have a housing crisis or are faced with losing your tenancy. If you move to temporary accommodation we can provide a hamper which will include, pots, pans, crockery, bedding etc so that you don't have to use your setting up home grant until you are in your own accommodation.

Work and learning:

We hold high aspirations for you and want you to succeed. We will support you to find a work or learning opportunity that's right for you and will be ready to celebrate your achievements.

We can support with:

- Information about opportunities for work and learning through "Let's Talk EET" sessions held at the Hub.

- Priority access to work experience opportunities within Bristol City Council.
- Guaranteed interview for a Bristol City Council job if you meet the essential criteria and tick on the application form that you are a care leaver.
- Support in the form of a gift voucher (up to £50) is available to buy interview clothing.
- If you undertake an apprenticeship with Bristol City Council, you will receive the £3,000 care leaver bursary from the government. We will also give you £25 per week and top up your salary to the National Minimum Wage.
- If you are aged 16-19 and in full-time education you may be entitled to some support from the college bursary. This bursary (up to £1200) can be used to pay for clothing, books or equipment for your course or for transport and lunch on days that you study. You should talk to your school, college or training provider for advice about how to access this.
- We can provide small education grants[5] you can speak to your personal adviser or the duty service if you would like to discuss help with funding a course, support to buy tools, equipment or essential clothing or books.
- You can contact The HOPE Virtual School directly for more information and guidance on education: For information on employment, work experience, traineeships, volunteering, training, and pre-engagement courses you can contact the Post 16 Participation Team: Post16Participation@bristol gov.uk. Phone number 0117 352 5750

University:

Applying to university can feel like a big decision and it can be daunting. This may be the first time that you have thought about moving away from Bristol.

We can support with:

- Comparing the different university offers including university financial bursaries, attending open days, helping you write your personal statement, applying for student finance and contacting the student support service.
- Being a guarantor for your university accommodation and exploring whether a Unite Foundation accommodation scholarship would be right for you.
- An Education Grant[6] of £2,000 per academic year if you are studying an access to university course and you are not entitled to benefits during this period of study.
- An Education Grant[6] of £4,000 per academic year (up to a maximum of four years) if you are studying a foundation or undergraduate degree.
- An Education Grant[6] of £2,000 per academic year (up to a maximum of two years) if you are studying a Post graduate masters / PHD study[7]
- Financial support for holiday accommodation if university accommodation is term time only. Please discuss with your personal adviser in advance.
- A named personal adviser throughout your time at university and we will support you to get to and from your accommodation with your belongings.

[5] *Please note this is intended to support alternative study other than higher education. Any grants awarded will be deducted from the education grant that can be claimed if you later apply to study a degree at university.*

[6] *Education grants are available to former relevant care leavers if your course starts before your 25th birthday. The grant will be pro rata for part-time courses.*

[7] *this is only available for young people who have been on the new Education Grant offer introduced in September 2020.*

- A starter pack in your first year which will include, pots, pans, crockery, bedding etc to set you up in your new accommodation.
- Planning for life after university, to help find and apply for job opportunities and housing.
- Your graduation ceremony by paying for your graduation cap and gown and the basic photograph package to capture memories of your special day.

Travel:

If you are aged between 16 and 26 and live in the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority or North Somerset Council region you can apply for a WESTpass. This will entitle you to free bus travel until the end of March 2029, or until your 26th birthday (whichever comes first).

Health and wellbeing:

We want you to be as healthy as possible and know this can be challenging when living independently.

We can support by:

- Giving you a summary of your health history when you turn 18 known as a 'health passport'.
- Helping you register with a GP and give you information on local services that offer help with emotional and mental wellbeing or sexual health.
- Offering free prescriptions through the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to eligible care leavers aged 18 until their 25th birthday. You can find details of eligibility and the application form on the care leaver app.
- Free membership to Bristol City Council Everyone Active gyms, Lex Leisure who operate Hengrove Park Leisure Centre and ALM who operate Brunel Fitness Centre.
- You can also get 50% off a Pure Gym membership through the Care Leaver Covenant.

Using your voice:

We want to hear from you to help shape the service we offer and your care leaver forum Community have asked us to follow the mantra "Your Voice, Our Mission". If you have ideas or suggestions about how we can improve our offer or service you can talk to your personal adviser or send us feedback directly via this QR code. If you leave your name and contact details we will let you know how we have used your feedback and how it has impacted service development.

If you help us with formal consultation or interviews you will be paid in the form of vouchers at a rate of **£10 p/hr**. Ways to get involved, have your voice heard and influence service development include:

- Joining our participation forum which young people named Community who meet monthly at the Hub.
- You have a right to an independent advocate if you want to challenge decisions about the support we give you, information can be found at Reconstruct Advocacy Service.
- You have the right to request access to the records that we hold about you.

Preparing for or being a parent:

If you are a parent or if you are expecting a baby, we will support you to do the best for them.

Support can include:

- Reviewing your pathway plan with you to make sure we give you all the support you need and plan for the next steps, including key dates or appointments that you might want support to attend.

- A gift voucher (up to £50) is available to buy maternity clothes. Please speak to your personal adviser or the duty worker to discuss this.
- Introducing you to universal support e.g., family hubs, children's centre and providing advice about targeted support available e.g., parenting programmes.
- Our monthly nurture group for parents and expecting parents called "Time for You".
- Referral to family nurse partnership[8] for support.
- Advice about applying for a Sure Start maternity grant or Healthy Start scheme.
- A hamper of goodies to celebrate the arrival of your new baby.

Young people seeking asylum:

As a City of Sanctuary, we will do our best to support you as a care leaver through your asylum claim.

Support we can offer includes:

- Completing a triple pathway plan with you, to make a short-term plan whilst your claim is being considered, and medium / longer term plans should you be given permission to remain or if you were to return to your country of origin.
- Providing you with a personal allowance of £70 per week until your asylum claim is completed, and you have recourse to public funds (and are allowed to apply for Universal Credit) or you become Appeals Right Exhausted.
- Providing and paying for your accommodation until you have recourse to public funds, or you become Appeals Right Exhausted. It is expected that this accommodation will be within the Housing Pathway in Bristol or one of our specially commissioned homes for young people seeking asylum.
- Help at the ARC– Asylum Seeker and Refugee Clinic with your feelings, emotions, and experiences.
- Paying for your first travel document and provisional UK Driving Licence and your citizenship ceremony.

Custody entitlements:

We will continue to offer you the support of a personal adviser up to the age of 25. Your personal adviser will visit you and work with probation and prison staff to review your pathway plan and prepare for your release from custody. We will ensure that you have a confirmed address 48 hours before your release.

For young people who engage in this support you will be offered the following financial support:

- £40 per month so that you can pay for food and toiletries.
- Annual clothing allowance (up to £50)[9].
- £50 on release from custody for initial expenses[10]
- Financial bridging payment following release from custody for a maximum of six weeks whilst you are waiting to receive your new benefit payment. Support is offered in the form of a £25 supermarket voucher and £10 on either gas, electricity **or** contribution to your service charge each week.

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[8] *For first time Mums up to and including the age of 21*
[9] *This is not offered as a cash payment but clothes that you request will be ordered and sent to you*
[10] *This is offered once per sentence and is not available if you are recalled to custody*