



Medway Council's Local Offer to Care Leavers



2022 – 2024

MEDWAY COUNCIL

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What is the Local Offer for Care Leavers?

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', setting out the services on offer from both the local authority and other agencies.

Whether you are just starting to prepare to leave care or have already left care, you will have lots of questions and important decisions to make along the way. There can be a lot to learn and find out about when you are preparing for independence or leaving care. If you are at least 16 years old and have been in the care of Medway Council for at least 3 months past your fourteenth birthday and at least 1 day past your 16th birthday, you will be entitled to a range of services and financial support, until the age of at least 21 but sometimes up to 25.

It is extremely important to Medway Council that our children and young people have the best start in life as possible and are happy and successful. This Local Offer is designed to give you some practical information, tell you about the help and support you can expect and explain the different options available to you.

Our role as corporate parents

There are seven corporate parenting principles for local authorities to follow to ensure that they are the best corporate parents to you as the children in care and care leavers they support, and to ensure that you remain the focus;

- ✚ to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- ✚ to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- ✚ to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- ✚ to help those children and young people 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 best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- ✚ for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and,
- ✚ to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Our role as corporate parents – What will we offer to you?

When a child or young person goes into the care of Medway Council (and its elected members, employees and partner agencies), we become the Corporate Parent. This means we take responsibility for ensuring the best possible care for those we care for so they can mature into a healthy, independent young person. You can expect a corporate parent to:

- ✚ respect and honour your identity
- ✚ listen to you
- ✚ always believe in you
- ✚ keep you informed
- ✚ support and guide you
- ✚ find you a safe home
- ✚ be your champion
- ✚ be realistic and honest



What happens when I turn 18?

Medway Council has a legal duty to support you in making the transition from care into adulthood and independent living. You are a care leaver if you are aged 16-25 and were in care for at least 13 weeks in total between the ages of 14 and 16 (including your 16th birthday). There are different explanations provided in the “Eligibility” section.

The Medway Council 16+ Care Leavers Service is currently divided into 2 teams and these teams contain a Team Manager, Personal Advisors, Social Workers and admin support. There is a Medway Council Corporate Parenting Board, a Director and Assistant Director of Children’s Services, a Head of Service for Corporate Parenting and a Group Manager of the 16+ Service.

When you transfer to the 16+ Service from a child in care team we will allocate you a Personal Advisor and continue to support you until you reach your 21st birthday, or your 25th birthday if you are in full-time education. In addition, if you are a former relevant care leaver and ask for support between the ages of 21-25, you will continue to be allocated a Personal Advisor to support and advise you until you reach your 25th birthday, or before 25 if you ask for this support to end. If you choose to end involvement with the service, say at 21, but at 22 you require advice or assistance from us you can contact the service and we may allocate you a PA or simply offer advice and signposting. Do not hesitate to contact us to discuss your needs even if you have not worked with us for a while.



Eligibility (the legal bit)

Eligible Young People

You are an “Eligible” care leaver if you are aged 16 or 17, have been in care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, and you are still in care on your 16th birthday and at least 24 hours after.

There is a duty to support you up to the age of 18, wherever you are living. You will have an allocated social worker and when you are 17 years old a Personal Advisor will start to also work with you who will remain involved post-18. As an eligible young person, you are entitled to:

- ✚ Accommodation and living costs
- ✚ A social worker and a personal advisor
- ✚ A detailed assessment of your needs
- ✚ A pathway plan which replaces your care plan, is completed with you, which is a record of what Medway Council will do for you
- ✚ Advice and support
- ✚ An education pathway plan (EPP) and six monthly reviews
- ✚ Money to live on until you reach 18 and advice and support to manage your finances after this age
- ✚ Statutory visits at a frequency agreed at your Child in Care Review overseen by your Independent Reviewing Officer
- ✚ Statutory reviews chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer every 6 months until you are 18
- ✚ A review health assessment every 12 months until you are 18, and a full Health History after your 18th birthday
- ✚ Opportunities for social activities, hobbies and cultural activities/outings

Relevant Young People

You are a “Relevant” care leaver if you are 16 or 17 years old, have been in care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and have left care after your 16th birthday. You are entitled to:

- ✚ Assistance in maintaining suitable accommodation
- ✚ A personal adviser
- ✚ A detailed assessment of your needs
- ✚ A pathway plan reviewed every six months

- ✚ Assistance to make sure that your needs in respect of education, training and employment are met
- ✚ Advice and support
- ✚ Visits from a personal adviser within seven days of you moving to a new property and then every eight weeks

Former Relevant Young People

You are a “Former Relevant” care leaver if you are aged 18-21, or up to 25 if continuing in further/ higher education or training, or if you wish to continue to have support, and have previously been eligible or relevant, or both. You are entitled to:

- ✚ A personal advisor
- ✚ A pathway plan and six monthly reviews
- ✚ Assistance with education, training and employment
- ✚ Advice and support
- ✚ Visits from your personal advisor within seven days of you moving to a new property and then every eight weeks during involvement with us
- ✚ Financial support for equipment and costs for education
- ✚ A higher education bursary of £2000 if you are in higher education (University)
- ✚ Vacation accommodation costs if in higher education or residential further education
- ✚ Access to local health, dental and optician services

The duties of Local Authorities are extended in relation to [*Former Relevant young people who inform the Local Authority of their wish to receive a service after the age of 21*](#) and under the age of 25 and the Medway Council has a duty to:

- ✚ Appoint a Personal Advisor;
- ✚ Carry out an assessment of the needs to determine what assistance (if any) it would be appropriate to provide;
- ✚ Prepare a Pathway Plan;
- ✚ Give assistance to the extent that your educational or training needs require it. The kinds of assistance are: contributing to expenses incurred in living near the place where you are, or will be, receiving education or training; or making a grant to enable you to meet expenses connected with your education and training;
- ✚ The duties of Medway Council subsist for as long as you pursue the programme of education or training in accordance with the Pathway Plan, and we may disregard any interruption in the education/training if it is satisfied that you will resume it as soon as is reasonably practicable.

In each case where a care leaver requests this support, Medway Council will assess the appropriateness of the course and how it will help the young person to achieve his or her ambitions. The extent of the practical and financial assistance provided will reflect the type of course, whether full- or part-time, and the young person’s existing income.

Qualifying Young People

You are a “Qualifying” young person if you are under 21 (or 25 if in education or training), have been looked after or accommodated in a variety of other settings such as custody, and have returned home and stayed there for six months or more after your 16th birthday, or you were under a special guardianship order. You are entitled to:

- ✚ Advice and support
- ✚ Financial assistance if assessed as needed
- ✚ The local authority keeping in touch if you wish
- ✚ Advice and support with education, training and employment
- ✚ Advice and support with education and training up to 25 years old

Qualifying care leavers are not entitled to a personal advisor or pathway plan but this is at the discretion of the Local Authority and should be based upon assessment of needs. This also includes:

- ✚ A duty to keep in touch
- ✚ Provision of vacation accommodation or the means to secure it where needed for young people who are in Higher or Further Education.

Please contact the 16+ Service if you believe you are Qualifying and would like support.

Care Leavers claiming Asylum

If you are a former unaccompanied child who qualifies as a care leaver and who has been granted leave to remain, or who has an outstanding asylum or other human rights claim or appeal, you are entitled to the same level of care and support from the local authority as any other care leaver.

