
OUR LOCAL OFFER

This is our offer to you, so you know what to expect and what help and guidance we will support you with throughout your journey from care to adulthood





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Section 1

An introduction to our local offer and care leavers 18+ service

What our local offer is to you

All local authorities have a legal obligation to support young people making the transition from care to independence. It is Kent County Council's responsibility to ensure that you know what services are available to you and what you can expect to receive whilst you are in care.

Eligible Young People

They are aged 16 or 17, have been **Looked After** for a period or periods totalling at least 13 weeks starting after their 14th birthday and are still in care. (This total does not include a series of pre-planned short-term placements of up to four weeks where the child has returned to the parent). There is a duty to support these young people up to the age of 18, wherever they are living.

The statutory definition and requirements to undertake a needs assessment, prepare a Pathway Plan, keep the Pathway Plan under review and appoint a Personal Adviser are covered by Regulations 42, 43 and 44 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010.

Relevant Young People

They are aged 16 or 17 and are no longer Looked After, having previously been in the category of Eligible Young Person when in care (that is, they have been Looked After for a period, or periods, totalling at least 13 weeks starting after their 14th birthday and up to their 16th birthday). However, if after leaving care, a young person returns home for a period of 6 months or more to be cared for by a parent and the return home has been formally agreed as successful, he or she will no longer be a "Relevant Young Person".

A young person is also "Relevant" if, having been in care for three months or more, he or she is then detained after their 16th birthday either in a hospital, remand centre, young offenders' institution or secure training centre. There is a duty to support Relevant Young People up to the age of 18, wherever they are living.

The statutory definition and requirements to stay in touch with the young person, undertake a needs assessment (unless this was done when the young person was 'Eligible'), prepare and keep the Pathway Plan under review, appoint a Personal Adviser (unless this was done when the young person was 'Eligible') and provide accommodation and assistance to meet his or her needs in relation to education, training or employment are now covered by Regulations 4 to 9 of the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010.

Former Relevant Young People

They are aged 18 to 25 and have left care having been previously either "Eligible", "Relevant" or both. There is a duty to consider the need to support these young people wherever they are living.

The statutory definition and requirements to stay in touch with the young person, keep the Pathway Plan under review, continue the appointment of a Personal Adviser and provide financial assistance near where the young person is employed or seeking employment/to enable the young person to pursue education or training remain unchanged; they are now covered by Regulations 4 to 9 of the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010. These duties continue until the young person becomes 21 or, where the Pathway Plan sets out a programme of education or training beyond 21, they continue so long as the young person pursues the programme. The duty to pay a higher education bursary also continues, as before for those who started a course of higher education after 2008.

The duties of Local Authorities are extended in relation to **Former Relevant Young People who inform the Local Authority of their wish to receive a service** after the age of 21 and under the age of 25. In relation to these young people, the Local authority has a duty to:

- Appoint a Personal Adviser;
- Carry out an assessment of the needs to determine what assistance (if any) it would be appropriate to provide;
- Prepare a Pathway Plan;
- Give assistance to the extent that the young person's educational or training needs require it. The kinds of assistance are: contributing to expenses incurred by the young person in living near the place where s/he is, or will be, receiving education or training; or making a grant to enable the young person to meet expenses connected with his education and training;
- For those in full-time education, aged 16-19, access to the bursary fund which came into place in 2011.
- The duties of the Local Authority subsist for as long as the young person pursues the programme of education or training in accordance with the Pathway Plan, and the Local Authority may disregard any interruption in the education/training if it is satisfied that the young person will resume it as soon as is reasonably practicable.

In each case where a care leaver requests this support, the Local Authority will need to assess the appropriateness of the course and how it will help the young person to achieve

his or her ambitions. The extent of the practical and financial assistance provided will reflect the type of course, whether full - or part-time, and the young person's existing income.

Qualifying Young People

They are aged 16 and over and under the age of 21, and are:

- Subject to a special guardianship order (or were when they reached 18) and were looked after immediately before the making of that Order;
- At any time after 16 (but whilst still a child), were looked after, accommodated or fostered.

'Looked after, accommodated or fostered' includes:

- Looked After by a local authority;
- Accommodated by or on behalf of a voluntary organisation;
- Accommodated in a private children's home;
- Accommodated for a consecutive period of at least 3 months (including even before the child was 16) by a Health Authority, CCG or Local Authority (providing education), in:
 - A care home;
 - Independent hospital;
 - National Health Service trust or Foundation Trust;
 - Privately Fostered - but do not qualify as Eligible, Relevant or Former Relevant.

Where a local authority looked after, accommodated or fostered a young person, and they are deemed as Qualifying for advice and assistance, the local authority has a duty to take reasonable steps to contact them with a view to advising and assisting them.

They may receive support, advice and assistance (including, in exceptional circumstances, cash or accommodation) wherever they are living.

If in full-time further or higher education, this may include contributing financial assistance to living expenses relating to their education or training or making a grant towards meeting their education/training expenses - including in relation to securing vacation accommodation up to the age of 24.

