

The Surrey Care Leavers Local Offer



This document is to ensure that you know what services are on offer to Surrey care leavers and what support you will have access to as you turn 18 and begin your journey into adulthood. If there is anything you are not sure about or do not understand in this document, please speak to your personal adviser about it.

Your Name:

Your Care Leavers' Service Team:



Search Care Leavers Local Offer Surrey online for up to date helplines, resources and more info.



SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

Surrey wants you to know that as you become a care leaver and begin to live independently, we still care about you and what is happening in your life. We know that leaving care can be difficult at times and in this offer, we want to let you know what you can expect from us and where you can find other useful help.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Terminology used in this document
Page 3

What does a local offer for care leavers mean?
Page 4

What does the Surrey Care Leavers' Service do?
Page 5

What does your Personal Adviser (PA) do?
Page 7

What is a Pathway Plan?
Page 8

Important documents to you
Page 9

Your health and wellbeing
Page 11

Your relationships
Page 13

Universal credit
Page 12

Your accommodation
Page 13

Your education
Page 15

Your employment
Page 18

Your participation
Page 21

Advocacy, complaints and useful contacts
Page 22

TERMINOLOGY USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

If you are a care leaver, you have certain rights and entitlements from Surrey Children's Services. Throughout this document we refer to young people in different categories. Below is an explanation of what these mean:

ELIGIBLE

An eligible young person is someone who is aged 16 or 17 and you are still in care.

RELEVANT

A relevant young person is someone aged 16 or 17, but has left care on or after their 16th birthday.

FORMER RELEVANT

A former relevant young person is someone aged between 18 and 25 and who was in care on or after their 16th birthday.

QUALIFYING

A qualifying young person is someone aged between 16 and 21 (or up to 25 if in education) who was no longer being looked after or accommodated in other settings, or privately fostered, after the age of 16 and not on their 16th birthday.

EXTENSION TO 25

Extension to 25 is someone under 25 years old who has previously been open to the Care Leavers' Service (CLS) who is entitled to request support, contact the CLS and ask to speak to the duty worker.

For further information about these terms, please visit the [Coram Voice website online](#).



WHAT DOES A LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS MEAN?

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 ensures that all local authorities establish a Corporate Parenting Board and publish a local offer for care leavers. The local offer for care leavers should explain the services on offer from both the local authority and other agencies. The local authority must publish information about:

- services the local authority offers for care leavers as a result of its functions under the Children Act 1989
- services the local authority offers that may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living
- information about services offered by agencies which the local authority has the power to offer as a result of its functions under the Children Act 1989/ 2004.

As your corporate parent, it is the responsibility of the local authority to make sure you know what services are available to you, and what you can expect to receive when you are a care leaver.

For former relevant care leavers, you are now able to request support and advice between the ages of 21 and 24 and a Personal Adviser (PA) will be allocated to you either until you reach your 25th birthday, or until you decide you no longer want this support.

The local offer must be updated from time to time, as appropriate, but only after consultation with the relevant people, including care leavers. It must reflect what you tell us you need, and not what we think you need.

The local offer for care leavers should relate to six areas. These are:

- **health and wellbeing**
- **relationships**
- **education and training**
- **employment**
- **accommodation**
- **participation in society.**



WHAT DOES THE SURREY CARE LEAVERS' SERVICE DO?

The Surrey Care Leavers' Service (CLS) do lots of things for young people. The commitment from the CLS to you as a care leaver is:

- we will listen to you and hear what your ambitions are for your future. We will advise and support you in how these can be achieved
- we will offer you the chance to shape the service you access by becoming a member of the Care Council, giving us your views through surveys and focus groups
- we will support your Personal Adviser to have a long-term professional relationship with you
- we will support you in improving your physical and emotional health and well-being
- we will support you in feeling safe and secure in your accommodation
- we will support you to stay in touch with the people who are important to you and have your well-being at heart
- we will work with other agencies to improve their understanding of your views, wishes and needs
- we will work with the eleven housing districts and boroughs in Surrey to support you to find suitable accommodation and support you in keeping your accommodation
- we will do everything we can to support you to access education, training and employment
- we will keep in touch with you until you are 21, or 25 should you wish.

