



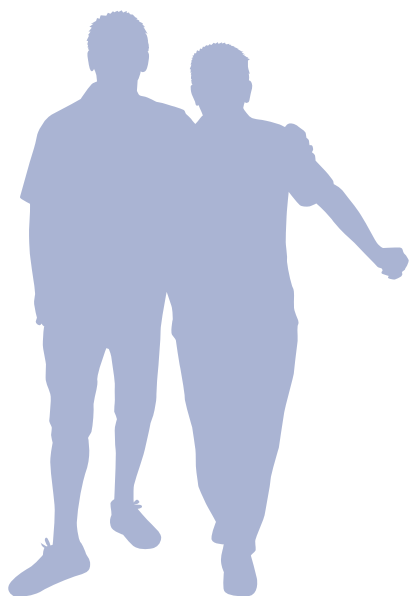
LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS



**achieving
for children**

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LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS

Welcome to the Local Offer for Care Leavers. You will find information about the support that is available to young people who have been in the care of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and are now aged 16 to 25 years. In April 2017, the Children and Social Work Act became law and the provision for care leavers has been extended to include young people aged 22 to 25 who are not in education.

In April 2014, Achieving for Children was created by the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and is commissioned to deliver children's services. In August 2017, we were joined by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. We provide children and their families with the support and services they need to live happy, healthy and successful lives.

WHAT IS THE LOCAL OFFER TO CARE LEAVERS?

A young person who has been looked after may become eligible for ongoing services past their 18th birthday. If you are a care leaver, you can use this website to find out what support you are able to access. Local authorities have a duty to young people leaving care to inform them of services available and provide support to successfully move onwards and upwards to independence. This Local Offer explains your entitlements as a care leaver and will also help you to get the best out of the support on offer.

WHAT IS IN THE OFFER?

You will find information on the following in this offer:

- Entitlement Status Support 16 +
- Your money and documents
- Where you live and your safety
- Your education, employment and training
- Your health
- Getting your voice heard



ENTITLEMENT

Now that you are aged 16 + and have been in the care of Kingston and Richmond Councils, you are legally entitled to ongoing support from AfC.

We work within The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children Act Transition Guidance which is designed to give 16 and 17 year olds still in care and care leavers, the support and advice that you need to engage you to move successfully into adulthood.

The Local Offer describes the support and financial help you should receive from AfC as a care leaver and also gives you details of other information that you can access to help you understand what support you can expect to receive.

The specific support you will get will depend on your care leaving status, which is based on how long you have been in care and how old you are. Depending on this you may get help with housing, education and training. However, all care leavers (no matter what your status) can expect the same quality service.

STATUS

There are four different types of status that you might hear people talk about.

ELIGIBLE CHILD

If you are 16 or 17 years old in care and have been in care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, you will meet the criteria as an 'eligible child'.

RELEVANT CHILD

If you are 16 or 17 years old have left care, but were in care on or after your 16th birthday and have been in care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, you will meet the criteria as a 'relevant child'. This applies if you have been part of the youth justice system or hospitalised on or after your 16th birthday.

FORMER RELEVANT CHILD

This will apply if you are now aged 18 to 21 years old and you were previously either an eligible or relevant children.

QUALIFYING CHILD

If you are aged 16 to 21 years old and have been in care or, if disabled, have been privately fostered after reaching 16, but do not qualify as eligible, relevant or former relevant (you spent less than 13 weeks in care). You may also qualify if you are the subject to a special guardianship order (SGO) and were looked after immediately before the SGO was made, or, if you were previously an eligible child, but returned to live with someone with parental responsibility (PR) for more than six months before your 18th birthday.

POST 21

If you are a care leaver and needing support post 21 you can make contact with the local authority and request support via a personal advisor (PA). The new duty to extend personal advisor support to all care leavers up to age 25 means that you will be able to continue to receive support when you reach age 21, or to request personal advisor support at any point after age 21 up to age 25, even if you had previously indicated that you did not want it.

