

Local Care Leaver Offer what does it mean for you?

2022-2024

North
Lincolnshire
Council



Introduction

This document tells you about all the help that is available to you as a care leaver from all of your corporate parents from North Lincolnshire Council and our partner agencies. The spirit of our Care Leaver Offer is closely intertwined with the 5 mission statements set out in 'The Independent Review of Children's Social Care: Final Report' to ensure that all care experienced people have the foundation for a good life.

They are:

- Young people should leave care with many loving relationships
- More care experienced young people should attend university

- More care experienced young people should be in well paid jobs and apprenticeships
- No care experienced young people should be homeless
- Care Leavers should enjoy better health and wellbeing

We know that becoming an adult and leaving care is tough. As your Corporate Parents, we want to make sure that you know where and who to go to for advice and help. Just because you are leaving care, or have already left care, we haven't stopped caring about you and will be here whenever you need us!

Local authorities and partner agencies have a legal duty to support young people making the transition from care to adulthood. As part of this, we need to make sure that care leavers know what services are available to them. This Local Care Leaver Offer contains information about all the support and services that we have in North Lincolnshire for you as you move into adulthood.

We have worked with care experienced people to put together this offer. We will continue to listen to your views to make sure the services we provide are what you need.



Corporate Parenting Principles

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced 'corporate parenting principles', which are things that the Council and our partners must do when helping children in care and care leavers. We have made sure that these are included in our 'Corporate Parenting Promise' to children in care and care leavers. The promise is made with the help of children in care and care leavers who have told us what it is important to include.

The North Lincolnshire Corporate Parenting Promise

Corporate Parents for Children in Care and Care Leavers in North Lincolnshire promise to:

- act in the best interests, and promote the health and well-being, of children in care and care leavers;
- encourage children in care and care leavers to express your views, wishes and feelings;

- take into account the views, wishes and feelings of children in care and care leavers;
- help children in care and care leavers gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children in care and care leavers;
- for children in care and care leavers to be safe, and for stability in your home lives, relationships and education or work;
- prepare children in care and care leavers for adulthood and independent living.

To do this we will:

- Ask your views, listen to what you say and act on it
- Support you and give you the information you need to lead a healthy lifestyle.
- Support you to feel safe.
- Support you to have contact with your family and friends.

- Make sure services and support are available to help you to be the best you can be.
- Have ambitions for you and support you to achieve your goals.
- Have high expectations of you and expect you to act sensibly.
- Support you to access the education and training you need and help you develop your skills and achieve your aspirations.
- Work with you to support other children and young people who may have had similar experiences.
- Provide opportunities for training and work experience and support you to find employment.
- Support you and your children while you gain life experience and become independent from us.
- Provide an open door for support and advice, whatever your age.
- Celebrate your successes and achievements.
- Help you be involved in the community.



Section 1 - Getting Support

Who is a Care Leaver?

The legislation surrounding supporting to Care Leavers can be quite complex and tricky to understand, so we have tried to make sure it is as easy as possible to follow.

Generally, to receive support as a care leaver, you must have been in care for at least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 18, but with one of these days occurring after your 16th Birthday.

Your social worker or personal advisor will be able to explain to this you if you need any further help.

The legislation that we work to describes 4 main groups of young people who can be supported as care leavers. These categories are:

You are a **Former Relevant Care Leaver** if:

- If you are aged 18 years or above, and either have been a Relevant or Eligible child when under 18
- if at the age of 21 or before reaching the age of 25 you are in education or training, then you will remain a former relevant child until the end of the agreed programme.
- if after 21 years you inform us that you want to pursue or are pursuing a programme of education or training
- if after 21 years, until the age of 25, you request to receive ongoing support from our service

You are an **Eligible Care Leaver** if:

- you are currently looked after; and
- aged 16 or 17; and
- you have been looked after for a period of 13 weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks) which began after you reached 14 and ended after you reached 16

You are a **Relevant Care Leaver** if:

- you are no longer looked after by the Local Authority but you have been 'Eligible'; and
- aged 16 or 17 years old;
- immediately before being detained or in hospital you were 'Eligible'; or
- lived for continuous period of 6 months or more with a parent, someone with parental responsibility and where those arrangements break down.

