



**THE SURREY**

# Care Leavers Local Offer

# Welcome to

## SURREY'S LOCAL OFFER TO CARE LEAVERS



## Introduction

Surrey wants you to know that as you become a care leaver and begin to live independently, we continue to 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 what services are on offer to support you as a care leaver and as you turn 18 and continue your journey into adulthood.

This guide gives an overview of the various services and support available to you. Some details may change so please visit the [local offer website](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/children/in-care/user-voice/care-leavers) (www.surreycc.gov.uk/children/in-care/user-voice/care-leavers) for up to date and detailed information.

If there is anything you are not sure about or do not understand in this document, please speak to your Personal Adviser (PA).

If you would prefer a paper copy of this document or require this in a different language or format, please speak to your PA.

---

Your Name

---

Care Leavers' Service Team

To visit the local offer website scan the QR code below



# Table of contents

Terminology used in this document.....	<u>Page 1</u>
What does a local offer for care leavers mean?.....	<u>Page 2</u>
What does the Surrey care leavers' service do?.....	<u>Page 4</u>
Support for care leavers (formerly asylum seeking children).....	<u>Page 7</u>
What does a Personal Adviser (PA) do?.....	<u>Page 8</u>
What is a Pathway Plan?.....	<u>Page 9</u>
Important documents and your information.....	<u>Page 10</u>
Your health and wellbeing.....	<u>Page 11</u>
Leisure, culture and life skills.....	<u>Page 14</u>
Your relationships.....	<u>Page 15</u>
Universal credit.....	<u>Page 16</u>
Your accommodation.....	<u>Page 17</u>
Support with housing costs and living independently.....	<u>Page 20</u>
Your education.....	<u>Page 22</u>
Your employment.....	<u>Page 25</u>
Care leavers covenant.....	<u>Page 28</u>
Your participation.....	<u>Page 29</u>
Advocacy and complaints.....	<u>Page 30</u>
Useful contacts and financial support.....	<u>Page 31</u>

# Terminology used in this document

If you are a care leaver, you have certain rights and entitlements from Surrey Children's Services dependent on your care leaver status. We have set out below the different descriptions of care leaver status dependent on your age, the age you were when you became looked after and how long you were looked after for.

## Eligible

An eligible young person is someone who is aged 16 or 17 and 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 more information about these terms, please visit [www.coramvoice.org.uk](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk)

# 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 because 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.

There are **seven corporate parenting principles** for local authorities to follow to ensure that they are the best corporate parents to the children in care and care leavers they support, and to ensure that you remain the focus [Children and Social Work Act 2017, s1 (1)]:

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
2. To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
3. To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
4. To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure best outcomes, for those children and young people;
6. For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and,
7. To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living

Former relevant care leavers 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 25<sup>th</sup> 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.

 For up to date and detailed information please visit the [local offer webpage](#)

To visit the local offer website scan the QR code



# 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 that 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

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

Support your Personal Adviser to have a long-term professional relationship with you

Support you in improving your physical and emotional health and well-being

Support you in feeling safe and secure in your accommodation

Support you to access mental health support, this could be through CLS CAMHS workers within the county

Support you to stay in touch with the people who are important to you and have your well-being at heart

Work with other agencies to improve their understanding of your views, wishes and needs

Work with the eleven housing Districts and Boroughs in Surrey to support you to find suitable accommodation and support you in keeping your accommodation

Do everything we can to support you to access education, training, and employment and work closely with the 16+ specialist in the Surrey Virtual School

Keep in touch with you until you are 21, or 25 should you wish



The Care Leavers' Service (CLS) is currently divided into six teams covering the following areas :

North West	North East	Two Asylum Teams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Runnymede</li> <li>• Surrey Heath</li> <li>• Woking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elmbridge</li> <li>• Epsom and Ewell</li> <li>• Spelthorne</li> </ul>	<p>These teams work across Surrey with young people 18 years+ who have claimed or are waiting asylum decisions. One team is based in the South West and the other in the North East.</p>
South West	South East	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guildford</li> <li>• Waverley</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reigate and Banstead</li> <li>• Tandridge</li> <li>• Mole Valley</li> </ul>	

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

The work of the service is underpinned by the care leavers service plan which is informed by the priorities of the Corporate Parenting Board and the Corporate Parenting Operational Group. Both groups work to promote the Corporate Parenting Principles within Surrey in the work we undertake with care leavers.

Your Personal Adviser (PA) 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.



Page 8 contains more information about the role of a PA



## Tailored support within the service

The Children and Young People's emotional wellbeing and mental health Care Leavers Service, which is provided as part of **Mindworks Surrey**, offers mental health support to vulnerable young people aged 16 – 25 as they leave their children's homes, hostels and foster placements and transition into adult life. This service aims to prevent long-term emotional and mental health problems for care leavers. We provide a primary mental health service which offers additional support but does not replace existing provision for this age group, including under 18s or the Community Mental Health Recovery Services (CMHRS) for over 18s.

**i** Find out more about the [mental health support available to care leavers](#)

Within The Virtual School there is a dedicated **Education and Employment Adviser**, providing tailored Career Information Advice and Guidance (CIAG) to Care Leavers aged 18-25. Contact your PA for more information.