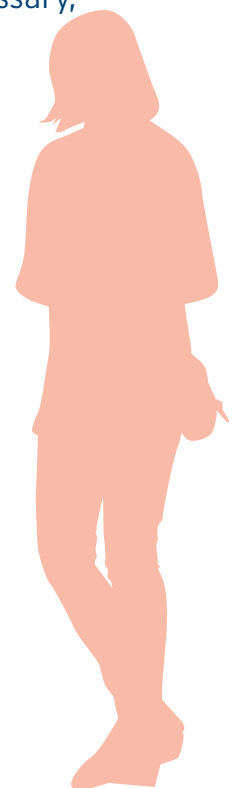
SUPPORT YOU CAN EXPECT

ELIGIBLE OR RELEVANT CHILD (16 TO 18), YOU CAN EXPECT:

- an allocated social worker or personal advisor
- a full assessment based on your needs
- a detailed pathway plan (PWP) based on your assessed needs, which will be overseen by a qualified social work team manager. You will need to be a key contributor towards this
- your plan will be reviewed every six months
- us to keep in touch and visit you every six to eight weeks (more often if necessary or less as identified within your pathway plan)
- financial support as relevant (see entitlement document below)
- support to help you to access safe and suitable accommodation
- financial support to help you maintain education, training or employment (see entitlement document for a more detailed breakdown)
- ensure that you have a bank account, National Insurance number and passport (unless your legal status prevents you)

IF YOU ARE AGED 18+ AND FORMER RELEVANT, YOU CAN EXPECT:

- an allocated personal advisor
- a full assessment based on your needs
- a detailed pathway plan (based on your assessed needs) which will be overseen by a social work team manager
- your plan will be reviewed every six months
- us to keep in touch and visit you every six to eight weeks (more often if necessary, less if you don't want a this frequency of visits and as identified in your pathway plan)
- ensuring that you are in relevant safe and suitable accommodation
- financial support to help you maintain education, training or employment (see entitlement document for a more detailed breakdown)
- provide you with vacation accommodation if in higher or further education



QUALIFYING

If you contact us requesting support we will:

- assess your current needs and provide you with the appropriate advice and support based on those needs
- provide you with vacation accommodation if in residential higher or further education

EXTENDED SUPPORT UP TO 25 YEARS

The aim of leaving care services are to allow care leavers to live successful independent lives.

Each care leaver will reach that point at a different age. Therefore not all care leavers will require support up to 25. We would expect that the level of support that care leavers receive will reduce over time, depending on assessed needs, in recognition of their growing maturity and independence.

For care leavers aged 21 or over, the new duty means that local authorities do not necessarily need to provide the same level of support to care leavers aged 21 to 25 as it does for those aged 18 to 20. The new duty does however enable local authorities to respond positively to requests for support from care leavers aged 21 to 25 who may be continuing to struggle with the transition to independence and adult life.

The new duty to extend personal advisor support to all care leavers up to age 25 means that they will be able to continue to receive support when they reach age 21, or to request personal advisor support at any point after age 21 up to age 25, even if they had previously indicated that they did not want it.

SUPPORT 16+

SOCIAL WORKER AND/OR PERSONAL ADVISOR

You will begin being supported by a social worker in the Leaving Care or UASC team around the time you turn 16, up to the age of 18, who specialises in this area. This is to help you to develop your independent living skills through developing and updating your pathway plan.

The social worker is required to fulfil the council's obligations as your corporate parent. Your leaving care social worker is there to hear your voice and support you to think about your present and past, but also and importantly, your future. Your social worker will work with you and the people who are important to you to ensure that you achieve the goals you set together. They need to ensure that you receive appropriate care, education and health services.

Your social worker needs to visit you face-to-face in your accommodation a minimum of once every six weeks, or three months if you have been living in your accommodation for over one year and there are no concerns about this accommodation. This will be agreed within your child in care review and will be the case until you turn 18, unless your circumstances change.

Your social worker will, as much as possible, work hard to meet your wishes and feelings, but sometimes they won't be able to give you everything that you want, particularly if they are concerned about your safety. The Leaving Care and UASC team is there to support you to take control of your own future.

