

Local Offer

Information and advice for Shropshire's Care Leavers aged 16 to 25



Shropshire
Council



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Leaving Care Local Offer

This Local Offer has been produced to give you, as a care leaver, an idea of what services and support Shropshire Council provides. It has been written with the aim of describing exactly what you can expect from us.

Our elected council members (your “Corporate Parents”) have made a Pledge to you:

- 1. Keeping You Safe** – We will keep you safe and ensure you are living in an environment where you feel valued, are supported and protected from harm.
- 2. Where You Live** – We will make sure you live in a stable home where you are happy, feel safe and are supported to become part of the community.

- 3. Your Friends & Family** – We will make sure that you are able to keep in touch with those who are important to you while creating opportunities and experiences where you can have fun, meet new people and gain skills
- 4. Your Health, Wellbeing & Lifestyle** – We will make sure you’re supported to live a happy and healthy life. If you ever feel that you need to talk to someone about how you feel, we will make sure you know what support is available and help you to access it.
- 5. Your Voice** – We will support you to express your views, wishes and feelings, and involve you in decisions that affect your life. We want to know what we can do better and will give you opportunities to help shape the support we offer.
- 6. Your Education, Work & Learning** – We will support you with your education and learning, to ensure that you have the opportunities to fulfil your potential. We will help you to gain the skills, qualifications and experience you need to start a career you’re passionate about.
- 7. Your Future** – We will support and prepare you for independence and ensure that you are equipped with the skills and confidence to live independently as part of the community. We will continue to support you into adulthood to ensure that you are happy, healthy and safe.

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How We Can Help

Depending on your circumstances and the time you spent in care, the law describes four different groups of care leaver:

- Eligible child
- Relevant child
- Former relevant care leaver
- Qualifying care leaver

You are an eligible child if:

- You are aged 16 or 17; and
- You are currently in care;

and

- You have been in care for a period of 13 weeks (or episodes which add up to 13 weeks) since your 14th birthday and at least one day whilst you were 16 or 17 years old.

You are a relevant child if:

- You are no longer in care, but you have been eligible and;
- You are 16 or 17 years old

You are a former relevant care leaver if:

- You are aged 18 or above and;
- Immediately before you reached 18 you were an eligible or relevant care leaver or;
- At age 21, or before age 25 you either continue to be on an agreed course of education and/or training or wish to receive support to start a new course.

At age 21, or before age 25 you can also ask for advice and guidance from the Leaving Care Team, even if it is not connected with a course of education or training. You may be going through a difficult time in your personal life or want some practical support with something. If you are not sure about what help you are entitled to, please ask.

You are a qualifying care leaver if:

- You are aged at least 16 but under 21 and;
- You were looked after by the council prior to the making of a special guardianship order or;
- If at any time after you reached the age of 16, you were looked after for a period of less than 13 weeks and have not returned home.
- At age 16 or 17 you were an eligible child but were living with a parent for more than 6 months before you reached age 18 (unless you were there under a care order).
- Coram Voice has a useful link to help you work out if you are a care leaver <https://coramvoice.org.uk/young-peoples-zone/am-i-care-leaver>

Depending on the group of care leavers you are in, you have certain entitlements:

The type of help you can expect to receive

	Eligible	Relevant	Former Relevant	Qualifying	21+ in education and training
Regularly reviewed Pathway Plan based on what we agree you need	✓	✓	✓	Together, we will decide how much advice and support is required. If necessary, a plan will be drawn up with you. This may be in the same format as a Pathway Plan	Together, we will decide how much advice and support is required. If necessary, a plan will be drawn up with you. This may be in the same format as a Pathway Plan
Personal Adviser	✓	✓	✓	Depends on the support you need	Depends on the support you need
Take reasonable steps to keep in touch at least every 8 weeks	✓	✓	✓	Depends on the support you need	Depends on the support you need
Find and maintain suitable accommodation	✓	✓	✓	We will help you to find suitable accommodation	We will help you to find suitable accommodation
Help to meet your education, training or employment needs	✓	✓	✓	We will provide the advice you need	An assessment will be made to see if we can help you to support your course of education or training



Preparing for Leaving Care

Needs Assessment and Pathway Planning

Shropshire Council has a responsibility to prepare you to leave care at a pace suitable to you. As a young person moving towards independence, you should expect to receive the same level of care and support as any other young person would receive from a reasonable parent.