You are a **Qualifying Care Leaver** if:

- you are at least 16 but under 21; and
- you were looked after immediately prior to the making of a special guardianship order which was in force when you reached 18; or
- if at any time after reaching the age of 16, but before reaching the age of 18 you have been a looked after child, accommodated by or on behalf of a voluntary organisation, registered children's home, or by a health authority or privately fostered.
- as a Qualifying Care Leaver you are able to access advice and assistance based on a needs assessment completed by the Leaving Care Team. But you will not be entitled to the full care leaver offer

Advice and Support from a Personal adviser

North Lincolnshire Council provides a personal adviser for care leavers until you are 21. Care leavers also have the right to a personal adviser up to 25 should you wish.

You can ask for support from your Personal Adviser at any time you would like some help up to the age of 25, whether you are in education or training or not.

Your Personal Adviser is there to help you to prepare to live independently and to offer advice and support after you leave care. Personal Advisers should talk to you about what support you need and record this information in your pathway plan.

We will try make sure that, wherever possible, you keep the same Personal Adviser. The amount of support that you receive from your Personal Adviser will depend on what you want and your circumstances and will be recorded in your pathway plan.

We will consider with you what extra support you may need. You might, for example, need extra support because:

- You have special educational needs or a disability
- You are an unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC) and your immigration status is unclear
- You are in or leaving custody or you have had contact with the criminal justice system
- You are a young parent
- You are going through a difficult time in your personal life

Pathway Planning

Personal advisers are responsible for ensuring that a Pathway Plan is created and kept up to date for each care leaver. Your pathway plan is written after consultation with you and important people in your life. It sets out your needs, views and future goals, and identifies exactly what support you will receive from us. We will review your pathway plan with you regularly so that it is kept up-to-date and you understand and are happy with its contents.

- We will work together to prepare a Pathway Plan with you that sets out how we will help you to achieve the things you want to.
- We start the Pathway Plan together while you are still in care – around your 16th birthday.
- We then review the Pathway Plan with you at least every six months to make sure that it is up-to-date. However, if you need extra help and support, we may review your pathway plan once every 8 weeks, or 3 months, to make sure you are getting the right level of support.
- This is your plan, and you should design the support that is important to you, with the help of your personal advisor.

Knowing your rights!

You have a right to be involved in all decisions about when you leave care and your plans for leaving care. We will make sure that you can let us know what you think of and how you feel about the services you receive from all agencies that are working to support you. We will also ensure that we regularly take the time to ask for feedback from you about how we are doing.

You also have a right to see the information we keep about you, including the files and records written about you when you were in care. Your personal advisor can help you to access your records if you wish, and support you to understand the contents.

You have a right to support from an independent advocate if you want to challenge decisions about the support we give you. Independent advocates can inform you about your rights and help you to be heard in meetings. They are separate from Children's Services. You have a right to talk to the Children's Advocate at any time including if you want to challenge decisions about the care and support you are provided by the local authority. Your personal advisor can share the contact details of the advocacy service at any point if you aren't sure, and they are also contained at the bottom of this document.

Life Long Support to Care Leavers - Open Door

For all of our care leavers, we are part of your family. In line with our corporate parenting promise we have formally extended our support and advice offer to all care leavers beyond the age of 25 years, recognising that you are a care leaver for life, not just until the age of 25 years.

The ultimate aim of our care leaving service is to support care leavers so that they can live successful independent lives, and achieve the 5 mission statements identified at the beginning of this offer. Each young people will reach that point at a different age. However, there may be times that young people within their adult lives may face difficult times, for which you may need support and advice on. Increasing our offer to Care Leavers means that there is always someone there to support and advise you, whatever your age.

