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Welcome to the 16+ Team

The Team

The 16+ Team in Luton provides the leaving care services to young people in Luton and is located in the town centre and operates normal office hours. The team is of a multi-disciplinary in nature along with Social Workers and 16+ personal advisors and there are professionals from a range of services including I.Y.S.S. officers, a Housing officer, an Asylum officer and a specialist officer who works with young people whom are remanded into secure accommodation. Their role is to provide specialist advice and support in those specific areas. There is a duty officer available on a daily basis whose role is to deal with any emergencies from existing or new clients that are presenting to the Luton 16+ Team for the first time.

We provide a safe and positive environment for you, so that you can explore the realities of your life in an environment that you can identify with. We work with ‘looked after’ young people in an equal and fair way and recognise them as individuals, with qualities that need an opportunity for personal growth and development.

We provide a range of education and employment advice so that you are prepared for your independence and feel supported up to and beyond 18, possibly to 25. We will assess your readiness for accommodation, we will continually review the assessments completed by you and professionals. We will ensure that you have information about your rights and entitlements whilst in care and after care. We ensure that you know where and how to access local resources.

How we will help you:

You will be allocated a leaving care social worker who will provide you with information about the range of assessments that are undertaken, how long these will take and why we review your pathway plan when you are 16 and continue to review it when you are 18 and over.

It is their duty and responsibility to give you information, educate you towards your independence and keep in contact with you and give you details of who to contact when you have a specific problem. Most young people, by the time they reach the age of 16, are thinking about what they want to do in the future, when they are independent. You may wish to move on towards independence at 16, 17, or later than that. Whenever it is, you and the people around you need to know what is on offer to you and what your options are so that you can plan ahead. The 16+ Team is here to help with that. As you have been in the care of Luton Borough Council, you are entitled to a range of support until you are 21 or 25, if you are in Further / Higher Education or training. This guide gives a brief introduction to what sort of support you will be able to access; A more detailed Financial Policy is available, along with a document called “Luton Transition to Adulthood Preparation for Independence and Pathway Planning checklist”.

The 16+ Team will provide you with an officer to work with you who will be your main contact and who will make sure that you have all the support you need. This is usually your social worker until you are 18 and after that it’s your 16+ P.A.
Our rules:
- Treat people with respect.
- No alcohol, drugs or weapons on the premises.
- Do not damage the property.
- Abusive or violent behaviour will not be tolerated and the Police may be involved.
- We want you fairly treated and offer you the best service possible with respect to your race, culture, religion, disability, gender, or sexuality.

Here is a list of the support you are entitled to from the 16+ Team up to 18:
- An allocated Social worker who will work alongside you in developing your independence skills.
- Make a detailed assessment of your needs within the Pathway Plan.
- Record within the ‘Pathway Plan’ how these needs are going to be met and review this plan every six months.
- Provide you with money to live on until you are 18 and advice about finances after that time.
- Provide you with accommodation until you are 18 and advice and support about accommodation options available to you after this time.
- Provide education, training and employment advice and support – sometimes financial help with these issues.
- Offer advice and help in relation to your general health and wellbeing.

The 16+ Team
- Work with you on your Pathway Plan regularly updating it.
- Advise you of your rights and responsibilities and the services available to help you.
- Provide help to ensure that you get the financial support you are entitled to at the right age.
- Help you to fulfil your potential in education, training and employment.
- Tell you about the different types of accommodation that you may be able to access, including L.B.C. Housing.
- Tell you about the Leaving care grant and how this can be used when furnishing your new home.
- Help you to promote and maintain relationships after leaving care.
- Help with a crisis, keep in touch drop in service at 16+ office.
- Generally support you in transition from care to adulthood including issues such as the following: Housing, Benefits, Budgeting, Education/training, Employment/unemployment advise, leaving care grant, Health matters, Independence training, health matters.

They can also advise you on how to make a complaint should you need to.
Guide for young people in the care of or care leavers

What happens when?

When you are 15 your Social Worker will start to talk to the 16+ Team. A meeting will then be arranged between you, your Social Worker, your carer and the 16+ team officer to give you the chance to find out more about the service. By the time you are 16⅓ your Social Worker will complete a Pathway Plan with you. The purpose of this is to look at your current and future needs and write down who will do what and when they will do it to make sure you have what you need. You will have a Social Worker until you are 18 and a 16+ Personal advisor worker after this you will be introduced to you when you and your social worker feel the time is right. The 16+ Team takes on responsibility for you from your 16th birthday, and will stay involved with you until you are 21 (or 25 if you are in further or higher education or training).

Pathway Plans

When you are 16 your Social Worker will work with you on your Pathway Plan. This is a record of your plans for the immediate and longer-term future. It includes contingency plans in case your wishes are not possible, or you change your mind. There will be a copy on your file and you will also have a copy of it. Your Pathway Plan will be updated, called a Pathway Plan Review, at least every six months or if there is a major change in your life until you are 21.