Your social worker will undertake a needs assessment and pathway plan with you within three months of your 16th birthday or within two months of being looked after if this is after your 16th birthday. Your social worker should consider what advice, assistance and support is appropriate to meet your needs with:

- Emotional and physical health
- Education, employment and training
- Accommodation
- Budgeting and bills
- Family and other relationships and the need to maintain these
- Culture and identity
- Practical skills

You will be fully involved in discussions and plans for your future. Your Pathway Plan will be reviewed:

- At six monthly intervals (if you are still in care, this will take place alongside your review)
- At your request, or that of your social worker or personal adviser
- If there are any significant changes your circumstances including a change of accommodation
- We must review the plan until you are 21 years old (and possibly up to your 25th birthday if we are supporting your education or training or supporting you with other things for a lengthy period)

Preparing for leaving care and your personal adviser

You will have a personal adviser as well as a social worker when you reach the age of 17. Your personal adviser will help you to develop skills and put into place the things in your life that will enable you to live independently in your own accommodation when you are ready.

The support will begin when you are still in care and you will be encouraged to develop skills in such things as cooking, budgeting, cleaning and looking after yourself before you are 16. Your personal adviser will provide you with support and advice on a range of things including:

- Developing your independence skills (being able to look after yourself)
- Access to training, education and employment opportunities
- Finding and managing suitable accommodation at a time that's right for you

- Helping you to manage your money, so that you have enough to pay your bills and buy things for yourself. We will make sure you know what money you are entitled to such as benefits and bursaries and entitlements from Shropshire Council
- Keeping in contact with family and friends
- Help to find specialist support when you need it, including counselling and advice on issues such as drugs and alcohol and your sexual health

Keeping in Touch

Your personal adviser will arrange to meet with you at a minimum of every eight weeks in your home to make sure that your accommodation is suitable. Accommodation will only be regarded as suitable if it is safe, secure and affordable.

We will also keep in touch through:

- Emails
- Telephone conversations
- Text messages
- Meeting you in the community or office appointments

There will be circumstances when visiting you at home every eight weeks is not right for you. We will discuss this with you to find the right balance. Any changes to the way we work with you or the way or frequency that we keep in touch will be clearly recorded in your Pathway Plan and in your file.



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18+ and Accommodation

Once you have reached the age of 18 years you will no longer be in care but will continue to be supported by the Leaving Care Team. There will be a range of options available to you depending on how ready you are to live independently.

In some cases, especially where you have been living in foster care, it may be possible for you to remain after your 18th birthday in a Staying Put arrangement. This also includes being able to go back to this arrangement during holidays if you are attending university.

This will be explained and discussed with you and your foster carer as part of your preparation for independence. This will be done well in advance of your 18th birthday to give you time to think about what is best for you.

Where you will live will depend on what support you need. It may be possible for you to live independently in a flat or house or in accommodation with other young people. In the early stages of leaving care you might need extra help, so we can provide support and visit you on a regular basis or find supported accommodation where staff are based on the same site. We also have a supported lodgings scheme which will help you to prepare for living independently.

Through our housing department, we will make sure that an affordable tenancy in social housing or the private sector is available to you at the time which we agree is right for you. We will help you to make it ready with a Setting Up Home Allowance and can contribute to your costs by paying your council tax.

Financial entitlements

The type of financial help you receive from Shropshire Council will depend on whether you are an eligible or relevant child, former relevant or qualifying care leaver. Your personal adviser will help you to work out what you are entitled to. You can also see our full list of financial entitlements.

There are staff at the DWP jobcentres who we will contact on your behalf to help you to set up benefits payments and to help prevent problems from getting out of hand.

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Shropshire Council Care Leaver Entitlements (wef 1 December 2018)

I am age ... and entitled to	16/17 living in foster or residential care (eligible)	16/17 living in semi-independent accommodation (eligible)	16/17 and have left care (relevant)
Weekly Maintenance	Yes. Provided by carers	Yes. At to the equivalent of JSA if you have no other income.	Yes. At to the equivalent of JSA if you have no other income and not living with a parent.
Custody	Yes. £5 per week while on remand.	Yes. £5 per week while on remand.	Yes. £5 per week while on remand.
Leisure Centre/Gym Pass	3 months pass at SC centres, renewable subject to attendance	3 months pass at SC centres, renewable subject to attendance	3 months pass at SC centres, renewable subject to attendance

16-20 (Qualifying) ¹	18/19/20 (Former Relevant)	21-24 on an agreed course of education or training ²	21-24 ³
No financial support is available.	No. JSA/UC can be claimed if no other income available. We will support you while you wait for your claim to be processed	No. JSA/UC can be claimed. We will support you while you wait for your claim to be processed. If at university, £15.50 per week term time, £58 vacations.	No financial support is available.
No financial support is available.	Yes. £5 per week while on remand.	No financial support is available.	No financial support is available.
Not available	3 months pass at SC centres, renewable subject to attendance	3 months pass at SC centres, renewable subject to attendance	Not available

¹We are unlikely to provide financial assistance to “Qualifying” young people but will consider requests.