Section 2 - Accommodation; where will I live?

We strongly believe that children in care and care leavers should be able to live in their home for as long as they need to and wish. We also believe that young people should be cared for and nurtured, and will therefore strive to make sure you live within a family for as long as possible.

How we do this:

Age 16 / 17

We believe that, where possible, young people should remain in their care placements until they are at least 18.

We will ensure that you have a suitable home to live in, such as with a foster family or in a children's home.

We will support you to 'stay put' in your home until at least 18. However, if you choose to leave these care arrangements before this, we will ensure that you have suitable accommodation and support in our local community through our in-house, dedicated provision.

We will start working with you on your Pathway Plan when you are 16 so there is lots of time to decide what you will need when you live independently. You can look at all the options available, with the support of your social worker and personal advisor, to make sure that you can find somewhere suitable and affordable when you are an adult.

Over 18

We will provide advice and support to all care leavers, so that you can live in suitable accommodation with the help that you need. This will be clearly outlined in your Pathway Plan. As part of this we work closely with other Council services, including, Housing Advice, local housing associations and providers, and Fostering, to provide to a range of suitable accommodation options including:

- **Remaining with your foster carers in a 'staying put' arrangement** – This is where you continue to live with your foster family when you turn 18. You will pay rent, or you will need to claim housing benefit; your personal advisor will help you organise this.

- **Supported Lodgings** - If you are leaving foster care or a children's home, supported lodgings can provide a 'bridge' between being in care and independence. Young people are usually between the ages of 16-18 when they move into supported lodgings. The aim of the scheme is to place older teenagers in a home where they can settle and be happy and at the same time receive guidance and encouragement to learn life skills. You will live with an adult, or family, who can support you to develop skills for adulthood.
- **In house semi independent accommodation** – these are starter flats or houses within North Lincolnshire where you receive floating support, to learn how to manage your own home.
- **Support to access social housing** – This housing is provided by local Social Landlords, such as ONGO. Support to live in this way may be offered by your personal advisor. If you are living independently, you can also receive help from Housing Related Support Service to manage your tenancy. Your personal advisor can give you more information about this.
- **Out of term accommodation for care leavers in higher education**

Working alongside our Council partners we will:

- make sure you have access to the benefits and financial support you are entitled to, including discretionary housing payments to support you
- Offer further accommodation opportunities if things go wrong
- Ensure that you are prioritised by Housing Providers when looking for your own place (band 1 priority)
- The Staying Put/Staying Close offer.
- Provide a Leaving Care Grant that can be used to furnish your first property when you move into your own independent home.
- Practical help to move into your own home.
- Provide continuing advice about maintaining a tenancy*, including paying rent, Council Tax and bills regularly.
- Help you look after your home including decorating, minor repairs and cleaning advice **a tenancy is a contract between you and your landlord that lets you live in a property as long as you pay rent and follow the rules*

Aspirational

We want all our young people to be supported achieve high aspirations and goals. We want home ownership to be one of those goals. So we will help you to access the right advice and support around home ownership, so you can own your own home, now or in the future.

Council Tax Support

If you live in North Lincolnshire, you will receive 100% Council Tax exemption until your 22nd Birthday. This exemption will be applied regardless of your income, in order to support your transition into adulthood. You must work alongside your personal advisor to alert the Council Tax department that you are in fact a Care Leaver, in order for the exemption to be applied. If you live outside of North Lincolnshire, your personal advisors will help you to make a claim to the local authority you live in to assess if you need to pay Council Tax.



Section 3 - Money; what will I receive?

As a care leaver we will try to help you financially. Your personal adviser will give you advice and information about what you are entitled to, as well as providing you with practical support to help you manage your money effectively.

