

Our Local Offer for Care Leavers



Contents

Contact	3
Our Local Offer for Care Leavers	4
6 Sections	5
Support for you	6
Stay Safe.....	7
Someone to talk to.....	7-9
Your Young Person's Advisor (YPA).....	9
Your Social Worker.....	10
Your Pathway Plan.....	11
Your Reviews	11-12
Where can I live	13
Staying put.....	13
Supported Accommodation	14
Supported Lodgings	14
Living on your own.....	15
Going to University	15
Money to set up home	15
Care Leavers and Council Tax	16
Help to avoid becoming homeless	16-17
Money	18
Help with your money.....	18-19
Help with Universal Credit and benefits.....	19-20
Money to set up home	20
Care Leavers and council tax	21
Welfare Rights	21-22
Looking after yourself	23
Someone to talk to.....	23-24
Looking after your health.....	25
Looking after your emotional wellbeing.....	26
Getting involved	27
Relationships.....	27
Education, training and employment	28
School Holidays and work experience	28
Going to sixth form or college.....	28
Going to university.....	29
Learning to drive	30
Help to get a job	30
Help to get an apprenticeship or traineeship.....	31-32

Contact

I can contact my Social Worker or Young Person's Advisor on 03000 262 289 at any time about any of the information in this booklet

Other useful contacts

	03000 268 000
Housing Advice	03000 264 000
Council Tax (can help with UK benefits)	03000 264 000
Welfare Rights	

Useful Websites

Credit Unions	https://nefirstcu.co.uk
Citizens Advice	https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk
NYAS	https://www.nyas.net
CICC	http://www.cbccicc.org.uk/website

Our Local Offer for Care Leavers

We've produced our Local Offer to give you, as a care leaver, a clear idea of what services we provide and what you can expect from us.

Our local offer tells you about all the support that we have in County Durham for you as a care leaver.

Just because you are leaving care, or have already left care, we haven't stopped caring about you. We want to make sure that you feel safe and supported and know where and who to go to for advice and help.

Did you know, that as a care leaver:

- you can get up to £2,000 to set up home
- you will get a discount on council tax and you might not have to pay any at all
- you can get £2,000 to help you with going to university
- you can get £1,200 if you go to sixth form or college
- you can get £500 towards driving lessons
- you can get a Freedom Card which is a leisure and activity pass



This document is split into 6 sections:

1. Support for you

Find out more about your rights and how your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) and social worker will help and support you. Find out about pathway plans and reviews.

2. Helping you find somewhere to live

Find out more about supported accommodation, supported lodgings, living on your own or how to keep living with your foster carer.

3. Money

Find out how we can help you with your money. We can give you help with your benefits, help you to manage your money, give you support to open a bank account, get your national insurance number and other important documents such as photo id so that you can access services.

4. Looking after yourself

Find out more about looking after your health and wellbeing. There's information about how we can help you to build strong and supportive relationships and also how we can support you to get involved and become an active member of society.

5. Education, training and employment

Find out more about going to sixth form, college or university. Find out how we can support you in getting an apprenticeship, training or a job. We can also help you get school holiday work experience and even give you help to learn to drive!

6. Who is this information for?

To be able to get the support set out, you must have been in care for at least 13 weeks (or periods adding up 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 Young Person's Advisor (YPA).

All the information in this booklet can be found online at:

www.durham.gov.uk/careleavers

Support for you

You have a right to be heard and taken seriously, you will be involved in all decisions about your plans for leaving care.

Your Rights

As a care leaver you have certain rights. We have to provide you with certain things and make sure you are safe.

Our promise to you

1. To treat you with respect and to remember that everyone is different.
2. To help find the best home we can for you. It will be where you feel safe, cared about and treated well.
3. To help you stay in touch with family and friends if it is ok to do so.
4. To listen carefully to you and try to act on what you say.
5. That your social worker will get to know you well. They will keep in touch with you and listen to what you say.
6. To really listen to things, you would like to change about being looked after.
7. To be honest and share any information or changes with you.
8. To involve you in any decisions, plans or changes that affect you or your future.
9. To give you any help or support that you need.
10. To help you be the best that you can be at school, college, training and work.
11. To give you help and support when needed to move from care to adult life.
12. To work together and support you during every change in your life.

Find out what information we hold about you

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. Visit www.durham.gov.uk/inforights

You have a right to support from an independent advocate

You might need someone to act on your behalf, known as an advocate. Advocates can support and listen to you if you feel your wishes and feelings are not being heard by your social worker, carers or anyone else involved in decisions about your care and welfare. They can go with you to meetings, if you want them to, and help you to tell people what you want, or speak for you if you don't want to.