Your needs related to being an unaccompanied child or victim of modern slavery must be considered in the assessment of needs undertaken as part of the pathway planning process, and by the Independent Reviewing Officer in any review of your pathway plan. For unaccompanied children or children trafficked from overseas, this will be likely to include issues relating to their immigration status and to the advice and support they need to engage in a timely and effective way with the process for resolving their status.

For former unaccompanied children whose long-term future is in the UK, transition planning will need to consider the challenges and issues facing you, such as education or preparing for independent living. Planning once you have been granted refugee status or humanitarian protection should also consider when you may be required to make a further application for leave to remain. Your PA will support you in understanding the roles and responsibilities of you and those involved with you

Unaccompanied children and victims of modern slavery from overseas can be at particular risk of becoming isolated on leaving care due to a lack of established social networks and/or access to members of their extended family. When planning for transition, we will ensure that language or cultural factors are taken into account to reduce this risk. A victim of modern slavery may still be at risk of exploitation on leaving care. This risk should be considered, particularly with regard to arranging your accommodation.



What is a Personal Advisor and what can they do for me?

When you enter care, you are allocated a social worker. Once you turn 17 you will be introduced to a Personal Advisor, known as a PA, who will work alongside you and your social worker until you reach the age of 18, at which stage the PA will become your key worker and you will no longer have an allocated social worker. As a young adult, you are able to make your own decisions and choices, however your PA is there to support and advise you in making the best decisions for you as you make the transition into adulthood and independent living.

As a care leaver, you are entitled to an assessment of your needs within a pathway plan; a Personal Advisor; support with accommodation and maintenance. It is the PA's role to support and advise you and to ensure that you are aware of what you are entitled to.

For care leavers aged over 18 and until your 21st birthday, the PA has a duty to see you every 2 months and to also see where you are living to ensure that you are OK and managing with independent living. They will also keep in touch with you, as agreed by you, in-between visits. The PA needs to record and monitor your progress and will offer you support and advice every step of the way.

Your PA will continue working with you at least until you turn 21, or up to the age of 25 if you are in full-time education, or if you have requested longer term support and advice. Never hesitate to contact your PA if you need more support, or need to see them.



What is a Pathway Plan?

Every young person between 16 and 25-years of age that is in care or is a Care Leaver is provided with a Pathway Plan. Your Pathway Plan will be started by your Social Worker when you turn 16; this will be reviewed with your Care Plan twice a year and when you turn 18, your Personal Advisor will take over the duties in managing this for you.

Your first Pathway Plan meeting will be chaired by your Independent Reviewing Officer and evaluated with your Care Plan and Personal Education Plan, should you have one. From 18 the Personal Advisor 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 Pathway Plan must state how you wish to stay in touch with the PA in-between visits, and the frequency of this. The Pathway Plan needs to be clear on its goals and how these will be achieved, by whom, and by when - these will then be reviewed at least every 6 months.

The law states that you will have an assessment of needs when you are 16, and again when you are 21, to find out what you need support with. Your pathway plan is to ensure these needs are met and it is written by the PA in consultation with you and important people/services in your life. It sets out your needs, views and future goals, and what support you will receive from us and other key professionals/agencies/support networks involved in your life. In Medway, our Pathway Plan is also the assessment of needs, so every time your Pathway Plan is reviewed (at least 6 monthly), a new assessment of needs is undertaken to help create the plan.

Between the age of 16 and 20, your Pathway Plan will consider your education, employment, health, finances, social needs, identity and relationships and accommodation. If you request advice and support post 21, up until your 25th birthday, the assessment of needs and Pathway Plan will concentrate on the areas you feel you need support with.

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

THE ASYLUM PROCESS

Pathway plans should always consider the implications if your asylum claim is refused without a grant of leave, if your application to extend your leave is refused or if your appeal against a refusal is dismissed. In such circumstances, you will become unlawfully present in the UK and be expected to make plans for a return to your home country. A plan for a return to your home country may also need to be made at any other point, should you decide to leave the UK. Initial planning may have to be based around short-term achievable goals whilst entitlement to remain in the UK is being determined. For those who have not yet received an immigration decision, transition planning should reflect all the relevant potential outcomes of the immigration process and which, over time, should be refined as your immigration status is resolved.

Although planning must not pre-empt the outcome of any immigration decision, it is equally important that you are prepared for the possibility that your asylum claim or immigration application is not successful and in those circumstances the plan will then need to focus on your return to your home country, including to reduce the risk of former looked after children remaining in the UK without status and at risk of exploitation. A holistic and informative approach gives children who do not have, or do

not yet have, leave to remain in the UK long-term the best chance of achieving durable outcomes, whether in the UK or abroad.

If your immigration status remains unresolved, pathway plans should consider the implications if your outstanding application or appeal is refused. Subject to a Human Rights Assessment by the local authority, you may then cease to be eligible for care leaver support under the restrictions on local authority support for adults without immigration status (in Schedule 3 to 30 the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002).

Former unaccompanied children who have failed to establish any lawful basis to remain in the UK as an adult, as well as those who are in the asylum process, will generally be eligible for practical and financial assistance and support in returning to their home country from the Voluntary Returns Service, run by the Home Office.

Unless you have been granted indefinite leave to remain (ILR) permanently in the UK, a triple planning approach must be applied to ensure that your needs are identified, and the pathway plan covers all eventualities and all possible outcomes.

If you are seeking asylum in the UK your PA will support you in accessing and engaging with an Immigration Solicitor so that you have legal advice to help you in the process. Your solicitor will help you to understand the possible outcomes of your asylum application which will be included in your pathway plan referred to as triple-planning.

What goes into my Pathway Plan?

Health

If you have any worries about your health this should be included in your Pathway Plan. This is not just your physical health, but also mental health and support with living a healthy lifestyle.

Education, training and employment

Any support you need to achieve your career goals should be written in your Pathway Plan. This includes clear aims for what you need to achieve your goals and how Medway Council will support you.

Relationships

Your plan should say how Medway Council will help you have good relationships with your family, friends and anyone else with whom you value in your life.

Identity and Participation in Society

If you need any extra support with language, religion, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation, make sure you explain what you need to your PA. We are here to support you and we can also help with your ID documents and accessing your file.

