

Care leavers Local Offer 2025

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Version: 3.0 (published)

Last updated: September 2025

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Luton's Local Offer for our care experienced young people

Everyone can thrive

If you've been in care, or are preparing to leave care, we want you to know one thing above all else: you are not alone.

Here in Luton, we recognise that care experienced young people have often faced challenges that no one should have to face alone. As your corporate parent, Luton Council has a special responsibility to provide services and to offer you the care, respect, and support that every young person deserves.

This Local Offer is our way of showing you what support is available. Whether you're just starting your journey out of care, or have already taken that step, we are here for you.

We know that reaching adulthood brings new challenges such as managing your home, your money, your health, your education, your dreams. You don't have to navigate any of this on your own. This guide is designed to make sure you know what help is available, how to access it, and who you can turn to.

Sometimes, you may need extra support - and that's okay. We're here to walk alongside you, not just as professionals, but as people who care deeply about your wellbeing and your future.

This Local Offer has been shaped by the voices of care experienced young people in Luton - and your voice matters too. We'll keep listening and keep working to improve what we do, based on your feedback. So please get involved.

Introduction

This document outlines the support we have available to you in Luton 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 your corporate parent, we aim to support and assist you on your path in the best way we can so that you can thrive and achieve. This is a Local Offer for care leavers in accordance with section 2 of the children and social work act 2017.

Our job is to support and assist you every step on your journey into adulthood.

Under the children and social work act 2017, we're required to publish the support and services we offer you and your rights. The Local Offer aims to support you toward a successful and independent adult life and has been co-produced by Luton care leavers.

The Local Offer will show you:

- your rights
- your entitlements
- your responsibilities
- our responsibilities
- the Local Offer includes information relating to:
 - education, employment and training
 - community participation and getting involved
 - accommodation
 - health and wellbeing
 - finances

Your social worker or personal adviser can explain the offer and help you understand the available support and how you can access the support available to you.

What type of care leaver am i?

The 'legal' stuff

There are different legal definitions or types of young adults on their journey to leaving care. It will be useful for you to understand which definition applies to your situation.

Please contact your personal adviser if you have any questions regarding the legal definitions below.

You're an eligible care leaver if you:

- are currently looked after
- are aged 16 or 17
- have been looked after for a period of 13 weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks) which began after you reached 14 and ended after you reached 16

You're a relevant care leaver if you:

- are no longer being looked after by the local authority, but you have been 'eligible' aged 16 or 17 years old
- you were 'eligible' immediately before being detained in a hospital, remand centre, youth offender institution or secure training centre

You're a former relevant care leaver if you:

- are aged 18 years or above, and either have been a relevant or eligible child when under 18

You're a qualifying care leaver if you:

- are aged between 16 and up to 21 (or up to 25 if you are in education)
- left care on or after your 16th birthday and you were looked after for less than 13 weeks since your 14th birthday
- are on a special guardianship order or were on a special guardianship order when you reached the age of 18 and was looked after immediately before the making of that order
- are a relevant child who returned home for six months or more

As a qualifying care leaver, you're able to access advice and assistance based on a needs assessment completed by the leaving care team.

Pathway planning

Your pathway plan sets out your needs, views, future goals and ambitions. It will help you to think about the support you need from us and other services we may work with.

The pathway plan covers many different areas, including:

- accommodation
- education, training and employment
- health and development
- independent living skills
- family and social networks
- hobbies/social/leisure
- financial support

- further support
- ethnicity, culture and identity
- a contingency plan
- we'll make sure we develop your pathway plan with you and review it every six months.
- with your agreement, we may ask some of our partners to help us. this may include:
 - housing
 - education
 - health
- any other service you may have worked with

This is to make sure your plan is the best it can be to meet your unique needs.

Pathway planning for 16 to 18 year-olds

If you're a former relevant care leaver, your social worker or personal adviser will talk to you about the support you need and record this information in your pathway plan.

Your pathway plan is all about the steps you need to take to help you confidently move into your adult life.

Your initial plan will be written before you're 16 years and 3 months old by your social worker. If you're over 16 when you first come into care, it will be written within 3 months by your social worker.