Our local offer for care leavers has the objective to clearly provide in a single document what you are entitled to and what we can expect from you. This will assist you in making the most out of our services that are available to you and make the most of your independence; our local offer is available to all eligible care leavers.

We have consulted with the Young Adult Council that advised us their views and opinions on the content of our offer.

At the end of our local offer you will find there is a section for useful contact details, should you require these.

About our Care Leavers 18+ service

Being a Corporate Parent, means that it is our responsibility to be good parents to all our young people in care and being a good parent means keeping our young people safe and providing them with the highest possible level of support to recognise and meet everyone's individual needs.

We can assist you in accessing housing, education, training, work experience and health services; whilst being here to support you to make the most of leaving our care,; we are also able to assist you by providing you advice, encouragement and financial advice to help you make the most of your journey through the care system.

Our care leavers 18+ service is based in West Malling and Dover; it is part of the specialist children's corporate parenting service and works closely with young people who are over the age of 18. Our care leavers 18+ service team is made up with personal advisers; who will support you with your journey to independent living. The care leavers 18+ service has a legal obligation to support you and provide you with assistance until you are at the age of 25.

What you can expect from your Corporate Parents

The government have introduced corporate parenting principles that requires all departments within a local authority to recognise their role as a corporate parent and encourage them to look at the support and services they provide. These principles require corporate parents:

- To act in the best interest and promote the physical, mental health and wellbeing of those children and young people;
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- To help those children and young people to gain access to, and make the best use of, the services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- To promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for those children and young people;

- To ensure those children and young people are safe and have stability in their home lives, relationships, education and/or work place;
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

About our Personal Advisers and what their role is

When you turn 18-years old, your social worker will be replaced with a personal adviser. The role of your personal adviser is to become your main point of contact and continue supporting you at least until you turn 21, however, they can support you until you turn 25 if you need or want further support.

Your personal adviser will be identified for you after you become 17-years old; this is for you to build a relationship with them before they become your allocated worker, we refer to this as transition working.

Your personal adviser will keep in contact with you and arrange meetings, they will visit you at home and arrange community visits. You, as the young person, are entitled to make the decisions and choices that help unfold your future as an adult; your personal adviser will provide you advice, information and guidance to help you make the best choices and decisions.

The relationship between yourself and your personal adviser is important to make the most of what you can access through the care leavers 18+ service.

Understanding your pathway plan

Every young person between 16 and 25-years of age that is in care or is a care leaver is provided with a pathway plan. Your pathway plan will be started by your social worker when you turn 16; this will be reviewed with your care plan twice per year and when you turn 18, your personal adviser will take over the duties in managing this for you.

Your first pathway plan meeting will be chaired by your independent review officer and evaluated with your care plan and personal education plan, should you have one. The pathway plan has information on the best way for us to support you in your transition to independence and adulthood.

Your pathway plan is written in such a way that should meet your individual needs and it will capture your hopes for the future, it will also include your views and key messages. Your pathway plan will be regularly reviewed with you and this will take place at least every 6-months – these meetings will ensure that your goals and milestones are still correct and being met.

Section 2

Your money

This section will provide you with information on what financial assistance you can expect from us. The amount of money that you will be provided with depends on your age and the accommodation that you stay in.

You will be provided with a personal adviser, support worker and keyworker who you can ask for more information from. Remember, if you are not certain about anything you will need to ask a member of staff.

There is a lot of information for care leavers on the *Kent cares town* website, for further information please go to this address <https://kentcares town.lea.kent.sch.uk/>

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p>Essential living allowance We will support you to claim benefits if you are out of work, however if you are unable to claim benefits, then we will offer you a weekly essential living allowance.</p> <p>This payment will be the equivalent to state benefits and you will be expected to use this for your living costs, excluding rent and household bills. These bills could include gas, electricity, water and council tax</p> <p>How you will be paid We can supply you with a Kent Card and money will be paid onto this fortnightly.</p>	<p>You will need to spend your essential living allowance on day to day essentials and you should budget your money and pay for your essentials first, such as food and bills.</p>
<p>Savings If you have been in care for a long period of time you will have a savings account that you are able to access once you turn 18. If you are unable to open a bank account, you will be given a Kent Card and money will be paid onto this weekly. (Click for further information https://sharefound.org/)</p>	<p>Depending on how long you have been in care your savings may be a substantial amount – use this money to help you with your future.</p> <p>If you aren't aware how to budget and spend your money wisely then you may struggle when you live on your own.</p>