Money

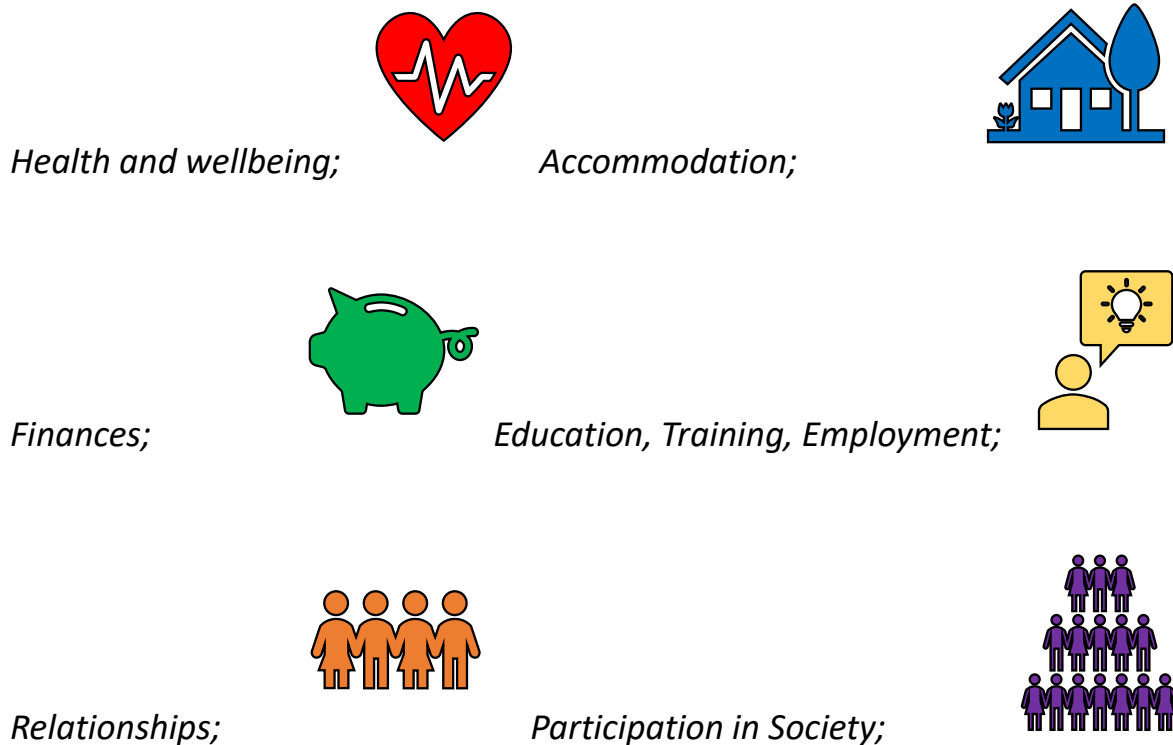
Your plan should state what your financial entitlements are, how much you will get and when you will get it from which service. It will cover budgeting, any benefits you are entitled to and any savings you may have.

Accommodation

You should have regular assessments of your current accommodation and your future accommodation. This should include location, safety, bills and rent. You will be included in any changes in your accommodation and a plan should be in place before you have to move.

The Local Offer

The local offer for care leavers relates to the 6 areas in line with your pathway plan, as well as ensuring that the seven corporate parenting principles apply. These are:





My Health and Wellbeing

As your corporate parent, we want you to be healthy and stay safe, this includes Physically, Emotionally and Sexually. To help you do this, your PA can advise and support you with:

- ✚ information on healthy living
- ✚ information on getting help to pay for prescriptions
- ✚ registering with a GP and dentist
- ✚ transitioning from CAMHS to adult services
- ✚ accessing other mental health support in your area, if you are not eligible for a service from adult services
- ✚ information about counselling services that are available locally
- ✚ information about health drop-in centres; sexual health clinics, or other testing/ screening facilities

Remember that you can speak to your PA about how you are feeling or anything you need help with. They are there for you and want to support you.

If you are receiving benefits, you are entitled to free dental and optician care. They are also free if you are under 18 or are in full-time education.

If you are awaiting asylum / ARE we can support you to complete a HC2 certificate for help with health costs. <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-low-income-scheme/hc2-certificates-full-help-health-costs> to find out more.

As an adult you can take responsibility for your choices and safety, but your safety is also our responsibility as your corporate parent. We want you to be safe and to ensure you have somewhere suitable to live. If things go wrong, we will work with you to address the problem and help you be safe. If you go missing and we have concerns for your wellbeing, we will report you as missing to the police. If we believe that you are being exploited, or 'used' by others, we will hold a meeting inviting relevant professionals to help make a plan to support you to stay safe.

As an adult, you will be able to make choices, however not all choices are safe - your PA can advise you on your options and help you make informed decisions, even if they are not ones we agree with. We report you missing and carry out risk assessments and hold meetings to ensure your safety and wellbeing. We do this because we care.

We can help you stay safe and give you advice on issues such as safe sex and consent. You shouldn't feel embarrassed talking to your Personal Advisor about sexual health. Talking about it can help you get access to resources and education you need to stay safe and healthy.

NHS Clover Street is the main Medway sexual health clinic where you can get advice on contraception, get tested for STIs, or get free condoms.

Get more sexual health advice

If you get pregnant, we're here to support you with your next decisions. If you go forward with the pregnancy, a social worker may complete a pre-birth assessment after 16 weeks to see if you need any extra help, including financial support – this will be discussed with you throughout. If you don't want to go forward with the pregnancy, there are clinics you can access in Medway.

You can get advice about your sexuality or gender identity or learn more about the LGBT+ community from the Medway Gender and Sexual Identity Centre.

If you would like help to access leisure, sport or fitness activities then speak to your Personal Advisor who can help you see what is available in your local area for free. There are many free fitness facilities in local parks and beach fronts that you can access.

Kent Sport has information about sport opportunities, including disability clubs and activities in Kent and Medway. <https://www.kentsport.org/>

https://www.medway.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5607/a_care_leavers_services_and_information_guide.pdf is the link to the offer from Health services within Medway "A Care Leavers Services and Information Guide" where you can find more information about different areas of health need and services locally and nationally.

Please speak to your PA about other support services you can contact or access in relation to your health, safety and wellbeing. Below are links to just some of the services available.

https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200221/a_better_medway provides information and links to many health services that may be useful to you.

To find a GP visit: www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-GP

To find an NHS dentist visit www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist

You can find your nearest optician at www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-an-optician

Medway Young Persons Wellbeing Service - This is for people aged 0-19 years or up to 25 with SEN needs. The service offers advice and you might also benefit from some of the self-help resources available at www.mindfresh.neflt.nhs.uk or Call 0300 3001981 to self-refer.

METRO charity - Provides advice and advocacy, STI home testing kits, free condoms, counselling services, workshops, relationships and sex education training and support groups where diversity is celebrated. 1-1 services are continuing remotely during the coronavirus outbreak. Phone: 020 8305 5004, email: youth@metrocharity.org.uk or visit: www.metrocharity.org.uk

Clover Street, Medway's sexual health hub is open for booked appointments. Visit [Clover Street website](#) or phone 0300 123 1678. [Online services](#) are also available.

Open Road - is an established Drug and Alcohol Recovery support charity, which provides services to support individuals on their journey to recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. You can reach out to them in person, over the phone, online via their website and social media platforms or via a professional you are currently engaging with such as a GP. www.openroad.org.uk/what-we-do

The Looked After Children's Nursing Team will continue to provide you with support until your 19th birthday. A nurse will take part in your pathway planning meetings, support you with your health needs and advise you on where to go for local services. The team offer a 9am to 5pm weekday service. Phone 01634 333634 or email lacadmin@medway.gov.uk or lac.health@medway.gov.uk



My Accommodation

Moving towards living independently can be scary for young people, especially those leaving care. We aim to make this process as smooth as possible with support from your social worker and/or Personal Advisor. We aim to help you find a home where you feel comfortable, safe and secure and help you to get all your necessary identity documents sorted. We will discuss what housing is most appropriate for you and the timescales this may have.

It is essential that a multi-agency approach is adopted when securing accommodation for care experienced young people. Young People need to be well prepared to live independently and your housing needs must be addressed before you leave care via careful and appropriate pathway planning and joint working. There is a joint working protocol in place that will ensure that Medway Council's Children's Services and Medway Council's Housing Services each play a full role in providing appropriate resources and support to you to ensure your transition to independent living by way of planned, sustainable moves.

