



Local Offer for Bristol Care Leavers

As Corporate Parents we are committed to doing everything we can to make sure our care leavers are set up for life. We are committed to being effective, caring, and ambitious and our Local Offer for Care Leavers sets out how we can support you to achieve your full potential. We have high aspirations for you and will do everything we can to equip you with the skills you need to live a fulfilling, successful, and rewarding life that is full of love. Moving into adulthood isn't always easy but we want you to know that we are by your side and will be here if you need us. The voice of our care leavers will be at the heart of our service design and our Local Offer for Care Leavers will continue to develop in response to your feedback. We will always have high aspirations for you and want to share in your successes.

Leaving care can be a worrying and scary time for young people. This guide is designed to tell you what support you can expect from Bristol City Council so that you continue to feel safe and supported and know where or who to go to for advice and help. If you do not live in Bristol, you will still be entitled to a personal adviser and financial support. We can help you access support in your local area, however some support outlined in the Local Offer for Young People Leaving Care may not be available outside Bristol.

Bristol has a Pledge to children in care and care Leavers. Our Pledge is a promise made by Bristol City Council and our partners to all children in care and care leavers. Bristol has also signed up to the Care Leavers Charter which was developed with care leavers from around the UK. The promises and principles included in the Pledge and Charter guide the development of our Local Offer for care leavers. You can read the Pledge and the Charter here: www.bristol.gov.uk/policies-plans-strategies/plans-and-policy-for-children-in-Or-leaving-care or by searching online for "Bristol's pledge to children in care".

The type of support we can offer you will depend on when and for how long you were in care, for further information please contact the Leaving Care Service on the freephone number 0800 6940198.

Keeping in touch

We work closely with care leavers to continually improve what we're doing and to make sure that the information and activities we offer meet your needs and are of interest to you. Please let your personal adviser know if you have any ideas about how we can improve our service.

To be able to get the support included in this leaflet, you need to have been in care for at least 13 weeks (or periods of time amounting to 13 weeks) which began after age 14 and included some time after your 16th birthday. If you are not sure if you qualify for support or are between 21-25 and would like support from a personal adviser please ring the Duty Team on the freephone number 0800 6940198.

Advice and Support from a Personal Adviser or named Social Worker from the Preparing for Adulthood service

We will ensure you have a named personal adviser and/or a social worker throughout your time as a care leaver. We know that young people will stop needing support at different points once they become an adult. Once you turn 21 you will continue to receive support and advice from your personal adviser if you

need it. This may include support for a short period or for a longer period depending on what you need. This applies until you are 25. Your personal adviser is there to help you to prepare to live independently and to offer advice and support after you leave care. We can help link you into adult services if you need it.

Your personal adviser is there to:

- Offer advice and support after you leave care
- Help you to prepare to live independently
- Help you with access to
 - Housing
 - Education or training
 - Work
 - Health Services
 - Financial Support

Your Pathway Plan

Your Pathway Plan starts when you are 16 and helps you plan and prepare for the time when you leave care. You and your personal adviser will talk about your goals, ambitions and hopes for the future, as well as what support you need. This plan is created by you and for you and should include people in your network who will support you with your plan. Your personal adviser will also review your plan with you regularly and include time for you to think about any support you may need when you are no longer a care leaver. It can include things like

- Support to develop practical and independent skills
- Support for physical, emotional, and mental health needs
- Managing money and budgeting
- Finding the right place to live
- Getting into work, training, or education
- Staying in touch with people who are important to you

Your home and housing

You can stay in care until you are 18 unless a return to your family is the right thing for you. Most young people still live at home with their families at this age. If you do leave your home before you are 18 and require housing you will remain a child in care and we will work with Housing Services to ensure you have accommodation that meets your needs and will guide you through the support available to you in our Local Offer.

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'.