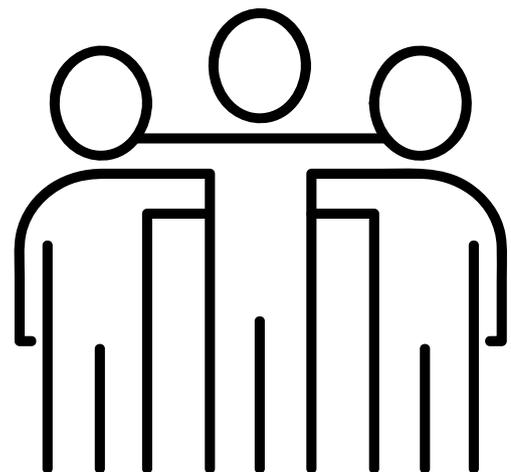


As a care leaver, you are provided with a Personal Adviser (PA) who can support and advise you with accessing housing, education, employment, training, health services, finances and can provide a shoulder to lean on, when needed. Your PA will play a vital role in supporting you. The Care Leavers' Service is here for you and we want you to succeed and be the best you can be - we want to watch you grow and transition into adulthood and independent living, with as much support as you need to do so.

The Care Leavers' Service is currently divided into five teams:

- North west - this team covers the boroughs of Runnymede, Surrey Heath and Woking
- South west - this team covers the boroughs of Guildford and Waverley
- North east - this team covers the boroughs of Elmbridge, Epsom and Ewell and Spelthorne
- South east - this team covers the boroughs of Reigate and Banstead, Tandridge and Mole Valley
- The asylum team - this team works across Surrey with young people who are unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.

Each team is made up of a Team Manager, Senior Practitioner and a number of Personal Advisers - all working to ensure care leavers get all the support they might need. You will normally be matched with the team closest to where you lived before entering care.



Search Care Leavers Local Offer Surrey online for up to date helplines, resources and more info.





WHAT DOES A PERSONAL ADVISER (PA) DO?

When you enter care, you are allocated a Social Worker. When you turn 16, you will be introduced to a PA who will work alongside your Social Worker until you reach the age of 18. Once you turn 18, your PA will become your worker and you will no longer have an allocated Social Worker.

As a young adult, you can make your own decisions and choices. Your PA is there to support and advise you with making the right decisions for you.

Your PA will continue working with you until you turn 21, or up to the age 25 if you are in full-time education, or if you have made a request for additional support and advice.

Your PA will give you their contact information, and should always tell you what days they work, if they are going on holiday and who you can call if you can't get hold of them in an emergency.

For care leavers aged 18 to 21, your PA will contact you every 8 weeks to make sure you are okay and provide you with support where needed.

WHAT IS A PATHWAY PLAN?

A Pathway Plan is a document that you will complete with your Social Worker or Personal Adviser (PA) between the ages of 16 and 21. Your Pathway Plan will set out your needs, your views, any future goals, and what support you will receive.

Your Pathway Plan will also consider your education, employment, health, finances, social needs, relationships and accommodation. If you request advice and support after you turn 21, up until your 25th birthday, your Pathway Plan will concentrate on the areas you feel you need support with.



It is important to recognise the change in duties to you between the ages of 21 and up to your 25th birthday and recognise that your primary source of financial and welfare support is provided in the same way as your peers. The amount of support and the frequency of contact that you receive post 21 will depend on your individual circumstances.

Your PA is responsible for ensuring you have a relevant, up-to-date Pathway Plan which considers your current needs and what needs to happen to aid your transition into adulthood and independent living. The plan needs to be clear, include your goals and how these will be achieved, by whom, and by when - these will then be reviewed at least every 6 months until you are 20 years old. The plan is reviewed annually from your 21st birthday.

Your Pathway Plan should be created with you, reflect your current status and views and where you wish to get to - after all, it is your plan.