We have a duty to ensure that you have access to suitable accommodation between the ages of 18-21. Whilst you can claim housing benefit/Universal Credit to cover rent costs, there may be staff support offered in some types of accommodation which will not be covered - we will ensure that this is paid. There are different types of housing with support, and you will be made aware of the types of accommodation available.

Your PA will visit you at your accommodation, as part of the legal requirements, to check that you are OK. We know that leaving care and moving into more independent accommodation can be lonely and isolating. Please remember that we are here to support you and want to do so. We never want you to feel you are on your own, so contact your PA and discuss how you feel so we can address any issues.

If you're aged over 18, your personal advisor will help you to find suitable accommodation. This might involve:

- ✚ working with housing services to come up with suitable housing options for you, including supported accommodation if you're not ready or don't want to have your own tenancy
- ✚ supporting you to remain with your foster carers in a Staying Put arrangement; this can last until you're 21 at which time it can become a private arrangement if you are both in agreement
- ✚ support to access different housing options, including social housing which is managed by a housing association
- ✚ independent housing and a private rental tenancy
- ✚ advice about holding down a tenancy, including how to avoid getting behind in your rent payments, paying for bills and budgeting. We know it can be very hard having your own place for the first time; we'll do whatever we can to ease the pressure on you
- ✚ practical support with moving into and furnishing and equipping your new home
- ✚ support with the cost of your first TV licence
- ✚ support to find cost-effective contents insurance to protect your possessions
- ✚ providing information about exemptions or discounts on Council Tax
- ✚ helping you to claim Housing Benefit or Universal Credit
- ✚ supporting you if you have a housing crisis, including helping if you're threatened with losing your tenancy, or if you've lost it

TYPES OF ACCOMMODATION

Staying Put

Staying with your foster carers beyond the age of 18 is called 'Staying Put'. If you are currently with a foster carer, you have the option to remain in their care, if everyone agrees, and you have the option to remain there until you turn 21 years old. Rather than being a child in foster care, this arrangement is viewed as a lodger with a host and paid as such. Don't worry, nothing will change for you, but things will change for your carers, like the money they receive from Medway Council to be a Staying Put provider. You will be a lodger in their home, in that you will be renting a room from them and you will be expected to pay a contribution to your keep.

Whilst here, you will be supported to develop your independent living skills further. This will mean that you continue to receive the extra care and support you might need before taking on your own independent accommodation. Many young people are not ready to move into their own accommodation at 18 and this can be a nice way of remaining part of the family and making sure you are confident in taking your next step towards independence.

During your Child in Care Reviews before turning 18 your Independent Reviewing Officer and Social Worker will support you throughout the discussions about the Staying Put process and ensure you are aware of the implications and expectations of the placement. If you or the foster carer decide not to accept the Staying Put placement arrangements, you will be supported to look for other alternative accommodation/support options. The Joint Housing Protocol should be referred to, as well as consideration of Private Rental Scheme options.

It is expected that you will contribute towards the cost of food, household items and utilities from your universal credit payments, and claim Housing Benefit where applicable which will go directly to the staying put provider. At 18 you will be eligible to claim universal credit if in full time education (excluding University). The social worker will assist you in submitting a claim to the Department of Work and Pensions six weeks before your 18th birthday.

The Staying Put arrangements should be reviewed as part of the Pathway Plan Review every six months and ensure any targets are being met. The Pathway Plan Review will ensure that you are developing and acquiring independent living skills. This should record any problems or difficulties that have emerged and what is working well in the arrangement and continue to plan for the future. A review can be arranged earlier if needed by agreement between you, the carers and your personal advisor.

Shared Lives

If you are disabled and need more support than can be offered through Staying Put, then Shared Lives might be a possible option for you, either with your current carers if they apply to become Shared Lives carers or another. Shared Lives can only be accessed via the Disability 0-25 Team or one of the Adult Services Teams in Medway Council. It should be considered by the Children in Care or 0-25 teams before you turn 18 years of age and is agreed following an assessment by Adult Social Services.

The Shared Lives scheme offers support to people who need it. It gives people a chance to move in or spend time with an approved Shared Lives carer. Together they share a home, family and community life. People supported through the scheme learn new skills, take part in different activities, and have the chance to make new friends and become more independent.

<https://www.medway.gov.uk/sharedlives> for more information from the Shared Lives team.

Supported Lodgings

There is a supported lodgings scheme in Medway where you can live with a family in their home. Supported Lodgings aims to give vulnerable young people, aged between 16 and 25 years old a safe and secure place to live as they prepare for independent living. In a supported lodgings home, you will get family-based support and advice to get education, employment or training as well as develop the confidence and skills to live independently. While living with the host you will be considered a lodger and will be expected to act as such.

The Supported Lodgings provider will help you to develop your life skills. The level of help will depend on what you need but they would be expected to help you:

- ✚ budget, shop for and cook low cost and nutritional meals
- ✚ to manage your money
- ✚ by promoting a positive self-image by encouraging a high standard of personal hygiene and self-presentation
- ✚ gain practical skills, such as cooking, laundry and developing a daily routine
- ✚ by offering advice and support in getting education, employment or training
- ✚ by helping you get information that will help the end goal of moving to full independence from services such as Citizens Advice Bureau and Benefits Agency
- ✚ by establishing an appropriate and consistent relationship with you including non-intrusive emotional or practical help and advice
- ✚ working and communicating with all professionals involved with you
- ✚ by attending meetings such as Looked After Children review meetings (for young people aged 16 and 17) or Pathway Planning meetings (for young people aged 18 and up) either at home or within the community.

This will be funded by Medway Council but you will be expected to claim benefits and make contributions, as with a Staying Put arrangement.

https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200170/children_and_families/934/supported_lodgings for more information on the Supported Lodgings Scheme.

Supported Accommodation/Semi-independent Living

This is accommodation where you are provided with independent accommodation but have extra help and support from staff. For example, some accommodation might be in shared houses or in single flats but there will be keyworker staff available. As with any adult accommodation, you will be expected to abide by the rules or risk losing the accommodation. The key purpose of supported accommodation is that there will be staff on hand to support and guide you. They might be there for certain parts of the day or sometimes even 24 hours a day. You should engage with your support worker as they will help you access local services and connect with your local community. If you have any problems settling in, your support worker will help you.

Speak to your PA if you wish to have more information about the supported accommodation in Medway.

Shared accommodation

If you decide to live in shared accommodation, as a care leaver 18-21 years old, you will be able to claim the higher-rate one-bedroom rate housing benefit to help cover the cost. This is sometimes a good option if you and some friends/colleagues wish to live together and share the costs.

Your PA can support with looking into this option.

Private accommodation

Private rented properties are advertised through private letting agents. Given the limited number of social rented homes in most areas, there can be more choice of properties in the private rented sector.

Some privately rented properties with landlords don't accept housing benefit as payments for rent but there are some that do, so it may be worth exploring this with support from your PA.

If you wish to enter privately rented accommodation, you will be solely responsible for managing the tenancy and paying the bills, including gas, electric, phone, water etc. This can be a big jump from living with a foster carer, so sometimes supported accommodation is better initially for a period of time to prepare you for this as a next step.

If you are a care leaver who is claiming rent payments via Universal Credit and are not confident that you will be able to manage the responsibility of paying your rent to your landlord, you need to speak to your DWP Work coach and arrange for this to be paid to them directly. Speak to your Coach (or your Personal Advisor) about 'direct payments to landlords'.

Your PA can help you look for a private rented property or you can look online for estate agents.

