

Royal Borough of Greenwich

Our Local Offer to Care Leavers



Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
OUR PROMISE	5
WHO CAN RECEIVE A SERVICE?	6
PARTNERSHIP SERVICES	6
YOUR RIGHTS	7
YOUR PERSONAL ADVISOR AND PATHWAY PLAN	8
YOUR HOUSING	10
YOUR EDUCATION TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT	12
YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING	14
DOCUMENTS AND IDENTITY	14
YOUR FINANCES	15
YOUR RELATIONSHIPS	16
YOUR PARTICIPATION	16
BECOMING A PARENT	17
CUSTODY	17
WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY	17
USEFUL CONTACTS	20



Our Greenwich,
our vision to
improve the
quality of life
and health of
our residents.

Introduction

This document tells you about the support we have in Royal Greenwich for you as a care leaver. This is known as the 'local offer' for care leavers. It sets out what you can expect from us. As any good parent, we have high aspirations for you, and we want to make sure you have the best possible support to help you thrive as you grow older. The document is also available on the Royal Greenwich website.

Our local offer has been co-produced with care leavers with support from key partnership services.



Our promise

Royal Greenwich has a duty to make sure that young people who have been in our care continue to have the support you need to make a smooth transition into an independent adult life. We want to make sure that you feel safe and supported and know where and who to go to for help.

To do this we will continue to keep the Royal Greenwich Care Leavers Promise. The Council, as your corporate parent, makes this promise* to you.

WE PROMISE TO:

						
Provide you with a safe and happy home	Respect you and your identity	Offer you support and guidance throughout your time in care	Make sure you get a good education and help you to achieve your aspirations	Involve you in decisions about your life	Support you to be active and stay healthy	Ensure you feel fully prepared for your transition into adulthood

**[We will do our best to support you. We cannot promise to do everything you ask, but we will always explain the reasons why.]*





Who can receive support

To be able to get the support you must have been in care for a period of at least 13 weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks) which began after age 14 and included some time after your 16th birthday. If you are not sure whether you qualify for leaving care support, then ask your personal advisor.

If you are between the ages of 21 and 25 we will continue to work with you as detailed in the law [Children and Social Work Act 2017 – Section 3](#). This means you can ask for support from us up until you turn 25, whether you are in education or not. Even if you choose not to be involved with us, you can still return to us before your 25th birthday to ask for more support.

Partnership services

In order for you to meet your full potential, we cannot provide support to you on our own. We work with our partners to provide high quality guidance and support to you.

Our partners include: carers; our Virtual School and education partners; community services; health services; the police; care experienced children and young people's local communities; our senior leadership; elected members and council officers.

Your rights

You have rights when you leave care. The next sections will explain your rights when you leave care. Including:

Support and advice from your Personal Advisor

You have the right to a pathway plan, information, advice and support from a personal advisor. Your personal advisor can provide support, including support with healthy relationships and supporting your physical and mental health.

A Suitable place to live

You have the right to suitable accommodation. We will encourage you to stay in care until you are 18, since most young people still live at home with their families at that age. However, if you choose to leave care after you are 16 but before you are 18, we will support you to ensure that you have a suitable place to live, which could include with your family.

Support to engage in education and training

We want to make sure that you have the support to achieve your goals in life, including your career, and we will provide help with expenses linked to employment, education, and training.

Be heard and taken seriously

You should be involved in all decisions about your plans for leaving care. If you want to challenge decisions about the support you receive, you have the right to an independent advocate. An independent advocate can inform you about your rights and help you be heard in meetings. They are separate from Children's Services.

You have the right to see the information we keep about you, including the files and records written about you when you were in care. If you want to see your records, talk to your personal advisor.

Your personal advisor and pathway plan

Once you turn 18, in most cases, you'll no longer have a social worker. Instead, you will have a personal advisor. Your personal advisor will make sure you get the services you need and help co-ordinate your pathway plan and reviews. However, to strengthen the support to you during the transition from care to independence, a Personal Advisor will be allocated to you by or soon after your 16th birthday.