Your YPA can help you to get in touch with one.

The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) - young person's website has lots of information about advocacy support.

Stay Safe

If you are under 18, and have been in trouble with the police, or are putting yourself at risk, we can help.

If you need our help, ask your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) or your social worker to speak to us for you.

How can we help?

We'll work with you to see why you got into trouble and look at what we can do to make sure this doesn't happen again.

What we will do

We'll look at what's going on around you that may give you problems now or in the future. We'll also look at your needs, including your health. Once we have this information, we will see what we can do to help keep you out of trouble in the future.

We will help you

We can also support you in lots of different ways that can help with your:

- school
- training or job
- health
- family
- drugs or alcohol

We can also sign you up for other activities - volunteering, leisure activities, or victim awareness support - if this is right for you.

Someone to talk to

If you need extra help or want someone to talk to, there are people you can contact for this

The Full Circle

Do you want help to cope with how you feel, or want someone to talk to, when a lot is changing around you?

The Full Circle team can arrange sessions with you to talk through what's going on, and how you are feeling. Together, you can work on what you want from the sessions and put a plan in place to get this.

If people around you, such as your social worker or supported lodging provider need support to help you, this group can put this support in place.

Whatever you talk about will be confidential between yourself and the person you speak with at The Full Circle.

How to contact The Full Circle

If you think you The Full Circle may help you, speak to your social worker or your YPA and ask them to contact us.

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

If you want advice, or just want someone to listen to you, contact NYAS.

The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) can help you if you are:

- not being listened to
- need advice
- need help to talk the council, your social worker, or personal advisor
- not being treated fairly
- having difficulties with college
- not happy with the contact you have with your family
- homeless

What NYAS can do to help

- *Meet in a safe place*

When you contact NYAS they will organise for a member of their team to meet you. You can choose where you want to meet - somewhere you feel comfortable or safe.

- *Fix your problem*

You will be able to talk about your problem and discuss how to fix it. The person you speak to at NYAS will be your advocate. This means that they will act on your behalf, such as making phone calls for you, come to meetings with you, or write emails or letters with you.

Your advocate can complain for you - but you will be in charge, until the problem is solved. You can ask to change your advocate, or you might decide that you no longer need their help - that is fine.

If you want more help from NYAS, you can contact them again, and if you want - ask for help from the same member of the team (advocate).

How to contact NYAS

It's up to you how you contact NYAS. See our website and get in touch for our contact details. Or speak to your social worker or your YPA and ask them to contact us.

Children in Care Council

Children in Care Council meet every month to talk about what it's like being in care and how things could be better.

If you are a young person that is looked after or has been looked after, you are automatically a member of the CICC (Children in Care Council) and you can take part in discussions and issues raised.

We bring our ideas and suggestions to our meetings and work with the adults within the council to improve things and feedback.

Our meetings are supported by an Investing in Children Project Worker but are ran by young people for children and young people - creating a safe space for voices to be heard.

We will pay you a fee of £7.50 for taking part in the meeting plus up to £3.00 if you have to use public transport to attend.

How to contact the Children in Care Council

See Children in Care Council - our meetings for more information or speak to your social worker or your YPA and ask them to contact us.

Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice can help with everything from money issues to problems with benefits, housing or work.

Citizen's Advice County Durham provides free, confidential and independent advice to help people overcome their problems.

They help with everything from money issues to problems with benefits, housing or employment.

Sometimes you might have more than one problem, and often they are linked. They can tackle issues in the round making sure you get all of the support you need.

Your Young Person's Advisor (YPA)

Once you turn 18, your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) will become your main contact (replacing your social worker).

You should find out who your YPA is around your 18th birthday (although this may change because of your situation). You can receive support from your YPA until you are 25, but once you reach 21 you can decide if you still want this support.

What is a YPA?

A YPA is an experienced support worker who is not a social worker. YPAs have different backgrounds and qualifications, and we can make sure that we match you to a YPA who can best meet your support needs.

What will your YPA do?

Your YPA is here to help you to prepare to live independently. They can offer you advice, guidance and support after you leave care.

Your support

Your YPA will talk with you about any support you need. This support, and how you'll get it, will be written in your Pathway Plan. The amount of support you receive from your YPA will depend on your needs and what you want from them. You might, for example, need extra support because:

- you have special educational needs or a disability
- you are in or leaving custody or you have had contact with the criminal justice system
- you are a young parent
- you are going through a difficult time in your personal life

How often will you see your YPA?