Council Housing

If you have particular needs which mean you require Social Housing, you can register on the local housing register. This is a long process and should not be relied on to provide a guaranteed home for you. You can register for social housing in Medway from the age of 17. This expresses your interest in housing and will add you to the housing register giving you a banding. You should be able to access work, or benefits, to pay for your rent and associated costs.

There is no guarantee that because you want social housing, that you will be eligible or able to access this, and if you are then this may take a long time to get. The local housing authority will assess your needs and make a decision on this. There is usually a waiting list for properties and how quickly you secure a property will depend on your circumstances. The council will give priority to certain groups of people, which can include care leavers, children who live with you, if you're pregnant and if you are homeless, amongst other things.

You can register for social housing in Medway through Kent Homechoice. Before you apply, you will need to complete a pre-assessment to check you're eligible for social housing.

<http://www.kenthomechoice.org.uk/choice/Content.aspx?wkid=4> for more information and to register for Home Choice. Your PA can help you with your application if you wish.

Living with Friends or Family

You may wish to return to living with family or friends. You may wish to live with a partner and their family. We will support you in your decision-making and advise on the practicalities of this. You may decide to do this for a short period of time or a long period of time. If it is not working out for whatever

reason or you change your mind, please speak to your PA who can support you in other options available to you. It is important to remember that this is a private arrangement and there may be some financial contributions expected of you.

Please speak to your PA if you would like any advice or support about living with your family or friends.

University Accommodation

You will need to apply to Student Finance England to receive a student loan to cover the cost of your university rent.

Whilst you are at university, Medway Council can pay your holiday accommodation rent if there is a need. You are responsible for your rent during term time.

The amount paid will be agreed by the Management Team. Please speak with your PA about the types of university accommodation available.

Council Tax

Council Tax is a payment for local services that many people over 18 with a tenancy are liable to pay. The money raised from council tax collections is used to pay for local services such as policing, rubbish collections and the maintenance of parks.

We will support you to claim all eligible council tax benefits and reductions, such as Council Tax Support, single person discount, student exemption.

When you apply for council tax in Medway if you have your own tenancy and are responsible for it, there will be a box to tick on the application form to say you are care leaver.

When the form is received you will be exempt from having to pay council tax. This is available for care leavers aged 18-25 residing within Medway. If you reside outside of Medway please speak to your PA as there are similar schemes in place in other Authorities.

Risk of Homelessness

In the first instance speak to your PA who can support you with options to avoid homelessness. However, if you think you will be made homeless in the next 56 days, and you cannot find your own alternative accommodation (despite the help of the agencies supporting you), you can approach any local housing authority in England, and ask for assistance. Provided you are eligible, the council will assess your needs, and draw up a plan to help you resolve your housing problem.

There will ideally be communication between the housing authority and your PA so please share your PA's contact details with them so they can work together to support you. It's important that you contact your Leaving Care Team if you're worried you are at risk of losing your accommodation and becoming homeless. The sooner we know, the earlier we can offer the advice and support you need.

Advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness, including to meet the needs of care leavers, is available free of charge on Medway Council's website: https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/download/403/housing_advice_information_leaflets

NEW HOME

Setting Up Home Allowance

We will support you with a Setting Up Home Allowance when you move to independent living. This can be quite exciting and scary at the same time, as it means you are about to take a huge step to live independently. When you are ready to move on to independent living, we will provide up to £2,000 for essential items such as a bed, kettle and carpet. This money will not be offered as one lump sum, and we will not replace essential items once they are purchased; we will only purchase them once. Items can be ordered online and delivered to your home, or your PA can go shopping with you.

Everyone has to budget and therefore setting up home is an opportunity to really explore what is available 'out there', from free items, to upcycling, or purchasing new. The PAs are aware of what is classed as an essential item and can share this with you. We will pay for your first TV license, however you will need to fund this after the first year and will need to budget for this. You are able to pay your TV license in monthly instalments, although this will be slightly more expensive. You can pay your TV license online at <https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/>

Your Personal Advisor can help you to keep on top of your bills and abide by your tenancy agreement. If you do not keep to your tenancy agreement or pay your bills you may be at risk of eviction and homelessness. The Accommodation Lead PA within the 16+ Service can offer you Tenancy Training to help you to be prepared and understand all of the requirements of holding your own tenancy. Please speak to your PA about any housing issues or worries.

Your Personal Advisor will assist and guide you with housing issues and if you live in supported housing you will have a support worker who will work with you to help you build your independence skills.

When you first move into your permanent home, your Personal Advisor will help you settle in. They will undertake a Pathway Plan Review when you have been in your home for 28 days and at least every 6 months after that. They will also visit within a week of you moving into your new home, and then visit at least every 2 months after that.

If you have a support or key worker because you live in supported accommodation, they are there to support and help you. Speak to your Personal Advisor if you don't think you're getting all the support you need.

Your Personal Advisor may also refer you to a floating support worker if you live in your own flat who will help with your personal life and practical life skills, such as budgeting. If you are allocated a worker and don't attend the meetings the support might stop, so try and get the maximum benefit from them as they are there to support you.

You can get [housing advice at Kingsley House](#) in Gillingham and may get temporary accommodation if you need emergency accommodation. Your Personal Advisor can give you advice on how to stay safe in your home and who to contact for any maintenance issues or issues with neighbours.











My Finances

Once you are 18, you will be supported to manage your money, and Children's Services should not be your main source of financial support. It is expected that once you turn 18 you will immediately claim Universal Credit/benefits if you are eligible to.

Because we know that it does not always run smoothly claiming benefits, we can provide the equivalent of the weekly allowance you will receive from claiming benefits, if you are living independently, for a maximum of four weeks - we expect you to pay this back, once you receive your benefits. After four weeks, you are expected to access advanced payments through the social benefits system if you are still waiting for social benefits to be paid. **Please note that the universal credit amount was increased by the Government during the Coronavirus pandemic and may go back to £57.90 as standard if this is what the Government decides.**

Once you turn 18 you will be responsible for paying for things through working, claiming benefits or your student loan. This includes bills, living costs, food and travel. However, you are entitled to a setting up home allowance of £2000. This should be spent on furniture or electrical equipment like a fridge or sofa.

Children's Services might also support you with other costs. These could include:

-  Accommodation and bills.
-  Clothing Allowance
-  Education (books, fees, travel).
-  Work (Interviews, travel).
-  Training or skills development (IT course, driving lesson etc).
-  Cultural or religious needs.
-  Special needs (disabilities, pregnancy, parenthood).
-  Personal documentation (passport, Citizenship)

If you need support with any of these things make sure you speak to your PA. They can work with you to look at your finances and make changes to your Pathway Plan if necessary. The decision to offer financial support will be made alongside the PA's manager and will be based on need. Please do not

suffer in silence if you are struggling to pay for things or are getting into debt – please contact your PA and ask for support.

There may be times when you hit crisis, or have an unexpected bill, such as for dental treatment. Whilst we do not have to pay for these, please speak to your PA and it will be considered whether we will financially support you with whatever issue has arisen. It is important to remember that our role is also to prepare you for adulthood and, as such, we are not simply here to ‘bail you out’ every time you hit a crisis, therefore support and advice may not always mean financial support. We can often signpost you to the right agency to help resolve issues.

