

Wiltshire Council Care Leaver Promise



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Leaving care?

We're here to support you on the next steps.

We know it's a big step when you move out of care and start living on your own or with friends.

We want to support you as you move on to the next stage of your life. So, we asked local care leavers what kind of support would be really useful, and they came back with some great ideas and from this we've created our Care Leaver Promise.

To get the support set out in this promise, 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 support, then ask your Personal Advisor (PA) or social worker and they will be able to tell you.

Your PA can provide you with a range of practical support and they will talk with you about the information in this Promise

The support we must give you by law

Following changes introduced through the Children & Social Work Act 2017, you will be able to ask for support from your PA up to the age of 25, whether you are in education or training or not.

Your PA is there to help you to prepare to live independently and to offer advice and support after you leave care. PAs should talk to you about what support you need and record this information in your pathway plan.

Your pathway plan is written by your PA after

consultation with you and important people in your life. It sets out your needs, views and what you want in the future, and identifies exactly what support you will receive from us. We will review your pathway plan with you regularly so that it is kept up to date.

Because we know how important relationships are, we will try to enable you to keep the same PA. The amount of support that you receive from your PA will depend on what you want and your circumstances.

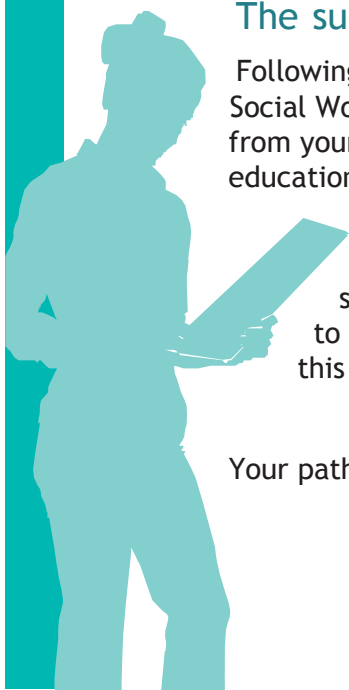
You have a right to be involved in all decisions about your plans for leaving care. You have a right to support from an independent advocate if you want to challenge decisions about the support we give you.

Independent advocates can inform you about your rights and help you to be heard in meetings. They are separate from Children's Services. If you need their help you can contact them by calling **0300 3658 300** or emailing WiltsCYPAdvocacy@ccprojects.org.uk

You have a 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 access this information tell your PA.

Most young people still live at home with their families at 18 and so we will encourage you to stay in care until you are 18. If you are in a foster placement or a supported lodgings placement wherever possible we will work to help you stay there. If you choose to leave care before age 18, the law says we must provide you with suitable accommodation so you have a right to expect this.

We want to make sure every young person leaving care has the support to achieve their goals in life. To help with this the law



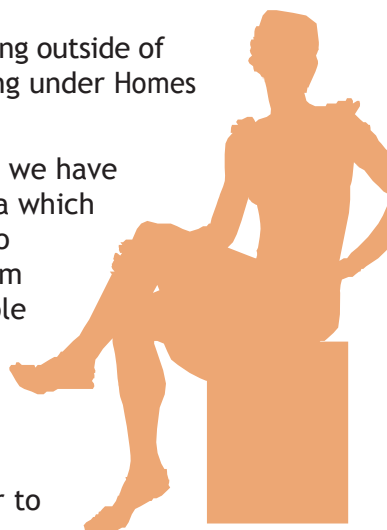
says we must provide you with assistance with expenses linked with employment, education, and training.

As well as the things that the law says we must provide we know that there are lots of other things that you need help with.

After talking to care leavers and personal advisors we have agreed to provide the following:

Accommodation

- **Council Tax**
Because we know how tight money can be when you first leave care and live on your own or with friends, we will exempt all Wiltshire care leavers from paying Council Tax, so you won't have to pay it until you are 25. Your PA will be able to explain how you can claim this exemption.
- **Priority Banding**
As a care leaver you will automatically get priority status under the Homes for Wiltshire Scheme. This allows you to apply for council and housing association accommodation when the time is right for you.
 - **Local Connection**
This means that care leavers living outside of Wiltshire can still apply for housing under Homes for Wiltshire.
 - **Supported Housing Pilot** - we have three flats in the Salisbury area which are available for care leavers to rent. These are all two-bedroom flats where care leavers are able to live together. Support is provided by a small group of PAs.
 - **Rent Guarantee scheme** - we offer to act as a rent guarantor to



care leavers where they have a sufficient income to cover rent and associated living expenses but where landlords require someone to guarantee the rent.

