

NORTH SOMERSET'S
OFFER FOR OUR
CARE LEAVERS

FOREWORD

Welcome you to our care leavers local offer.

Corporate parenting means acting how any parent would do for their child: giving their child the support, guidance and care to allow them to fulfil their dreams. It is important to me that our offer supports young people in all aspects of their lives. It is driven by the voice of the young people who have experiences of what it is like to be in care and then leave care as they know best the support that they need both now and in the future.

We are really proud of what our young people have achieved in making this booklet and we hope it will help you in making the very most of all the support that is available to you.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheila Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sheila Smith (One of your corporate parents)



Councillor Gibbons

Executive Member for
Children's Services



Sheila Smith

Director of Children's
Services



Bethany Swan

Young Director

Personally, I think it's worth reading this leaflet because it tells you exactly what you're entitled to and explains who is there to help you get those entitlements.

When I moved out of my foster home, I had no idea the kind of help I would get, I truly thought I had to fend for myself and then one day I was shown this document which wrote about all the support I could get. Help with getting onto more college courses, a savings account ready for me, and my leaving care grant meaning I could get nice flooring, a fridge and a bed amongst many other things. If I could pass on any kind of wisdom for anyone leaving care, it would be: You're going to be given a lot of documents and leaflets and every single one of them will contain at least one thing that can help you and you'll only find that if you look through them.

Bethany Swann

Bethany Swann, Young Director

INTRODUCTION

This is our local offer for care experienced young people in North Somerset.

Here is information about the support we can offer to you in our role as your corporate parents. This booklet will let you know what you are entitled to and how we will support, guide, and help you towards a successful life as an adult.

We understand that leaving care can be a difficult time for many young people. It can be scary and feel like you are suddenly on your own. We want you to know that you are not lone and that you are important to us.

CORPORATE PARENTING PRINCIPLES

We are your corporate parents. This may seem like a strange term.

It means that care experienced young people should expect the same level of care and support that other young people would expect from a good parent.

We take our responsibilities as corporate parents seriously and are committed to the following principles which have been set out in law:

- to act in the best interests and promote the physical, mental health and wellbeing of our children and young people
- to encourage our young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- take into account the views, wishes and feelings of our children and young people
- to help our children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes for our children and young people
- to help our children and young people to be safe, and to have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- to prepare our children and young people for adulthood and independent living

YOUR RIGHTS AND OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

YOUR RIGHTS

- you have a right to be involved in all decisions regarding when you leave care and your plans for leaving care
- you have a right to tell us how you feel about the services you are receiving and expect an answer
- you have a right to see all information about you including all the files North Somerset Council kept when you were in care
- we will support you to apply for the financial support you are entitled to

MENTORING AND ADVOCACY

- You can ask for a volunteer mentor to meet you regularly to offer ongoing help, support, and advice
- You have the right to have an independent advocate who can offer confidential advice and help you understand your rights. You can ask your Personal Adviser for a referral so you can self-refer to

Junction 21 Mentoring and Advocacy

- Steve Coggins 01275 888 360
- Junction21@n-somerset.gov.uk

PATHWAY PLAN

The Pathway Plan is a continuation of your Care Plan.

With you, your social worker or personal adviser will prepare a Pathway Plan that sets out how we will help you to achieve the things you want to. We will start to do this while you are still in care, around your 16th birthday. We will review it with you at least every six months until you are 21. It is designed to help you make the most of life and develop useful skills that could help you in the future.

It will include things like:

- where you will live
- any education or training
- jobs, money, financial manager, such as opening a bank account
- applying for a National Insurance number
- your health and lifestyle
- support with developing your individual identity including understanding your life story
- offer you an assessment for support if you become a parent
- group activities to reduce the risk of feeling isolated and increase your well being
- provide specific support to unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people who cannot access benefits
- an opportunity to join the Care Leavers' Council

ADVICE AND SUPPORT FROM A LEAVING CARE PERSONAL ADVISER (LCPA)

Personal Advisers are part of the Leaving Care Team.

Your Personal Adviser will support you until you are 21 and you can request ongoing support up to the age of 25. Your personal adviser will be in contact with you at least every two months or more often if you need this.