We will support you to:

- Make sure that you have the advice you need to learn to manage your money and that this is detailed in your Pathway Plan.
- Help you to open a bank account.
- Help you to gain appropriate identification documents, such as a passport and/or provisional driving licence.
- Help you to get your NI number – this might be writing a letter or helping you complete an application.
- Provide additional financial support if you need a helping hand, or in an emergency.

Living Allowance

If you are aged 16 or 17, or you do not have access to public funds, and you are supported to live in the community (i.e. not in a foster family or children's home) we will provide a personal allowance for all young people. The amount provided is equivalent to the amount received from universal credit as at April each year.

This payment will be made until you are receiving money via universal credit, or you are working and earning a wage.

The money will usually be paid directly into your bank, but in some cases may also be paid via vouchers or direct purchases, if this is in line with the needs assessed within your pathway plan. There may also be some deductions for bills such as gas, electric and water, which we will pay directly for you until you are 18.

Setting Up Home Grant

We will also provide a grant of £2000 for young people who are moving from care or supported accommodation into their own independent accommodation. This is to support you to buy furniture and fixtures for your new home. You may choose to spend this in one go, or spread the amount out over a longer period.

This grant is normally available to young people until their 21st birthday, however, in some circumstances we can agree to pay this after you have turned 21, if you are not yet ready to move to your own home. This will be agreed between you and your personal advisor and recorded within your Pathway Plan.

Clothing Allowance

It is important that young people leave care with adequate clothing. We will ensure all young people who leave care have adequate suitable clothing before this move into other arrangements. Following this, young people up until the age of 21 will also have access to an annual clothing allowance. This may be provided in cash, or via supported purchasing, but this will be agreed with you in your pathway plan and in line with your individual needs.

This allowance will be split into two parts:

- A guaranteed winter clothing allowance to ensure that you have suitable clothing for the winter periods.
- An additional seasonal allowance that will be needs assessed through the Pathway Plan review process, to support you to purchase other seasonal clothing. As this is needs assessed, if you are working and earning a stable income, you may not be eligible for this part of the allowance.

We may also make extra payments for additional clothing on an individual basis in exceptional circumstances, if you are in a crisis.

Young Parent Grants

Being a parent is tough! It is hard practically, but also financially. We will make sure that if you are a parent, or are expecting a baby, that you receive a full welfare rights assessment and information on the maternity benefits available to you. Your personal advisor will help you to make applications for grants and benefits that you may be entitled to.

We will also provide a grant payment to all care leavers aged under 21 who are expecting a child, over and above any other grants available to you, to support you to make sure you have the things that you need when your baby arrives.

We may also provide as a discretionary payment, where this has been needs assessed in your Pathway Plan, an additional annual payment to any care leaver who is a parent under 21 years of age (up to 25 in exceptional circumstances) to support you with the maintenance of your child or children.

Again, this will normally be through the purchase of provisions, but in exceptional circumstances may be made in cash. This is to help you with purchasing things such as new clothes, toys or other items you need for your children.

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Religious Festivals and Birthdays

We will provide care leavers with a gift at Christmas or other celebrated religious festival annually, and at each birthday up to the age of 21 years. In exceptional circumstances, in line with their assessed needs, this can continue up to 25. This may be given as cash, but again will be agreed within your Pathway Plan.

Other Financial Help and Support

There is lots of advice and support available to you in our community. Much of this is provided by voluntary organisations and agencies, as well as from North Lincs Council itself. We will make sure you are in touch with the right people to make sure you get the help and advice you need, whether its about a financial crisis, or setting up young own business.

The Live Well North Lincolnshire website is a great source of advice and support for all these matters!



Section 4 - Education, Employment, Training and Aspirations

Deciding what path to take next after school can be difficult. We want all our care leavers to be as successful as they can, and we believe that you are an asset to our community. Because of this, we have high aspirations for you, and we want you to have the same aspirations for yourself and be ambitious!