Your personal advisor will:

- help you to think about your future, what you are studying, your independence skills
- talk to you and other people who are important to you to find out more about you and your needs
- be involved in understanding your needs and preparing your pathway plan so that you can get a good idea of what you want to do with your life
- review your pathway plan at least every six months to help you to stay on track and achieve the things you want from life
- with your agreement, seek the views of our partner agencies when completing your pathway plan. This may include housing, education, training and employment providers, benefits, and health services
- liaise with youth offending services and probation if needed

Even if your case has been closed you can still get in touch with us before your 25th birthday and we will assess what help or assistance we may be able to give you.

If you are a disabled care leaver and have been assessed to have eligible needs under the Care Act 2014, a social worker will regularly review your care and support plan to ensure that the right support is in place to meet your assessed

needs. The care and support plan must be reviewed at least once a year

Your pathway plan

Your pathway plan is written in consultation with you and the important people in your life. It sets out your needs, views and future goals and identifies exactly what support you will receive from us.

We recognise that as a 21 to 25-year-old, it is likely you will want to be a lot more independent than someone younger. So, as you approach your 21st birthday, your Personal Advisor will sit down with you and work out the following:

- Whether you still need our support.
- If you do need support, what tasks you need support with.
- If you do need support, how often we will keep in touch and how we will keep in touch.
- The amount of support you receive from your personal advisor will depend on your views and your individual circumstances.

Personal advisor service hours

We are open **Monday to Thursday 9:00am to 5:30pm and on a Friday from 9:00am to 4:40pm**; and generally work around those hours. However, depending on your needs and in agreement with your social worker or personal advisor, we shall visit you outside these hours as required.

A duty Personal Advisor is also available between these hours and will be contactable via telephone **020 8921 8708**

If you require support outside of these hours please contact our children's out of hours emergency duty line **020 8854 8888**



Your housing

A suitable place to live

Your personal advisor will help you to find suitable accommodation.

You might decide that supported accommodation is best for you. This means that you could be living in a house with other young people, a flat with support from someone who visits you or a house with staff on the site.

Many providers of semi-independent living and supported accommodation offer a starter pack which usually includes bedding, pots and pans, cutlery, crockery and other essential household items. If they don't, we can help you buy essential items up to £150.

We want you to build and maintain your secure relationships throughout your life. If you would like to remain with your foster carer for longer speak to your social worker/Personal Advisor about a Staying Put arrangement, or to be able to benefit from a Staying Close scheme if you are in an alternative provision. If you and your foster carers agree that you would like to stay with them after you are 18, we will support you to remain with them. This can last until you're 21.

For care leavers with disabilities, we also offer the opportunity to reside with carers in our Shared Lives Scheme or Supported Accommodation Scheme please see our SEND Local Offer for more details.

Living independently

If you want to live independently, when you are ready, we will work with Housing Services to explore options for you. We will work with you to consider the location, safety, bills and rent to see if it's suitable.

You have priority access to accommodation in the borough and your personal advisor can help with the bidding process.

We know it can be hard having your own place for the first time. We can offer help with your expenses.

We can help you to claim housing benefit/universal credit if you are entitled to them. Once your claim is in process, we can give you financial support for up to eight weeks until your benefits start.

You will get help and advice to prepare for independent living by learning key skills as well as practical advice from Housing Services and the Leaving Care team on holding down your own tenancy. You must show evidence that you have learnt these skills before you can move to your own tenancy.

If you are living in your own independent accommodation and are a Royal Greenwich care leaver, you will not have to pay Council Tax until you are 25 years old. Speak to your personal advisor to apply for support with Council Tax dispensation for care leavers.

We can provide you with a setting up home grant of up to £3,000 to help you to set up your first home. We can go shopping with you and suggest ways to get the most for your money.

You will be asked to provide receipts for anything you buy. We will work with you to help you to settle in and maintain your tenancy. We know that sometimes things go wrong and there might be a time when you could be at risk of losing your tenancy. If this happens, you should contact your personal advisor as soon as possible.





Your education training and employment

We want you to succeed in your education, training, and employment whatever you choose to do. We will ask you how you are doing and be ready to celebrate your achievements with you or offer support when you need it.