You should see your YPA face to face at least once every three months, but you can speak to them on the phone more often than that. You can talk to your YPA about how often you'd like to see and speak to them.

Your Social Worker

Your social worker will support you from around the time you turn 16.

How will my social worker support me?

Your social worker will try to help and support you in many ways. They will help you to develop your independent living skills and make plans with you for your future.

They will work with you and the people who are important to you to make sure that you achieve the goals you set together. They will:

- spend time with you - helping with any problems you have by offering you advice and support
- go to all meetings about your care
- listen to what you have to say, and help you put your views across at meetings and when decisions and plans are made
- keep a record of everything that goes on while you are being looked after
- be there for you if you want someone to talk to
- make sure that you are being treated well by visiting you and your carers to make sure that you are OK and getting on well together
- make sure you see the people you need, for example, a doctor
- explain things to you and make sure you understand what is going on
- help you to keep in touch with friends, relatives and family

When will I see my social worker?

If you are staying with foster carers, your social worker will visit you within one week of you moving in, then at least every four weeks in the first year that you live there. After the first year your social worker may visit you less often but at least every 3 months. Your social worker should also visit you at any time if you ask to see them.

When will I stop seeing my social worker?

You will continue to see your social worker until you turn 18. Once you are 18, you will no longer have a social worker and your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) will become your main contact.

Your Pathway Plan

Your pathway plan sets out the support that you'll receive once you leave care.

What is a pathway plan?

Your pathway plan will help us meet your needs and help you move from care to living independently. The plan is unique to you, and it sets out how we will help you to achieve the things you want.

We'll prepare the plan with you and the important people in your life. Your plan will be written so that you understand it, and you can ask for changes to be made if you don't understand it. It will look at things like:

- where you will live
- education and training
- support with money
- support to develop relationships
- life skills
- support for your health needs, including mental health
- support if you are finding it difficult living independently

Your plan will include actions and deadlines so that you know who will be doing what, and when.

When will I get a pathway plan?

We will make sure your pathway plan is in place for you by your 16th birthday. Your social worker and your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) will support you with your pathway plan until you are 25.

Will my pathway plan change?

Your plan will be reviewed at least every six months to make sure that it is meeting your needs.

Your Reviews

Review meetings are very important. They are about you and your time in care.

What happens at a review meeting?

Review meetings are to check that your care plan is still right for you and to change it, if necessary.

You will have your first meeting when you have been looked after for one month, another review in about 3 months and after that we will have review meetings every 6 months for as long as you are looked after.

The time and date of the meeting should suit you. You don't have to go to the meeting, but it is best for you if you do go. The meeting is about you and your future. You should be there so that you can say what you want to happen. It may help you to write your views down in a leaflet that your social worker or your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) will give to you. You can choose someone to help you with this.

Where will my review meeting take place?

Review meetings are usually held where you live, they should be held at a place where you feel comfortable. You should be asked where you would like the review to be held.

Who will be at my review meeting?

Your social worker or your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) will explain to you what the review meeting is going to be about and tell you who else will be there and why. We only invite a small group of people - for example, your parent or relative, foster carer, key worker, or teacher. You can invite whoever you would like to be there. Let your social worker or your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) know.

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

The person who organises the meeting is called an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and it is their job to make sure they know everything about your situation and what has happened so far. This is to make sure any decisions made are right for your needs and the best plans are made for your future. They also check that everyone who works with you has completed all the tasks that have been agreed to keep you safe and well.

They will ask if you would like to talk with them before the meeting to hear your views about your situation and if there's anything you would like to get changed or arranged at the review. If you cannot make the review or don't want to attend, let your social worker or your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) know. The IRO can then arrange to see you where you live, or at the council's offices if you like. IROs need to make sure decisions made at your review are right for you and that good plans are made for your future.

Where can I live?

We can help you if you are having a housing crisis.

Staying put

If you and your foster carer(s) agree, you can continue to live with them after you turn 18. This is known as 'staying put'.

You might want to do this because you want support while you finish your education, or you might just need more time to make the transition to independence.

This can continue until you turn 21, or you can stop living in the household before then.

When you are 16, we'll start to think about this - and talk about it with you. We'll also record this in your pathway plan.



Supported accommodation

There are a number of schemes in County Durham that can provide you with somewhere to live with lots of support.

There are lots of different options available to you:

- Sharing a house or flat with others with support from staff based on site.
- Living alone in your own house or flat with 'floating support' that will regularly visit you and help you to manage your tenancy.