Your Pathway Plan will include information on:

- Your health and development
- Education, training and employment
- Family and social relationships, and personal support
- Practical skills
- Accommodation
- Details of any children you have if you are a parent
- Financial support
- Legal issues

Preparation for Adult Life

Before you begin to live independently, you should have been well prepared and have learned how to look after yourself. The 16+ Team runs a course yearly, which introduces you to some of the things you will need to know and do to live independently. Your Social Worker will let you know when it is next being held, so that you can attend. Also there is preparation for Independence work sheets and the “Luton Transition to Adulthood Preparation for Independence and Pathway Planning checklist” these can used with your foster carer / key worker depending on where you are living to help you develop those independent living skills, it will help you to explore some of the things you need to know about, and issues you need to think about. It is really important that you have either completed the course, or completed the spread sheets and guide, or both! so that you and your Leaving Care Worker can make informed choices about what accommodation and support will best suit your needs in the future.
Moving On Accommodation

Before you leave care you will have been assessed as to what type of accommodation would suit your needs, you will meet with your Leaving Care Worker who advise you what sort of accommodation is available in relation to your assessed needs and discuss in depth the most appropriate accommodation for you. You will be supported in making the right decisions as to which accommodation suits your needs. The 16+ Team will be responsible for your rent until you are 18 years old and a package of support will go with the accommodation to help you develop your independent living skills e.g. improve your domestic skills, organising how you pay your bills and buying essential furniture or equipment. A contingency plan (Plan B) will need to be in place in case the accommodation you first move to doesn’t work for you. In extreme or unavoidable circumstances you may need to use emergency accommodation.

The different types of accommodation available for care leavers include:

Council housing

The 16+ team have an agreement with LBC Housing that care leavers are given priority in accessing the Housing register you will receive extra points as you are a care leaver and deemed to be vulnerable as a result of this status. However you will only be nominated for this status once your S.W. / 16+ P.A. have assessed you as being ready to live independently with a support package.

Supported Lodgings, under 18 & over 18

This involves living in the home of another person or family, who will provide you with a room, support and guidance. It is different from foster care in that you have your own money and will be more independent and responsible for far more than you would in a foster placement.

Staying Put Over 18s

This involves you living with your previous foster carers under a different status you will have your own bedroom and the nature of your relationship changes with your foster carer as you are responsible for your welfare and there is limited support from the Staying put officers.

Hostel

Under 18 & over 18s - this involves you living in shared accommodation with other young people from the community. You will always have your own bedroom. The support available and what communal areas you will need to share vary according to the hostel or foyer that you live in. The foyers are well known for organising interesting activities.

Training Flats

16+ have access to 6 flats and two bedsits in a shared complex this accommodation is used to support young people in developing their independence skills with an allocated support worker.

House of Multiple Occupancy

Under 18 & over 18s - you live with a small number of other care leavers in a house and share communal areas, although you will have your own bedroom. Support is provided through differing agencies including L.A.M.P. & Athena.

Supported Housing

Under 18 & over 18s - this includes independent or shared accommodation in a property with a regular package of visiting support from another organisation.

If you are not working when you are 18 your Leaving Care Worker will help you apply for Housing Benefit and can also help you set up and move into your new home.
Mother and baby placements
The 16+ team can support young expectant Mothers or Mothers with baby into accommodation this may be a Mother & baby foster placement, supported independence, or a specialist Mother and baby hostel in Luton.

Money to live on
If you start living independently when you are 16 or 17 years old the 16+ Team acts as a benefits agency and will pay you a living allowance unless you are working full time. This allowance matches the benefits rate for young people aged 16 to 17 years and is called your personal allowance. Every care leaver will need a bank or building society account and your Social Worker will be able to help you with information about setting this up. Your personal allowance will be paid on the same day every week. Initially payments may be in cash, and split into two payments over the week. When we know you can manage your money, you will be paid once a week. Eventually your allowance will be paid direct into your bank account.

Care leavers may also receive allowances to help with education, training and employment and other linked costs.

Leaving Care Grant
When you leave care, you will be told about your L.C.G. (currently £1,500). This is money the 16+ Team can use to help you set up your own home usually when you are over the age of 18. Your S.W. / 16+ P.A. Leaving Care Worker will discuss with you the sort of things you can spend the money on, e.g. furniture and household items, and will make these purchases with you.

Other Payments
Help with other costs agreed in your Pathway Plan will also be given. These might be in connection with; contact with family, emergency or crisis support, independence training, health or emotional wellbeing, passport, birth certificate and driving licence. You will also receive a voucher for your birthdays and for Christmas.