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS TO YOU

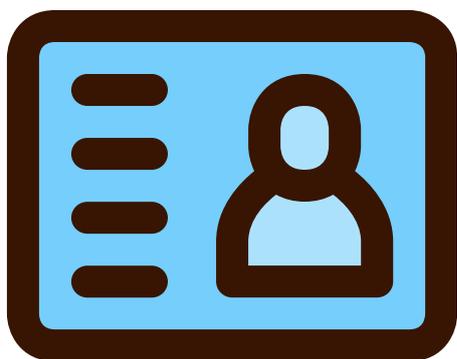
The Care Leavers' Service (CLS) can help you get the documents or photo identification you might not have. The CLS will only fund one form of ID. To request this funding or for more support, please speak to your Personal Adviser (PA).

You will need documents to prove who you are and to access educational courses, employment, social benefits or to open a bank account. The CLS will support you to ensure that you have the important documents you need, such as a passport and birth certificate, however you will be responsible for ensuring you look after these and keep them safe - the CLS will not repurchase documents if you lose them. If you agree, the CLS can keep copies of your important documents safely on your record.

You are responsible for ensuring you keep this safe, and for funding any additional documents, or replacements.

National insurance (N.I) number

At 15 years and 9 months, your Social Worker should apply for your national insurance number (N.I Number). Your PA will ensure that you have this. You need this number if you wish to work, so you must keep it safe. If you lose it, your PA can support and advise you on how to obtain another one, but you will have to pay any costs towards receiving a replacement.



Passport

Your PA will support you with an application for a passport, and the CLS will cover the cost of applying for and purchasing this. Your passport is your main source of I.D. and can be used to open a bank account, or travel. If you lose this, you will have to fund a replacement and they are expensive, so please keep this in a safe place.



Provisional driving licence

This provides you with photo I.D., as does a passport. If you intend to learn to drive, you will need a licence. Again, if you do not keep your licence safe and require another one, you will have to fund this yourself. Please also remember that if you move address, you must update the DVLA.



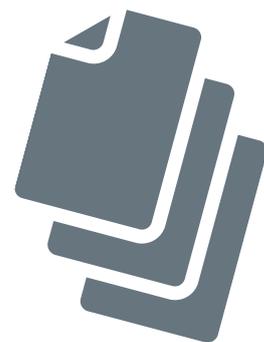
British citizenship

If you are entitled to apply for British Citizenship, your PA will support you to do this.



Access to your records

You have a right to see the information we hold about you, including the records written about you when you were in care. This is called a Subject Access Request. If you would like to make a Subject Access Request, your PA will help you complete the necessary forms.



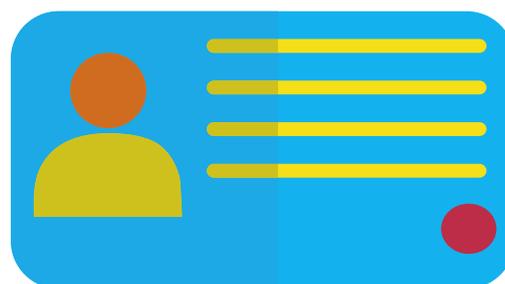
Birth certificate

If you do not have a birth certificate, your PA can support you to apply for one. This can be used, alongside photo I.D., to open a bank account. You may also need it if you intend to get married. It proves your identity and is therefore extremely important.



Biometric residence permit (often called a biometric card)

If you are an unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person, you will not be able to apply for a passport, but can apply for a biometric residence permit which will provide you with a source of I.D. The CLS will pay for you to apply for this.



Search Care Leavers Local Offer Surrey online for up to date helplines, resources and more info.