²If you started your course before the age of 21 but it continues beyond age 21, any assistance as described in the pathway plan extends until the end of the course. If you stopped receiving a service from us at age 21 and you ask for support with education/training before age 25, we will carry out an assessment to see if the course or training is one we would agree to support. We will consider providing financial assistance if we agree that financial help would be necessary to complete the course.

³We are unlikely to provide financial assistance but will consider requests

I am age ... and entitled to	16/17 living in foster or residential care (eligible)	16/17 living in semi-independent accommodation (eligible)	16/17 and have left care (relevant)
Accommodation Costs	Yes.	Yes. Rent and support paid. You may have to pay a service charge for utilities and food.	Yes. Rent and support paid if not living with a parent. You may have to pay a service charge for utilities and food.
Rent in Advance, Deposit + Fees for 1st private tenancy	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Council Tax	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Passport & Birth Certificate	Full cost of first Passport, Birth Certificate and any other form of ID such as Provisional Driving Licence.	Full cost of first Passport, Birth Certificate and any other form of ID such as Provisional Driving Licence.	Full cost of first Passport, Birth Certificate and any other form of ID such as Provisional Driving Licence.

16-20 (Qualifying) ¹	18/19/20 (Former Relevant)	21-24 on an agreed course of education or training ²	21-24 ³
No financial support is available if benefits or student finance can be claimed. Top up subject to assessment	No financial support is available if benefits or student finance can be claimed. Top up subject to assessment	No financial support is available if benefits or student finance can be claimed. Top up subject to assessment	No financial support is available.
No financial support is available.	Yes – at affordable rent and when social housing not available	Not applicable	Not applicable
No financial support is available.	We will pay your tax liability	We will pay your tax liability	We will pay your tax liability
No financial support is available.	Full cost of first Passport, Birth Certificate and any other form of ID such as Provisional Driving Licence.	Full cost of first Passport, Birth Cert' and any other form of ID such as Provisional Driving Licence.	No financial support is available.

I am age ... and entitled to	16/17 living in foster or residential care (eligible)	16/17 living in semi-independent accommodation (eligible)	16/17 and have left care (relevant)
Essential Clothing Payments"	Yes. Provided by carers	Yes. Up to £100 summer and £100 winter (+ up to £150 for education or work-related clothing)	Yes. Up to £100 summer and £100 winter (+ up to £150 for education or work-related clothing)
Maternity	£250 in 3rd trimester in addition to state benefit entitlement	£250 in 3rd trimester in addition to state benefit entitlement	£250 in 3rd trimester in addition to state benefit entitlement
Further Education - Course Fees	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Travel Fares to College	Travel Pass if Shropshire resident. If not, fares paid	Travel Pass if Shropshire resident. If not, fares paid	Travel Pass if Shropshire resident. If not, fares paid

16-20 (Qualifying) ¹	18/19/20 (Former Relevant)	21-24 on an agreed course of education or training ²	21-24 ³
No financial support is available.	Yes. Up to £100 summer and £100 winter (+ up to £150 for education or work-related clothing)	Up to £150 for education or work-related clothing within 3 months of course ending.	No financial support is available.
No financial support is available.	£250 in 3rd trimester in addition to state benefit entitlement	No financial support is available.	No financial support is available.
Subject to assessment	Yes, but subject to assessment	Yes, but subject to assessment	No financial support is available.
Subject to assessment	Travel Pass if Shropshire resident. If not, fares paid	Travel Pass if Shropshire resident. If not, fares paid	No financial support is available.

I am age ... and entitled to	16/17 living in foster or residential care (eligible)	16/17 living in semi-independent accommodation (eligible)	16/17 and have left care (relevant)
Travel Fares up to 1st month employment	Travel Pass	Travel Pass	Travel Pass
Travel to Visit Family or Significant Adults	Bi-annual fares. Subject to assessment	Bi-annual fares. Subject to assessment	Bi-annual fares. Subject to assessment. Not available if living with parent
University Bursary	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
College/Uni Related Equipment	Via College Bursary. Top up subject to assessment	Via College Bursary. Top up subject to assessment	Via College Bursary. Top up subject to assessment

16-20 (Qualifying) ¹	18/19/20 (Former Relevant)	21-24 on an agreed course of education or training ²	21-24 ³
Subject to assessment	Travel Pass	Not applicable	No financial support is available.
No financial support is available.	Bi-annual fares. Subject to assessment. Not available if living with parent	No financial support is available.	No financial support is available.
No financial support is available.	£2000 split into equal instalments (annual) throughout duration of course.	£2000 split into equal instalments (annual) throughout duration of course.	No financial support is available.
Via College Bursary. Top up subject to assessment	Via College Bursary/trust funding. Top up subject to assessment	Via trust funding. Top up subject to assessment	No financial support is available.