Your PA can support you with your money and budgeting. They can also help you to:

- ✚ open a bank account
- ✚ find out about relevant money management courses
- ✚ get your National Insurance number, if you don't have one already
- ✚ find exceptional financial support if you have an emergency
- ✚ make sure you have appropriate identification documents (ID)
- ✚ apply for benefits if you're in full-time education
- ✚ apply for benefits if you're looking for work, or if you're unable to work due to your personal circumstances
- ✚ apply for benefits if you need help and are eligible
- ✚ apply for PIP (Personal Independence Payments) if you have a disability or health condition that means you're eligible
- ✚ apply for bursaries if you're in further or higher education
- ✚ access rent and deposit schemes to secure your own home
- ✚ buy essential things if you move into your own home (Setting Up Home Allowance of £2000)
- ✚ stay in touch with people who are important to you by helping with transport costs
- ✚ access financial support if you're an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child (UASC)

When you were in care you should have been getting allowances and had money put into a savings account or had a Junior ISA opened for you. You'll be able to access these savings when you turn 18.

Saving can be hard but your personal advisor can help you organise a budget plan and be involved in helping you manage your spending if you'd like.

WHERE TO GET MONEY ADVICE

Entitled to - Check what benefits you're entitled to.

Jobcentre Plus - Information about Jobcentre Plus.

The Money Advice Service - Free and impartial money advice.

Turn2us - A national charity that helps people in financial hardship to gain access to welfare benefits, charitable grants and support services.



FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO LEARN TO DRIVE

You can get help with the costs of learning to drive from the age of 17. To get funding you'll be assessed on your ability to learn how to drive safely such as the ability to pass the theory and practical tests. You'll also have to show that you are looking for and/or staying in education, training and employment opportunities.

If funding is agreed, it will cover the cost of:

- ✚ a provisional driving licence
- ✚ up to 10 driving lessons (if agreed with the service manager, additional lessons could be funded)
- ✚ the theory test fee (and one retake if needed)
- ✚ the driving test fee (and one retake if needed)
- ✚ a full licence once the test has been passed

You will not be able to apply for funding when learning to drive or continuing lessons if you:

- ✚ have any driving related convictions, charges or charges pending in the last 18 months
- ✚ have any convictions, charges or charges pending related to violence, drugs or alcohol in the last 6 months
- ✚ have been in custody in the last 6 months
- ✚ behave in a way the driving instructor considers unacceptable

FINANCES FOR CARE LEAVERS SEEKING ASYLUM

If you are an asylum-seeking care leaver, your personal allowance payments will continue whilst you are awaiting the outcome of your asylum claim and you are therefore unable to claim social benefits, or work. However, if you are deemed 'All Rights Exhausted', the support offered to you will be reviewed in line with the Immigration Act 2016 and you will be referred to the Home Office.

Financial support for you as a former unaccompanied children should reflect your needs and immigration status. Your pathway plans should address employment opportunities and funding arrangements for education and training, taking account of your immigration status.

If you have no recourse to public funds, you will be unable to access a number of welfare benefits and social housing. Subject to the Human Rights Assessment by the local authority under Schedule 3 to the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, the provision of accommodation may form part of the leaving care support provided to a young person who has no recourse to public funds.



My Education, Training and Employment

We want you to succeed in your education, training and employment. You are expected to stay in education, training or employment with training until you're 18 years old to gain qualifications. After 18 we can look at the support you may need, and you'll be able to access advice and guidance about your options at any age. We will ask you how you're doing and we'll record this in your personal education plan (PEP) or your Pathway Plan, or both. We'll be ready to celebrate your achievements with you.



FURTHER EDUCATION

You may choose to remain in full time education after Year 11 either in a Sixth Form at school or at a college. Sixth Forms tend to be smaller and offer an experience fairly similar to school. Colleges are larger and often offer a wider range of courses that aren't available in schools. They tend to be more informal but will expect you to manage your own time and work effectively.

Often which you choose will depend on the subjects you want to study, qualifications you need for the future or job you are interested in pursuing as well as your own learning style and preferences. It is important to look at different schools and colleges and talk to the people there to find out which would best suit you. All colleges and sixth forms hold open days but you can also ask to visit during a normal day to find out more.

College open days are a really helpful way for you to find out how different colleges work and get an idea of what it will be like to be a college student. They are an opportunity to see the campus and get information that will help you make a decision on what to do next. Ask your PA if you would like to attend an open day and if you would like them to attend with you.

16 – 19 BURSARY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS

If you are studying a fully recognised qualification at either a school, college or training provider and aged between 16 and 19, you may be entitled to the 16–19 bursary of £1,200 from the education provider. The bursary is to support educational related costs, including travel. Each education provider can administer the bursary how they wish. You will often meet with your education provider to discuss any course related costs (e.g. travel, kit and equipment) and agree how to use the bursary. In some cases, you may receive payments so will need a bank account in your own name. You will need to

apply for the bursary from your student services adviser at college before you start the course. For the 16-19 bursary, you need to ensure you are clear of the educational provider's requirements for receiving it e.g. 95% attendance or good behaviour. Your attendance and behaviour will be monitored.

DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUND

If you are aged 19 or over and are finding it difficult to access further education or training at your college, you may be able to apply for the Discretionary Learner Support Fund.

This fund is for students who are facing financial hardship and may be used for:

- ✚ Travel costs and accommodation
- ✚ Essential course equipment and materials
- ✚ Child care costs (if you are aged 20 and over at the start of your course)

You should speak to the education provider about the fund before starting any course as it comes from them. If you are advised that it is not available, immediately discuss this with your Personal Advisor who will assist you.

For young parents, aged under 20 at the start of your course, there is government funding in place to assist with nursery and child minder costs. You should speak to your education provider about applying for this.

<https://www.gov.uk/get-childcare> for guidance on how to find childcare, to get help paying for it and what to do if your circumstances change. Your PA or the parent support advisor within the care leavers service will be able to help you find information if you need it.

UNIVERSITY HIGHER EDUCATION

If you wish to pursue a course at university and pursue your dream career, we can support and advise you on how to obtain tuition fees and maintenance loans. We can offer support with travel costs at the start and end of term, and make sure you have somewhere to live during the holidays. Your PA can support you in applying, and advise you if there are any bursaries, or discretionary funds which can be accessed through the university to aid you in your studies. In addition, all universities have student unions which will support you with any questions you may have and ensure you are accessing the support that is available for you. You are expected to claim benefits or apply for a student loan in the same way as any other young person.

We will support you for a maximum of 4 years of university study in higher education, there is a £2,000 bursary which the care leavers service will provide to you. In addition;

- ✚ You will be eligible to apply for a student loan from Student Finance England
- ✚ We will support you to visit universities prior to acceptance by covering travel costs
- ✚ We will provide funding towards accommodation in Easter, Christmas and Summer holidays
- ✚ We will assist you with the initial travel costs of moving to and from university up to £200
- ✚ Any additional funding will be agreed by the management team where necessary.
- ✚ If you are attending university, you are able to use some of your Setting Up Home Allowance to cover the costs of duvets, pots and pans etc up to a maximum of £200.

You may also be entitled to additional support from the university who often have additional funds and grants for care leavers, but you should contact your chosen university to discuss what is available. Your PA can help with contacting them if you need it.

If you are thinking about applying to university, please speak to your Personal Adviser or Social Worker, as they will be able to help you with applying for your personal student finance loan and support you throughout the process.

UCAS - Undergraduate Getting Started - Care Leavers - support with finance, settling in, and accommodation for care leavers.

The University of Greenwich has also created lots of resources to help you write your personal statement.