A personal advisor is an experienced support worker who is not a social worker. Personal advisors have different backgrounds and qualifications, some of them in youth work. There is no one personal advisor qualification. The personal advisor is there to offer you support, advice, guidance and assistance to help you develop your independence.

You should see your personal advisor face-to-face a minimum of once every two months, visits can also be less than two months as specified in your pathway plan, but you can speak to them on the phone more often than that. You can talk to your personal advisor about how often you'd like to see and speak to them. This is also specified in your pathway plan. Once you reach 21 years of age you can decide if you'd like to remain supported by your personal advisor.

Your personal advisor can help you to access other support services which you might need. This may include mental health support, debt planning and budgeting, housing and accommodation, benefits and education. Personal advisors may not be able to provide this support to you directly, but they will help you to find someone who can. Personal advisors can support you with simple budgeting, however, may refer for more specialised input if you are in debt and this is complex. Sometimes your personal advisor won't be able to provide you with something that you are asking for.

Just like social workers, personal advisors will review and update your pathway plan with you every six months.

PATHWAY PLAN

Every child in care must have a pathway plan, usually starting around your 16th birthday. Your pathway plan says how AfC will help you prepare to live independently. It is like a contract or agreement between you, AfC and other important professionals in your life. What is more important is it gives you a chance to share your wishes and feelings. You are the most important element in this process as this is your plan.

A review of your pathway plan should take place at least every six months, but you can ask for this to be reviewed at any time. Your plan also needs to be reviewed if there are any big changes in your life as it needs to look at what is happening now. You contribute towards this and therefore you and your social worker signs your plan and you should get a copy. This will help you track progress and keep on track as to what needs to happen.

Young people aged 18 and above also will have a pathway plan unless over 21 and the support need is specific and a one off. Pathway plans will continue to be reviewed on a six monthly basis.

WHAT SHOULD MY PATHWAY PLAN COVER?

HEALTH

If you have health problems your pathway plan should say how AfC will help you manage them. It is not just for problems though: it should also say how AfC will help you live a healthy lifestyle (such as helping you to access healthy activities).

EDUCATION

Your plan should make sure you have everything you need to succeed and are on track to achieve your career goals. This includes clear aims for you to meet and how AfC will support you, including financially (for example, practical support or equipment depending on assessed need).

HOW YOU FEEL

How do you feel about yourself? How do you get on with other people? Are there things that could help? Let your social worker or personal advisor know so they can follow up.

FAMILY AND SOCIAL NETWORK

Do you have a good relationship with your family? Have you got people to turn to when you need them? Your plan should identify how the council will help you have good social and family relationships. If you are unhappy about contact arrangements with your family this is where you need to make your voice heard.

IDENTITY

This is about what makes you... you. AfC should help you with any questions you have about your past, support you need around language, religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation, as well as ensuring you have the right identification documents and know how to access your files.

YOUR PRACTICAL SKILLS

This should look at how prepared you are for life as an adult. What do you need to learn to be ready to live independently and how will AfC help you do that? This can vary from cooking a meal to paying bills.

MONEY

It's really important there is a clear statement of the financial support you'll get from AfC. This should state your entitlements and other help you will get, how to get it and when. It should cover help you might need to budget, savings you may have and benefits you are entitled to.

WHERE YOU LIVE

AfC should assess your accommodation (current or planned) and see if it is suitable for you, including location, safety, bills and rent. Future housing options should be explained including plans to move to independent accommodation and what needs to be done for this to happen.

If you are not happy where you live let us know.



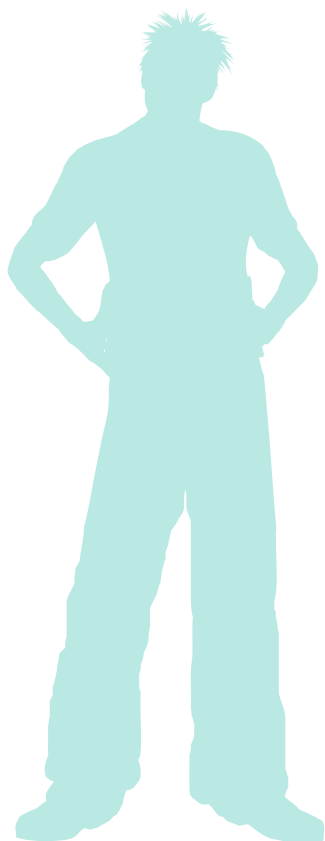
INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS AND CHILD IN CARE REVIEWS