Lone Parents and those with Disabilities
Young people with disabilities and lone parents will be able to claim Income Support and other linked benefits. Benefits such as Disability Living Allowance to be replaced by (Personal Independence Payment) will still be paid to all care leavers who qualify for them.

If you are a young person with disabilities or a lone parent, your SW / 16+ P.A. will be able to help you apply to claim benefits to which you are entitled and you will still be able to get additional support from the 16+ Team, transitional worker or Adult Social Worker.

Education and Training
We are committed to helping you to think about your career in the future and when you leave care you will be encouraged and supported to continue or engage in education or training and to gain qualifications. Therefore we will be discussing this with you on a regular basis and it is important that information about your plans regarding this are recorded in your Pathway Plan.
Further Education and training

As a care leaver you will be entitled to the 16 to 19 Learning Support Bursary. Some colleges also have support funds that can help you with costs specifically associated with courses. The 16+ Team may meet other costs not covered such as:

- Registration and examination fees
- Text books specified as essential
- Activities essential to meet course requirements
- Public transport between accommodation and course centre if the distance is over 3 miles and it is the nearest college to your home offering the course you want to do.
- Transport costs to open days or college interviews
- Specific clothing, including clothes for interviews, and essential equipment related to the course.

Higher Education

Your career plans may also include going to university. If so, you will be able to apply for the grants and loans that are available to all students and your leaving care worker will offer advice about that. In addition, as a care leaver, you are entitled to a student bursary of £2,000 which is paid over the duration of your course. How this is paid is dependent on your circumstances and needs, but payments are typically divided up and given to you on a regular basis each term.

The 16+ team also pay £100 per week to pay for accommodation costs for the student. Deposits will be taken from the LCG this can be returned to the 16+ team and then reissued at a later date.

The 16+ Team needs to be given proof from the young person of their student loan and grant from student finance England prior to the beginning of the academic year, evidence of registration, a signed consent form to contact tutor and exam results.

Health and Wellbeing

We can also assist you in applying to charitable organisations for any additional funding that is available. Loans will be considered until student loans are available. We will consider providing additional funds, e.g. for travel or equipment essential for your course.

Employment

You will be supported through at least one move into employment of your choice.

As agreed in your Pathway Plan, some costs may be met by the 16+ Team for:

- Suitable clothes for interview purposes
- Transport costs to interviews
- Specific clothing or uniform you may need to do your job or training such as steel toed boots or hairdressing kit.
- Start up equipment, including health and safety equipment
- Public transport from accommodation to employment until receipt of first earnings
- Top up payments if you are 16 or 17 in full time work or apprenticeship and your income is less than £100 per week.
What is a C-Card
A C-Card can be issued to you after a short discussion about sexual health and contraception with a trained advisor (this might be with your leaving care worker, social worker, youth worker, college tutor etc). If you present this card at places that display the C-Card logo you are able to get free condoms with no questions asked.

Healthy Living Costs
You should receive free treatment for glasses, prescriptions and dental treatment from the NHS while you are less than 18 years old. After this the Leaving Care Service may be able to assist you with some health costs.

Family Contact
Contact with your family is also something your Leaving Care Worker can help you with, as we know this is still important even after you have left care. This will depend of course on where your family are and how important different members of your family are to you. We will need to make an agreement with you individually about how often contact is possible.

Young People with a Disability
Access to the Leaving Care Service for young people with a disability should be exactly the same as for all other young people and you are entitled to the same advice and support as any other care leaver. However, you may have additional needs due to your disability, or may require ongoing care when you are an adult, so the role of the 16+ team will be discussed with you and negotiated between your Social Worker, the 16+ Team Leader and, if appropriate, your carer. These discussions will start when you are 15 and will be reviewed regularly.

Having Your Say & Information Sharing
You will be asked if it is okay for us to give information out about you to certain professionals. You will be asked to sign a form that shows who can know what about you. What information is shared is something you and your S.W. / 16+ P.A. can talk over. Only information that may put you or others in danger can be shared without your permission, but you would always know what is being said, to whom and when.

Feedback about your accommodation
Of course you can say at any time what you think about your accommodation to your provider or S.W. & 16+ P.A. You will also be asked either when you leave or every year if you remain in the same place for some time, for your views in writing so we can pull the information together from everybody and plan accommodation better in the future.

Mentors and Advocates
N.Y.A.S. is a mentoring, befriending and advocacy service.

Young people in care and those who have already left care can apply to have a mentor (an adult friend). They make a commitment to see the young person at least once each week for a minimum period of two years.