- Personal Statement: Getting Started
- Personal Statement: Check-Up
- Personal Statement: Self Assessment

The Propel website is also a fantastic resource offering advice and information about how different institutions support care leavers. You can use it to find out about all year-round accommodation, bursaries and grants and key contacts.

Student Finance England have released a guide to the Terms and Conditions that come with applying for and repaying your student loans. The full Student Finance England Terms and Conditions document can be accessed here.

EDUCATION HEALTH CARE PLAN

The purpose of an education, health and care (EHC) is to:

- ✚ make special there is educational provision to meet the special educational needs of a child or young person
- ✚ secure the best possible outcomes for them across education, health and social care
- ✚ prepare them for adulthood as they get older.

If you have an Education Health and Care Plan, we can be part of the review process and advise you on what educational placements meet your needs.

You can request an education, health and care plan from the age of 16. There are professionals and carers who can help you to do this or do it for you.

If you're a care leaver with an EHCP, you're eligible for the year long Supported Internship Programme which supports young people in the workplace. Every college and university has a disability adviser or learning support coordinator so speak to them for more information and support.

If you have an EHCP but do not continue in education, training or you get a job, your EHCP will stop. Bemix Supported Internships for young people aged 16-24 with EHCPs - www.bemix.org

Find out if you would be entitled to a EHCP

MEDWAY VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Medway's Virtual School promotes the educational achievements of looked-after children and previously looked-after children. It does this through a range of strategies including training, advice and guidance for schools, social workers, foster carers and other professionals. Most of our pupils are educated in Medway schools and some go to Kent schools as this is often their nearest school.

The virtual school ensures that the achievement of looked-after children is prioritised by those with responsibilities for promoting their welfare. This is so that our children and young people can achieve more and do as well as their peers.

The virtual school also;

- ✚ Give advice to those who care for those previously in care, such as those who have been adopted or are living in a special guardianship arrangement.
- ✚ Provide young people in care and care experienced young people with advice, guidance and support to enable each young person to reach their full potential.
- ✚ Monitor and track exclusions, attendance and progress.
- ✚ Provide specific training for schools and colleges for designated teachers and carers.
- ✚ Challenge schools and educational settings to raise attainment of young people in care and Care Experienced young people.
- ✚ Ensure care experienced young people have access to the funding they need through Bursaries and Funding Projects.

Medway's Virtual School is made up of a virtual headteacher, deputy headteacher, school officer and school practice support officer.

You can contact the virtual school by emailing virtualschool@medway.gov.uk



EMPLOYMENT

We're here to support you in applying for and being successful in a job application. We work alongside other agencies such as Links to Work, APM, Prince's Trust and the Jobcentre to provide the best support.

If you're aged 16 to 18 you must be in education or in a training scheme. Your social worker, then Personal Advisor after 18, is responsible for your education, training and employment planning so you must talk to them about what you want to do. You can follow different routes to find your dream job. There are resources online, or your Personal Advisor can help you get in touch with a Careers Advisor.

Other work and education resources in Medway include:

- [adult education](#)
- [apprenticeships and internships](#)
- [volunteering](#)

There are opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships and employment within the council; if you're interested in a Medway Council apprenticeship you will be guaranteed an interview and your PA can support you with your application and interview preparation.

If you would like help finding a job, you can also contact Jobcentre Plus. The job centre for Medway is located at Crown House, The Brook, Chatham, ME4 4LQ. An adviser can discuss your options, help you find work and help you with making benefit claims. Find further information about [Jobcentre Plus on GOV.UK](#)

If you're aged 16 or 17 you can also get career information and advice, this could be a one-to-one appointment, group work, drop in or on social media. You can contact the Information, Advice and Guidance Team by emailing iag@medway.gov.uk or follow them on social media on Twitter: @IAGMedway, Facebook: IAGMedway or Instagram: @IAGMedway.



My Relationships

If you have entered care, it is likely that you have experienced some level of loss during your early childhood, and possibly trauma and/or abuse. It may be that you are only starting to come to terms with this as you enter adulthood, or that you realise this still affects you today. In addition to this, your own experiences may well impact on your adult relationships, both with professionals, friends, and intimate partners. You may fear if you are about to become a parent that your child will have similar experiences and be taken into care, and this can be a very scary time for you. You may also want to 'get it right' to make sure your history is not repeated in your own relationships. We can support you in understanding what a healthy relationship is and isn't so you can make an informed decision about who you want in your life. Talking about your relationships openly with your Personal Advisor will help us know how much support you need to help you find and maintain healthy relationships.

Medway Council will offer you a safe, trustworthy PA to talk to. The PA will support and advise you as you transition into adulthood. If other needs are identified, your PA will advise you how to access appropriate support.

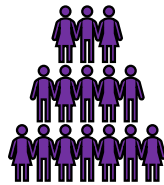
If you are a young parent and you wish to access support with parenting, you can speak to your health visitor (if your child is under 5 years old). The 16+ Service also has a parent support worker who can work with you if you wish, in addition to your PA. If you have more than one need, you can ask your health visitor, or other involved professional, to complete an Early Help Assessment which can be discussed at a multi-agency meeting to offer you and your family multi-agency support. You are able to access parenting courses and other support through the Early Help Hub, and it may benefit you socially too. Anyone, not just care leavers, accesses these services, so you are not alone in needing support with parenting.

As well as support from a personal advisor, we may be able to offer you additional practical and emotional support, such as:

- ✚ where appropriate, continuing to support contact with the Independent Visitor you had while you were in care
- ✚ helping to maintain or regain contact with people special to you or who cared for you in the past, like former foster carers or social workers
- ✚ helping you maintain or regain contact with members of your family.

If you have lost contact with your family from your country of origin, we will support you by linking you with agencies who help to trace families (for example British Red Cross).

You should let your Personal Advisor know who is important to you as we are able to help you make contact with them. You should also tell us who you would like to have as your next of kin for emergency issues.



My Participation in Society

If you need any extra support with language, religion, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation, make sure you explain what you need to your PA. They are there to support you and can also help with your ID documents and accessing your file.

If you wish to attend a specific place of worship, we will support your travel costs on special occasions (for example during festive periods). We will fund travel up to 4 times in a year and we will purchase the train tickets for you. If you need support in finding a safe place of worship close to where you live, please speak to your Personal Advisor.

We want to ensure that your voice is heard. You are the expert of your experiences and how these impact on you. You are the expert of how services helped, or hindered, you. We want to hear from you about your experiences and what we can do, as corporate parents, to improve services for others.

We will listen to your views, but will not tolerate abuse or aggression. We will treat you with respect and expect the same from you. If there are exceptional circumstances and you wish to change your PA, we will listen to your views and consider if this is necessary. We will speak with you about this and ensure we all agree what is best.

We want you to feel part of society, and to feel you make a positive contribution to it. We can help you participate in society in the following ways:-

- ✚ Providing information about groups and activities in your area

- ✚ Supporting you to access education, training and/ or employment in your area
- ✚ Supporting you to enrol on the electoral register, so that you can vote
- ✚ Supporting you to access local leisure activities

Once you are 18 you will be able to vote. This means you can have your say on local and national issues and politics. Anyone who wants to vote must be registered. You can register to vote online or by post.