Support for care leavers with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

If you are aged 16-25 and have an Education Health and Care Plan, the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) can provide you with information, advice,

and support. Your Personal Advisor will be able to liaise with SENDIASS to help you access this support.

We are committed to helping you achieve in education and training. Even after you have left care, the Virtual School will continue to support you with your education.

Depending upon your personal circumstances the Virtual School might be able to offer assistance until the age of 25 if you are still in education. Your Personal Advisor can help with careers information and advice, such as help to develop your CV, work experience, advice about university, college, and job interviews, including what you might wear.

University

If you want to go to university, we can help you choose the right course and university that matches your talents and interests. We can help with travel costs to open days.

Many universities offer bursaries specifically for care leavers. The amounts vary and can be from £1,000 to £3,000 per year. You can see which universities offer this kind of support by visiting Propel at <http://propel.org.uk>

We will provide you with a £2,000 bursary for your first-degree course. This will be paid over three years £667 in year 1 and £666 in years 2 and 3. You must attend your course to receive this payment and we require proof from the university that you are attending and remaining on the course.

We will pay for up to 40 weeks of your reasonably priced university accommodation; and provide you with travel costs where applicable at the start and end of the term to return to Greenwich. We can also advise you about living arrangements during the holidays.

We can help you get where available, tuition fees and maintenance loans.

Further Education

If you are 16 to 19 and in education, you should receive £1,200 each academic year from your college. We can pay up to £20 a week for a bus pass to help you get to and from the college.

Apprenticeships

If the apprenticeship pathway is more appropriate for you, you will receive a bursary of £3,000 from August 2023 from your apprenticeship provider. As a care leaver you are guaranteed an interview for an apprenticeship with the Royal Borough of Greenwich. If you want to know more, talk to your personal advisor. Depending on what is in your pathway plan we can provide support to buy tools, equipment, essential clothing and books.

Greenwich Local Labour and Business (GLLaB) can help care leavers get into training and match you with local job opportunities. It provides free careers information, advice and guidance, employment support, training, work experience and apprenticeship opportunities including with the Council.

GLLaB works in partnership with a range of organisations to assist care leavers finding the best chance of a job in Royal Greenwich and wider area. (See Useful Contacts) education, training and employment.

Mentoring Support

Greenwich will be providing a mentoring programme for all care experienced children and care leavers including those who are planning to go into higher education and apprenticeships or currently in higher education or apprenticeships. The programme will be informed and led by the young people and their aspirations. Young people will be matched with a mentor to build long lasting friendships.



Your health and wellbeing

Your physical and mental health are important. In our care, you will continue to have health assessments each year until your 18th birthday. These will be carried out by the health nurse. If you have specific health needs your personal advisor will discuss with you how these can be met, and this will be included in your Pathway Plan.

After your final health assessment before you turn 18 we will give you your health discharge summary with your medical history and any outstanding health issues, which will include:

- immunisation record
- a copy of your last medical history and any outstanding health issues
- any relevant information about your family's health history if this may affect your long-term health
- offer of advice on your health and signpost you to where you can get help for health issues such as contraception, sexual health, mental health, or substance misuse
- necessary transfers to adult health services
- support with registration with a GP and dentist when you leave care

Becoming an adult can be a tough time for everyone and you may feel excited, uncertain, frustrated, angry, or upset, especially during the first few months after leaving care. Talk to your personal advisor if you are feeling unhappy

and they will help you to work through these problems or put you in touch with someone who can help.

If you need help with substance misuse or access to sexual health or mental health services, your personal advisor can signpost you to the right services and come with you if that is what you want.

You are entitled to free prescriptions, please discuss this with your personal advisor if you need assistance. Your personal advisor can tell you if you are eligible for free prescriptions, dental care and glasses and help you with any forms that have to be completed.

Regular exercise is good for your physical and mental health. You can apply to the Health and Wellbeing panel for a bursary of up to £150 a year or a local gym membership to help you to keep fit. All care leavers, up to the age of 25 are entitled to apply to the Health and Wellbeing bursary for gym membership in the borough. Talk to your Personal Advisor for details.

Documents and identity

You will usually need formal identification of some kind to start work, to claim benefits, to set up a bank account and to prove you are who you are.