Where you live will be discussed as part of your pathway plan and there'll be a special meeting held to talk about the options open to you when you are ready to leave care.

Supported lodgings

This is where you live with a family or single person, who will help you to develop the skills to live independently. This can be a stepping stone to prepare you for living on your own.

Who is it for?

Supported lodgings is for you if you are not ready to live on your own. You might be leaving care or private accommodation or in some cases you might come straight from your family.

How long will I stay in supported lodgings?

Placements usually last between 6 months to 18 months. The time is not fixed, it is based on your need. When you feel ready to move on, we can help you.

What can I expect?

You will:

- have your own room
- have use of all communal rooms
- have use of appliances such as a washing machine
- have a safe and secure place to live
- get support from the person or people you live with

Who else will live in my supported lodgings placement?

This is different in each home. Some of our householders are single people and others are couples or families. There may be another young person alongside you.

The most important thing is that you will live in a safe and friendly home.

Living on your own

We know it can be very hard having your own place for the first time and we will support you the best we can to make that easier for you and ease some of the pressures.

What help will I get?

Once you are ready to live on your own, your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) will:

- help you to apply for your own home through Durham Key Options.
- make sure you are given priority when bidding for houses / flats.
- help you to claim for Universal Credit and other benefits so that you can pay your rent.
- help you to apply for council tax reductions.
- help you to manage your home, pay bills and deal with repairs.
- help you to access a grant from Welfare Assistance and a Setting Up Home Allowance (£2,000) so you can buy items you need to set up your home.
- give you practical support to move into and furnish your home.
- help you to develop your independent living skills with training from the National Open College Network.
- help you if you are at risk of losing your home.

Going to university

We will make sure you have somewhere to live when you go to university.

If you decide to go to university, we will:

- help you to find somewhere to live
- pay your rent while you are at university
- provide somewhere for you to stay during university holidays if where you stay during term-time is not available
- Many universities offer care leavers a guaranteed place in university owned accommodation which will cover the full 52 weeks per year.

Money to set up home

We will give you up to £2000 to buy essential furniture and home electricals (for example cooker or fridge) when you set up your own home.

To apply for this money, contact your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) or your social worker.

Care leavers and council tax

If you are a care leaver aged under 25 who is paying council tax or living with someone who pays council tax, we may be able to reduce the amount of council tax you pay.

Will I qualify?

To qualify for a reduction you must be:

- a care leaver under 25 years old
- live in County Durham
- named on the council tax bill

The reduction will stop on your 25th birthday or if the policy is revised.

What will I pay?

If you are the only person paying the council tax bill, you will not have to pay any council tax.

If you live with someone else, the council tax bill will be reduced to 50%.

How do I apply?

To find out if you qualify please complete the application form and:

- contact us to return it by email or post
- return it to your Young Person's Advisor (YPA)

If you have any questions, contact us or speak to your YPA.

If you qualify for a reduction it will be automatically paid to the relevant council tax account.

Our policy

The policy will be reviewed annually, and the current scheme is valid until 31 March 2019.

Help to avoid becoming homeless

We offer free help if you are homeless, at risk of homelessness or simply want advice about your housing options.

You may find yourself at risk of being homeless for many reasons. Do not wait until you become homeless - contact us as soon as possible - we may be able to prevent this.

How we can help you

We will provide advice on a range of housing issues, from landlord disputes to homelessness. We'll look at all of your options, from supported accommodation to privately rented housing.

Helping you keep your home

If you're in danger of losing your home, we will work with you to prevent this happening. We can help if:

- you're fleeing domestic abuse
- facing possession proceedings
- being harassed or evicted by your landlord
- being asked to leave by friends or relatives.
- struggling to pay your rent or mortgage
- you need help to live in your home

Finding a new home

If it's not possible to prevent you becoming homeless, we will try to help you to find a new home, whether that's renting from a private landlord or housing associations.

Emergencies

If you are homeless tonight and it is after office hours (5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 4.30pm Friday) please contact our care connect.

What we must do

Within 56 days, we must prevent you from becoming homeless, or find an alternative solution for you. If we are not able to do this, we will start enquiries to confirm that you:

- are eligible
- are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- are in a priority need
- you have made yourself intentionally homeless
- Have a local connection to Durham.

If you are eligible, we may offer temporary accommodation while we carry out enquiries. Please remember we are responding to a crisis situation and therefore, may have to rely on temporary accommodation that may not be in an area of your choice, and smaller than your ideal requirement.