- [Advice about voting](#)
- [Voting in Medway](#)

Young Lives Foundation are available to provide mentoring and advocacy services providing advice and guidance in resolving any challenges that you are facing. <https://ylf.org.uk/>

Stonewall - Is an LGBTQ rights charity. Stonewall's work focuses on working with organisations to bring equality to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people at home, at school, and at work. www.stonewall.org.uk

Mermaids - Is a charity for gender diverse children, young people, and their families. www.mermaidsuk.org.uk

Coram Voice - Coram Voice want all care experienced young people to take part in A National Voice and become part of their online community by using the hashtag #ANationalVoice and following their Twitter account [@CoramVoice](#). Coram Voice want to hear from you so join the conversation or start one with them. You can get involved by visiting their twitter [@CoramVoice](#) and searching through the hashtag [#ANationalVoice](#).

CHALLENGE CARDS



Challenge Cards are a quick and easy way for young people to share views and experiences of being in care. They are a way to let the decision makers know what improvements young people would like to see in the care system.

How we use Challenge Cards

Young Lives Foundation anonymously share the Challenge Cards at Medway's Children and Young Person Council (MCYPC) meetings. Decision makers for Children's Services are at these meetings. They listen and take on board the challenges raised by young people in care.

If we can take a challenge forward, we work out a deadline to make sure it is completed. If we cannot complete a challenge, we will find out why and let you know.

Once we have completed a challenge, the MCYPC will share the outcome on their social media pages and website.

Submit a Challenge Card

If you're a Medway young person in care or a Medway care leaver aged up to 24, wherever you live, you can submit a Medway Challenge Card to us
To submit a card, visit the [Young Lives Foundation \(YLF\) website](#).

SUPPORT AT MEDWAY LIBRARIES

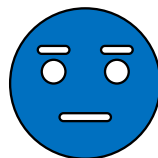
Our libraries in Medway are a free, safe space for young people to meet and relax.

At the libraries you can:

- ✚ use free computers
- ✚ access wifi
- ✚ use the printers for a small fee
- ✚ use online referencing tools to help you with research and studying
- ✚ access a wide range of books and DVDs including eBooks

The libraries also have resources to help you:

- ✚ with your education
- ✚ with your wellbeing
- ✚ to look for jobs
- ✚ find events and groups in Medway
- ✚ get volunteer or apprenticeship opportunities at libraries
- ✚ socialise - with free space for groups to meet



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

In the first instance if you are unhappy with something from the 16+ Service please speak to your Personal Advisor or their manager. The duty contact details are in the “Things to Remember” section. If you are not happy with the response you can make a complaint to the Medway Council Complaints Department.

They deal with the following kinds of complaints:

- ✚ you think a decision was unfair or you feel badly treated
- ✚ you are unhappy with the quality of the service
- ✚ you were refused a service
- ✚ a service was not provided on time
- ✚ you disagree with an assessment
- ✚ you feel your views are not being listened to
- ✚ attitude or behaviour of our staff

- ✚ how eligibility and assessment criteria was applied
- ✚ the impact on the child or young person of a local authority policy
- ✚ concern about the quality of an assessment or a review

If after speaking to your PA and a manager within the 16+ Service you'd like to make a complaint, comment or compliment about children's services, there are several ways you can get in touch:

- ✚ email sccm@medway.gov.uk
- ✚ phone 01634 333 036
- ✚ text 07712 391 459
- ✚ write to Social Care Complaints Manager, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, ME4 4TR
- ✚ contact the Young Lives Foundation on 01622 683815 to ask someone to help you make a complaint.



Important 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. If you lose it, the PA can support and advise you on how to obtain another one, but you will have to pay any costs towards receiving a replacement. More information can be found at https://www.gov.uk/national-insurance/your-national-insurance-number
Passport	Your PA will support you with an application for a passport, and we will cover the cost of applying for and purchasing your first passport. 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 new one and they are not cheap, so please keep it in a safe place. You can find out more information and apply at https://www.gov.uk/apply-renew-passport .
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 license. The first license will be funded by Medway Council. Again, if you do not keep your license 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. You can find more information and apply at https://www.gov.uk/renew-driving-licence .
Birth certificate	If you do not have a birth certificate, the PA can support you to apply for yours. 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. We will pay for you to apply for this. More information can be found at https://www.gov.uk/order-copy-birth-death-marriage-certificate .
British citizenship	If you are entitled to apply for British Citizenship, the PA will support you to do this. More information can be found at https://www.gov.uk/becoming-a-british-citizen .
Biometric residence permit [often called a biometric card]	If you are an unaccompanied asylum seeker, 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. We will pay for you to apply for this. More information can be found at https://www.gov.uk/biometric-residence-permits .

ASYLUM SUPPORT SERVICES

Refugee Council – Children’s Panel. The Refugee Children’s Section has a national remit to offer advice and support to unaccompanied children and advise other professionals who are involved in their care. This includes work with all unaccompanied children who claim asylum and specialist projects working with trafficked children and with age disputed young people. Phone: 0207 346 1134 Email: children@refugeecouncil.org.uk Web: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/what_we_do/childrens_services

The Children’s Society provide specialist services supporting refugee and migrant children and young people in London, Leeds, Birmingham, Coventry, Blackburn, Newcastle, Oxford and Manchester Phone: 020 7841 4400 Email: supportercare@childrenssociety.org.uk Web: www.childrenssociety.org.uk/in-your-area

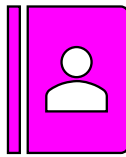
The Migrant Children's Project advice line at Coram Children's Legal Centre provides specialist advice to professionals, young people and families on the rights and entitlements of asylum-seeking, refugee, trafficked and migrant children and young people: Phone: 0207 636 8505 (Tuesday to Thursday 10am to 4pm) Email: mcp@coramclc.org.uk



Things to Remember

- ✚ Your Pathway Plan should be reviewed every six months, but you can ask for it to be reviewed at any time.
- ✚ If there are any major changes in your life your Pathway Plan should be reviewed, and you should be given a signed copy of the new plan.
- ✚ Decisions made in all of the domains in the local offer should be included within your Pathway Plan.
- ✚ If you disagree with your PA/social worker this should be noted to make sure everyone’s point of view is clear.

- ✚ Other people can be asked about your plan when under 18, such as your family, foster carer, teachers, health services, IRO and advocate (but not without you knowing). If you do not want certain people to be involved after your turn 18 you should tell your social worker or PA.
 - ✚ The last year of your pathway plan should focus on support you can get while living independently. This should include lists of who's there to help you, what they can do and how you can get in touch. You can choose to end involvement with the service at 21 or it can continue for a bit longer if there is specific support you require up until you are 25.
 - ✚ If you are unsure about anything in the Local Offer please speak to your PA. If they are unable to answer your query they will speak to a colleague or manager and come back to you with a response.
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Contact the 16+ Service

The Care Leavers Hub is based at the Elaine Centre in Strood and is available for you to drop-in Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm. Look out for groups and trainings sessions available in the future. You can arrange to meet your PA there or ask to speak to any PA in their absence. There is a washing machine, shower and kitchen available if you need to use them, please speak to your PA or contact the service on the details below if you wish to use them (just so we can check they are not in use by someone else). There is a comfy sofa area and pool table if you just need somewhere to go for a while.

Please save the following contact details –

- 16plus.duty@medway.gov.uk is the email address to use if you cannot reach your PA
- The 16+ service duty number is 01634 335681 available Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm
- The Out of Hours Kent and Medway phone number is 03000 419191.
- You will have the direct contact details of your Personal Advisor and you can agree who you should contact in their absence.