Your personal adviser and Housing Services will help you find somewhere safe and suitable to live. Support to you could include:

- 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.
- Practical support for moving into and furnishing your home
- Using your setting up home grant of up to £2,000 when you set up your own home, (the amount will depend on your circumstances).

- We will pay for your first television licence.
- Visits from your personal adviser once you have moved in to ensure you have settled and have everything you need
- Advice about tenancies and avoiding rent arrears, paying bills and budgeting
- Helping you to claim your council tax exemption.
- Help to claim housing benefits or universal credit
- Help to apply for grants for essential items such as white goods
- Helping make sure your housing needs are met if you are a disabled young person.
- Support if you have a housing crisis or are faced with losing a tenancy

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:

- Support you to register with a GP and dentist.
- Give you information on getting help to pay for prescriptions, glasses, and dental health costs
- Give you help with transport costs when attending health appointments
- Support you to apply for a personal health budget of up to £500 to help you to have 'more good days'
- Give you information about counselling and mental health services that are available locally, and support you to move from children's services to adult services if you need to
- Give you information about health drop-in centres such as sexual health clinics
- Your children in care nurse will work with you to develop a 'health passport' containing key information from your childhood (for example, when and if you have had immunisations and your current health needs).
- Give you information about exceptional clothing payments if you need extra money for clothes such as a winter coat, shoes, warm clothing, or maternity clothing.
- Care leavers living in Bristol can access a free gym membership through Everyone Active.
- You can speak to your Personal adviser about how you are feeling or anything you need help with. They are there for you and want to support you
- Introduce you to our specialist care leaver domestic abuse practitioner who can offer you advice and support if needed (e.g., to understand your options, support you to have a safety plan).

Education, Training and Employment

We hold high aspirations for you and want you to succeed. We will support you to find an education, employment, or training opportunity that's right for you. We will ask you how you are doing and be ready to celebrate your achievements with you. We can support you with:

- Information about opportunities for work experience, traineeships, apprenticeships, pre-engagement courses, voluntary opportunities, and employment
- Support you to find relevant work experience where possible. We will help you with transport and lunch costs for work experience placements.
- Information about opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships, and employment within the council and will guarantee you an interview if you meet the essential criteria. You will get an extra £25 a week if you are doing an apprenticeship with the council.

- Career's information such as help to develop your CV, advice about job interviews, including what you might wear.
- £1,000 bursary if you do an apprenticeship with us and we will also top up your salary to National Minimum Wage
- Support to buy tools, equipment, essential clothing, and books
- We will encourage you to work through the national ASDAN Living Independently Award, to help you gain skills for independent living
- If you have additional needs we will work with you to support you to access learning opportunities and increase your independence skills
- We will provide support to apply to university - identifying which to apply to, help with your personal statement, attending interviews and applicant days, and applying to student finance (for tuition fees and maintenance loans)
- You will be offered a personal adviser throughout your time at university.
- We will provide a grant of £4,000 per year to each care leaver studying a foundation or undergraduate degree and support you with accommodation costs during term time and holidays.
- We will provide a grant of £2,000 per year to each care leaver studying an access to university course if you are not entitled to benefits during this period of study.
- Where possible we will connect you with your university's Welfare Officer before you start university, but we can also provide support if you have any problems whilst you're at university
- We will help you get references and support you with your next steps. If things don't work out, we will support you to try again.
- We recognise that there are lots of education pathways and routes to success and want to support and encourage alternative opportunities. These can be agreed on an individual basis.
- We will support you to access support with travel expenses through the Wheels to Work Scheme to support our young people who may be starting a new job, attending a training course, attending a work placement, or attending job interviews.