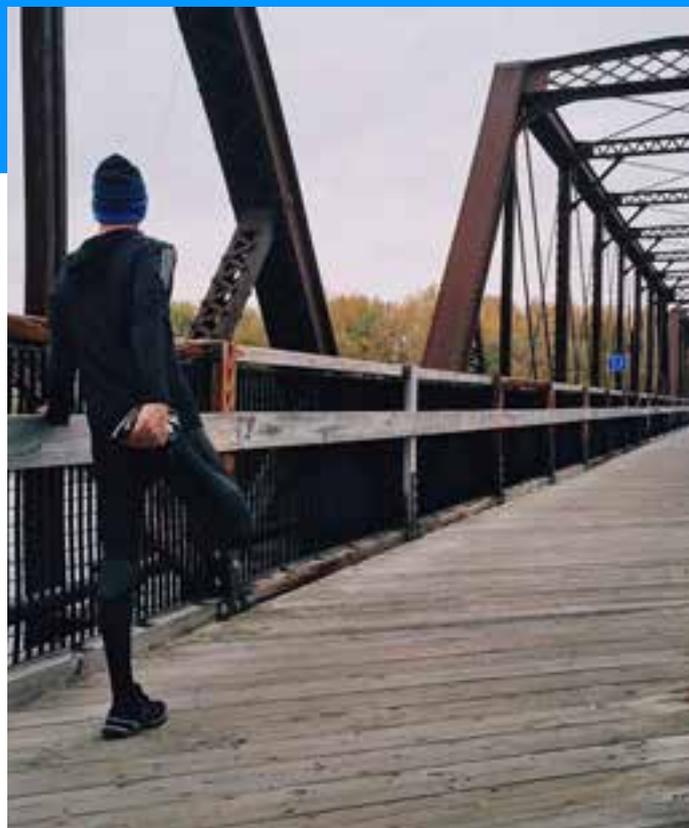


YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

It's important to take care of yourself to ensure that you stay fit, healthy and happy. This includes your physical and mental health.

You will receive a health passport before you leave care, this will include useful information including how to access your health history and details of your immunisations.

If you don't have your health passport, speak to your PA. It's your right to have a record of what you have been treated for in the past. Once you have it, read it and keep it safe.



SEEING A GP

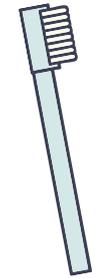
Whether you are feeling physically unwell or struggling with your mental health, contact your GP. If you're not registered with a GP, then you can find local GPs on the NHS website. You will need to complete a registration form that you can get from the GP surgery. They are also likely to ask you to provide proof of identity and address as part of the registration process, however you should not be refused registration or appointments if you do not have proof of address or identity to hand. If you're struggling to register, contact your PA for support. If you move to a new house, you'll have to tell your GP and sign up with another one that is local to you.



THE OPTICIANS AND DENTIST

You should get your eyes checked by an optician at least every two years, or whenever you think you need to. If you are 16, 17 or 18 and in full-time education then you're entitled to a free NHS eye test. You can also qualify for a free NHS eye test if you are in receipt of certain benefits.

Don't forget to go to the dentist for a check-up. The time between check-ups can vary from 3 months to 2 years, depending on how healthy your teeth and gums are and your risk of future problems. You can find dentists online. It's important to be aware that many dentists accept both NHS and private patients, however, the number of NHS patients they accept may be limited and you may need to join a waiting list.



YOUR SEXUAL HEALTH

It can be awkward to talk about your sexual health, but if you are sexually active, it is important to make sure you look after your sexual health, for both you and any partners you might have.

If you ever find yourself in a situation where you need emergency contraception, the morning after pill is available for free at some chemists and NHS walk in centres, for those under the age of 25.

If you are worried about sexually transmitted infections or would like to talk about contraception, head to your GP surgery or the local sexual health clinic.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

If you think you might have a problem with drugs or alcohol, it's important to get help. There are several support services available, please talk to your GP or PA who will be able to find you help with this.

SUPPORT WITH YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Your emotional and mental health is just as important as your physical health. If you feel you need support with your mental health, talk to someone, be it a friend, a family member, your GP or your PA.

Talk to someone, you never know, they may be able to help.



Search Care Leavers Local Offer Surrey online for up to date helplines, resources and more info.