If you are unhappy with our decision

If we reach a decision that you are not happy with, you can ask us to review the decision. We will tell you who you must contact, and when you must do this by. The person who carries out the review will not have been involved in your case previously.

Money

Help with your money

We can help you learn the skill of managing your money, working out how much you have and deciding how you spend it.

Help to manage your money

Your social worker or YPA will help you to complete a 'financial assessment' which looks at your income and spending and forms the basis of your budget plan which they can also help you with. Sometimes it may be your foster carer, keyworker or someone else who does this with you. It's very important that you learn to budget as this will help you when you are living independently.

We'll help you to set up a bank account if you don't already have one. We can also give you information about the NEFirst Credit Union who offer savings accounts and loans. They also have schemes where you can buy furniture and white goods by weekly payments.

If you end up in debt, it's important that you let your social worker or YPA know as soon as possible. We can help to get you back on track.

The Citizens Advice Bureau can give you independent debt advice as well as help and advice on money matters, welfare benefits and tax.



16 and 17 year old

Usually young people will stay in care until the age of 18. If you leave care before you are 18, your social worker will help you plan this. We will pay most of your rent and also pay you a weekly income which is paid at the same amount as you would receive if you were claiming benefits. We will also give you a home allowance to help you with the essential items you need. If you are sick or a single parent you will be able to claim benefits instead of the weekly payment from us.

18 and over

If you are not working full time you will be able to claim benefits and we will help you make a claim.

If you go to college you can get up to £1,200 to pay for things like clothing, books, equipment for your course, transport and lunch on the days you study or train.

Over 21

If you are in further or higher education after the age of 21 we can give you support and assistance. This can be provided until you are 25 if you stay in education.

Important documents you might need

Your social worker will help you to apply for your National Insurance Number as soon as you are old enough. You should have this before your 16th birthday. We will also help you to make sure you have photographic identification, which you will need to access services. We will support you with either your passport or provisional driving license.

Help with universal credit and benefits

We'll help you claim Universal Credit and benefits, and will work with you and the job centre to sort any issues you have with these.

If you have problems with Universal Credit and benefits, debt or managing your money, speak to your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) or your social worker (care leavers) - they will contact us, to see how we can help.

Did you know?

As a care leaver you can ask for:

- your Universal Credit to be paid weekly
- your landlord to be paid directly (the housing element of your Universal Credit)

We will contact the job centre for you and let them know that you are able to receive your Universal Credit this way.

Help to claim Universal Credit and benefits

Before your 18th birthday, we'll contact you to help you apply for Universal Credit, and any other benefits you may be entitled to (for example Personal Independence Payment).

Help with any Universal Credit and benefit issues

If you have any problems, we'll speak to the job centre for you, to sort these. This could include:

- challenging any sanctions (cuts) on your payments, because you've missed an appointment or other commitment.
- challenging any benefit decisions that you don't agree with, and appealing if our challenge is not successful.
- making sure that any debt payments you have (through your benefits) are as low as they can be.

Our Welfare Rights teams can also help with questions and problems on a wide range of social security benefit and tax credit issues.

Extra support when things change

We can help you claim for daily living expenses and settlement grants through our Welfare assistance scheme.

Money to set up home

We will give you up to £2000 to buy essential furniture and home electricals (for example cooker or fridge) when you set up your own home.

To apply for this money, contact your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) or your social worker.

- or other commitment.
- challenging any benefit decisions that you don't agree with, and appealing if our challenge is not successful.
- making sure that any debt payments you have (through your benefits) are as low as they can be.

Our Welfare Rights teams can also help with questions and problems on a wide range of social security benefit and tax credit issues.

Extra support when things change

We can help you claim for daily living expenses and settlement grants through our Welfare assistance scheme.

Care leavers and council tax

If you are a care leaver aged under 25 who is paying council tax or living with someone who pays council tax, we may be able to reduce the amount of council tax you pay.

Will I qualify?

To qualify for a reduction you must be:

- a care leaver under 25 years old
- live in County Durham
- named on the council tax bill

The reduction will stop on your 25th birthday or if the policy is revised.

What will I pay?

If you are the only person paying the council tax bill, you will not have to pay any council tax. If you live with someone else, the council tax bill will be reduced to 50%.

How do I apply?

To find out if you qualify please complete the application form and:

- contact us to return it by email or post
- return it to your Young Person's Advisor (YPA)

If you have any questions, contact us or speak to your YPA.

If you qualify for a reduction it will be automatically paid to the relevant council tax account.