Pathway planning age 21 to 25

After you turn 21, pathway planning will focus on the specific issues or areas of need that you and your PA have identified together. If you only want support for a specific area or for a short time, this is fine.

You will have responsibilities to work with your pa, and to carry out your parts of the plan.

Keeping in touch with you

From April 2018, we must offer care leavers the option to have support from a personal adviser (PA) until your 25th birthday. Previously, most PA support ended when you turned 21.

We believe that relationships matter, especially as you navigate adulthood. If you're 21 or older and have chosen not to continue working with a PA, we want you to know that we still care about how you are doing. That's why we'll continue to keep in touch in a way that works for you, whether it's a quick message, an email, or a check-in call. We'll usually check in around your birthday, but we may also send updates at other times to let you know what is available.

Throughout the year, we'll share useful information with you, such as:

- apprenticeships, job and training opportunities
- wellbeing support
- any offers, updates or events from the council or our partner organisations

In some cases, it will be just a reminder that support is still there since we want to make sure you don't miss out on anything that could help you thrive.

We also don't want to miss an opportunity to reconnect with you in case your circumstances change, and you need more in-depth support. Equally, we are also interested to hear about your progress, your achievements towards your life goals, and make sure you have safe and stable accommodation.

Where appropriate, personal advisers may help you to stay connected with family, relatives and friends that you have met whilst in care. If you have lost contact with your family and friends or

would like to re-establish a relationship with them, please speak to us to discuss how we can help bring together people who care about you.

Your support options age 21 to 25:

- If you request PA support to continue after you are 21, we'll provide it.
- If you don't want a PA after your 21st birthday, you do not have to have one.
- If you've said no to having a PA, you can change your mind at any time up until your 25th birthday.
- If you return and ask for PA support, we must provide it.
- If you've said yes to PA support, you can also change your mind at any time.
- If you choose to continue with PA support, you will still need to have a pathway plan and regular visits from your PA.

Accommodation

This is what you need to know about our responsibilities, to ensure you have somewhere stable to live.

Housing options

Your social worker or personal adviser will be able to talk through what housing options are available to you. This could include the following,

Staying put

If you're in foster care, you're encouraged to 'stay put' with your carers. This arrangement enables you to remain with your foster carer until the age of 21. Your social worker will have all the details on staying put. More information can be found on our staying out policy.

Supported accommodation

If you choose to move on from your foster home, then your personal adviser can help you to access supported accommodation in Luton or elsewhere in the county. This might be the best option if you're not ready to live independently.

Social housing tenancy

If you're ready to have your own tenancy, you'll be referred to housing and will receive the highest priority (band 2). This will enable you to bid for social housing. If you're not ready, your PA will support you with your independent living skills.

Private rental

Private rental accommodation can be a viable housing option for care leavers, offering greater independence and flexibility during transition into adulthood. However, accessing the private rental market can be challenging due to issues such as affordability, lack of rental history, and limited support networks.

To make private renting more accessible, the local authority provides financial assistance (rent in advance and deposit), guarantor schemes, and tailored advice. This will be based on your individual needs so please liaise with your PA to discuss these options.

Help and advice

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

- working with housing services to come up with suitable housing options for you
- advice about holding down a tenancy, including council tax, paying bills and budgeting

- helping you to claim universal credit
- practical support with moving into and furnishing your new home
- supporting you if you have a housing crisis, including helping if you are at risk of losing your tenancy

Council Tax

It's been agreed that care leavers will not have to pay Council Tax wherever they're living within the UK.

Your personal adviser can help you apply for this payment. This only applies:

- until you're 25
- if you don't live with someone else who is not a care leaver

Leaving care grant

The leaving care grant is funding up to £3,000 (based on assessed need) for items you need for setting up home like:

- appliances
- bedding
- furniture
- contents insurance

Your social worker or personal adviser will be able to support you when purchasing the items.

When moving into your new home, this is what you can expect from us:

- your first and second tv license will be paid from your leaving care grant
- first food shop
- based on assessed needs we'll provide you with £60 food voucher for local supermarkets when you first move into your own independent accommodation
- winter heating allowance. we'll provide you with some financial support for your first 2 winters in independent accommodation.