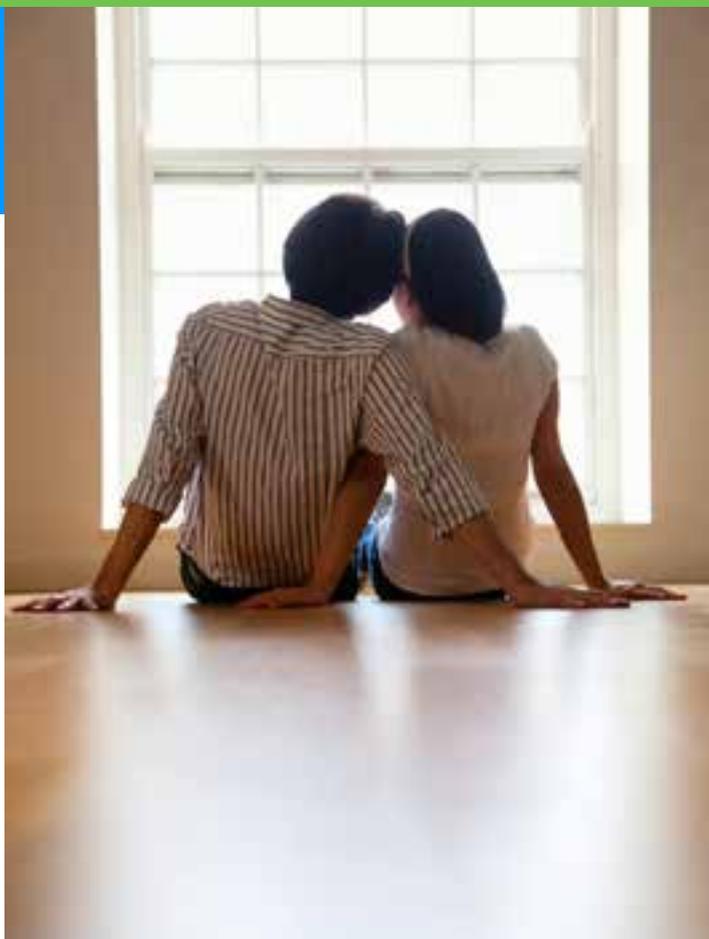
12

YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

As a young person who has been in the care system, you may have suffered some form of loss during early childhood, and possibly trauma and/or abuse, and may find it difficult to come terms with your experiences as you get older.

In addition to this, your own experiences may well impact on your adult relationships, both personally and professionally. Each person's journey and experiences will be different. There are various people and organisations that can help you.

Your PA can support you with advice and guidance on how to maintain healthy relationships and signpost you to further help and support suitable for your needs.



**Search Care
Leavers Local
Offer Surrey
online for up to
date helplines,
resources and
more info.**



13

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

As you begin living more independently, you may hear about Universal Credit (UC). This is financial support you will receive from the government if you are on a low income or are unemployed.

UC replaces some of the benefits below which you might have previously heard of:

- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Working Tax Credit.

These are now called legacy benefits.

You might be able to claim UC if:

- you're currently out of work, in-between jobs or on a low income
- you're aged 18 or over, however depending on circumstances, young people aged 16 or 17 may still be able to claim
- you and your partner have less than £16,000 in savings.

There are some situations where you will be able to claim UC if you're 16 or 17-years-old as well as if you're studying. This all depends on your circumstances, please speak to your PA as they will be able to help you apply for UC. For more information, you can search online for 'Universal Credit', where you will find various websites that will give you guidance on it.



Search Care Leavers Local Offer Surrey online for up to date helplines, resources and more info.



14

YOUR ACCOMMODATION

We have a duty to ensure that you live in suitable accommodation between the ages of 18-21. Your local district and borough hold the overall responsibility to provide housing to care leavers. Your PA will support you in speaking to your local housing department to understand your options around independent housing.



We know that leaving care and moving into independent accommodation can feel lonely and isolating. Please remember that we are here to support you and want to do so. You can contact your PA for advice or support whilst living independently.



There are different types of housing available to you. Your PA will discuss your options with you when you are approaching independent living. Your PA will visit you at your accommodation to check that it is suitable and that you are doing okay.