Our policy

The policy will be reviewed annually and the current scheme is valid until 31 March 2019.

Welfare Rights

We can help with questions and problems on a wide range of social security benefit and tax credit issues. We offer services to the public, and to advisers and other organisations.

How can we help?

If you need advice on a benefit issue, we can:

- Give you information on what benefits you might be entitled to and how to claim them.
- Check that you are getting the right amount of benefit.
- Advise you on what will happen if your circumstances change.
- Give advice on how to ask for a reconsideration of a decision, or appeal against it.

Acting on your behalf

If you've recently had a benefit claim turned down and are appealing against this, we can act on your behalf if any of the following apply to you:

You or a member of your household (including non-dependants) lives in County Durham and receives Housing Benefit or an award under the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

You, a member of your family, or the person you care for, lives in County Durham and has a cancer diagnosis.

You are terminally ill.

You are a member of the armed forces community, including dependent families (regular personnel, reservists, veterans, bereaved).

You are judged at risk of suicide, for example if you are a member of a CREE project.

You have been referred from Citizen's Advice County Durham / Carers Centre / AgeUK County Durham.

You have been referred from Hotspots.

You have been referred from our Housing Solutions, The Adult Sensory Support Team or Durham Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Information Advice and Support Service.

Specialist teams

Our specialist teams provide services that concentrate on working with some of the most vulnerable people in our community, and on providing support to other professionals and agencies working with vulnerable people.

Looking after yourself

We want to help you to stay healthy and safe, both physically and emotionally.

Someone to talk to

If you need extra help or want someone to talk to, there are people you can contact for this.

The Full Circle

The Full Circle team can arrange sessions with you to talk through what's going on, and how you are feeling. Together, you can work on what you want from the sessions, and put a plan in place to get this.

If people around you, such as your social worker or supported lodging provider need support to help you, this group can put this support in place.

Whatever you talk about will be confidential between yourself and the person you speak with at The Full Circle.

How to contact The Full Circle

If you think you The Full Circle may help you, speak to your social worker or your YPA and ask them to contact us.

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) can help you if you are:

- not being listened to
- need advice
- need help to talk the council, your social worker, or personal advisor
- not being treated fairly
- having difficulties with college
- not happy with the contact you have with your family
- homeless
- What NYAS can do to help
- Meet in a safe place

What NYAS can do to help

Meet in a safe place

When you contact NYAS they will organise for a member of their team to meet you. You can choose where you want to meet - somewhere you feel comfortable or safe.

How to contact NYAS

It's up to you how you contact NYAS. See our website - National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) - Get in touch for our contact details. Or speak to your social worker or your YPA and ask them to contact us.

Children in Care Council

If you are a young person that is looked after or has been looked after, you are automatically a member of the CICC (Children in Care Council) and you can take part in discussions and issues raised.

We bring our ideas and suggestions to our meetings and work with the adults within the council to improve things and feedback.

Our meetings are supported by an Investing In Children Project Worker but are ran by young people for children and young people - creating a safe space for voices to be heard.

We will pay you a fee of £7.50 for taking part in the meeting plus up to £3.00 if you have to use public transport to attend.

How to contact the Children in Care Council

See Children in Care Council - our meetings for more information or speak to your social worker or your YPA and ask them to contact us.

Citizens Advice

Citizen's Advice County Durham provides free, confidential and independent advice to help people overcome their problems.

They help with everything from money issues to problems with benefits, housing or employment.

Sometimes you might have more than one problem, and often they are linked. They can tackle issues in the round making sure you get all of the support you need.

Looking after your health

We can support you to stay healthy. We can:

- give you information on healthy living
- support you to register with a GP, dentist and optician
- give you information on getting help to pay for prescriptions
- give you help with transport costs when attending health appointments
- if you are a young parent, we will support you to do the best for them - we will help you arrange childcare, if this is what you want
- give you information about health drop-in centres
- work with you to develop a 'health passport' containing key information from your childhood (for example, when and if you have had immunisations) and your current health needs
- help you to apply for a Freedom Card from Durham's Children in Care Council which is a leisure and activity pass

Support from The Healthy Child Service

We can put you in touch with The Healthy Child Service who can give you lots of advice and support to stay healthy. They can visit you at school, college, in your home or somewhere else if you would feel more comfortable.

- They'll help you to find and register with a doctor, dentist, sexual health clinic.
- They have staff who specialise in healthy weight, emotional health and stopping smoking.
- They can help you to understand any health conditions and medicines.