Please speak to your PA regarding how to access this.

Education, training and employment

This is what you need to know about our responsibilities, regarding your education, apprenticeships, training and employment.

Education

You'll be allocated an educational personal adviser from the virtual school to help you access education, training or employment up to the age of 18.

Between 18 to 25, you can access education, employment, and training advice via our dedicated email.

We offer bookable appointments regardless of where you're living, so young people can speak to our careers' advisors twice monthly at our face to face and online drop ins.

We also have our care leavers app and [EET virtual school padlet](#)*, packed with an array of tools to support you on your journey into employment.

*Full url: www.padlet.com/virtualschool1625team/eet-virtual-school-padlet-4fczsc4w7rp375bp

If you go to university and have to pay rent, we'll contribute £150 per week towards this, including holiday periods. Speak to your personal adviser to see if you're eligible.

We'll give you a £2,000 bursary if you're in higher education.

We expect you to claim benefits if you're eligible. We'll include these benefits in any calculation we make for additional financial support.

You're expected to apply for a student loan, as any other young person would.

You can do this on [The Student Room website](#).

Full url: www.thestudentroom.co.uk

We may assist you in identifying financial support and resources to enable you to undertake post-graduate study.

The offers a care experienced scholarship, providing care leavers with the opportunity to gain a free undergraduate qualification, subject to eligibility criteria.

Training and apprenticeships

We'll be able to contribute to some of your living expenses and apprenticeship related expenses whilst you are training.

We'll support you to find out what apprenticeships there are in your area and help you apply for them.

The council is ring fencing all L2 and L3 roles for care leavers, so that only care leavers have access to apply for these roles for one week. These ring-fenced roles are for all roles not just apprenticeships. Care leavers who meet the critical criteria for a role at L2 and L3 are guaranteed an interview under the guaranteed interview scheme (GIS).

To support the GIS for our care leavers, [Luton Adult Learning \(www.lutonacl.ac.uk\)](http://www.lutonacl.ac.uk) is able to provide employment skills support via the [passport to employment programme \(www.lutonacl.ac.uk/find-a-course/passport-to-employment-2023.html\)](http://www.lutonacl.ac.uk/find-a-course/passport-to-employment-2023.html) The programme has already proven to be effective in helping care leavers prepare for and perform at interview.

This 'wrap-around' service means that unsuccessful applicants can review their performance based on feedback and experience, helping them to become stronger candidates for future opportunities.

Luton Adult Learning (part of Luton Council) runs funded passport to employment sessions to support residents to apply for, interview for and gain employment. The connect 2 work sessions are run to support care leavers into long-term employment. Contact the programme lead at Luton Adult Learning to book places - tel: 01582 548541.

The Apprenticeship team is very happy to support care leavers to access any apprenticeship programme. All apprenticeship roles are shared with the care leaver service so that you can go onto the padlet and apply.

From august 2018 care leavers will be boosted by a new £1,000 bursary payment if you choose to do an apprenticeship. For more information, please speak to your personal adviser or contact the LBC apprenticeships team at LBCApprenticeships@Luton.gov.uk

Employment

We really want to help you to find the best career pathway and secure employment. To support you we'll consider the following:

- buying the items you need directly to enable you to secure employment
- in exceptional circumstances, giving you cash that will help your ability to access employment opportunities - for example getting to interviews and, if needed, interview clothing
- signposting you to other agencies who may be able to support you financially

Your personal adviser will support you to understand different ways to look for employment and help you complete your cv and application.

Health and wellbeing

This is what you need to know about our responsibilities, regarding your health and wellbeing.