When you move to be independent, it is important that you have the right documents. When you leave care, you should already have a National Insurance Number, a birth certificate, and a passport to which you are entitled.

Your finances

Keeping track of money, living within your means and keeping out of problem debt are important skills for living independently. We will support you to develop these through one-to-one work or your personal advisor can help you to access the Money House Project where you will learn how to manage your money and earn a Level 1 Certificate before you are considered for a priority housing bid.

If you were in care for more than 12 months you should have a Junior ISA or a Child Trust Fund, which was set up with £200. When you become 16 you can make decisions about how you want this money invested but you cannot access this money until you are 18.

Your social worker will be able to give you information about the money in your account and tell you how to access it. Some young people may also have other savings. Those savings are there to support you as you move towards adulthood, so you should think carefully before spending this money.

You will need a bank account to pay in wages, grants, and any bursaries so that you can

access your money. If you do not have a bank account, your personal advisor can advise and support you.

Even when things are going well, emergencies can arise. Your pathway plan should always contain arrangements to help you deal with this. Arrangements may be made to assist in an emergency. This could involve a small cash payment. This should not be relied upon and therefore your Personal Advisor will work to encourage you to manage without making this a regular occurrence.

Festivals and celebrations

We will provide a £20 a year allowance for one festival celebration (e.g., Christmas, Eid, Diwali) and a birthday allowance of £20 a year up to your 21st birthday. We will also recognise your education achievements as part of nominations for the annual Education Awards by the Virtual School. Where you have done particularly well in a certain aspect, your Personal Advisor may celebrate this with you in another way e.g. by taking you out for a special meal or by purchasing a special gift for you to the value of £50.



Your relationships

As you move on to become an independent adult the positive relationships you have maintained should be there to catch you when you need help. Every young adult needs a secure base from which they can go off and explore the world, and which they can retreat to when things get tough. The same should be true for every child who lives in care. We want you to know that there will still be someone to support and care about you.

We want you to maintain your secure relationships through life, through a Staying Put arrangement, or to be able to benefit from a Staying Close scheme.

For care leavers, understanding your history can be important as it can help you come to terms with difficult topics and get a clear perspective on what has happened to you.

Your Personal Advisor should be able to help you find out about your pre-care life and how you can go about accessing your file.

As well as support from your personal advisor, we may be able to offer you additional practical and emotional support if you want it.

This might include:

- Supporting you to find a mentor/peer mentor or from the Life-Long Links worker who can assist you in (re)connecting with your support network
- Helping you to maintain or regain contact with people special to you or who cared for you in the past, like members of your family, former foster carers, independent visitors, or social workers

Your participation

We want you to be an active member of society, and to have all the chances in life that other young adults have.

We will encourage and help you to enrol on the Electoral Register, so you can vote in local and national elections.

Royal Greenwich has a range of groups, events and forums that allow you to raise awareness of specific issues that affect young people to help to improve services, gain new skills and meet new people.

We are committed to ensuring that children and young people have a voice in decision-making, planning, commissioning, design and delivery of services.

The Council's Young Greenwich Insight and Influence Team will work with children and young people including Care Leavers to support you to help us to shape services and influence decisions that affect you and other young people. You also have the opportunity to join one of our Youth Voice forums such as the Care Leaver Forum.

If you want to volunteer in the community, your personal advisor can help you to find opportunities. Your personal advisor can also advise you on how you can take up volunteering opportunities so you can make a difference to your local neighbourhood environment and help other people. Your personal advisor may be able to put you in touch with a mentor or organisation who can provide extra one-to-one support. To contact the Young Greenwich Insight and Influence Team directly.

Please email
youthvoice@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Becoming a parent

If you become a parent, you might need some additional support. You may wish to access support from the Best Beginning Midwives. Speak to your personal advisor for further assistance.

Custody

If you are in custody, your personal advisor will keep in touch with you until age 25 if you request it. If you leave prison before you are 25, we can work with others to help you with the transition if you want support. When you are in custody, we can offer you pocket money to help with small purchases up to when you reach 21.