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p>Budgeting</p> <p>We will develop an accredited course and assist you with learning how to budget and live independently.</p> <p>We will develop a peer to peer financial mentoring model, where former care leavers support current care leavers by sharing basic advice and support with issues relating to personal finances and budgeting.</p> <p>You will be offered budgeting sessions with your keyworker or support worker.</p>	<p>Not being able to budget properly may affect you in the long-term and if you require budgeting support then speak to your personal adviser.</p>
<p>Welfare benefits</p> <p>When you are old enough to apply for benefits, we will help you do this.</p> <p>If you have applied for benefits and are waiting to be paid, we will offer you an allowance to help you live for a period of up to 6-weeks. This allowance will be in the form of cash payments and food vouchers, up to the value of the essential living allowance.</p> <p>Benefit options</p> <p>Universal credit is a single monthly payment for people in or out of work.</p> <p>It replaces some of the benefits and tax credits that you might be getting now, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing benefit; ▪ Child tax credit; ▪ Income support; ▪ Working tax credit; ▪ Income-based jobseeker's allowance; ▪ Income-related employment and support allowance. 	<p>You must attend your appointments as it is a criminal offence to lie to the benefits office.</p> <p>You will need to provide your personal adviser with proof that you have applied for benefits.</p> <p>If you don't attend appointments with the job centre you will be sanctioned and your benefits may be stopped.</p> <p>We will only be able to provide food vouchers the first time you are sanctioned, the second time we may refer you to a local food bank. You may not receive any subsistence money from us if you are sanctioned.</p> <p>Your personal adviser will be able to advise and support you with applying for benefits.</p>
<p>Setting up home allowances</p> <p>We will offer you a setting up home allowance up to the value of £2,000 to buy essential items for when you move into your own home. Instalments will be paid of up to £500 once receipts have been provided</p>	<p>To choose items you really need from the essential items list and only essential items for your home may be purchased.</p> <p>You will need to provide receipts to show that only those essential items have been</p>

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p>verifying previous payments.</p> <p>At times you may need essential items of furniture before you move onto independent living; the care leavers 18+ service team manager must agree costs and only essential items will be considered.</p> <p>We will support and promote you to progress into independent living in the community, we will provide additional financial support to cover accommodation deposit, 1 month rent advance and agent fees in addition to the £2,000 setting up home allowance.</p>	<p>purchased.</p>
<p>Miscellaneous payments</p> <p>We understand that everyone has their own unique circumstances.</p> <p>The care leavers 18+ service will consider payments for 'unexpected items' and payments will need to be agreed by the care leavers 18+ service team manager and an assessment of need will be carried out.</p> <p>Bursaries for education</p> <p>Bursaries or money for your education and training will be provided.</p> <p>Bursary for care leavers in higher education is to be extended to £4,000 provided over 4 years, £1000 per year, to support for a further year after successful completion of degree course.</p> <p>We will provide appropriate financial assistance to help purchase IT equipment and laptops for care leavers up to the age of 25 who are in further or higher education.</p> <p>We will explore the extension of support and financial assistance for college travel fare up to age of 25.</p>	<p>We need you to work in partnership with us and your education/training provider to ensure you are supported and receiving all the support you need from them. This will involve you taking part in discussions about your progress and attendance.</p>
<p>Subsistence and food vouchers</p> <p>We will pay for day to day essential items and food vouchers to provide to care leavers for the following reasons:</p>	<p>Speak to your personal adviser if you think you are entitled to subsistence and food vouchers or if you are facing an emergency.</p>

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As part of an education package; ▪ If you are unable to claim benefits; ▪ If you are waiting for your benefits to start; ▪ In an emergency. <p>Clothing Allowance £120 per year, paid in two separate amounts of £70 and £50.</p> <p>Birthday Money Allowance £30 paid on 17th birthday. £60 paid on 18th birthday.</p>	<p>We may ask for proof of your situation and we fully understand that emergencies do happen.</p>
<p>Other sources of funding Some organisations help care leavers by awarding grants that do not need to be repaid.</p> <p>Some grants help with university, moving into independent accommodation and financial support to help you train.</p> <p>Contact the care catch22 advice line on:</p> <p>0207 017 8901 www.catch-22.org.uk</p>	<p>Speak to your personal adviser and support worker about what other funds you may be entitled to or try to Google search to investigate and find out what other financial support is out there for care leavers; you may apply to charities and organisations for additional grant funding if you meet their criteria.</p>

Section 3

Important documents

We all need important documents because without them we are unable to do simple things such as; applying for a course, claim benefits or open a bank account.

We will ensure you have the important documents that you require in adulthood, such as a passport and a birth certificate. We will also keep copies of your important documents safely on our files and you will be responsible for keeping the original documents safe.

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p>Your national insurance number When you are 15-years and 9-months old, we will apply for you to have a national insurance number.</p>	<p>Ask your social worker if you do not receive this. You no longer receive a NI Card so you need to keep your number safe.</p>
<p>Passport We will support you with an application for a 10-year passport and this will be your main source of identification. We will fund application for a Travel Document for our Asylum Care Leavers.</p>	<p>Do not lose this or you will have to apply and pay for a new one. If you do lose this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You will not be allowed to leave the country or travel; ▪ You may be at risk of identity theft.
<p>Provisional driving licence We will pay 50% towards your provisional driving licence and your theory and practical driving tests, if you need to learn to drive for education and training purposes. If this is agreed, we will pay 50% for a maximum of x20 driving lessons.</p>	<p>You are unable to drive without a provisional driving licence.</p> <p>If you lose your licence you will have to pay for a new one and if you do not turn up for driving lessons, we will discontinue our contribution.</p>
<p>Birth certificate If you do not have a birth certificate we will apply for you to get one.</p>	<p>If you lose this document, you will have to pay for a new copy.</p>
<p>Keeping documents safe We will keep copies of all your documents safe for you and you will keep the original documents.</p>	<p>At certain times you will need your original documents and copies of documents will not be accepted; for example; opening a bank account.</p>
<p>British citizenship If you are entitled to apply for British citizenship before the age of 18, then we will support you to do this.</p>	<p>To tell us you want to apply.</p>