The Care Leavers' Service (CLS) 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 CLS is proud to work with you on your journey to independence.

Our **Care Leavers Housing Officers** aim to prevent homelessness amongst care leavers by setting up agreements, arrangements and meetings with young people, their landlords or providers, their Personal Advisers and any other specialists who are involved in the young person's Pathway Plan in order to work together to make sure each young person has a safe and secure place to stay. We believe that all Care Leavers deserve to be in suitable accommodation in line with the Children's Act (7.12).

We work with the local districts and boroughs in order to get the best outcomes for our young people, this includes using the Care Leavers Joint Protocol. We ask that referrals are completed by Personal Advisers in order for us to help you find or maintain your accommodation.

**i** For more information contact our Care Leavers Housing Officers



## Support for care leavers (formerly asylum seeking children)

If you are an Asylum Seeker or do not have status to remain in the UK, we have Support Workers who can help you with any specific challenges.

The Migration Project seeks to expand opportunities for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in Surrey's care.

We engage closely with young people and the people supporting them to better adapt our services to their needs.

Whether through drop-in sessions with foster carers, welcome packs for new arrivals, life skills training, or collaborative projects with local organisations, the Migration Project aims to help asylum seeking young people integrate into Surrey, access vital services and expand their opportunities, whilst increasing awareness amongst staff, service providers and residents.

Most of all, we want to support young people to contribute to and help define what life in Surrey is like.

If you have any questions you want to ask, ideas for support groups or activities you'd like to see, or just generally want to chat, please contact us directly. We also offer training to staff and foster carers, so if you're new to working with UASC, we'd love to speak to you too!

### Contact us

[Shahernaz.Kargar@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:Shahernaz.Kargar@surreycc.gov.uk)

[Adam.Taylor@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:Adam.Taylor@surreycc.gov.uk)



There are also a range of charities which provide services to support and empower refugees and asylum seekers to rebuild their lives here in the UK. Some examples are Refugee Action, Refugee Council and Baobab Centre.



# 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 Personal Adviser (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. You can ask for a PA profile which is an introduction to your allocated PA, this will include a bit about them and what their role is.

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 of 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 18-21, your PA will see you at least every 8 weeks to make sure you are okay and to provide you with support where needed and will ensure they maintain contact with you in between visits. It's a good idea to let your PA know how you would like to be contacted, this might be by phone, What's App, text or email.

For young people aged between 21-25 years old who have remained open under extended duties, your PA must see you a minimum of every 12 weeks. However, there may be times when you wish for advice and support, or have greater need, and therefore the frequency will depend on the assessment of your needs and what your Pathway Plan states in relation to maintaining contact.

For those between 21-25 who have closed to the service, we will contact you once every 12 months until your 25th birthday to remind you that you can access the care leavers service by asking for support and a PA will be allocated to you.

**i** For more information please refer to [\*Transition into care leavers service guidance \(pdf\)\*](#)



# 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.

**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!**

If you request advice and support after you turn 21, up until your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, your Pathway Plan will concentrate on the areas you feel you need support with, developing a Pathway Plan that is proportionate to your needs; a full Pathway Plan may not be necessary, but all plans will explain how your PA and you plan to keep in touch.

It is important to recognise the change in duties to you between the ages of 21 and up to your 25<sup>th</sup> 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 whilst you remain with the service or at any time when a significant change takes place.

It's really important that you have a copy of your Pathway Plan, your PA will send this to you. If you do not receive a copy, please ask your PA.



For up to date and detailed information please visit the [local offer webpage](#)



## Important documents and your information

You will need documents to prove who you are and to access educational courses, employment, social benefits or to open a bank account.

The Care Leavers' Service (CLS) will help you to get the important documents or photo identification you need, such as a passport and birth certificate.

The CLS will fund the following three forms of identification; your first birth certificate, your Passport and your provisional driving licence. To request this funding or for more support, please speak to your Personal Adviser (PA).

It is your responsibility to look after and keep documents safe, the CLS will not repurchase documents if you lose them so you will need to fund any replacements yourself. If you agree, the CLS can keep copies of your important documents safely on your record.

You also 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. Our expectation is that the Looked After Children's teams will have provided you with a later life letter than explains your care journey prior to you turning 18.

## List of key documents

### 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. For young people seeking Asylum you will be eligible for a National Insurance number once your status is determined or once you've received eligible status. The confirmation to remain in the UK will be printed on the back of your Biometric Residence Permit.

### Passport

Your PA will support you with an application for your first passport, and the CLS will cover the cost of applying for and purchasing this. There is an expectation that young people under 18 years old would have a passport in transferring to the CLS. 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 a form of photo I.D. like a passport. If you want to learn to drive, you will need a driving licence. Please remember that if you move address, you must update the DVLA!

### 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.

### British Citizenship

This gives you the right to live and work in the UK permanently. You need British Citizenship before you can apply for a UK passport. If you are entitled to apply for British Citizenship, your PA will support you to do this.

### Biometric Residence Permit (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 ID. The CLS will pay for you to apply for this.

# Your health and wellbeing

It's important to take care of yourself to make sure 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.