BELOW ARE SOME OPTIONS YOU HAVE ON WHERE YOU MIGHT LIVE:

STAYING PUT

If you are living with foster carers, you may want to stay with them after you are 18 - this called 'staying put'. If you would like to stay living with your foster carers and everyone agrees to that plan, you can remain with them until you are 21 or 25, if you are in full time education. You can, of course, move out to live independently once you are ready. In 'staying put', you will be more independent than when you were in foster care, but you will still need to keep to the house rules. Your 'staying put' carers will continue to support you and help you develop your independence skills. You will need to pay rent either from your wages if you are working, or from Universal Credit (UC). You will have a written 'staying put' agreement which includes a tenancy agreement, as you will be a lodger in the carers' home.



SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

This is accommodation where you are provided with independent accommodation but can get extra help and support from staff. This is often a good way to help you prepare for living independently. Supported accommodation is usually shared with others but with your own room. Some have full time staff on site and others where keyworkers visit regularly but no staff live there. As with any adult accommodation, you will be expected to abide by the rules or risk losing the accommodation.

SUPPORTED LODGINGS

You can choose to live in supported lodgings. This means you would have your own room in someone's house and share the kitchen, living room and bathroom. Supported lodgings may be with a family, a single person or a couple. Most of the time, carers in supported lodgings work outside of the home, but some are home-based. They will offer support and guidance to help you towards independence. The level of support offered depends on what you need. You will be a lodger in the supported lodgings carer's home, but most supported lodgings carers will invite you to be part of the family if you would like that or if that's not for you, you can live more independently with the security of knowing there is someone living alongside you to support you when needed.



PRIVATE-RENTED ACCOMMODATION

If you have good independence skills, you may decide to rent from a private landlord. Your PA can support you with this and help you check out properties and tenancy agreements. This will usually be shared accommodation and can be a good option if you have a few friends you would like to live with. You would pay the rent from your wages if you are working or from Universal Credit. As a care leaver, you can claim the one-bedroom rate for UC even if you are living in shared accommodation, up until your 22nd birthday. If you want to remain there after your 22nd birthday you will have to pay the full cost of your rent, so it is often sensible to find accommodation where the rent can be covered by the shared housing rate. Your PA can help you work this out.

SOCIAL HOUSING

This is provided by local district and borough housing departments. You should apply to the district and borough where you have a local connection. Young people can be added to their local housing register from age 16. It may take some years to gain a property so your Social Worker will help you to apply when they complete the Pathway Plan with you. Social housing is usually a secure tenancy, a reasonable rent and is your own accommodation. Local district and boroughs will want to know that you are ready to live independently; and have evidence that you have previously held a tenancy and have been a reliable tenant and paid your rent. Young people can be added to their local housing register from age 16.



YOUR EDUCATION

We will help you to reach your goals and fulfil your potential by helping you to access higher and further education and work opportunities. Part of your Pathway Plan is all about what you want to do in the future and whether you want to go to college, university or complete an apprenticeship. You will have a chance to talk it all through with your Personal Adviser (PA). Personal Education Plan's (PEP) will also continue in the academic year you turn 18 and beyond this if you would like them too.

**Search Care Leavers
Local Offer Surrey
online for up to date
helplines, resources
and more info.**



If you want your PA to support you with finding education, please ask. Before you meet your PA to discuss, ask yourself these questions:

- Do you have a specific career in mind?
- What subjects have you studied at school or college?
- Do you have a passion for something?
- Have you had a careers appointment to talk through your ideas??



You will be able to find out lots of information about college or university online, including entry requirements, open days, student life and much more. You will also be able to find apprenticeship vacancies and opportunities.

You can arrange an advice and guidance session with a student adviser, who can help you choose the right course for you based on your current qualifications and career aspirations. If you don't have any qualifications, don't worry, there will still be some courses you can apply for. Your PA can help you with application forms and interview tips.

Most college courses start in September but there may be some which start in January. You will need to contact the colleges to find out more.



GOING TO UNIVERSITY

If you are interested in going to university, but are not sure where to start, take a look at the UCAS website. This has all the up to date information around courses and financial support as well as advice and guidance around what other options are available such as gap years, apprenticeships and employment pathways. The UCAS website is also where you will make your university application.

Some universities offer care leavers the opportunity to gain a place on a chosen study programme, even if you don't have the required qualifications. You will need to speak directly with each university to get more information on the options available.