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p data-bbox="140 232 448 271">Access to your file</p> <p data-bbox="140 273 785 383">If you apply for access to your file, then we will provide you with access to your social services files from the age of 18.</p> <p data-bbox="140 421 785 568">If you would like to see your file, then please make a request in writing and give this to your personal adviser who will make the appropriate arrangements.</p>	<p data-bbox="809 232 1455 376">Think about this decision very carefully as files can be difficult to read. However, we will offer you with full support if you choose to do so.</p>

Section 4

Housing options

There are different kinds of housing with support and you will have a large say on where you wish to live. Your social worker and personal adviser will be visiting you and where you choose to live will be agreed in your pathway plan.

If you are at university and require help with the cost of accommodation during vacation time, we will support you with this.

Staying on with foster carers is referred to as *staying put* and you can stay with your foster carer until the age of 21, if agreed. This will not affect you on obtaining permanent tenancy and we have a range of different kind of supported housing options that are available depending on your need.

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p>Independent housing</p> <p>It is important to know that you will need to be in education, training or employment before you will be considered for independent housing. You will also need to show us that you can budget, cook and keep your home tidy. If you are living out of county we will inform you about your housing options.</p> <p>When you are in independent accommodation you are responsible for yourself and for paying your bills, such as gas, electricity, council tax and water. We will support you with applications, so you can access registered social landlords, also known as housing associations. If your application is successful you will get a tenancy of your own.</p> <p>Council tax</p> <p>Council tax is a payment for local services and many people over 18 are liable to pay it and if you are on benefits this cost will be included.</p>	<p>To keep on top of your bills and to abide by your tenancy agreement, you can work with your personal adviser to help you with this as if you do not keep to your tenancy agreement, you may be at risk of eviction and homelessness.</p> <p>Find out about your bills as water, gas, council tax and electricity can all be paid for monthly through your bank and this is a much better option than running up bills.</p> <p>Make sure you know how your rent is being paid as it is your responsibility, whether you are working or on benefits, to ensure that your rent is paid to avoid eviction.</p>
<p>Maintenance and DIY</p> <p>We will arrange for a maintenance person who can offer you advice and guidance about the property as they can help you with DIY, how to make your house look better.</p>	

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p>Staying put If you and your carer agree, you can keep living in your foster placement until you reach 21.</p> <p>You will be a lodger in their home, in that you will be renting a room from them and you will be expected to pay a contribution for your keep.</p>	<p>Staying put will help you maintain a supportive relationship with your carers and, if you decide to do this, we will still help you apply for independent accommodation after you are 21.</p> <p>Do not be in a rush to get your own property as independent living is hard, so make sure you make the right choice for you.</p>
<p>Keyword sessions For a period, you will have the support of your Personal Adviser when you get your permanent home, to help you settle in. We will provide somewhere suitable to live taking into account your needs and wishes.</p> <p>We will undertake a pathway plan review when you have been in your home for 28-days and at least every 6-months after that.</p> <p>We will provide you with a personal adviser who visits within a week of you moving into your new home, and then visit at least every 2 months after that.</p>	<p>Make sure you use the support from your keyworker as they are there to help and support you and speak to your personal adviser if you feel you are not getting the support you need.</p>
<p>Supported and semi-independent accommodation This is a supportive accommodation package for care leavers who are ready for independent accommodation but require or would like extra help and support.</p> <p>In Kent there is a range of housing with support, for example some accommodation might be in shared houses or single flats.</p> <p>The key purpose for supported accommodation is there will be staff on hand to support and guide you and they might be there for certain parts of the day or 24 hours.</p>	<p>Engage with your support worker as they will help you access local services and connect with your local community and, if you have any problems with settling in, your support worker will help you.</p> <p>You will be expected to abide by the house rules.</p>

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p>University accommodation in holiday periods</p> <p>You will receive a student loan to cover the cost of your university rent and whilst you are at university we can pay your holiday accommodation rent if there is a need.</p> <p>The amount paid will be agreed by the head of the care leavers 18+ service.</p>	<p>If you do not use your accommodation, then you may be risk of losing it.</p>
<p>Moving placement and school/college</p> <p>We will aim to keep you safe in one place and if you do move we will try to make this planned.</p> <p>If you must change school/college, we will make sure you are well supported with this transition and we will seek to adhere to the principles of staying close.</p>	<p>If you are unhappy in your placement speak to your social worker or personal adviser and they will be able to guide you.</p> <p>Attend your looked after children review and pathway planning meetings so you can talk about your placement and any plans to move you. You will be fully involved in any housing decisions.</p>
<p>Ongoing housing support</p> <p>Your personal adviser will assist and guide you with housing issues and if you live in supported housing you will have a support worker who will work with you to help you build your independence skills.</p> <p>Your personal adviser may refer you to a floating support worker if you live in your own flat who will help with your personal life and practical life skills, such as; budgeting.</p> <p>We have a rent deposit and rent guarantee scheme that can be accessed by care leavers, enabling them to seek housing in the private rented sector.</p>	<p>If you are allocated a worker and you do not go to meetings the support may stop, so try to engage with your workers and get the maximum benefit from them as they are there to support you.</p>