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

If you need an interpreter/translator to attend any appointments, this support can be booked through your health provider. We would really recommend downloading the [NHS app](#) to access a range of services and information.

## Seeing a General Practitioner (GP)



If you are feeling physically unwell or struggling with your mental health you can contact your GP for help.

If you're not registered with a GP, you can [find a local practice on the NHS website](#). You will need to complete a registration form which you can get from the GP surgery.

As part of the registration process they are likely to ask you to provide proof of identity and address; 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.

Don't forget if you move to a new address you'll have to tell your GP and sign up with another one that is local to you!

## The Opticians

Even if you have perfect vision you should go to the opticians to get your eyes checked at least every two years, or sooner if you think you need to.

You might be entitled to a free NHS eye test and optical voucher to help towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses. For example, if you are 16-18 and in full-time education. [Check whether you're entitled to a free NHS sight test or an optical voucher](#)

## The Dentist

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. It's important to be aware that most 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.

If you are new to the area or have not registered with a dental practice, you can search for an NHS dentist near you on the [NHS website](#).

## 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, you never know they may be able to help, be it a friend, a family member, your GP or your Personal Adviser (PA). There are several support services available to you, some examples are listed on this page.

.....

## 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. [Find local sexual health services and support.](#)



Please speak to your PA for more information and advice on specialist support.

## Mental Health Support Services

If you are feeling low and do not have any other support networks or trusted adults to talk things through call the [Samaritans](#) on 08457 909 090.

[YoungMinds Textline](#) offers you free, 24/7 text messaging support wherever you are in the UK. If you need someone to talk to about how you're feeling, text YM to 85258. Texts are free from EE, O2, Vodafone, 3, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile and Telecom Plus.

[Mindworks Surrey](#) is the emotional wellbeing and mental health service for children and young people in Surrey. You can contact the Care Leavers Service directly if you would like advice, information or would like to talk through a concern about mental health. Call 01372 203 096.

[Refugee Council](#) provides specialist mental health support to help refugees and asylum seekers to rebuild their lives. They offer this through one-to-one counselling and psychosocial groups where refugees have opportunities to come together and share experiences.



## Support with alcohol and drug misuse

If you feel you are struggling with drugs or alcohol, or know someone else who is, there is support out there and services who may be able to help. Some examples are listed on this page. Remember you can always talk to your GP who may offer treatment or refer you to a local service.

.....

## Involvement with the police

If you find yourself involved with the Criminal Justice System (Police, Courts, Probation or Prisons) we want to be able to support you as best as we can.

You might want to mention that you are a care leaver. That way all the professionals can work together to make sure that you get the additional support you need, including from your PA.

### Support services

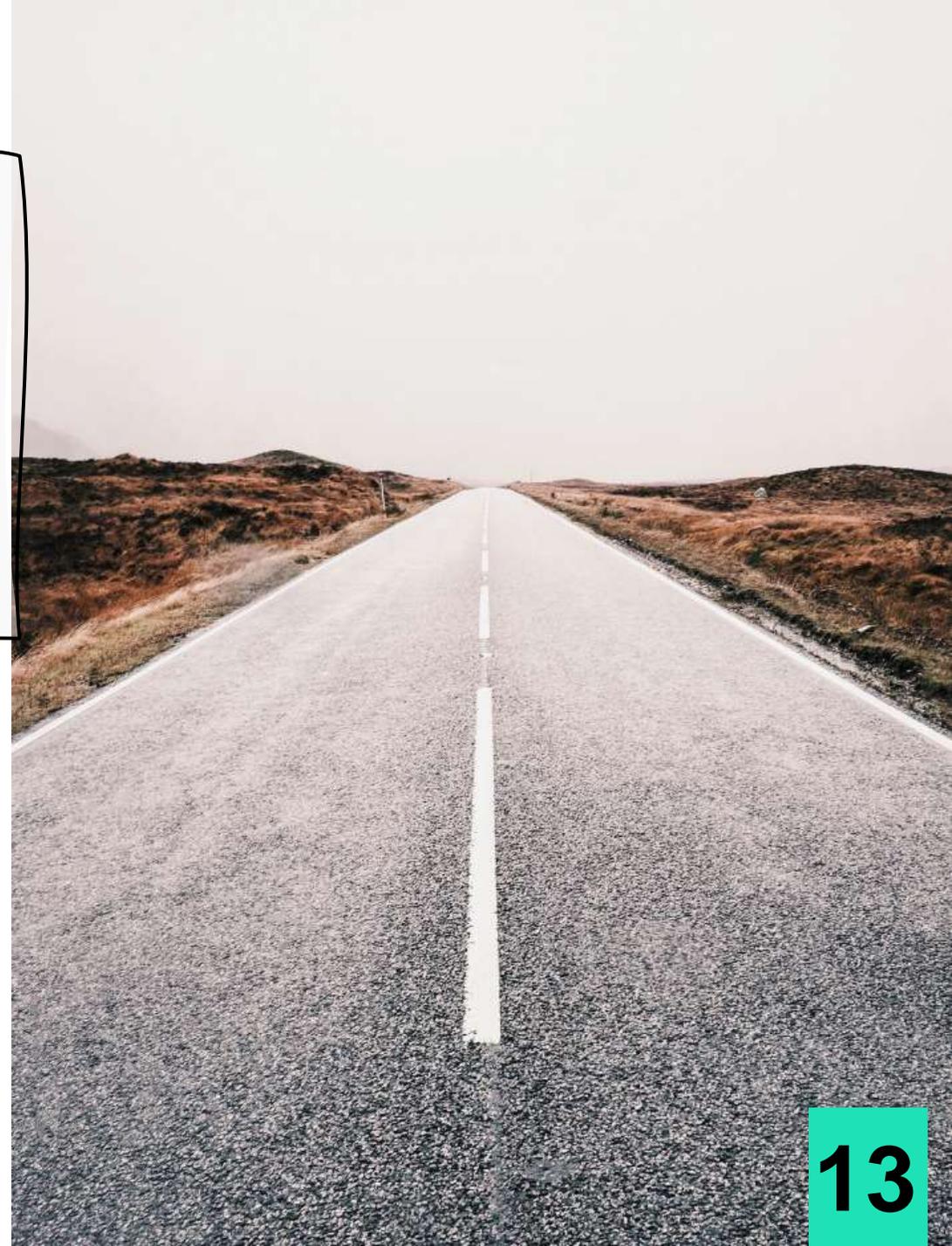
**Catch22** Surrey Young people's Substance Misuse Service (SYPSMS) is a county-wide specialist treatment service for young people aged up to 25. Visit [www.catch-22.org.uk](http://www.catch-22.org.uk) for more information. Alternatively, if you wish to refer yourself for any substance concerns you can call 0800 622 6662.