All young people who are looked after by their local authority are allocated an independent reviewing officer (IRO). They have an IRO whether they are the subject of a care order granted by the court, or accommodated with their parents' agreement (what is known as a 'Section 20' arrangement). Although they work for AfC, IROs are based in a separate department from the social work teams, and this is how they bring independence in their work with you.

Your IRO is a qualified social worker and responsible for ensuring that your views are heard, and that the plans for you are good enough. They also check that everyone who works with you has completed all the tasks that have been agreed to keep you safe and well.

All looked after young people have looked after children reviews. These are regular meetings involving you and the people who are closely involved in your care, and where your progress is discussed.

Your views on all aspects of your life are very important, and your IRO will meet with you before the review to ensure they understand your thoughts and feelings, possibly giving your views about venue etc. We encourage you to be as fully involved in your reviews as you can, and to chair your review meetings should you wish to do so. Otherwise your IRO will chair the meeting, and following this will write a record of the meeting and decisions that were made there.



YOUR MONEY AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The type of financial help you receive from AfC will depend on whether you are an eligible, relevant, former relevant or qualifying young person.

BUDGETING

Your social worker or personal adviser can help you to complete a financial assessment which looks at your income and spending and forms the basis of your budget plan which they can also help you with. Sometimes it may be your foster carer, keyworker or someone else who does this with you. It's very important that you learn to budget as this will help you when you are living independently.

If you end up in debt, it's important that you let your social worker or personal adviser know as soon as possible. We can help you by referring you to debt support services and developing a payment plan to get you back on track.

BENEFITS

In respect of benefits, your personal advisor will help with:

- **benefit maximisation:** ensuring that you're getting all the benefits you're entitled to
- **benefit claim support:** help for making and maintaining benefit claims including completing applications for Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, Employment and Support Allowance,
- **housing:** options and advice regarding housing and the related benefits
- **personal budgeting support:** advice and skills surrounding budgeting and how to make your money go further
- **low-level debt advice:** contacting creditors and advice on setting up affordable payment plans to ensure you stay on top of your finances
- **high-level debt aid:** sign-posting to experts who can assist with larger debts
- **employment support:** support and assistance for those who are ready for work

WHERE YOU LIVE AND SAFETY

STAYING PUT

In 2014, the Children and Families Act formalised the practice of allowing young people to remain with their foster carers post 18. Under 'staying put' arrangements, young people can remain with their foster carers beyond their 18th birthday if this suits the young person, carer and the local authority. For some young people this will be to complete their education. Others may need extra time to make the transition to independence because of their support needs and the additional emotional and practical support they require to prepare.

Any young adult in a 'staying put' arrangement who is gets income from a wage or benefits will be expected to contribute a sum to the 'staying put' carer towards their maintenance and to the rent. This will need to be discussed on an individual basis and arrangements confirmed within the 'staying put' living together agreement. This will be deducted from the allowance paid to the foster carer.

Where a young person is not eligible to claim benefits as they have no access to public funds, AfC will pay the subsistence allowance to the young person (as set out in eligibility criteria) via the social worker or personal advisor. Again, they should make a contribution to the foster carer. This will be deducted from the allowance paid to the foster carer. Your social worker or personal advisor can provide you with the AfC 'staying put' policy.

INDEPENDENT HOUSING

Independent housing can mean different things, but usually independent housing means that you have signed a tenancy or license agreement and as such are responsible for paying rent, being a good neighbour and keeping the accommodation clean and in good repair.

Your personal adviser or social worker will speak with you about moving to independent accommodation and together you will decide when this is right for you. Your personal adviser or social worker may ask for some evidence - such as proof that you've paid all your bills and can manage all of your appointments. They will also need to see that you have been a good neighbour by not creating too much noise or inviting a lot of friends over. They will also want to know that you can keep yourself safe and know how to respond to an emergency.