Section 5

Your safety

As your corporate parent, your safety is at our utmost priority and we will do our very best to keep you safe and ensure you have a safe place to live.

If you do get in trouble with the police service, then we will support you and make sure you have an adult you trust with you. If you go missing from our care, we will report you missing and go to the police to try to make sure there is an adult you know or trust who can help you.

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p>A safe place to live If your placement is unsafe we will work with you to move you to somewhere that is.</p>	<p>Make sure you tell us when you are worried about something and don't allow strangers into your home.</p>
<p>Keeping safe We will provide you with guidance and practical advice on how to keep yourself practically and emotionally safe and we may refer you to a counsellor or mentor to enable this.</p>	<p>You must work with us and other organisations to keep you safe and ensure you attend appointments.</p>
<p>Keeping you in touch Where suitable, personal advisers should help you to keep in contact with relatives and friends that you have met whilst in care.</p> <p>If you are in custody We will aim to offer several initiatives to our care leavers who are detained in custody at the time of their care episode.</p> <p>We will ensure we are aware of all care leavers open to the children in care teams and care leavers 18+ service who are in custody and track and monitor the activity of all our care leavers entering and leaving custody.</p> <p>We will establish close working partnerships with the resettlement officers and the local prisons.</p> <p>We will ensure that you are supported by your personal adviser, with more emphasis on them giving their written consent to share</p>	<p>It is important for you to tell us who you wish to be in touch with, you might have lost touch with friends or family, and we will need your help to support you in finding these people.</p>

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p>and disclose the pathway plan and other significant information in the planning and preparation of their release into the community.</p> <p>We will provide bespoke training to the resettlement officers; this is carried out quarterly and will cover all local prisons where care leavers will be detained.</p> <p>Personal advisers will aim to visit 6-8 weekly and communicate with the allocated resettlement officers, while ensuring the pathway plan is reflective of your overall needs.</p> <p>This will also include, once consent is achieved, contact on behalf of you with family members and partners to promote the contact during detention and in the release planning.</p> <p>During the final sentence over a 12-week period your children in care social worker or personal adviser will be exploring your housing and support options before you are discharged.</p> <p>The discharge plan will be formulated into the pathway plan. We will work with Probation, NACRO and OMU.</p>	

Section 6

Getting your voice heard

Having a voice and knowing that your rights are important when you are a care leaver is important and we really want to hear your views, and there are a lot of ways that this can be done.

By allowing your voice to be heard you can help us improve our services and the care system, your workers have a duty to listen to you and involve you in decisions that are made.

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p>Leaving Care Charter</p> <p>We know that leaving care can be a difficult and uncertain time with lots of changes to consider. Kent County Council, as your 'Corporate Parent', can be there to guide and support you through it.</p> <p>The Leaving Care Charter explains exactly what you should expect in terms of the help and support Kent County Council will give you as you leave care. It follows on from the Kent Pledge made to children and young people in the care of Kent County Council. The Charter says that you must be asked about important decisions that affect you and that your opinions should be listened to.</p> <p>The Charter explains what you can do if things aren't going well or you feel you are not receiving the support you should. It also tells you how you can have an input into the services Kent County Council provides for children in care and care leavers.</p>	<p>If you do not have a copy of the Leaving Care Charter, please ask your Personal Adviser for one.</p> <p>You can also find it by visiting www.kentcarestown.lea.kent.sch.uk/.</p>

<p>Young Adult Council (YAC)</p> <p>YAC is a group of young people in care and care leavers aged 16 and over. They meet regularly to have their say about issues that affect them and others in care or those who have left care, so they can make positive changes both in their own lives and for others. Elected Members, senior leaders and key professionals at Kent County Council regularly come to meet with the members of YAC to hear their views on a variety of topics affecting young people in care and care leavers and take their advice before making significant changes or introducing new policies or procedures.</p> <p>The group also like to have fun. They regularly go on trips, take part in activities and fundraise for charity too.</p>	<p>YAC allows you to have your say and make sure your voice is heard by decision makers in Kent County Council. It is also a great way to meet new people, build confidence and boost your CV.</p> <p>If you are interested in becoming a member of YAC, please contact VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk.</p>
<p>Challenge Cards</p> <p>Challenge Cards are a formal way for you to express your views about issues faced by children in care or care leavers and challenge the way Kent County Council does things. Once a challenge is received, it is taken to one of the Children in Care (CiC) Councils where it is discussed. If the CiC Council feels that the challenge should be taken forward, it is discussed at a meeting of senior officers. It is the officers at this meeting who have the responsibility to decide on actions to meet the challenge and who will carry out these actions. It is also reported to the Corporate Parenting Panel. The Virtual School Kent Participation Team will keep you updated about the progress of your challenge.</p>	<p>Challenges should be about issues that affect many children and young people in care and care leavers. Challenge Cards that are related to personal issues are passed to relevant professionals who can help with the issue raised.</p> <p>Contact the VSK Participation Team to find out more about making a challenge to your corporate parents: VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk.</p>