You can contact The HOPE Virtual School directly for more information and guidance on education: The HOPE: www.bristol.gov.uk/web/the-hope/home. 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

Managing Money and Financial Support

We will try to help you financially and work with you to manage your money. This will include a range of practical and financial support and access to your savings. We can support you to:

- Apply for up to 100% relief from council tax until your 25th birthday if you remain living in Bristol. You still need to register for Council Tax but indicate the care leaver discount on the form. More information is online here: www.bristol.gov.uk/council-tax/discounts-and-exemptions
- Open a bank account and give you information on accessing your Junior ISA or Child Trust Fund if you have one
- Gain important identity documents such as a passport, birth certificate and driving license.
- Get your National Insurance number
- We will offer financial support to each care leaver when making their initial benefit application until the first payment is received.

- We will fund one driving theory test for each care leaver and can support you to make charity applications for financial support with driving lessons.
- Meet the designated care leaver job coach in your local DWP job centre.

Relationships

As well as support from a personal adviser, we may be able to offer you additional practical and emotional support, such as through:

- Help you to identify the people most important to you. We can help you to maintain or regain contact with these people who are special to you or who cared for you in the past, like former foster carers, independent visitors, or social workers
- Support to re-connect with family where it is in your best interests
- Providing information on groups and clubs you might want to join.
- Inviting you to our regular group events and holiday activities where you can keep in touch with other care leavers
- We will give you a financial gift on your birthday and a nominated special occasion up to the age of 21 (this will be Christmas unless you tell us otherwise e.g., Eid).
- We will offer financial support (up to 3 return journeys a year within the UK) to visit a family member, friend or significant other.

Supported to be a Parent

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

- Your GP and midwife can talk to you about the health services available to you
- Your personal adviser can give you information about financial support and schemes in place to support you
- We will help you arrange childcare if this is what you want
- If you are a first time Mum, we can make a referral to the family nurse partnership for extra support.
- We can introduce you to the care leaver champion in your local Children's Centre. The role of a champion is to help welcome you and ensure that you feel comfortable. They can meet you with your personal adviser and come and visit you at home.
- We can make a referral for specialist parenting support to prepare you for having a baby and for advice and support once your baby arrives.
- We will provide you with a hamper of baby goodies to celebrate the arrival of your new baby.

Support for young people in custody

We will continue to offer you financial support and 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. Care leavers in custody will receive:

- £40 per month so that you can pay for food and toiletries from the canteen
- £50 annual clothing allowance.
- On release from custody each care leaver will receive £50 to pay for initial expenses.

Your Voice, Rights and Participation

As a care leaver your experiences are the best to help us shape the services that you and future care leavers need. We want to hear from you about your experiences and to help us understand what we can do, as corporate parents, to continually develop services. We want you to feel part of society; and to ensure that you have opportunities to ensure that your voice is heard.

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** (above the minimum living wage).

We want our care leavers to be active members of society. We will encourage and help you to enrol on the Electoral Register so that you can vote in elections.

If you want to be involved in helping to shape care leavers services you may want to join CLUB (Care Leaver Unite Bristol). CLUB is based at Junction 3 library and run fortnightly meetings to produce their own ideas/plans, to raise issues and campaign for change. For further information speak to your Personal adviser or contact Tom tom.thomas@barnardos.org.uk

You have a right to be involved in all decisions about your plans for leaving care and to see all information about you; this includes your files from when you were in care. You have a right to an independent advocate if you want to challenge decisions about the support we give you, information is available here: <https://info.reconstruct.co.uk/bristolportal>

You have a right to let us know how you feel about the services you are receiving or about progress with your pathway plan for example. You can give feedback or make a complaint. Please contact the Care Leaver Co-Ordinator at Bristol City Council or use the information online here: www.bristol.gov.uk/complaints-and-feedback

Bristol City Council works in partnership with a range of organisations in Bristol to create this Local Offer. It is reviewed annually, and we will encourage you to have a say in what support is available through the CLUB, but you can also share your views with your personal adviser, our care leaver apprentices, or by coming to a regular supper club.

Remember you can stay in touch with what's happening for Care Leavers by reading our quarterly **Connect Newsletter** or by joining our Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/803467363416098/> or search for Bristol Care Leavers on Facebook or ask your Personal Adviser.