WHAT ABOUT AN APPRENTICESHIP?

Apprenticeships allow you to earn a salary whilst studying for a nationally recognised qualification and getting 'on the job' training. It's a way to gain experience, strengthen your CV and build your career. There is a wide range of apprenticeships available to suit every skill and passion and the training provider will offer support for any additional needs. It's a different way of learning compared to college or university, and you have the opportunity to learn skills that will be valued by potential employers.



Apprenticeships range from intermediate level (equivalent to GCSE level) right up to degree level and are available in a wide range of different industries. If you're not quite ready for an apprenticeship, then you might be interested in a traineeship.

CAN I GET ANY HELP WITH MONEY TOWARDS MY EDUCATION?

Yes, but how much depends on your age and situation. Talk to your Social Worker or PA to find out exactly what you are entitled to.

Most young people in higher education are not entitled to welfare benefits. However, in particular circumstances, some may be entitled to Income Support and Housing Benefit. For example, single parents, young people with long term illnesses, or those with a registered disability - may be eligible for benefits whilst studying. Talk to your PA if you think you may qualify for help.



Search Care Leavers Local Offer Surrey online for up to date helplines, resources and more info.



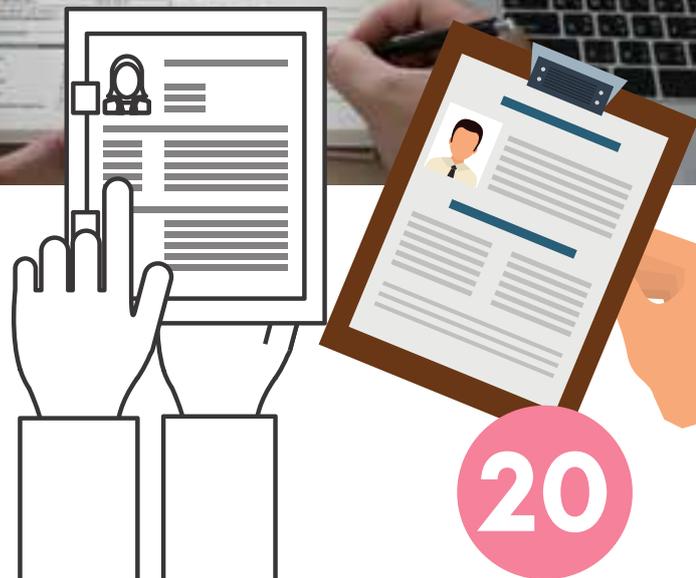
19

YOUR EMPLOYMENT

Your Personal Adviser (PA) will be able to help you with finding a job if needed. You will talk about employment and write your goals into your Pathway Plan. If you're not sure what you want to do, then the National Careers Service website is a good place to start. It has job profiles, telling you how much you can earn in different roles, advice on the different stages of a job hunt, including how to improve your interview skills, write an effective CV and help you search for your first job.

If you need some help with writing a CV, you can find CV templates online. Don't worry if you don't have a lot of work experience, you can still reference things like volunteering you have done, any hobbies or clubs you are part of and how they have helped you to develop skills.

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INTERVIEW PREPARATION

If you have a job interview, there are lots of interview tips online but make sure you tell your PA. They'd be happy to run through some questions with you and help you get ready for your interview. Some of the things you will want to consider are:



- making sure you dress appropriately - first impressions count, so make sure you dress smart
- making sure you arrive in good time - allow yourself plenty of time to get to the interview to ensure that you aren't late
- researching the company in advance - this will show that you have taken a genuine interest in the job you are applying for and have used your initiative to find out more
- thinking about possible interview questions and the answers you would give - think about the skills you need for the role and examples of how you have used these in the past.

VOLUNTEERING



Volunteering can be a great way to build your skills and meet new people. If you are interested in working in a particular area but don't have the experience of doing so, then volunteering can really help you gain the experience you're missing. For example, if you really want to work with animals then you may find there are volunteering opportunities at your local animal shelter that you can help with.