I am age ... and entitled to	16/17 living in foster or residential care (eligible)	16/17 living in semi-independent accommodation (eligible)	16/17 and have left care (relevant)
Setting Up Home Allowance	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Part of setting up home allowance may be made available
Birthday & Festival Money	Yes. Provided by carers	Yes. At equivalent rate when in foster care	rate when in foster care unless living with a parent

16-20 (Qualifying) ¹	18/19/20 (Former Relevant)	21-24 on an agreed course of education or training ²	21-24 ³
No financial support is available.	If living independently. Maximum £2,000 for household fixtures and fittings + 1st TV licence; insurance; locks; fire safety; decorating allowance; initial food and cleaning stock. Available up to age 25	If living independently. Maximum £2,000 for household fixtures and fittings + 1st TV licence; insurance; locks; fire safety; decorating allowance; initial food and cleaning stock. Available up to age 25	If living independently. Maximum £2,000 for household fixtures and fittings + 1st TV licence; insurance; locks; fire safety; decorating allowance; initial food and cleaning stock. Available up to age 25
No financial support is available.	£75 for 18th & 21st birthday. £50 at age 19 & 20. Festival £75 (£100 if a parent) + hamper	Not Applicable	No financial support is available.

I am age ... and entitled to	16/17 living in foster or residential care (eligible)	16/17 living in semi-independent accommodation (eligible)	16/17 and have left care (relevant)
University Vacation Accommodation	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Immigration, Citizenship, Asylum Applications	Asylum attracts legal aid. Immigration and citizenship funding subject to assessment	Asylum attracts legal aid. Immigration and citizenship funding subject to assessment	Asylum attracts legal aid. Immigration and citizenship funding subject to assessment
Participation Payments	£30 per day (vouchers) pro rata + travel and refreshments. Minimum payment £15	£30 per day (vouchers) pro rata + travel and refreshments. Minimum payment £15	£30 per day (vouchers) pro rata + travel and refreshments. Minimum payment £15

16-20 (Qualifying) ¹	18/19/20 (Former Relevant)	21-24 on an agreed course of education or training ²	21-24 ³
Yes. At the equivalent of the local housing allowance rate.	Yes. At the equivalent of the local housing allowance rate unless returning to Staying Put arrangement or supported lodgings.	Yes. At the equivalent of the local housing allowance rate unless returning to Staying Put arrangement or supported lodgings.	No financial support is available.
No financial support is available.	Asylum attracts legal aid. Immigration and citizenship funding subject to assessment	No financial support is available.	No financial support is available.
£30 per day (vouchers) pro rata + travel and refreshments. Minimum payment £15	£30 per day (vouchers) pro rata + travel and refreshments. Minimum payment £15	£30 per day (vouchers) pro rata + travel and refreshments. Minimum payment £15	£30 per day (vouchers) pro rata + travel and refreshments. Minimum payment £15



Apprenticeships

Shropshire Council has created apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers in several parts of children's services and within the wider council. For more details, please contact the Leaving Care Team Manager on 01743 254590.

Help with the cost of full time education or attending university

Your personal adviser will discuss the financial and any other support that we will provide you with to support you whilst you are in full time education or attending university.

If you are a former relevant care leaver and you enter a higher education course, we will provide you with financial support. The support available will be discussed with you. You will however, always be provided with the following if you need it:

- A weekly living allowance
- A bursary of £2,000 divided over the length of your course
- Help and support with the cost of accommodation during holidays.
- Support to communicate with a nominated support worker at the university to ensure all necessary support is provided
- Support with educational equipment/materials

There is also a 16 -19-year-old bursary. Young people in care and care leavers are guaranteed a £1,200 bursary if you stay in full-time further education. We will help you to get in touch with education provider (school or college) to find out how to claim the bursary.