Your social worker or personal advisor will discuss your future goals and ambitions with you within your pathway plan – we can then work out what steps we need to take together to get you to your goal.

If you are not sure what you want to do, don't worry! Your personal advisor can help discuss the options that are available. We also have a dedicated Education Inclusion Officer for care leavers, who has some expert knowledge and can advise and direct you, and help you to find opportunities for you.

We will also aim to involve you in 'Aspirations Days' and aspiration activities.

These are opportunities to spend time with local employers, training providers and advisors to have a taste of what they do, discuss your training needs, develop your awareness and build confidence in planning for the future and gaining employment. You will be supported to attend by your worker and have the opportunity to talk about anything you wish and any support you need to achieve your aspirations.

We also work with our partners to offer work place opportunities, including work taster sessions, work experience apprenticeships and job opportunities. We have a dedicated coordinator who works to bring all these opportunities together, so we can get you involved in voluntary, learning and employment opportunities quickly. These are flexible and tailored to young people's needs and are supported by Corporate Parents from across the Council and partners.

We will ensure that all young people have access to local services such as the Action Station, which provides skills and employment support to members of the community, including CV writing, interview preparation and mock interviews, so that the right advice and guidance is easily accessible to you.

Other local organisations are also keen to Help. The ONGO Building Better Opportunities project **provides support to address any barriers you may have to entering employment or training** by creating an individual plan for your specific needs .

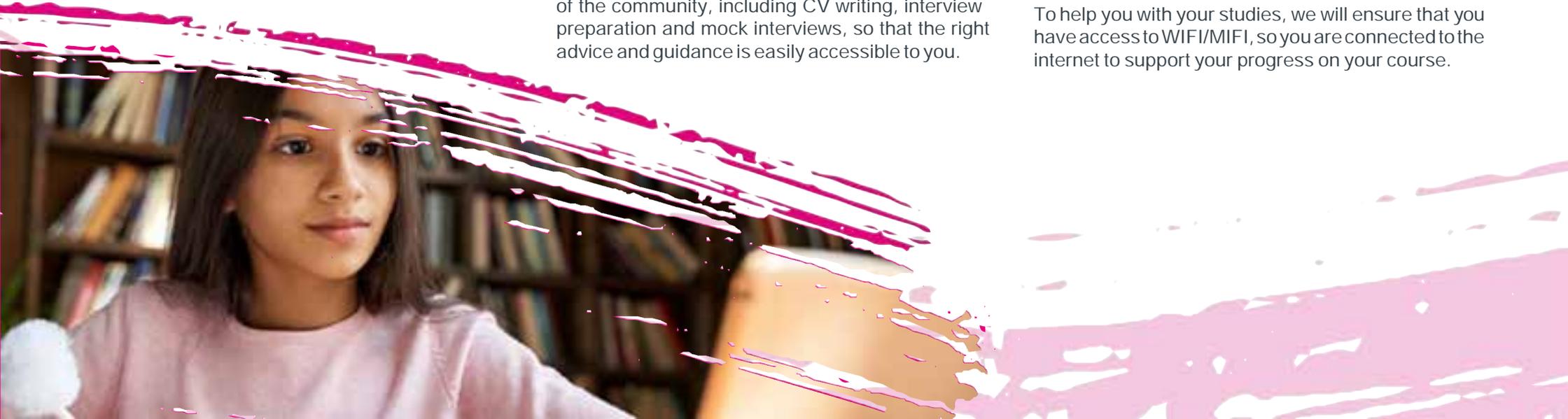
College/Further Education

If you decide that College or Further Education is the path that you want to take, then there's further support we can provide.

Your College or FE provider will provide you with a bursary of up to £1200 per year – this is normally paid on a weekly basis if you attend all of your required sessions.

We will also make sure that you have access to some of the essential for college, including stationery, a laptop, and a college bag. We will also provide you with finances to acquire a bus pass, subject to you maintaining good attendance.