TRAINEESHIPS

A traineeship is an education and training programme with work experience. It allows you to develop your skills and gain qualifications, including English and Maths for those who need it, whilst benefitting from high quality work experience. Traineeships can last from 6 weeks to 6 months and are an ideal steppingstone to an apprenticeship. The work experience placement is not paid, but the costs of travel and meals may be supported by the training provider or employer. You can find out more about traineeships and search live vacancies within Surrey via the 'Find a Traineeship Service' website.

THE CARE LEAVER COVENANT

The Care Leaver Covenant (CLC) is a promise made by private, public or voluntary organisations to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them to live independently.

The aim of the CLC, to which organisations commit, is to provide additional support for those leaving care; making available a different type of support and expertise from that local authorities provide. Drawing on the resourcefulness and imagination of their staff and their working environment, organisations have the potential to offer new perspectives and professional expertise. These can offer opportunities and a new way of thinking to aid you in moving forward successfully to the next phase of your lives.

Download the free app:



Find out more:

Website: www.mycovenant.org.uk

Call: 0800 077 3557

Email: info@mycovenant.org.uk

YOUR PARTICIPATION

Your voice is important and changing the system around you is something you can be a part of.

The User Voice & Participation Team are a team who support young people to get involved with improving the services they use. The team facilitate participation groups that enable young people to work closely together to listen and support each other. The members of the groups are passionate about making positive change to services. Groups take part in consultations, service re-designs and deliver training for frontline workers and senior leadership. Young people can also train to undertake interviews and get paid an hourly rate for this ad hoc work.

CARE COUNCIL

Care Council is for looked after children and care leavers aged 13-25 that are from or living in Surrey. The group meets monthly to discuss what they'd like to stop, start or change about being a young person in care or leaving care.



SURREY YOUTH CABINET

The Surrey Youth Cabinet is group of young people aged 11-19 (or up to 25 with additional needs) representing youth participation groups and the 11 boroughs in Surrey, championing the views of young people at a Council and Parliamentary level.



CYA (CAMH's YOUTH ADVISORS)

CYA are a group of young people who have all accessed or still are accessing emotional wellbeing and/or mental health services in Surrey. They help to shape, change and improve these services for other young people.



SYAS (SEND YOUTH ADVISORS SURREY)

SYAS are a group of young people who have a special educational need and/or disability. They meet to have a say in services that affect them and make changes for the better.



The UVP team run lots of different participation groups and other activities for a variety of young people accessing different services. For more information on these groups, please contact UVP on the details below:

GET IN TOUCH WITH UVP:

Follow us on
Twitter and
Instagram

@ourvoicesurrey



Email us

user.voice

@surreycc.gov.uk

Call us

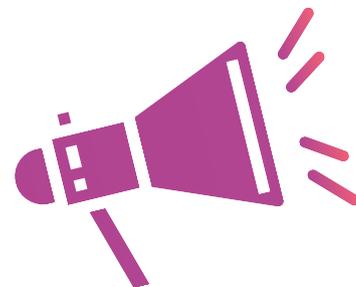
Office: 01483 519464

Mobile: 07973 660976



23

ADVOCACY & COMPLAINTS SERVICE



What's their aim?

They want children and young people to be more able and more confident to 'self-advocate'. This means to be able to speak up for themselves to make sure:

- they fully understand the decisions being made by professionals and also how these decisions will impact on their life
- that professionals fully understand what the young person wishes for and how they feel about the decisions affecting their life
- young people will have more opportunities to express their wishes and feelings and to have a direct say about the issues that affect their lives, whether they are making a complaint, trying to resolve a problem or meeting with professionals.

What's their belief?

They believe that all staff working with children and young people have an advocacy role to play and that it is often better to avoid unnecessarily introducing more adults into children's lives.

Our message to workers is that: Advocacy starts with you unless you feel your 'hands are tied' or the young person wishes to make a complaint and asks for independent advocacy support to do so.

If you wish to speak to someone further regarding advocacy support or to make a complaint please speak to your PA in the first instance and if needed, get in touch: be.heard@surreycc.go.uk.

USEFUL CONTACTS



We have put together a list of useful contacts for different support services and charities you who may be able to help. Please scan the QR code with a mobile device to access this information.