You may choose to move into private rented accommodation or ask to be put on the housing register and you will go into the priority needs category for social housing in the borough. Once you and your personal adviser or social worker agree you are ready, you can be nominated.

You are entitled to up to £2,000 (depending on assessed needs) setting up home allowance when you move to your permanent property. Please refer to the Financial Policy regarding this.

SEMI-INDEPENDENT HOUSING

When you move to semi-independent accommodation this is a chance for you to learn your independence skills in preparation for your own tenancy. This kind of accommodation is only available to people aged 16 and up.

When you live in semi-independent accommodation you will have your own, lockable room, but may have to share other facilities such as kitchen and bathroom. There will be key workers at the accommodation who are there to work with you to achieve your independence goals. This might mean helping you learn to cook, budget, clean and make appointments.

They can also support you to appointments, such as doctors or college. It's important that you work with your keyworker on your independence plan as you may not be recommended for your own tenancy until you have shown that you are ready.

AfC works with a number of different semi-independent accommodation providers in and out of the area.

MOVING PLACEMENT

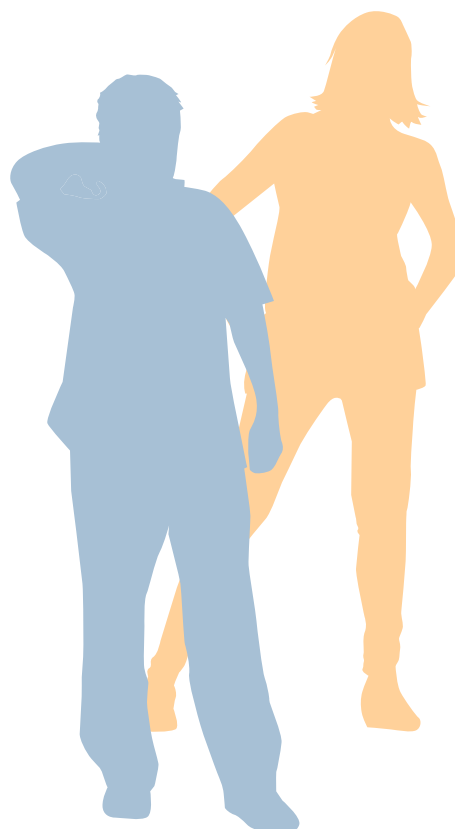
If you are under 18, your social worker will always help you to move or will ensure someone that you trust will move you. A placement planning meeting should then occur within three working days and a new review held if this was not a planned move. Your personal adviser or social worker can help you plan any moves.

Housing application support: your personal advisor will help you with all relevant procedures as part of housing applications.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Your personal advisor will assist you with:

- exploring and finding apprenticeships
- finding work and interviews
- volunteering
- college and university applications



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

You will need to register with a GP initially and finding the relevant health service you need can be assisted by following these Links:

- NHS Choices website: www.nhs.uk/pages/home.aspx

See your GP if you've been feeling depressed for more than a few weeks and/or your anxiety is affecting your daily life.

If you want to talk to someone right away, the mental health helpline page has a list of organisations you can call for immediate help.

- www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mental-health-helplines.aspx
- Whatever you need to know about coping with stress, anxiety or depression, or just the normal emotional ups and downs of life, the NHS Choices Moodzone is a website which may help
- www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/low-mood-stress-anxiety.aspx

It offers practical advice, interactive tools, videos and audio guides to help you feel mentally and emotionally better.

THE EMOTIONAL WELLBEING SERVICE (PART OF CAMHS)

This is a specialist service that provides consultation and fast track access to looked after children and care leavers to receive therapy.

MENTAL HEALTH

DO YOU NEED URGENT MENTAL HEALTH HELP NOW?

The Samaritans helpline is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for people who want to talk in confidence. Call 116 123 (free). They offer confidential, listening service providing emotional support to anyone in crisis. Calls to their crisis line do not appear on phone bills.