Mentors are volunteers and do not get paid. They are independent and their relationship with each young person is confidential. Each mentor is a friend in the community and will provide help and support as well as friendship. What you do together is entirely up to the two of you. If you want to try activities such as sports, theatre, cinema or just go to a café and chat, that’s fine. To find out more visit.
N.Y.A.S. also offer an Advocacy service, this is a person separate from your Social Worker or S.W. / 16+ P.A. who can help you plan what you want to say at meetings (they will even say it for you if you wish). You may want to have an advocate at your Pathway Plan meeting or Child Looked After review where decisions about your future are being made. An advocate cannot always get you what you want, but they can help you to say what you want to. Your advocate can help you:
- Speak up for yourself or put your views across
- Support you with making and resolving a complaint
- Give you support and guidance

If you think that you would like an advocate or want to know more about how an advocate can help you, ask your S.W. / 16+ P.A. or contact directly on WWW.NYAS.net

Complaints Procedure

If you feel that you have been treated unfairly or not benefitted from something you are entitled to, you may wish to make a complaint. Your Leaving Care Worker can let you have a copy of the complaints procedure. Making a complaint can be a difficult thing to do, but your feelings and views do matter.

Know Your Rights

The Law

**At 16 you can:**
- Work full-time
- Pay prescription charges (certain people are exempt, e.g. if you are unemployed, on a low income or in full-time education and under 19)
- Girls and boys can consent to sexual intercourse
- A boy can join the armed forces with parent/guardian’s permission.

**At 17 you can:**
- Hold a licence to drive any vehicle except certain heavy goods vehicles
- Appear before an adult court if charged with an offence
- A girl can join the Armed Forces with parent/guardian’s consent at age 17
- A Probation Order can be made on you.

**At 18 you can:**
- Get married
- Vote in a parliamentary or local election
- Get tattooed
- Act as executor of a person’s will
- See an ‘18’ film
- Enter a betting shop and bet
- Change your name
- You can drive a motor cycle and a car
- Make a will
- Apply for a passport without your parent/guardian’s consent
- Own houses and land
- Sue and be sued
- Go abroad to sing, play or perform professionally without a licence
- Sit on a jury
- Be a blood donor
- Buy alcohol
- Drink alcohol in a pub
- Pawn an article in a pawn shop
- Apply for a mortgage (but most building societies will not consider applicants under 21 years of age)
- If you are adopted, you can see your birth certificate on application to the Registrar General
Guide for young people in the care of or care leavers

From 21 you can:
- Stand in a parliamentary or local election
- Drive any mechanically propelled vehicle
- Hold a licence to sell alcohol
- Adopt a child
- Drive a large goods or passenger vehicle

For more information on your rights visit ncas@catch-22.org.uk

There are lots of places you can get more information such as the websites detailed below:

- Confidential Drugs information and advice. TALK TO FRANK
  If you're a young person living in Luton you may find that being gay or questioning your sexuality can be difficult. If this is the case, there is a support group The LGBT support group is for young people in Luton who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Information and advice on health and wellbeing: Advice on other things you might be worried about like benefits and housing: Meet other like-minded young people. They meet every other Monday at 6pm at Luton Town Hall, George Street, Luton, LU1 2BQ.

- www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk
  The Who Cares? Trust is a national charity working to improve public care for around 60,000 children and young people who are separated from their families and living in residential or foster care.

- www.youth@Luton.gov.uk
  Support with making decisions about education and other important issues in your life.

- www.direct.gov.uk
  The latest news and information on benefits will be available on this national website. You can search for individual benefits and use the ‘benefits adviser’ interactive tool that can help you find out what benefits and tax credits you may be entitled to.

- Shelter housing advice helpline
  Shelter provides a free, national telephone advice line staffed by trained housing advisers.
  T: 0808 800 4444 (8am—midnight 7 days per week, Free phone)
  E: info@shelter.org.uk W: www.shelter.org.uk

- The Who Cares? Trust
  They have produced a range of resources for professional and young people, including the H.E. handbook. www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk

- www.youth2youth.co.uk
  Youth2Youth – The UK’s first National Young Person’s help line, run by young people, for young people.

- Voice
  A children’s advocacy organisation for children living away from home or in need that provides a national helpline. Free phone: 0800 800 5792 E: help@voiceyp.org W: www.voiceyp.org

- www.leavingcare.org
  Leavingcare.org has been developed and is maintained by the National Care Advisory Service. Please go to NCAS for more information about who they are and what they do.

- www.ru-ok.org.uk
  RU ok? – This is a self help website for teenagers and is about coping with common, but serious problems, as well as urges you to access your strengths.

- Connexions Luton now at T.O.K.O.
  Find them at TOKKO Youth Centre
  Gordon Street Luton LU1 2QP
  Is a one-stop advice centre for young people in Luton. They will listen to you and help you find the services you need – they won’t judge you or tell you what to do they also support young people with additional needs up to the age of 25. Contact them on Tel: 01582 548340
  Fax: 01582 481905 Email: youthdropin@luton.gov.uk
Luton Leaving Care Service 2016/17
Guide for young people in the care of or care leavers to Luton Borough Council