Personal Advisers are responsible for ensuring that your Pathway Plan is written in consultation with you and important people in your life. It will be reviewed regularly until you reach age 21. Your Pathway Plan sets out your needs, views, future goals, and identifies exactly what support you will receive.

Your Personal Adviser can help you with independent living and a wide range of advice and support.

We will try to make sure you keep the same personal adviser, although this is not always possible. The amount of support that you receive from your personal adviser will depend on your circumstances.

ACCOMMODATION

We will ensure you have secure housing where you feel safe and settled. Your personal adviser will help you to look at housing options and choose the most suitable home for you. We will:

- support you to stay in your foster placement until you are 21 if that's best for you and your foster carers
- support you to access your setting up home grant that can be used to furnish your first home
- support you in securing and maintaining your own tenancy through our Rent Guarantor Scheme
- advocate for you if you need help or support with your housing
- act as a guarantor if you need this
- pay your Council Tax until you are 25
- offer advice and training about how to manage your money
- help you to enrol on the Electoral Register so you can vote in Elections
- work with our Housing Advice Officer to find suitable housing where you feel safe including supported accommodation if you are not ready or don't want to have your own tenancy
- provide you with advice about maintaining a tenancy, and support you if you get into trouble, such as debt, paying bills etc
- if you are at risk of homelessness, we have two specialist workers who will support you back into stable housing

You can access our Housing Protocol to learn more.

FINANCES & ID

Becoming an adult and living independently can be complicated and expensive. As a Care Leaver you are entitled to financial support.

FINANCIAL ENTITLEMENTS/SUPPORT

Your Personal Adviser can support you to budget your money or they can signpost you to more specialist advice if that is what you need and help you to claim all you are entitled to. Please look at our Entitlement Guide for more detailed information on what financial assistance is available to you.

Some examples of financial entitlements are included below:

- support towards paying your Council Tax
- support for driving lessons
- contribution to WIFI costs
- emergency payments if you are in financial crisis
- financial support for higher education
- free gym pass
- leaving care grant to help you buy essential items to set up home (e.g. bed, cooker)
- money on your birthday
- support to access your Junior ISA if you have one

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

As an adult you will need ID to prove who you are

We will help you to obtain the following:

- Birth certificate
- National Insurance number
- Bank account
- Passport
- Citizens Cards
- Provisional Driving Licence
- Application Registration Card (ARC)

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

We have a range of support available to help support you with education, employment, and training.

We run:

- a weekly drop-in on a Wednesday for support and advice on education, employment and training options
- a next steps panel - this offers funding for specialist training or equipment to help care leavers access employment
- an Education, Employment and Training panel, with links to colleges, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities to help you to meet your career aspirations

- A specialist job coach who can support you with careers advice and help supporting you into education, employment and training

We can also help you with:

- opportunities for further education such as college or A Levels
- apprenticeships
- financial support package if you go into higher education to study for a Bachelors or master's degree, including accessing additional information and pastoral support from the University

- a generous financial support package if you go into higher education courses such as university, including a master's Bursary
- employment
- financial support with travel and clothes for interviews and employment
- first month subsidy if in employment
- support to buy equipment, essential clothing, and books
- a celebration of your individual achievements in a personal way, for example by taking you out for a meal when you complete significant qualifications

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

HEALTH

We want to help as much as we can to ensure you look after your health and get the support you need to stay healthy. We will provide you with a health passport at the age of 18 which includes a summary of your health history while you were in care.

We also offer you:

- a free gym pass
- access to counselling
- an assessment by a health trainer
- support to access specialist services
- information on clubs and groups you may wish to join. Help with the cost of leisure activities.
- advice about healthy living
- support with registering with a GP, dentist and optician
- support to complete the form if you are exempt from prescription charges
- support to maintain good sexual health and advice about contraception.
- support to help you access Adult Social Care or Adult Mental Health services if you need these.
- transport costs when you are attending hospital or doctors' appointments.

BECOMING A PARENT

There may be additional support we can identify for you if you are expecting a child such as:

- SureStart Maternity Grant to help towards the cost of having a child
- Support to attend parenting groups at your local Children's Centre

MAKING A COMPLAINT/ SHARING A COMPLIMENT

We want to know what you think about the service you are receiving from us.