Website: www.samaritans.org

HOPELineUK is a national confidential support service for any young people (under 35) at risk of suicide, or anyone worried about a young person at risk of suicide. The helpline is open 10am to 10pm Monday to Friday, Weekends 2 to 10pm, and Bank Holidays 2 to 5pm.

Tel: 0800 068 41 41 SMS: 07786 209697 Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org

If you've had thoughts of self-harming or are feeling suicidal, contact someone you can trust immediately, such as your GP, a friend or relative or your personal adviser or social worker.

PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY

CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL (CICC)

The Children in Care Council for Kingston and Richmond is focused on building relationships with the young people in our care and all departments within Children's Services.

When projects crossover, we work with partners such as the Virtual School, independent reviewing officers, looked after children's nurse and foster carers to ensure CiCC can work jointly to deliver their vision. This relationship helps build a comprehensive picture of the child's or young person's voice coordinated by the youth engagement officer within the Youth Service.

CiCC members meet every Thursday at Heatham House, Twickenham. The focus is on creating a friendly, pleasant and comfortable semi-formal meeting environment for discussions and consultation to take place. It allows the group to suggest projects which can be aimed at tackling issues in their lives or simply develop a common interest within the group. There is also a fun element to the meeting.

The agenda covers a mixture of projects that are chosen, any government and/or service changes, young people's ideas for shaping the service and suggestions from foster carers.

Some of the projects we have run to date include:

- Bake sale
- Total Respect training
- Christmas party
- Award ceremony
- Summer BBQ
- CiCC DVD

Each year CiCC plan and attend a residential trip. It includes senior managers and provides the setting for further informal consultation.

YOUTH SERVICES

The Youth Service provides a range of services across the borough for young people and the wider community. Projects and programmes are regularly monitored to ensure they are providing value for money and meeting the needs of residents. Young people's suggestions and feedback is routinely used to develop and improve all Youth Service provision.

UNIVERSAL PROVISION

The Youth Service provides a diverse range of affordable, fun, educational universal activities for young people aged 8 to 19 (up to 25 years with SEN).

The provision includes:

- youth centre sessions
- project sessions
- school holiday activities
- Youth Voice groups (Youth Ambassadors, Youth Voice Youth Choice funding scheme, etc)

The success (impact) of this provision is measured through pre and post support data and feedback (from young people and professionals), de-escalation to lower EH? Level provision, development of young people into volunteers and then paid members of staff, attendance numbers, accreditations. Following the conclusion of a majority of the projects, contact is made with young people and professionals after three to six months to get feedback on longer term impact as a result of any support.

Feedback from young people suggests that young workers do not have a stigma attached to them and are seen by young people as informal (unlike teaching staff, social care, etc). Some young people do not always like to be seen working with specialist services.

As the needs of the residents change, additional projects are planned and delivered to ensure that these needs are addressed, for example due to the increase in CSE cases nationally the Youth Service have developed a CSE awareness session that can be delivered in schools and youth groups.

CHILDREN IN CARE PROVISION

The Youth Service engages children in care in decision making processes that enables them to meet with and influence local decision makers. The Youth Service also leads on the positive activities programme for young people in care. The worker that leads on children in care engagement has no direct link with social care and as a result is seen as neutral by the young people with no set agenda.

Feedback indicates that children in care do not wish to attend events that are specifically for them so Universal Youth Service programme publicity is made available to them before it goes into the public domain and they are actively encouraged to attend the programmes. This focused approach has led to a high increase in children in care attending universal Youth Service provision.

The success of this provision is measured through accreditations, attendances on programmes of young people, young people's feedback, meeting minutes and the success of the rolling action plan.

GENERAL

Youth workers are trained to deliver the Duke of Edinburgh's and ASDAN awards and provide training to internal and external services on how to deliver the awards.

Volunteers enhance most aspects of Youth Service delivery, especially Duke of Edinburgh's Award groups and universal youth sessions. Both young and adults volunteers undergo a training package to enable them to carry out their role.

“ THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN POSSIBLE
AND IMPOSSIBLE IS YOUR OWN
DETERMINATION TO SUCCEED ”

CONTACT DETAILS

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Richmond: 020 8891 7776



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