To help you with your studies, we will ensure that you have access to WIFI/MIFI, so you are connected to the internet to support your progress on your course.



We will also provide you with a 'bonus' each full term of the academic year, if you manage to achieve an attendance percentage of 95% or more. This is to encourage you to attend as much as you can.

We also want to celebrate your successes with you, so will help you with any costs associated with graduation, or to celebrate you completing your studies.

Higher Education/University

If you are interested in going to university, we will help you. Going to University can be scary, as this sometimes means moving away from home. Your personal advisor can help and support you to make applications to university, as well as support you to apply for the finance required to fund your tuition and maintenance whilst at university.

Many Universities provide bursaries and free accommodation for young people who have left the care of the local authority. We will support you to access these types of opportunities within your university, and to access bursaries where available and ensure that a full financial assessment is carried out and documented within the pathway plan.

We will also provide an additional bursary of £2000, which is over and above any other bursary gained. You do not have to pay this back. The £2000 can be spread over the length of the Higher Education course or may be paid in a lump sum, however, the £2000 will only be paid once. The payment details will be agreed with you and detailed within the pathway plan.

Just like when you go to college, we will also provide additional support to purchase stationery, laptop, books and other essentials, as well as providing financial support so you can come home during

holidays. We will always ensure that you have somewhere safe and secure to stay during holidays if you choose to come home.

Again, we want to celebrate your successes with you, so will help you with any costs associated with graduation, or to celebrate you completing your studies.



Section 5 - Relationships and support; who is there for me?

Having a supportive network of friends and family around you can help as you make the transition from care to independence.

As well as support from your Personal Adviser, additional practical and emotional support might be through:

- Inviting you to attend drop-ins and informal opportunities to meet and talk.
- Providing you with a mentor/peer mentor – this may be someone within the council or our partners or another care leaver who can share their experiences.
- Help to maintain or regain contact with people special to you or who cared for you in the past, like former foster carers, care workers, Independent Visitors or social workers.
- Support to re-connect with your family where it is in your best interests.

We want children who enter and leave our care to experience stable, positive relationships with trusted adults. We believe it is vitally important that young people who leave our care and become care leavers, have a network of key trusted adults who they can rely on for support. We will therefore place a key focus on actively building and maintaining important connections and relationships, whether this be with your parents, wider family members, friends, former foster carers or other significant relationships. This is what we call our 'You Say Who' model – YOU tell us who you want to be on your team, and we will work with you to make it happen.

This is something we will continue to review with you when designing and updating your Pathway Plan.

Connectivity and maintaining relationships

We want to make sure you are connected to families, friends and wider support networks. We will ensure that we emotionally, practically, and at times, financially support you to make sure you can connect with these important people. We may support with means of transport, such as a bike, or bus pass to help you get around.

Connectivity and access to the internet

We recognise that connecting with those important people, and staying connected to them, is so much easier when you have access to the internet. Access to the internet has also become an invaluable daily tool for most people, whether it's for looking up recipes to cook, or how to unblock your sink! To support you on your journey to adulthood, we will support young people aged 18-21 with access to the internet, if you are not able to manage this yourself yet. This may be through internet provided within our semi-independent accommodation that we provide to you, through provision of agile MIFI devices, or through financially supporting your own phone's data package. Please speak to your personal advisor if you require support accessing the internet.

Participation in Society

We want our care leavers to be active members of society, and to have all the chances in life that other young adults have. We can help you participate in society in the following ways:

- Providing information on groups and clubs you may wish to join.
- Informing you about any awards, schemes and competitions you can enter, in line with your talents and interests.
- Encouraging and helping you to enrol on the Electoral Register, so you can vote in elections.
- Offering work experience within the council and with wider Corporate Parents.
- Informing you about voluntary work that we think you may be interested in.
- Informing and helping with the cost of leisure activities.
- Giving you advice and helping you to challenge any discrimination you face as a care leaver.