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How payments will be made

If you are entitled to personal allowance and accommodation payments, your social worker or personal adviser will organise these as follows:

- Payment of personal allowances will be made to a bank or building society
- A birthday payment will be made in the week before your birthday
- A Christmas or festival payment will be made in early December or at a time suitable to your festival

Education, Training and Employment

Your personal adviser or social worker will help you to achieve the best possible opportunities for education, training and employment and will work with anyone else who can help you. We have a dedicated adviser from the Virtual School who will be happy to offer you careers advice whenever you need it. She is available through your personal adviser or you can drop in and see her at The Vicarage.

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Health and Well Being

Every young person will have different support needs when it comes to health and it will be for you to ask your Personal Adviser for help where you need it. If you feel there are things that you really need to talk to someone about, then your Personal Adviser can direct you to services and perhaps attend some of the initial meetings with you if you'd like some moral support.

However, there are some key things that you might want to consider asking your Personal Adviser to help you with:

- Registering with a GP, Dentist and even an Optician if you have not done so already or if you have moved to a new area. You have the right to choose your primary healthcare providers and cannot legally be refused treatment based on any outstanding application for leave to remain in the UK. To check for your nearest health service, go to the NHS Service Search tool <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search>
- Signposting you to appropriate services for your physical, mental and sexual health.
- Attending hospital appointments with you for non-routine health concerns, as these can often be stressful and so it is good for you to have someone there with you. Also, if you do end up as a patient at hospital then your Personal Adviser should come in and see you.
- Advice on healthy living which will include anything from being smart about having safe sex all the way through to having a balanced diet.
- During the coming year, the NHS will ensure that young people due to leave care will be offered a copy of a health passport describing their medical history.



<https://beeu.org.uk/im-young-person/im-16-or-over/> BeeU can put you in touch with services when you feel that you need support with your emotional or mental health.

<https://kooth.com> provides free, safe and anonymous online support for young people via a social platform for young people.

<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/beam/shropshire> Beam is an emotional health and well-being service for children and young people across the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin areas so if you're under 25 and have something on your mind, they are there to listen and support you.

Don't forget The Samaritans, who provide emotional support if you are struggling to cope or having suicidal thoughts.
Freephone: 116 123

Relationships

We know how important it is to have close friendships and family support so we want to do as much as we can to help you to keep people you value close to you. We will support you with the cost of seeing close family and other people important to you and make it possible for you to make new relationships through things like leisure passes and the Care Leavers' Forum. We will also support you when things are not going well with your close relationships by either talking things through with your personal adviser or by putting you in touch with other people we know.

Complaints and Advocacy

We will always try to give a high standard of support. If you are unhappy with the service you have received, you might want to talk to someone you trust who might be able to help you sort the problem.

This could be a parent, carer, key worker, personal adviser, social worker, designated teacher or an advocate.

You may also want to give feedback about the following:

- Anything good about the service you received.
- Any ideas which you may have about how we can do things better or do things in a different way.

You are entitled to let us know if you are not happy and, if necessary, to make a complaint if you are not satisfied with the support you are receiving or feel that you have not been listened to.

If you have tried to speak to someone or feel unable to and there is still a problem and you want to make a complaint, make a suggestion or give a compliment you can contact us in several ways:

Email: customer.feedback@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 0345 678 9000

You can download this leaflet which explains everything:
<https://shropshire.gov.uk/media/10601/childrens-feedback-leaflet-aug-2018.pdf>

You have the right to have an advocate. An advocate is someone that can help you to get your voice heard. They are separate from Children's Services and work for you. Advocates will listen to you and help you to put your views and wishes across. If you need help or support in making your complaint, you can contact Coram Voice on their freephone number 0808 800 5792 or email them help@coramvoice.org.uk or download their leaflet https://coram.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource_files/Coram%20Voice%20Advocacy%20and%20You.pdf

Getting in touch with us:

Your social worker and personal adviser will provide you with their direct dial extension, mobile number and email address.

The Leaving Care Team, The Vicarage, Shirehall, SY2 6ND

If your social worker or personal adviser is unavailable, you can contact the duty personal adviser who will help you:

Leaving Care duty personal adviser - 01743 254590

You can email the leaving Care Team at:
LeavingCare16Plus@Shropshire.gov.uk

If you need to urgently contact us during the evening, at night or at the weekend, contact our out of hours team on 01743 244197



Access to records and data protection

The law says that you have a right to see information that is written about you. This includes social services files. You can ask to see any information held by the council about you. Please ask your social worker or personal adviser for further information.

Getting Involved

The Care Leavers' Forum meets regularly to support the Leaving Care Team to improve what we do. In fact, this booklet was put together with the help of the forum. For more details about how to get involved, please contact your Leaving Care Ambassador on 01743 254590.

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01743 254590