**FRANK** provides confidential advice regarding drugs 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Visit [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com) for impartial advice and information or call 0800 77 66 00 or text 82111

If you live or commit a criminal offence in Surrey you could be eligible for the Checkpoint Plus scheme. This is a 'Deferred prosecution scheme' which means that conditions are set by the Police after speaking to your Personal Adviser, allowing you to address the causes of crime and reduce your risk of reoffending in place of formal prosecution. This means you could avoid a criminal record and be able to have additional support to help you move forward.



For up to date and detailed information please visit the [local offer webpage](#)



# Leisure, culture and life skills

## Leisure offer

The leisure offer is different depending on where you live and your age, however there are lots of free and discounted leisure activities available including gym membership and swimming. Speak to your Personal Adviser (PA) and check your local Borough council website to find out what is available in your local area. If you live outside of Surrey you can apply through the celebration fund for support.

## Celebration fund

This scheme is funded by Members to recognise and reward care leavers for their achievements. Awards may support young people to take part in a hobby or activity, purchase equipment or training to help promote independence or achieve a goal. Find out more about [celebration fund eligibility and support](#).

## Surrey Bike scheme

Surrey County Council can provide looked after children and care leavers with a contribution towards a bike, helmet and lock. Talk to your PA to find out more.

## Surrey Arts

Surrey Arts aims to increase people's interest and participation in music, singing and performing arts. There are a range of arts opportunities for care leavers to enjoy; such as music lessons and workshops. Visit the [Surrey Arts webpage](#) for more information.

## Driving lessons

The road to driving just got a little bit easier. Care leavers are supported to fund costs associated with learning to drive a car or motorbike. This scheme is available for care leavers from age 17.

Speak to your PA for information on how to access this support.



For up to date and detailed information please visit the [local offer webpage](#)



# Your relationships

By building positive relationships with others, we will be happier and feel more supported, supportive, and connected.

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 to 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 to develop strong and positive relationships.

Your Personal Adviser (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.

Every relationship has its ups and downs but sometimes relationships in our lives can be harmful. There are lots of great resources and websites that can offer tips, advice and support to help you manage your relationships.

**i** Find out more about what healthy and unhealthy relationships may look like



# 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, these are now called legacy benefits:

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

## You might be able to claim universal credit 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 limited situations where you will be able to claim UC if you're 16 or 17-year old as well as if you're studying. This all depends on your circumstances, please speak to your Personal Adviser (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.



# Your accommodation

We recognise that where you live, and feeling safe in your home is important. We have a duty to ensure that you live in suitable accommodation between the ages of 18-21 and once you become an adult we will help you to manage your accommodation. Your local district and borough hold the overall responsibility to provide housing to care leavers.

We know that leaving care and moving into independent accommodation can feel lonely and isolating. We will work together to make sure you are prepared you for your move into independent living only when you are ready.

If there are times where you are moving we will help you to prepare and explain what your options are each step of the way. We will do our best to support you on your journey until you are settled in your independent life.

If you are turning 17, we will look at what post 18 options will look like for you. Your Personal Adviser (PA) will support you to speak to your local housing department to understand your options around independent housing. We will also work with people in your network, district and boroughs, private landlords and where necessary our Gateway to Resources Team to find you a suitable home.

Your PA will visit you at your accommodation to check that it is suitable and that you are doing okay. Don't forget 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 and will help to find accommodation that is right for you. The next page contains some options 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 is 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. 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 "living together agreement" which will explain the expectations of you and your former foster carers for the duration of the staying put arrangement.