Living well

We'll make sure that:

- you understand about healthy eating and the importance of exercise
- your carer or support worker helps you learn how to cook healthy meals and encourages you to take regular exercise

Getting help if needed

Your carer, or support worker will help you access services you may need. They'll make sure you have the support you need from the right organisations, at the right time, for example:

- mental health services
- drug and alcohol services
- family planning
- keeping in good health

Your personal adviser will make sure that you understand how to stay healthy. They'll support you to:

- find a GP, dentist and optician
- make sure you keep in good health
- access Active Luton gym membership up to 12 months free
- pay 50% of a pure gym membership for care leavers living outside of Luton or not close to an Active Luton site
- receive a one off £60 payment for gym wear after you have signed up to a gym

Further information

To get more information about health and wellbeing and your entitlements, contact your personal adviser.

Support and relationships

Leaving care doesn't mean leaving support behind. We'll make sure you have people around you who listen, guide you and stand by you as you move into adult life.

This is what you need to know about our responsibilities, regarding support and relationships.

Support from your personal adviser (pa)

You will have your own named PA (personal adviser) to support you and build important relationships.

A PA is alternatively qualified and not a qualified social worker. However, they can do certain things with you. For example, they will:

Meet with you regularly (at least every 8 weeks)

Help you prepare and update your pathway plan so it matches your goals and dreams

Support you to develop the skills you need to cope with the responsibilities of adult life

Help you to stay healthy, this can include finding a GP, dentist or wellbeing services

Connect you with services if you need them, such as drug and alcohol support, counselling or sexual health advice

Young people get together at chill-in

The care leaver service run chill-in sessions on the first Thursday of every month from 4.30 to 7pm. The venue is:

Limbury community centre
Icknield way
LU3 2JR

By taking part you'll:

- make new friends
- engage in fun activities
- learn new skills such cooking and
- help make services better for other young people through participation and co-production

Please contact your personal adviser if you would like to know more.

Luton Council's mentoring programme for young people

This programme is part of our corporate parenting commitment to care leavers and has been developed following feedback from our young people.

Within the council we have a highly skilled and diverse workforce and many of them have stepped forward to take on the role of a mentor for our young people. We also have external mentors.

The mentoring group matches mentees to mentors based on shared interests and career aspirations. The mentees and mentors can meet every two to six weeks depending on the needs, at mutually agreed venues. This can range from cafes and coffee bars to the town hall.

Young people have been supported in applying for jobs, training courses, university applications and running their own businesses through this programme.

Please contact your personal advisers and virtual school team if you would like to have a mentor allocated to you.

Advocacy

If you feel you're not being listened to or that you're not getting what you're entitled to, then you have the right to use the National Youth Advocacy Service.

Full url: www.nyas.net

An advocate is someone who does not work for us. They're there to help you challenge decisions that have been made about your life and future.

You can have an advocate to help you. For example:

- ensuring your voice is heard
- supporting your future plans
- supporting contact with your family
- supporting access to financial support
- supporting your accommodation options

You can refer yourself or you can ask your IRO, social worker or PA to refer you.

If you'd like to use this service or get an advocate you can call nyas helpline for free on 0808 808 1001.

The helpline is open:

- weekdays 9am to 8pm
- weekends 10am to 4pm (excluding bank holidays)

Your relationships

It is important for everyone to have strong and supportive relationships. We can help you:

- stay in touch with people who've been important to you (like former foster carers, siblings, or independent visitors)
- reconnect with family, if it's safe and right for you
- meet new people and build friendships through local groups, activities, and mentoring opportunities

Healthy relationships

You should never feel pressured into a relationship that you don't want to, and not all relationships are healthy. If something doesn't feel right please speak with your pa

Your PA can support you with advice and guidance on how to maintain healthy relationships and signpost you to support services.

If you need to, you can access domestic abuse services here -

If you want to make a complement or complain about the services you receive please contact the complaints team:

Money

Financial support

As a care leaver, you're entitled to financial support and advice. This will be different for each young person, so it's important that you speak with your personal adviser to confirm what support you're entitled to.

University accommodation support

We believe that being an estranged young person or care leaver shouldn't mean being left behind. The unite foundation gives a rent-free, year-round #homeatuniversity scholarship, which means you can go to university, stay at university and finish your course, just like anybody else.

With the unite foundation scholarship, you'll have accommodation and bills covered for up to 3 years at university.