If you are not happy with the service you receive you can:

- talk to your Personal Adviser
- contact the Care leavers Service Team Manager (Liza Zakheim – liz.zakheim@n-somerset.gov.uk) or the Head of Corporate Parenting (Carrie Yeates – carrie.yeates@n-somerset.gov.uk)
- email North Somerset Social Care Complaints department complaints.manager@n-somerset.gov.uk
- access to North Somerset's Council Complaints Portal

If you need help making a complaint, you can ask your Personal Adviser to refer you to the Junction 21 mentoring and advocacy service. Alternatively, you can refer yourself to the Junction 21 mentoring and advocacy service.

For further information please speak to your Leaving Care PA or the Young Person's Director (please see the useful contacts page at the back of this leaflet).

HEARING YOUR VOICE/ GETTING INVOLVED

THE CARE LEAVERS FORUM

The Care Leavers Forum is a group of care-experienced young people who come together to use their experiences to inspire change in the Leaving Care Service. You get to socialise and make friends with young people who have also been in care. The purpose of this forum is to have your voice heard and help make improvements to our services.

This forum is facilitated by our Young Director and our Participation Worker. The views of this group are shared with decision makers within North Somerset Council including the Corporate Parenting Panel which you can also attend.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Care Leaver's Forum or would like to attend a meeting please contact our Participation Worker, Ella Bunting at ella.bunting@n-somerset.gov.uk or our young Director, Bethany Swann at bethany.swann@n-somerset.gov.uk.

You can also share your views with us in other ways. We are always very interested to hear from you and understand how you think we can improve our service

and offer for care leavers:

- fill in the 'Make Yourself Heard' Compliments/Comments/Complaints leaflet available in the Resource Room or download it here [North Somerset's Council Complaints Portal](#)
- speak to, or ask to speak to, the Participation Worker, Young Director or any member of the care leaving team to give your verbal comments
- complete the Annual 'Your Life Beyond Care' survey. The questions in this survey have been designed by Care Leavers to emphasise the areas of their life that affect wellbeing
- attend the Care Leavers Forum
- Be a part of interview panels for new roles in the council.
- Help with skills to foster, sharing your experiences to help new foster carers.
- Join themed Corporate Parenting Panel Meetings.

USEFUL CONTACTS

LEAVING CARE PERSONAL ADVISERS

01934 421 900

CARE LEAVER'S HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION OFFICER

Claire.ward@n-somerset.gov.uk

01934 426 189

JUNCTION 21 MENTORING AND ADVOCACY SERVICE

Junction21@n-somerset.gov.uk

01275 888 360

THE CARE LEAVERS FORUM

Ella.bunting@n-somerset.gov.uk

Bethany.swann@n-somerset.gov.uk

01275 888 841

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING OFFICER

TBA

KOOTH

Online mental health support

CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER

Learn about your rights as a care leaver.

CORAM VOICE

Make your voice heard.

SHELTER

Find housing as a care leaver.

REES CARE LEAVERS FOUNDATION

Learn about the Rees Care Leavers Foundation and their services.

EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM

01454 615165

HEALTH & WELLBEING SAMARITANS

116123 (FREE)

CHILDLINE

0800 1111

NHS ENGLAND

Learn how the NHS can help you.

111 CRISIS TEAM (MENTAL HEALTH)

Learn about the services offered by the 111 Crisis team.

POLICE NON-EMERGENCY

101

NEXT LINK - DRUG AND ALCOHOL SERVICE

Learn about the Next Link Drug and Alcohol Service.

0800 4700 280

NATIONAL INSURANCE NUMBER HELPLINE

0300 200 3500

SHELTER

0808 800 4444 / 0808 1644 660 (Emergency)

OTHER SUPPORT

BUTTLE

Get in touch with Buttle.

020 7828 7311

NATIONAL YOUTH ADVOCACY SERVICE

Contact the National Youth Advocacy Service.

0808 808 1001

THE CARE LEAVERS' FOUNDATION

01678 540598

BECOME

advice@becomecharity.org.uk

Check out the Become Charity website.

0800 023 2033

PROPEL

Check out the work Propel does on their website.

THANK YOU...

We would like to say a big **THANK YOU** to the following care leavers who gave up their time to discuss, create and design this booklet:

- Caroline
- Danni
- Demi
- Ryan