For more information please refer to the [Staying Put electronic policy \(pdf\)](#)

## 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.

## 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.



## Private rented accommodation

If you are 18 and have good independence skills, you may decide to rent from a private landlord. Your Personal Adviser (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 Local Housing Allowance Shared Accommodation Rate until your 25th birthday. The Local Authority will provide you with the first month's rent and deposit on your first privately rented tenancy.

## 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.

We would encourage all young people to register for social housing from the age of 16 however this option is only available from age 18. It may take some years to gain a property, but you are not guaranteed social housing.

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.

## Preventing homelessness

Under the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 we have a 'Duty to Refer'. This means we need to notify the Local Housing Authority Housing teams if we have reason to believe someone may be homeless or threatened with homelessness.

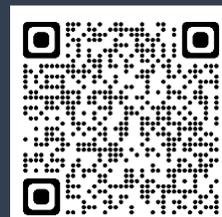
In general, a referral cannot be made without consent however, this may be waived in order to safeguard young people or vulnerable adults.

We can help you to submit a homeless application. Should you wish to view more information on homelessness please refer to the [Homelessness Code of Guidance](#).



For information and advice on homelessness, private renting, social housing and housing benefit search [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk) or call 0808 800 4444

To visit the local offer website scan the QR code



# Support With Housing Costs & Living Independently

## Setting up home allowance (SHA)

When you move into your own tenancy you are entitled to an allowance to help you get the things you might need, like a bed, TV, sofa, fridge freezer or washing machine. You can also use your SHA to get other things like decorative items. You will be supported by your Personal Adviser (PA) to select and purchase items for your home, including white goods and furniture.

This budget may not get you everything you need, so it is important that you look for items on sale and begin saving for your home prior to moving. Friends and family may also have items they don't need anymore, which you can use to stretch your budget further.

We always advise protecting your belongings, you can use SHA towards your first home contents insurance policy. Talk to your PA for more information.

## Low cost furniture and household items

If you're moving into your own accommodation talk to your PA to find out more about local charities who can offer up to 50% discount on second hand furniture and flooring (rugs and carpets). Woking Community Furniture Project also offer 10% off electrical items.

Local furniture donation and re-use organisations such as Freecycle can provide good quality second hand furniture, safety-tested appliances and other household items for young people starting out in their first homes. Local charities may also provide starter packs with household essentials such as bedding and towels, a kettle, cups and plates etc.

## Storage and removals

We can support your move into permanent accommodation, including the use of a removal van (subject to availability) and storage provision for a short period of time in an emergency. Speak to your PA to find out more.



## Council tax relief

In partnership with our districts, boroughs and the Police and Crime Commissioner, Surrey County Council have set up a new scheme which offers 100% council tax discount to care leavers in Surrey.

If you live outside of Surrey we will pay 75% of the final bill for sole occupancy, if living in shared accommodation we will pay 75% of your portion of the final bill. Visit the [local offer webpage](#) to find out more about.

## TV and Wi-Fi

For those living independently, Surrey currently offers funding for care leavers to purchase their first TV license and we provide an allowance (up to £20 per month) to contribute towards Internet Access for a 6-month period.

## Bills

When you move into independent accommodation we will provide a £50 contribution towards your first set of utility bills.

You may be entitled to 50% off your water bill. To find out if you're eligible speak to your Personal Adviser (PA) or call Thames Water on 0800 009 3652 (Monday-Friday 8-5)

## Safe and well visits

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service can visit you at home to provide personalised advice about fire safety. This is a free service and they will even fit free smoke alarms during the visit if you need them. Talk to your PA to arrange a visit.

## Living independently

Growing into adulthood and facing the world independently and alone is exciting and scary in equal measure. If you are prepared for something it makes it less scary and you are more likely to enjoy life and have better outcomes.

The 'Being Independent' Guide will help you understand some of the aspects of 'being an adult' and will provide tips to help you live independently. This guide is for you, for your future, to make it the best you possibly can. Ask your PA for a copy of the guide.

Your PA will complete an independent living skills assessment with you. This will ask how much support you feel you need to do things around the house such as; ironing or cooking. This assessment will then help to identify areas where we can support you to develop the skills you need to live independently.



For up to date and detailed information please visit the [local offer webpage](#)



# 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 Plans (PEP) will also continue in the academic year you turn 18 and beyond this if you would like them too.

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

What subjects have you studied at school or college?

Do you have a passion for something?

Do you have a specific career in mind?