Looking after your emotional wellbeing

Your emotional wellbeing is as important as your physical health. We can support you to stay healthy and look after your mental health and wellbeing.

We can:

- support you to move from CAMHS to adult services
- support you to speak to your GP to discuss your emotional wellbeing especially if you need help with what to say
- give you information about counselling services that are available locally
- give you details of helplines and websites that are free to access if you prefer to get support this way
- help you to apply for a Freedom Card from Durham's Children in Care Council which is a leisure and activity pass as we know physical activity can be good for your mental health
- work with you to develop a 'health passport' containing key information from your childhood and your current health needs

Support from The Healthy Child Service

We can help you to get in touch with The Healthy Child Service who can give you lots of advice and support to stay healthy. They can visit you at school, college, in your home or somewhere else if you would feel more comfortable. They have staff who specialise in emotional health and can help you understand your mental health diagnosis if you have one.

Other support

- NHS Moodzone: Whatever you need to know about coping with stress, anxiety or depression, or just the normal emotional ups and downs of life, the NHS Choices Moodzone can help. It offers practical advice, interactive tools, videos and audio guides to help you feel mentally and emotionally better.
- YoungMinds: YoungMinds are the UK's leading charity fighting for young people's mental health. Whether you want to find out more about mental health or if you need someone to talk to, YoungMinds are there to help.
- Childline: They can give you help and advice about a wide range of issues.
- Talking Changes: They can help you deal with common mental health problems such as stress, anxiety or depression, as well as panic phobias obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and post traumatic stress disorder.
- Samaritans: They offer a safe place for you to talk any time you like, in your own way - about whatever's getting to you. You don't have to be suicidal.

Getting Involved

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

- provide you with information on groups and clubs that you might want to join
- tell you about awards, schemes and competitions that you can enter in line with your talents and interests
- help you to enrol on the Electoral Register so you can register to vote
- help you to get work experience through Teenagers to Work
- help you to get work experience with our councillors
- tell you about volunteering work that we think you might be interested in
- help you to apply for a Freedom Card from Durham's Children in Care Council which is a leisure and activity pass
- give you advice and help you to challenge any discrimination you face as a care leaver

Relationships

Having strong and supportive relationships will be really important for you as you move to independent adult life.

As well as support from your Young Person's Advisor, we may be able to give you extra practical and emotional support such as:

- providing you with a mentor/peer mentor
- helping you to keep or regain contact with people special to you or who cared for you in the past, like former foster carers, independent visitors or social workers
- support to reconnect with family if it is in your best interests

Advocacy support

You might need someone to act on your behalf, known as an advocate. Advocates can support and listen to you if you feel your wishes and feelings are not being heard by your social worker, carers or anyone else involved in decisions about your care and welfare. They can go with you to meetings, if you want them to, and help you to tell people what you want, or speak for you if you don't want to.

Your YPA can help you to get in touch with one.

The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) - young person's website has lots of information about advocacy support.

Education, Training and Employment

School holidays and work experience

Get work experience, new skills and increase your confidence when you take a work placement in the school holidays.

Teenagers 2 Work (T2W) offers you work placements during the school holidays - Summer, Easter, May and October.

If you'd like a work experience placement, contact us.

Going to sixth form or college

We want to make sure that when you leave care, you are able to achieve the goals you set yourself. We want you to succeed in your education, training and employment.

Finding a course

We can help you to find a course at college or sixth form, explore with you what you want to achieve and help you make a realistic plan to get there.

All colleges and sixth forms have a member of staff who supports young people in care and care leavers and they'll be able to give you lots of advice and support too.

Money to study

If you are aged 16-18 and study full-time you will be able to get a 'bursary' worth up to £1,200. This will be paid to you by your college, sixth form or training centre.

A bursary is money that you can use to pay for things like clothing, books, equipment for your course, transport and lunch on the days you study or train.

Deciding what to do when you leave school

Deciding which college, sixth form or what training you will follow after completing Year 11 is a big decision. It will be important to consider a few options before making your final choice. Your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) and your Virtual School caseworker will give you lots of advice and guidance as part of your Year 11 'PEP meetings' and as part of your pathway plan where you will set out goals for your future.

The move from Year 11 to further education can be challenging especially if you are moving home at the same time or at a later stage. Your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) and your Virtual School caseworker will work closely with you to make sure any changes affecting your education are as smoothly as possible.

Going to university

Making the leap from care to university can be both scary and exciting. If you want to be a student there is loads of support available to make it happen.