- **Accommodations Officer** - there is an Accommodations Officer who works with care leavers and other young people. They are able to work with you and your PA to help solve problems. Together with your PA, they can support you to access different independent housing options including social housing (this is accommodation managed by us or a housing association) and provide advice about holding down a tenancy, including avoiding rent arrears, paying bills and budgeting.

Work/Independence

- **Building Bridges**
The Building Bridges program supports young people into education or work. Applications to Building Bridges can be made via your PAs. A mentor will be appointed, and they will work with you to help you develop your confidence, skill, and expertise for as long as you like and until you feel secure in education or employment.
- **Grandmentors**
Work with young people from the ages of 16-24. These are volunteers aged over 50 who have lots of life experience and will work with you on the things which you think are most important. That could be finding a job, making friends, or getting fit; anything really.

Each volunteer supports a young person for a minimum of six months, working towards agreed personal goals. Your PA will be able to put you in touch with the Grandmentors coordinator.



- **Favourable access to council apprenticeships**

We have a guaranteed interview scheme for care leavers to all council apprenticeships where you meet the eligibility criteria. This means if you apply you are guaranteed an interview.

- **Work experience**

We can offer you work placements in every council department. So, if you are interested in a career in accountancy, gardening, maintenance, driving (the list goes on) speak to your PA and they can arrange something for you through the local Employment and Skills Officer.

- **Careers Advice**

We will provide you with careers information and advice, such as help to develop your CV, mock interviews, and advice, including what you might wear to interview.

- **FE Bursary**

Care leavers are a priority group for the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund administered by FE colleges, which pays a bursary of up to £1,200 a year to support vulnerable young people to participate in education. Your PA and the Virtual School Officer will help you to claim this.

- **Transport costs**

We can help to meet your transport costs when travelling to training, school/ college, apprenticeships, or job interviews and to see important people in your life.

- **Equipment**

We will also support you to buy tools, equipment, essential clothing, and books.

- **University**

Support if you choose to go to university, such as helping

you obtain tuition fees and student loans, travel costs at the start and end of term, and making sure you have somewhere to live during the holidays. We will help you choose the right course and university that matches your talents and interests.

- **Driving Lessons**

We will pay a contribution towards driving lessons, up to 10 hours.

- **Benefits**

Just before your 18th birthday you can get assistance from your PA and local Job Centre to make a claim for benefits. They will help you have everything in place so you are paid promptly soon after you turn 18 and between them will support you to get a job or an apprenticeship or return to education.

Health and Leisure

We know life isn't all about education and work. Having fun, keeping fit, staying healthy and meeting with your friends are all just as important. So, we will provide:

- **Free access to our sports centres**

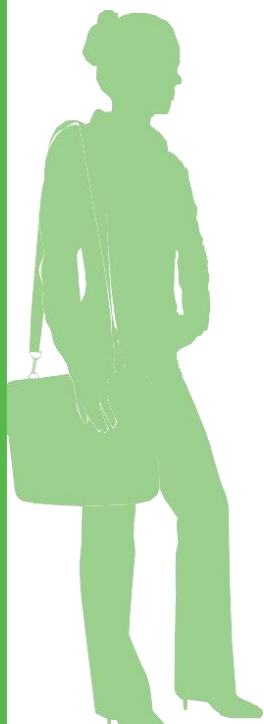
All Wiltshire Care leavers and children in care have free access to a range of activities at any of the council-owned sports centres in Wiltshire. For those living outside of Wiltshire we will offer the equivalent financial support with membership.

- **Contribution towards Wi-Fi costs**

We consulted with you and you told us how difficult it can be keeping in touch with friends, particularly if you have moved between different placements.

- **Health Passport**

We will make sure that every care leaver has their own 'Health Passport' when you turn 18 or leave care. This will provide a summary of relevant health conditions, check-ups,



and immunisations. We know how difficult it can be to keep track of all these things and so it's helpful to have all the information in once place.

- **Emotional and mental health** There are a wide range of services in Wiltshire which can provide support including:

The Samaritans - provides around the clock service to anyone who is experiencing problems and needs to talk to someone. Call **116123** or email **jo@samaritans.org**

MIND and RETHINK - provide help and advice to anyone experiencing mental health problems or to people concerned about others.