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

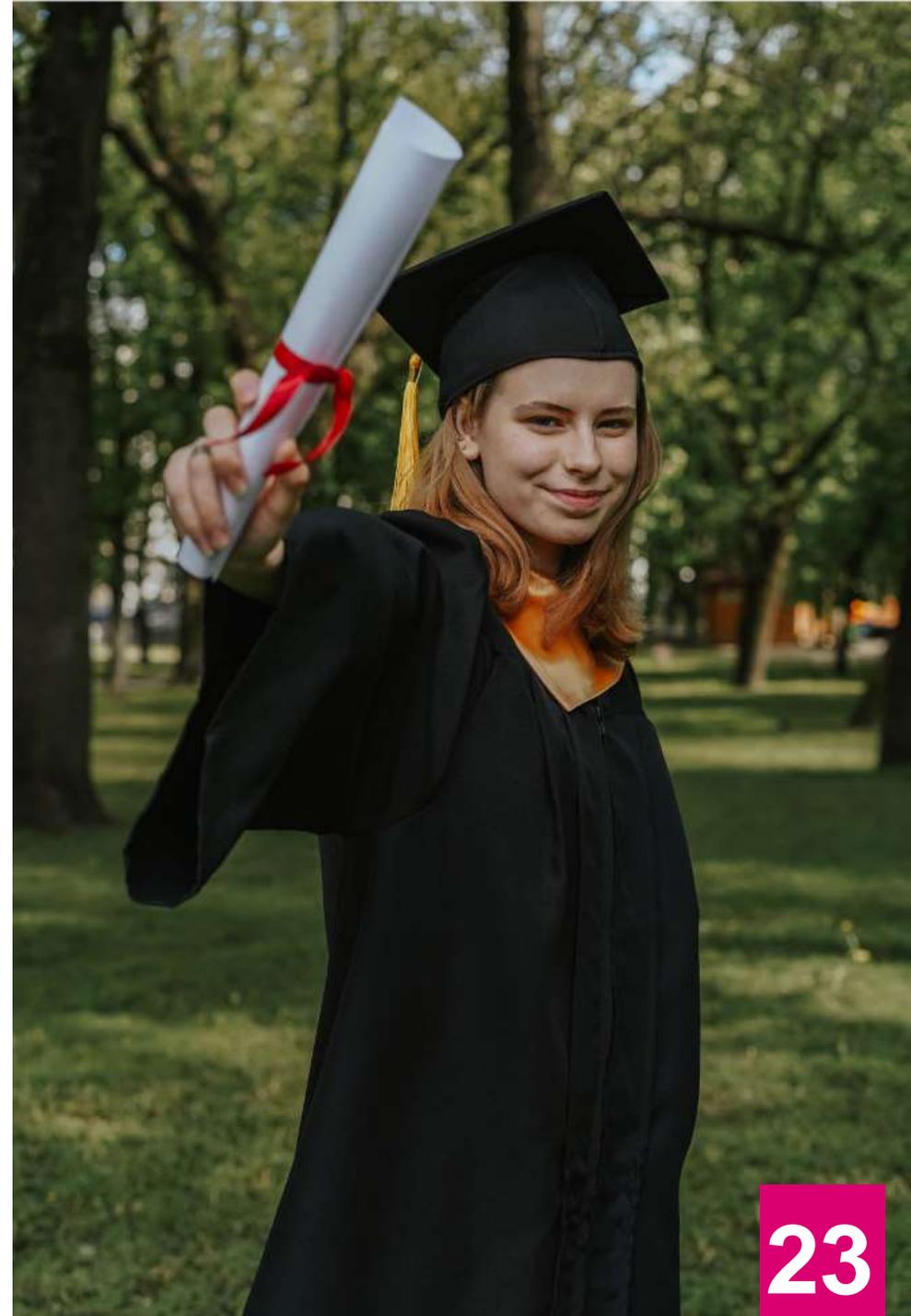
If you are interested in going to university, but are not sure where to start, take a look at the [UCAS website](#). This has all the up to date information around courses and financial support as well as advice and guidance around what other options are available such as gap years, apprenticeships and 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.

The [PROPEL website](#) is a directory which provides information on the support available to you from colleges and universities offering higher education (HE) courses across the UK.

Some universities provide support and scholarships to care leavers so make sure you check out their website for more information.

The [Unite Foundation](#) delivers a unique university accommodation scholarship for care leavers and estranged young people across the UK. The scholarship takes care of students' accommodation and bills, covering up to 3 full years of study.