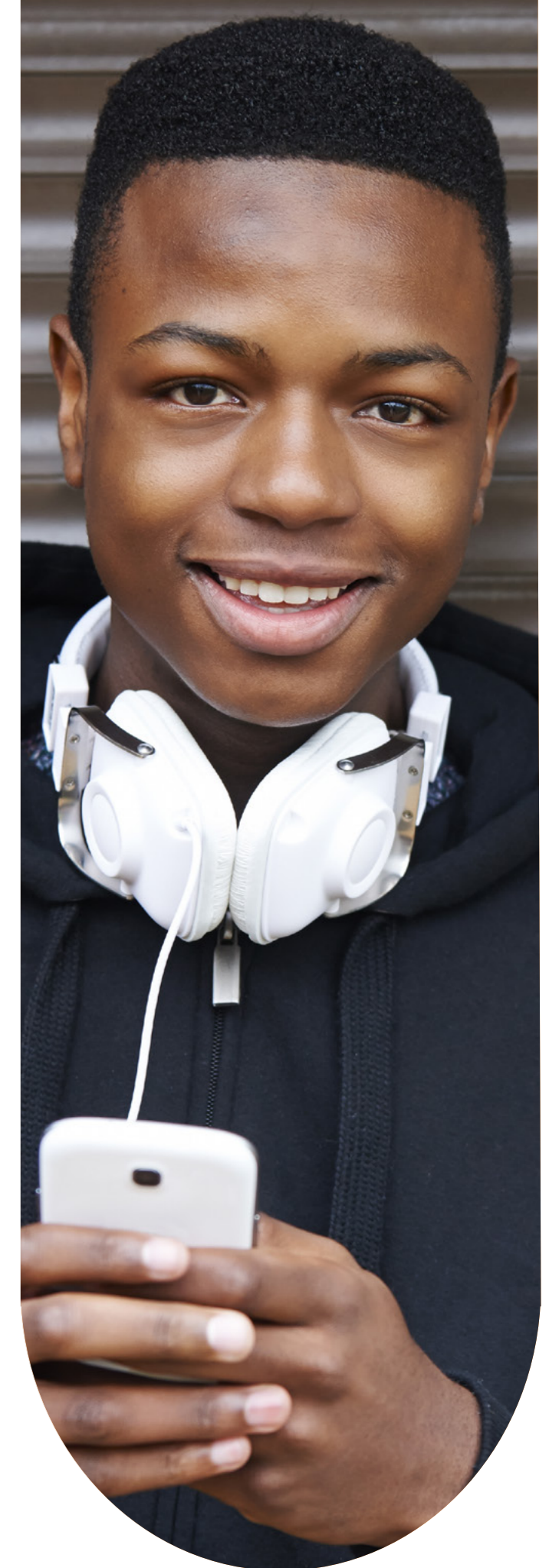
What to do in an emergency

If you need money in an emergency, you need to contact your social worker or personal advisor. They will carry out an assessment before any payment is made and it is more likely you will receive vouchers rather than cash.

If you are about to be evicted or cannot return to your accommodation for any reason you should contact your social worker or personal advisor (or the Children's out of hours service) so that arrangements can be made for alternative accommodation to be found

Royal Greenwich Leaving Care duty number is **020 8921 8708**.

Outside of office hours you can contact the Emergency Duty team on **020 88548 888**





Useful Contacts

DWP/Universal Credit application:

[gov.uk/apply-universal-credit](https://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit)
080 0328 5644

Greenwich Local Labour and Business (GLLaB):

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/gllab

The Old Library, Calderwood Street,
Woolwich, London SE18 6QW

020 8921 2440

Royal Greenwich Virtual School:

virtualschoolgreenwich.org.uk

020 8921 5029

1st Base Housing Options:

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/leaving-care

020 8921 2863

Moving to Adulthood for Disabled Care Leavers:

<https://greenwichcommunitydirectory.org.uk/kb5/greenwich/directory/advice.page?id=v6SLTdgvYYTg>

Contact number: **020 8921 2599**

Shared Lives Scheme

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/shared-lives
020 8921 6120

Supported Accommodation Scheme:

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200271/independent-living

020 3907 7696

Royal Greenwich Leaving Care duty number

020 8921 8708

Outside of office hours you can contact the Children's Out of Hours Service on
020 8854 8888