<p>Recruit Crew</p> <p>Kent County Council believes that it is important to include young people, who have had experience of the care system, when they are recruiting new staff who are going to be working with children and young people. This means that when personal advisers or social workers, for example, are interviewed there is often a young person on the panel too asking questions about the things they feel are important.</p> <p>The 'Recruit Crew' is a group of care experienced young people who regularly support these recruitment activities.</p>	<p>If you would like to sit on an interview panel, please contact VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk.</p> <p>The VSK Participation Team also offer a one-day Level Two course in 'Interviewing Skills for Service Users' which helps prepare you for taking part.</p> <p>Both this course and any interview panel experience you have can be added to your CV. The experience can also help you when you are interviewed yourself as it gives you a good insight into the recruitment process.</p> <p>You will often receive vouchers as a thank you for attending and will have your travel expenses paid for.</p>
<p>Your personal adviser</p> <p>When you turn 18 you will be allocated with a personal adviser as opposed to a social worker.</p> <p>Your personal adviser will keep in contact and arrange meetings with you, they will visit you at home but can also arrange to see you in the community.</p> <p>Your personal adviser will give you advice, information and guidance to help you make the right decisions for you.</p>	<p>The visits from your personal adviser is your chance to allow your voice to be heard, speak to them about any problems you have as we don't want things to happen that you do not want.</p>
<p>Changing your personal adviser</p> <p>In exceptional circumstances you can request to have your personal adviser changed, request to speak to the care leavers 18+ service team manager if you would like this to be considered.</p>	<p>Speak to your personal adviser to work out any issues that you may have.</p>
<p>Contacting your personal adviser</p> <p>You will be provided with your personal adviser's mobile number and email address, they work from 09:00-17:00, Monday to Friday and can offer you support during that time.</p>	<p>Contact your personal adviser when you need them and agree who you can contact if you require them outside of their working hours.</p>

<p>Occasionally personal advisers leave, if this does happen then your personal adviser will say goodbye to you at least 2-weeks before this. If this does not happen we will explain to you why.</p>	
<p>Grandmentor scheme Grandmentors work with care leavers aged 16-24 and they will meet with you weekly to offer you friendship, support and guidance. Grandmentors are older adults so they have a lot of knowledge and life experience to share.</p>	<p>If you would like a grandmentor then speak to your personal adviser.</p>
<p>Participation service You will have access to Kent's participation service where you can get involved in making changes to the care system, going on trips and much more.</p> <p>Participation in society We offer the Duke of Edinburgh award to care leavers. We believe that the Duke of Edinburgh award would help young people to integrate in the community.</p> <p>The award is for young people between 14 to 24 and helps young people stand out from the crowd when they apply for college, university or jobs.</p> <p>If you do not know much about the award, here is a link www.dofe.org/do-your-dofe/.</p> <p>Kent will offer regular forums, drop-ins and various media platforms for young people to access information and to voice their views, wishes and feelings and share their experience.</p> <p>We will also promote volunteering opportunities for care leavers where they can give back to the community and at the same time the society can have a different experience and view of care leavers.</p>	<p>Get in touch with the service as getting involved in group activities, forums and training will help to boost your self-esteem, develop new skills and help you to build your curriculum vitae.</p>

<p>How to complain</p> <p>You have the right to complain if you can't solve a problem with your personal adviser or their manager.</p> <p>You can contact our complaints department on: CScomplaints@kent.gov.uk</p>	<p>Try to find a solution with your personal adviser or care leavers 18+ service team manager before contacting the complaint or advocacy services.</p>
<p>Advice and help for care leavers</p> <p>There are lots of services for care leavers require or would like support and guidance.</p> <p>There are lots of national organisations campaigning for better services for care leavers and they run national consultation events, to hear your views.</p> <p>Contact <i>become charity</i>: Freephone 0800 023 2033 advice@becomecharity.org.uk</p>	
<p>Our pledge to you</p> <p>As your corporate parents, we made a pledge to all our children in care.</p>	

Section 7

Your health

Your health matters to us, being healthy does not only mean being physically healthy, but it also is defined by your mental and sexual health. There are a lot of services that are provided to ensure all aspects of *being healthy* are met.