# 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.

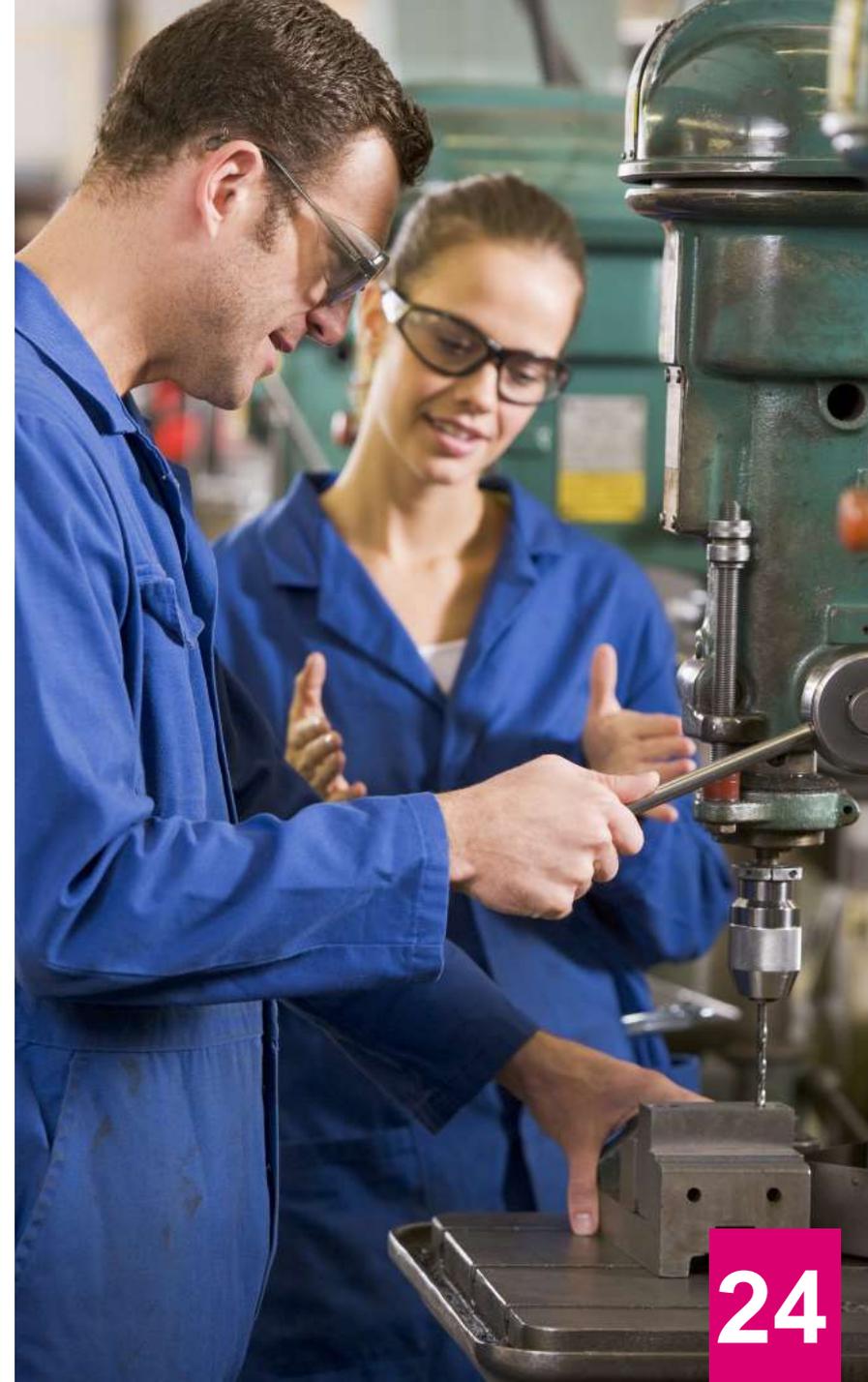
There is a wide range of apprenticeships available to suit every skill and passion and the training provider will offer support for any additional needs.

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 Personal Adviser (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. Visit the local offer webpage or talk to your PA to find out more about financial support that may be available to you.



# Your employment

We want to help you achieve your potential, developing your skills and building experience through employment opportunities.

Your Personal Adviser (PA) will be able to support you to find employment opportunities and will provide information about any benefit entitlements. You will talk about employment and write your goals in 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.

If you have a Jobcentre work coach, they can help you to find suitable job opportunities and to claim benefits if eligible.

You can also receive up to £100 for one set of clothing suitable for interviews. Speak to your work coach for more information.

**To visit the local offer website scan the QR code**



# 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. You might want to consider:



## **Dress appropriately**

first impressions count, so make sure you dress smart



## **Arrive in good time**

allow yourself plenty of time to get to the interview to ensure that you aren't late



