



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 group to keep our local offer under review so that we can be responsive to your changing needs. 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.

This leaflet summarises the key messages in our local offer. For our full offer, 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. 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. 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 **age 21 and over**. The full offer can be found on our care leaver app and website.

Support and planning.

- 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. Your plan should help you to be ready to live independently, support your physical, emotional, and mental health needs, help you find work or learning, find the right place for you to live and to help you stay in touch with the people who are most important to you.
- You will be allocated a personal adviser when you are 17 who can support you until you are 21. Once you turn 21 you can access support for as long as you need it through our [21+ service](#).

Financial entitlements: (available to former relevant care leavers up to and including their 21st birthday).

- £25 birthday voucher. *
- £25 festival voucher * (you can request this at either Christmas, Eid; Hanukah; Diwali).
- 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.
- Cost of one driving theory test.

* Vouchers are usually Amazon or Love 2 shop others can be requested.

- 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.
- You will be entitled to a 95% discount with Wessex Water. Your personal adviser can support you to apply for this.
- When you make your very first benefit application (this will usually be when you turn 18) we will pay you a personal allowance of £70 a week (up to a maximum of six weeks) until your first benefit payment is received. If the application is not made on time, you will be offered a £25 supermarket voucher and £10 added onto your electricity or gas account weekly (up to a maximum of 4 weeks) to give you chance to make the application.
- Support to access a local foodbank and £10 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.
- Support in the form of a £50 [One4all](#) gift voucher is available if you need support 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 independently. Our support can include:

- Independence training groups run from our [care experienced HUB](#).
- 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. This needs to be done by the time you are 17 ½ if you are not going to be staying put or living with family or friends 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.

Relationships:

We understand the importance of making and maintaining connections with family and friends and we can offer help in the following ways:

- To reconnect with the people that are important to you.
- With 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.
- Support to understand your journey into and through care. This can include life story conversations or [access to your records](#).
- Opportunities to connect with other care experienced young people through our [social events](#), groups, and activities.

- Reconstruct offer [independent visitors](#) who can spend time with you to visit new places, try activities, learn independence skills or be a listening ear or role model *.

* *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 eighteen we will work with Housing Services or Adult Social Care to ensure you have accommodation that meets your needs. We can support with:

- Helping you to understand your housing options (e.g., supported accommodation or gaining your own tenancy through social or private housing) to agree the right one for you.
- If you and your foster carer want to, we will support you to remain with your foster carer until you are 21 in what's known as 'Staying Put'.
- Priority status (P1) on the housing support register when you are 17½ to help you move into supported accommodation.
- Priority banding (Band 1) on Home Choice (Bristol's social housing list) as soon as you have been assessed as being ready for independence in your pathway plan.
- 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), 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.
- 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 entitlements:

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.
- 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 £50 [One4all](#) gift voucher is available if you need support 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 a £1,200 [bursary](#) from your school, college, or training provider.
- We can provide small education grants. 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, attending open days, helping you write your personal statement, applying for student finance and contacting the student support service.
- An Education Grant~ 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~ of £4,000 per academic year (up to a maximum of four years) if you are studying a foundation or undergraduate degree to support you with accommodation costs. Financial support for holiday accommodation will be offered to both qualifying and former relevant young people if university accommodation is term time only. Please discuss with your personal adviser in advance.
- An Education Grant~ of £2,000 per academic year (up to a maximum of two years) if you are studying a Post graduate masters / PHD study ~~
- A named personal adviser throughout your time at university and we will support you to get to and from your accommodation with your belongings.
- A starter pack in your first year which will include, pots, pans, crockery, bedding etc to set you up in your new accommodation.
- Your graduation ceremony by paying for your graduation cap and gown and the basic photograph package to capture memories of your special day.

~ 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.

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

Travel:

- If you are aged between 18-26 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 2026, or until your 26th birthday (whichever comes first).

Health and wellbeing:

We want you to be as healthy as possible and know that this can be challenging when you're living independently. Below are some of the ways that your personal adviser can support you to stay healthy and look after yourself:

- You will be given a [summary](#) of your health history when you turn 18 which is known as a 'health passport'.
- Help you register with a GP and give you information on local services that offer help with emotional and mental wellbeing or sexual health.
- The Integrated Care Board (ICB) offers [free prescriptions](#) 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. If you help us with consultation, interviews, or other engagement activities you will be paid in the form of vouchers at a rate of **£10 p/hr**. Ways to get involved and have your voice heard include:

- Opportunity to join our participation group which young people named [Community](#).
- 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:

- Review your pathway plan with you to make sure we give you all the support you need and plan for the next steps, including any key dates or appointments that you might want support to attend.
- Introducing you to universal support e.g., family hubs, children's centre and providing advice about targeted support available e.g., parenting programmes.
- Attend our monthly nurture group for parents and expecting parents called "Time for You".
- Referral to family nurse partnership* for support.
- Advice about applying for a Sure Start maternity grant or Healthy Start scheme.
- We will give you a hamper of goodies to celebrate the arrival of your new baby.
- Support in the form of a £50 [One4all](#) gift voucher is available to buy maternity clothes. Please speak to your personal adviser or the duty worker to discuss this.

** For first time Mums up to and including the age of 21.*

Young people seeking asylum:

Bristol is a City of Sanctuary and we will do our best to support you as a care leaver through your asylum claim. Support we can offer includes:

- Complete 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.
- We will provide 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.
- We will provide and pay 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 or one of our specially commissioned homes for young people seeking asylum.
- We will pay for your first travel document and provisional UK Driving Licence.
- Help at the ARC– Asylum Seeker and Refugee Clinic with your feelings, emotions, and experiences.
- We will pay for your citizenship ceremony.

Custody entitlements:

We will continue to offer you the support of a personal adviser up to the age of 25, who will visit you to review your pathway plan and prepare for your release from custody. 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.
- A £50 annual clothing allowance (this is not offered as cash but clothes that you request will be ordered and sent to you).
- £50 on release from custody for initial expenses (this is offered once per sentence and is not available if you are recalled to custody).
- Financial support in the form of a £25 supermarket voucher and £10 on either gas or electricity **or** a £10 contribution to your service charge each week (up to a maximum of six weeks) following release from custody whilst you are waiting to receive your new benefit payment.

Published July 2025.