How we'll help you go to university

If you decide to go to university, we will:

- give you a higher education bursary of at least £2,000
- help you to look at universities, apply for a place and make visits before starting
- help you to apply for tuition fees and a student loan
- help you to find somewhere to live
- pay your rent while you are at university
- provide somewhere for you to stay during university holidays if where you stay during term-time is not available
- help with books and other equipment for your course
- pay your travel costs back to the area three times during your course
- arrange visits by your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) regardless of where you are studying
- review your pathway plan every six months to make sure your needs are still being met
- Have a celebration event to champion your success

University support

All universities have a member of staff who supports care leavers and they will be able to give you lots of advice and support too. Many universities will offer care leavers a guaranteed place in university owned accommodation which will cover the full 52 weeks per year.

To find out what the university or college you're applying to can offer, search for the university online, followed by 'care leaver' (for example 'Sunderland university care leaver') to help you find pages on their website about what they can offer you.

Why should you go to university?

Many care leavers go on to achieve amazing things in higher education. So can you.

<https://propel.org.uk/uk/is-higher-education-for-me/> list the top 10 reasons why you should go to university:

- You'll be able to live independently and make your own decisions.
- You'll always feel proud of your achievement and get confidence from it.
- You'll find clubs and societies for every interest imaginable.
- You'll have access to more jobs when you qualify.
- You'll fit in. Higher education welcomes all kinds of people from all types of backgrounds.
- You can study a subject you're good at and care about.
- You'll have the potential to earn more money.
- You'll have the chance to choose a city or town you'd love to live in.
- You'll meet new people and make lasting friendships.
- You'll have access to lots of support to help you get there - and stay there - so why not take advantage of it?

Learning to Drive

Learning to drive is a great way of becoming independent. We can give you support to help you do this including money towards your driving lessons and tests.

Through the Drive Project you can get up to £500 towards your driving lessons, theory and practical tests.

Its limited to 15 people per year, but if it's full you can be added to the waiting list.

CBT motorcycle training is also included in the scheme.

Do I qualify?

To access the project, you must be 17 to 21 years old (or 25 if you are still in full-time education) and it must be part of your pathway plan.

Find out more

Find out more about The Drive Project: <http://www.durham.gov.uk/media/25356/The-Drive-Project/pdf/TheDriveProject.pdf?m=636735622643000000>

Help to get a job

We will support you with finding a job.

What help can I get?

Your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) or your social worker will:

- help you write your CV
- tell you about any job vacancies
- help you apply for a job
- help you prepare for an interview
- help you with travel costs when going to job interviews
- help you buy equipment and clothing you need

DurhamWorks

Your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) or your social worker can also refer you to <http://www.durhamworks.info/> where you will receive one to one support from a Personal Advisor.

This will include:

- help with a job search
- helping you with any barriers to work such as transport or child care
- activities to help you gain the skills, confidence and experience that employers look for

Help to get an apprenticeship or traineeship

Apprenticeships combine practical training in a job with study. A traineeship is a course with work experience that gets you ready for work or an apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships

As an apprentice you'll:

- work alongside experienced staff
- gain job-specific skills
- earn a wage and get holiday pay
- get time for study related to your role (usually one day a week)

Traineeships

As a trainee you'll get:

- a work experience placement
- help with English and Maths (if you need it)

You won't be paid, but you may be given expenses for things like travel and meals.

Help with finding an apprenticeship or traineeship

Your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) or your social worker will help you to find an apprenticeship or traineeship. They will help you complete application forms, prepare for interviews and provide help with money.

They will also support you to get help from DurhamWorks and the Adult Learning and Skills Service.

DurhamWorks

With DurhamWorks you will have a Personal Advisor who will support you to go forward into further education, training or employment. They'll give you lots of information, advice and guidance about the range of apprenticeships and traineeships available to you.

You'll be able to access activities and programmes to help you gain the skills, confidence and experience you need. Your Personal Advisor will also help you with any problems such as child care, transport or costs.

Adult Learning and Skills Service

With an Adult Learning and Skills Service apprenticeship you can get hands on experience in a job, earning a wage while you gain valuable skills, knowledge and qualifications. Apprenticeship programmes include:

- business administration
- information technology
- customer service
- health and social care
- support teaching and learning in schools.

Their traineeships can help to prepare you for an apprenticeship or a job by helping you to become 'work ready'. They offer courses such as a Traineeship for Care Leavers. This is specifically designed to meet your needs - you will have the opportunity to go on a work placement, improve your English and maths, as well as receiving help with any problems such as child care, transport or costs. They'll also help you plan your next steps.