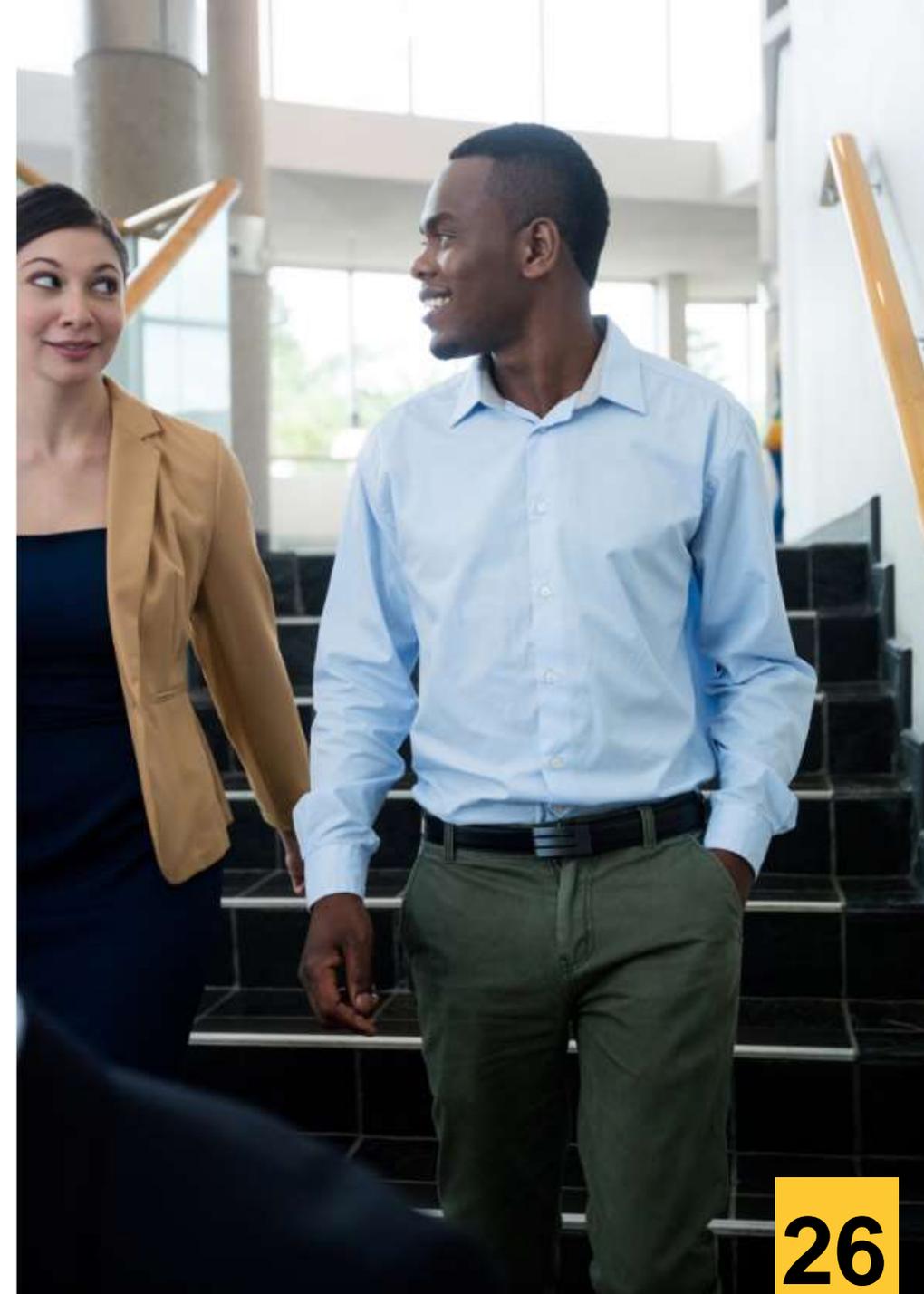
## **Research the company in advance**

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



## **Think 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.



## 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.



Visit the [National Careers Service](#) for information, advice and guidance to help you make decisions on learning, training and work at all stages in your career.

## 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.

There are a number of digital platforms such as [Do-it.org](#) or [Vinspired](#) that can connect you with suitable volunteering opportunities.



# 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. This can offer opportunities and a new way of thinking to aid you in moving forward successfully to the next phase of your life.

Connects is a tool for care leavers to stay informed with all that the Covenant has to offer. [Sign up to Connects](#) to receive updates on relevant work, education and recreational opportunities as well as information about support you may be able to access.

It can match you to meaningful opportunities and also to stay in touch with anyone who is supporting you into employment. Connects sends opportunities relevant to your interests and ambitions and automatically enter you to win prizes in our monthly give-aways. You can download the app too.



## Contact information

Webpage: [www.mycovenant.org.uk](http://www.mycovenant.org.uk)

Phone Number: 0800 077 3557

Email: [info@mycovenant.org.uk](mailto: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 (UVP) 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 Leavers' Forum

Care Leavers' Forum is for care leavers aged 18+ 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 a 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 (CAMHs 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.



## ATLAS (ACCEPT, TEACH, LISTEN, ACCESS, SUPPORT)

ATLAS are a network of children and young people with additional needs and disabilities living in Surrey. Together we share our experiences and give feedback to bring about change to the services we use.



## CONTACT UVP

The UVP team run lots of different participation groups and other activities for a variety of young people accessing different services. For more information read our [menu of service](#) or contact us:

## FOLLOW US

Twitter and Instagram  
[@ourvoicesurrey](#)

## EMAIL US

[user.voice@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:user.voice@surreycc.gov.uk)

## CALL US

Office: 01483 519464  
Mobile: 07973 660976

# Advocacy and complaints

## What is an advocate?

An Advocate is different from any other professional. You can request a referral or make a direct referral for an independent advocate.

Advocates are there to help and support you and to make sure you are involved in all decisions about your life. Advocates also help you speak out when things go wrong. They make sure you know your rights and help you to get the support you need from Children's Services.

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 Personal Adviser (PA) in the first instance.

Or if you're finding it hard to talk to a social worker, health professional or teacher, One (Mind Of My Own) App is a great way to put down your thoughts and send them to those who need to hear from you.

## How can my advocate help me?

They will always be on your side

They will tell you about your rights and give you information and advice about the things you should get from Children's Services

They will make sure you understand what professionals are saying and help you to say what you want to say

If you are unhappy about how you are being treated by Children's Services or if you are worried about what is happening, they can help sort out any problems or concerns.

They can make sure people listen to you



For up to date and detailed information please visit the [local offer webpage](#)



# Useful contacts and financial support

There are a lot of different ways the Care Leavers' Service (CLS) are able to support you, and if they can't, they will be able to point you in the right direction to find the support you need. Speak to your PA who will be able to help you find out what support you can get.

You can find an up to date list of useful contacts and financial support on the [local offer webpage](#)

This document summarises some of the services and support available to you as a care leaver. For more information and to view our full offer please visit our local offer webpage: ([www.surreycc.gov.uk/children/in-care/user-voice/care-leavers](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/children/in-care/user-voice/care-leavers))

To visit the local offer website scan the QR code below