Travel to work

We provide support including:

- funding to commute to a new place of part-time or full-time work for up to 4 weeks based on assessed need
- banking
- work wear
- funding is available to buy essential work wear based on assessed need

Contact

Funding is available to see family or significant others based on assessed need. This can be discussed when you do your pathway plan with your pa.

Photo ID

Funding is provided to get a provisional licence up to the age of 25 and a driving licence will be funded as a form of photo ID, based on assessed need. A passport will only be funded based on assessed needs).

Interview clothes

Funding is available for up to a total of £100 for interview clothing based on assessed need.

Support for course equipment

Funding is available for course equipment based on assessed need. Ask your social worker or personal adviser about how you access it.

Cheaper broadband and phone packages

Social tariffs are cheaper broadband and phone packages for people claiming universal credit, pension credit and some other benefits. They're delivered in the same way as normal packages, just at a lower price.

Amid rising living costs, ofcom is encouraging companies to offer social tariffs to help customers on low incomes.

Driving lessons

Funding for up to 20 driving lessons. You'll be expected to pay for any further lessons. We'll also pay for fees for up to 2 theory tests and 2 practical driving tests, based on assessed need.

Graduation ceremony

We'll pay £100 for expenses related to your graduation ceremony.

Leaving care allowance while waiting for your first Universal Credit claim

If you've applied for UC and you're waiting to receive this, we'll support you with a weekly allowance for up to 5 weeks.

Additional support from other agencies

Sparks foundation grants

The sparks foundation provides grants of amounts up to £700 which will either:

- help to advance the education or vocational training or employability of children and young people under the age of 26
- provide those who are leaving care, or have recently left care, with basic items, facilities or equipment (where eligible)
- the overall aim is to give this group the same chance as those who have not been in care

Capstone care leavers trust

- Individual grants are most likely to be for amounts between £300 and £2,000, but we'll consider awards of up to £3,000 specifically in relation to higher education fees or training courses:
 - that are not funded by Student Finance England or the local authority
 - where all other educational grant, bursary or subsidy entitlements have been exhausted, dependent upon your individual circumstances
 - this could also include tools or equipment that are essential for the course

The Rees Foundation

The Rees Foundation aims to help care-experienced people who find they're in financial crisis. You can apply for a small crisis payment to help out in an emergency for things like:

- gas
- electric
- essential travel costs
- if short of food, the trust may be able to provide grocery gift vouchers

Based on assessed need and outlined in your pathway plan, rent deposit will be funded to secure accommodation for independent living. If you haven't received this prior to age 21 then this financial support can be accessed up to age 25.

Removal costs

Removal expenses for up to 2 changes of address based on assessed needs. If you're living with a partner only half the removal fee will be paid. This will be based on assessed need.

Parents

Based on assessed needs if you're having your first baby, we'll provide up to £400. This will be split into 2 payments - one 4 weeks before birth and second after baby is born. If you're having your second baby, we'll provide up to £200. This will be split into 2 payments - one 4 weeks before birth and second after baby is born.

Birthday payment

We'll provide you with £50 each year for your 18th to 24th birthdays

Getting involved

Leaving care

This is what you need to know about our responsibilities, to ensure you're part of your community and an active citizen.

Registering to vote

We can support you to register to vote and that you understand how to do this.

Volunteering

We'll support you to find local volunteering opportunities. We'll help you access these opportunities (if this is something you would like to do).

Making your voice heard

We'll make sure that you're aware of all opportunities to take part in involvement activities. These include the following:

- care leavers council
- all in this together

There are usually lots of other activities to get involved and get yourself heard. Please speak to your personal adviser and they can help you access them.

Leisure activities

We'll support you to get information about leisure time activities.

Being a good citizen

We'll support you to become part of your community and help you understand what being a good citizen is.

Know your rights

We'll make sure you know your rights, not only as a care leaver but all of your rights that you are entitled to.

Further information

To get more information about being involved and part of the community, contact your personal adviser.

If you're not sure what your status is, you can contact or text your personal adviser and they'll confirm it.