MIND can be contacted on **0300123 3393**
RETHINK Mental illness can be contacted on **0300 5000 927**

CAMHS Flexible transitions - This support has a mental health focus but also incorporates life skills, employment and/or education opportunities, and generally building emotional resilience for young people who would otherwise struggle to maintain their wellbeing during the transition to adulthood. The flexible transition offer will be explored with those young people whose emotional development would continue to benefit from a CAMHS intervention post 18, but do not require an adult mental health service.



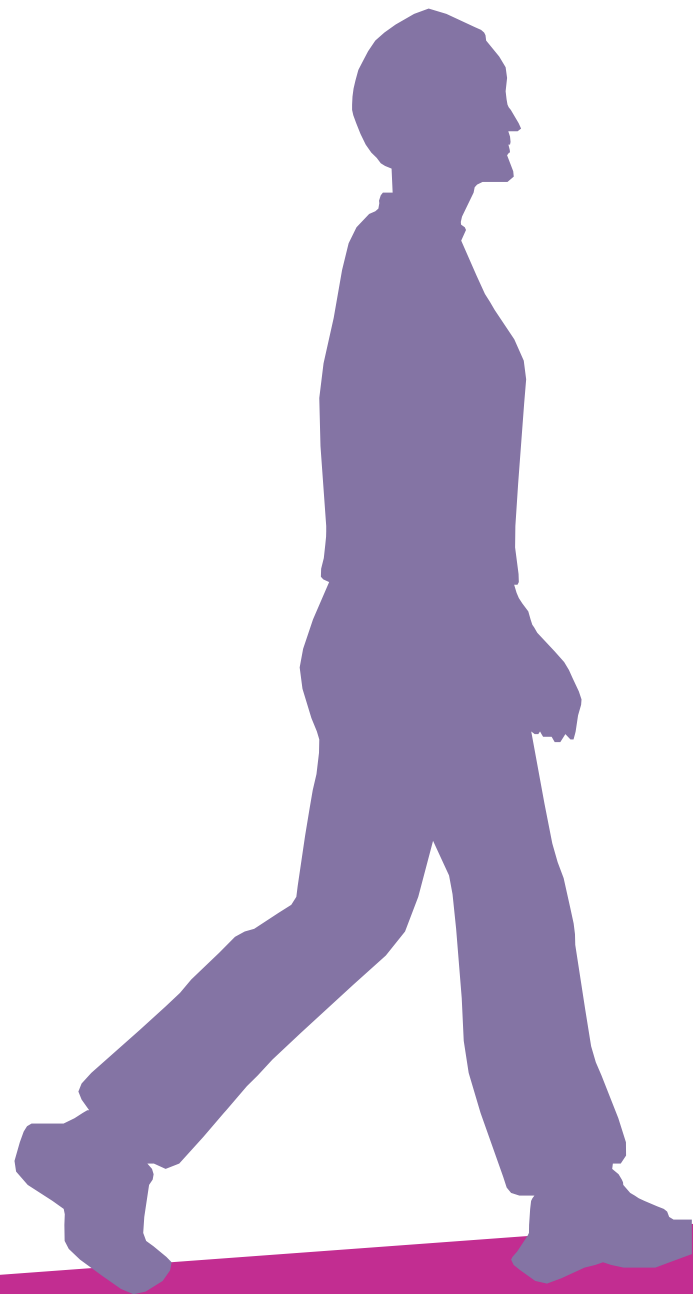
We will also support you with:

- Information on healthy living,
- Getting help to pay for prescriptions
- Registering with a GP
- Information on counselling services
- Help with transport costs when attending health appointments

Finance

- The benefits system is complex, and we know that not everyone gets all of the support that they are entitled to. Therefore, experts from within the council have agreed to meet with individual care leavers and PA's to ensure you get all benefits you can. The service will also include personal budgeting/money management support where appropriate.
- Leaving care grant and discretionary payments. You are entitled to a grant of £2,000 to support you as you leave care. It is important that this money is spent sensibly as it has to last a long time and we encourage you to agree with your PA how it is spent. If it is spent wisely then in some circumstances your PAs Team Manager can authorise additional money where this is needed; we call this a discretionary payment.





Wiltshire Council
Where everybody matters