Section 6 - Health and Wellbeing

We will support and encourage you to be healthy and provide the help you need to achieve this. Through day to day support and your pathway plan, your personal adviser will support you to stay healthy and look after your physical and mental health. We will do this through a number of key ways:

- Giving you information on keeping yourself healthy.
- Providing a health passport as you reach 18 – this is a summary of your health information.
- Help to register at health services when you move home.
- Help you to manage your emotional well-being – this may include CAMH services or supporting you to access services as an adult. CAMHS provide support until you reach 18. This includes offering therapeutic support for anxiety, depression/low mood, obsessive compulsive disorder, eating disorders, self-harm/suicidal thoughts and assessment for neurological development disorders including ASD and ADHD. The CAMH service will also oversee the transition to adult mental health services where needed.

- Help you to attend hospital or doctors' appointments.
- Provide help and support if you are a parent.
- Free access to the North Lincolnshire leisure centres.
- Free access to some leisure activities, such as membership at Normanby Hall Park.

We also recognise how important it can be to go to social activities, to make sure that young people do not experience social isolation, and support your emotional wellbeing and mental health.

To support our young people, an annual allowance for social activities will be provided to young people to ensure you have the opportunity to engage in activities and events, in line with your peers. This could be used, for example, to attend a football match, a concert, a meal or any other activities with peers.

We will also try to arrange our own social activities for young people. This may be summer BBQ's, Christmas Meals, or trips to theme parks. This provides an opportunity to make memories, and form friendships with other young people with similar life experiences.

Sunday Drop In

We will provide access to all young people to attend our Sunday Drop in Sessions. These sessions are held from Brocklesby Court, on alternating Sunday afternoons. These are relaxed and informal sessions where anyone is welcome to come along, get involved in preparing a meal for yourself, other young people and some staff, and enjoy each others company for the afternoon. These sessions have a family vibe where we chill together over food and drink. So feel free to come along and join in whenever you feel like it. Speak to your personal advisor or social worker for more details on dates and times.



Who can help?

Key contacts for Care Leavers:

- Children and Families Leaving Care Workers/PA's – tel 01724 296500
- Housing Advice Team – tel tel 01724 296500
- Complaints and Representations – tel 01724 296426
- Local authority leadership including the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member – tel 01724 296296
- Fostering Services Team – 01724 297042
- Education Inclusion Careers and Progression Team – 01724 298554
- North Lincolnshire Careers and Progression team – tel 01724 298554
- Mentoring and advocacy support - Children's Advocate – tel 01724 296639

Other services that provide support for Care Leavers in North Lincolnshire include:

- The children in care Health Team
- CAMHS – 01724 408460 (CIC and CL can self-refer between ages of 13-18. Schools and GPs can also refer).
- VirginHealth (sexual health advice and support) - Call 0300 3301122
- DELTA substance use support service – tel 01724 298528
- North Lindsey College - tel 01724 281111 info@northlindsey.ac.uk
- John Leggott College – tel 01724 282998
- Humberside Police, Early Intervention Team (offer help, advice and support) – tel

Other places you can go to for help or advice include:

- Citizens Advice Bureau – tel 01724 870941
- Humberside Fire and Rescue – tel 01724 295920
- Action Station – tel 01724 296969
- North Lincolnshire Youth Council – tel 01724 298440 young.voice@northlincs.gov.uk
- Care Leavers' Foundation – 01678540598
- Youth Information and Counselling Unit (YPs aged 13-25) – 01724281824/297972
- CRUSE Bereavement Care (self-referral) – 01724 281178
- Life Central website and app – www.life-central.org (Emotional wellbeing and health support for children and young people, parents, carers and professionals)
- Talking Shop – 19 Market Hill, Scunthorpe, 01724 867297 (Drop in or call for advice and psychological therapy for young adults aged 18+).