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p>Emotional wellbeing</p> <p>If you need someone to talk to about any concerns that you do not feel comfortable to share with your personal adviser or a trusted person, then we can refer you to have counselling.</p> <p>You can also use the child line for 24-hours support on: 0800 11 11.</p> <p>There is an excellent service available that can provide support in several life events that may present with difficulties.</p> <p>www.livewellkent.org.uk have a lot of useful information, you can call them on 0800 567 7699 to discuss how they can help you.</p>	<p>If you are struggling, speak up. There are a lot of people who are here to help you.</p>
<p>Leisure facilities</p> <p>If you would like help to access free leisure care, sport or fitness activities then speak to your personal adviser and if it is agreed by the head of care leavers 18+ service then certain costs will be covered.</p>	<p>We will try our best to give you access to leisure facilities, but this will depend on the cost and the decision of the head of care leavers 18+ service.</p>
<p>Sexual health</p> <p>If you need help and support with sexual health, you will be referred by your personal adviser to the right services for you. Your support worker or keyworker may also give you advice and guidance.</p> <p>If you are having sex or thinking about having sex it is important that you protect yourself against sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy by using a condom and planned contraception. You can speak to your personal adviser for assistance with arranging this.</p>	<p>Keep yourself safe, if you do not use a condom you will be at risk of becoming a young parent and catching sexually transmitted infections.</p> <p>There are services that provide you with free condoms, contraception, pregnancy tests and much more.</p> <p>Please click on the link for some services http://www.kentcarestown.lea.kent.sch.uk/vsk/health-centre</p>

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p>Dentist and opticians</p> <p>If you are receiving benefits you are entitled to free dental and optician care. They are also free if you are under 18 or are in full-time education.</p>	<p>It is important you keep these appointments, otherwise you could be at risk of being taken off the list of patients.</p>
<p>Drug and alcohol support</p> <p>There are several services that can help with drug and alcohol treatment, including; advice, information, drop in services, structured treatment, counselling, harm reduction and techniques.</p> <p>In East Kent: 0300 123 1186 https://www.forwardtrust.org.uk/</p> <p>In West Kent: 0844 225 0652 https://www.changegrowlive.org/</p>	<p>If you want help and support, you need to be able to speak up and let us know.</p>
<p>Your doctor</p> <p>Your personal adviser will help you to sign up with a GP.</p> <p>A GP treats preventative care and health and will be able to refer you to other services, should you require this.</p>	<p>If you move homes, it will be your responsibility to inform your GP and sign up with a different one.</p>
<p>Health passports</p> <p>When you become a care leaver you will be given a health passport by the looked after children nurse at your last statutory health check, which will contain all your health information. Your health history will be a summary of your overall health and will be provided just before your 18th birthday.</p> <p>This will be useful to use when you access health services and adult services.</p>	<p>It is important that you keep this information safe and it could be important to you at any time in the future.</p>

Section 8

Your education, training and employment

We will work hard to ensure we support you with your education. If you decide to higher this by attending university we will provide you with up to 4-years of financial support.

Further education is essential for you to gain academic qualifications that you will need when searching for employment later. However, college and university are not the only options and there are training and apprentice schemes that are very popular and can be a good way to learn whilst you earn an income.

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p>Virtual college Whilst you are in year 13 and 14 we will offer support to ensure that you are achieving the best of your ability and we will liaise with your education provider to access additional support where necessary.</p> <p>Virtual college have workers in place to assist you with your education and provide you with additional support.</p> <p>We can support you by providing 1:1 private tuition for maths and English GCSE retakes and will discuss with you and your personal assistant to put this in place if required.</p> <p>We will provide additional information to support you in your university applications and be on hand if you have concerns or worries.</p>	<p>It might not be possible to find a provider for all interests and courses, so you might need to be flexible. It is important that you do attend your training, education or employment placement to avoid being asked to leave.</p>
<p>Apprenticeships If you get an apprenticeship or traineeship we will provide you with travel money and assist you until you receive your first pay.</p> <p>Apprenticeships can also be another way of achieving higher education without accruing the university debt.</p>	<p>Please speak to your personal adviser if you would like to find out more information on apprenticeships or traineeships.</p> <p>We hold a money management course, please liaise with your personal adviser if you would like to sign up for this.</p>
<p>Finding work and our interview allowance We will provide you with a one-off payment of £50 to purchase clothes for an interview. We will also help by providing you with</p>	<p>Please contact your personal adviser or support worker about help with getting ready for an interview and with applying for jobs, they can help you with this.</p>

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p>interview practice, assisting with applying for jobs and with creating your curriculum vitae and personal statement.</p> <p>The job centre plus will support you to look and apply for work if you are not in education or employment and adult learning can support you.</p> <p>Our care leavers will receive assistance in purchasing a young person's travel card and or bus pass, so they can get to work.</p>	<p>If you are claiming Job Seekers Allowance you will be expected to work with the DWP to find a job.</p>
<p>Exam rewards</p> <p>If you provide your personal adviser with images of certificates every time you complete a qualification, we financially reward results from ESOL/GCSE to degree level. This would be £25 cash.</p> <p>£100 reward</p> <p>If you complete your undergraduate degree, we will reward you with £100.</p>	<p>Please make sure you let us know when you do achieve some success, we would like to celebrate this with you.</p>
<p>University</p> <p>If you decide to go to university we will assist you with your housing during holiday periods and provide you with extra financial support. Long-term funding for higher education will be agreed by our management team if necessary.</p> <p>We will support you for a maximum of 4-years of university study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You will be eligible to apply for a student loan; ▪ We will support you to visit universities prior to acceptance; with travel costs. ▪ We will assist you with the initial costs of moving to & from university up to £200. <p>You may also be entitled to additional support from the university who often have additional funds and grants for care leavers.</p>	<p>If you are thinking about applying for university, please speak to your personal adviser as they will be able to assist with applying for your personal loan.</p>