Transition to adulthood and further support

The Luton transition to adulthood for independence booklet is an assessment tool and checklist to aid discussion, planning and assessment in relation to:

- preparation for independence
- planning the transition to adulthood

It's been developed in conjunction with our young people, leaving care personal advisers and other social care professionals.

Other general resources are categorised by topic.

Money

- Find organisations and services that can help with money and legal advice
- Use an independent benefits calculator to find out what benefits you could get, how to claim and how your benefits will be affected if you start work
- Contact them about making a new benefit claim, existing benefit claims or changing or cancelling an appointment

Health and wellbeing

- search for health and wellbeing services in Luton
- including doctors, dentists, opticians, mental health and sexual health services
- our CAMHS podcasts cover a wide range of topic and can be streamed on Spotify along with other podcast locations free of charge

Getting involved

The care leavers council is an opportunity for you to get your voice heard, ideas implemented and really help shape service delivery and improvement. Contact us and get involved via subhana.dean@Luton.gov.uk.

Things to do on Luton Directory - search for things to do, groups and activities in Luton

Education, training and employment

[Work, training and education on Luton Directory](#) - find organisations and services that can help with learning, work and volunteering in Luton.

Full url: www.directory.luton.gov.uk/kb5/luton/directory/directory.page?directorychannel=13

[Luton Youth Advice](#) - find out if you're eligible for the programme

Full url: m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Education_and_learning/Pathways/youth/advice/Pages/Luton-Youth-Advice.aspx

Find your local [JobCentre Plus](#) - contact them about making a new benefit claim, existing benefit claims or changing or cancelling an appointment.

Full url: www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus

Useful contacts

18+ leaving care duty team: if you'd like to discuss any historical or current query, please call 01582 547 820 or email and ask to speak with the duty worker.

National youth advocacy service: freephone: 0808 808 1001

[Become Charity](#): free support helpline for care leavers

Full url: www.becomecharity.org.uk

[Care Leavers Association](#): this association provides support and advocacy for care leavers.

Full url: www.careleavers.com

Immigration

If you need support in regard to your asylum status in the future, please contact your solicitor or local citizens advice bureau.

Migrant help: free asylum helpline (open 24/7/365): 0808 8010 503

Ramfel (refugee and migrant forum of Essex and London) Tel: 0207 0525212

[Young Minds](#): mental health support for young people.

Full url: www.youngminds.org.uk

Mental health crisis line: a 24 hour help and information line run by South London and Maudsley NHS trust - tel: 0800 731 2864.

The Samaritans: 116 123

NHS: 111

Keeping safe

[Link to Change](#): 01480 474974

Full url: www.linktochange.org.uk

Financial support

If you find yourself in financial difficulty, please contact your local job centre.

Step Change: debt advice and support.

Full url: www.stepchange.org

Entitled To: free website to check what benefits / financial support you can be entitled to.

Full url: www.entitledto.co.uk

Turn2us: find an adviser is a tool that allows you to search for local, regional, or national organisations that can provide you with information and advice on a variety of topics. Topics include benefits, housing, bereavement, legal issues, mental health and more.

Full url: www.turn2us.org.uk

The British Red Cross: offers a family tracing service and support with the urgent needs of refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants.

Full url: www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/get-help-as-a-refugee/contact-your-local-refugee-service

Find your local GP

Full url: www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/gp/locationsearch/2

Find your local NHS dentist

Full url: www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/dentists/how-to-find-an-nhs-dentist

Find an NHS sight test

Full url: www.nhs.uk/service-service/find-an-nhs-sight-test/location

Police: emergency: 999, non-emergency: 101

Crisis cafes: Luton and surrounding areas offer crisis cafes, open 9am to 4.30pm, 7 days a week, 365 days a year from 5 to 11pm, 0300 330 0648.

Full url: www.local.dualdiagnosis.org.uk/organisations/united-kingdom/luton/luton-1/mind-blmk-luton-crisis-cafe

Good thinking UK: online website where you can select specific issues you want help with, they have a variety of resources including online apps, toolkits, how to guides, podcasts etc.

Full url: www.local.dualdiagnosis.org.uk/organisations/united-kingdom/luton/luton-1/mind-blmk-luton-crisis-cafe