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p>University support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person You may study at university if you are an unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person. However, you may not be entitled to pay home fees and you may not be eligible for student finance.</p> <p>Some universities use their discretionary powers to allow unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people to study as home students.</p> <p>Discretionary leave to remain You may be entitled to university support if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You live in England; ▪ You have lived in England for 3-years; ▪ You are under 18 or you have lived in England for 7-years. <p>Indefinite leave to remain You may be entitled to home fees and student finance.</p>	<p>If you are interested in applying for university it will depend on your immigration status, please contact your personal assistant who can assist you with this.</p>
<p>Further education You will be supported if you are in further education and there are several funds available to you:</p> <p>16-19bursary Please apply for the bursary from your student services adviser at college during the FIRST week of your studies.</p> <p>Discretionary learner support fund If you are advised that support is not available immediately discuss this with your personal adviser who can assist you.</p> <p>Care to learn For young parents, aged 19 and under, there is government funding to support in place to assist with nursery and childminder costs for young parents.</p>	<p>If you are not in employment, on a training programme or in education you will have to claim benefits.</p> <p>Your attendance and behaviour will be monitored and if you are a young parent, then please contact your personal adviser about what extra support is available for you.</p>

Our offer to you	Your responsibilities and our advice
<p>Volunteering We will support and encourage you access volunteering opportunities.</p>	<p>Volunteer placements can be great fun, you can earn accreditation and receive a small allowance for travel and lunch.</p>
<p>Travel costs If you live in Kent, we will provide you with a 16+ travel card which you can use up until the age of 21 years.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to additional payment if having to travel outside of Kent, to be agreed by Team Manager.</p> <p>If you are in full time education, training and living and learning in London, you are entitled to one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 16+ student oyster card- this offers free travel on buses and trams across London; ▪ 18+ student oyster card – this offers 30% off the cost of adult travel fare. 	<p>If you are under 19 and in full-time education, please apply for the 16+ oyster card (not 18+) as you are eligible for free travel.</p> <p>We will pay a £10 administration cost for you to get an oyster card or equivalent for the area you live in.</p> <p>Please click on link for further information https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/travelling-around-kent/bus-travel/bus-passes/16-travel-card</p>
<p>Studying away from home Funding may be available for those who would like to access specialist courses outside of the local area.</p> <p>This would have to be agreed by the care leavers 18+ service team manager. The 2 main types of funding are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Residential bursaries from the college; ▪ Residential support schemes. 	<p>Please let us know how we can support your study.</p>
<p>Additional education payments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We will pay the registration and/or exam fees for your agreed course; ▪ We will support you with essential equipment and books as agreed on an individual basis; ▪ We will pay an exam reward money when you have completed qualifications. 	<p>Please contact us if you feel things are going wrong and you are struggling with the course – we can help to support you.</p>

Section 9

Useful contact information

Our offices	
Worrall House 03000 421 124	30 Kings Hill Avenue West Malling Kent ME19 4AE
Thistley Hill 03000 410 701	Melbourne Avenue Dover Kent CT16 2JH
The Sunlight Centre <i>Drop-in</i>	105 Richmond Road Gillingham Kent ME7 1LX
Information zone	3 Palace Avenue Maidstone Kent ME26 6NF

Feedback or suggestions about Virtual School Kent?		
The Young Adult Council	Vsk_participation@kent.gov.uk	03000 419163
Need a travel pass?		
Young person's travel pass	youngpersonstravelpass@kent.gov.uk	03000 418484

Websites with helpful information regarding training providers in Kent, and apprenticeships		
https://www.readytoworkkent.co.uk/		
http://www.apprenticekent.com/home		
http://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/college-sixth-form-employment-and-training		
http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/volunteering		
You may also find useful...		
Benefits	www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/entitlement	
Solicitor	www.lawsociety.org.uk/find-a-solicitor	
Care Leavers Association	www.careleavers.com	0161 2361980
National Leaving Care Advisor Service	www.leavingcare.org	020 7336 4824
Care Leavers Foundation	www.thecareleaversfoundation.org	01678 540 598
Refugee Council	www.refugeecouncil.org.uk	0808 808 0500
New Horizon Youth Centre	www.nhyouthcentre.org.uk	020 7388 5580
Citizens Advice Bureau	www.citizensadvice.org.uk	0300 330 1313
Shelter	www.shelter.org.uk	0808 800 4444
Who Cares Trust	advice@thewhocarestrust.org.uk	020 7017 8901
Voice	www.voiceyp.org	0808 800 5792