



# **Redbridge Local Offer for Care Leavers**

**What support is available?  
2021-22**

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# Who is a Care Leaver?

## **You are an eligible Care Leaver if:**

- you are currently looked after; and aged 16 or 17; and
- you 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 are a relevant Care Leaver if:**

- you are no longer looked after by the Local Authority, but you have been 'Eligible'; and
- aged 16 or 17 years old; immediately before being detained or in hospital you were 'Eligible'; or lived for continuous period of 6 months or more with a parent, someone with parental responsibility and where those arrangements break down.

## **You are a Former Relevant Care Leaver if:**

- if you are aged 18 years or above, and either have been a Relevant or Eligible child when under 18.
- if at the age of 21 or before reaching the age of 25 you are in education or training, then you will remain a former relevant child until the end of the agreed program.
- if after 21 years you inform us that you want to pursue or are pursuing a program of education or training.

## **You are a qualifying Care Leaver if:**

- you are at least 16 but under 21; and
- you were looked after immediately prior to the making of a special guardianship order which was in force when you reached 18.
- or if at any time after reaching the age of 16, but before reaching the age of 18 you have been a looked after child, accommodated by or on behalf of a voluntary organization, registered children's home, or by a health authority or privately fostered;
- as a Qualifying Care Leaver, you can access advice and assistance based on a needs assessment completed by the Leaving Care Team.

But you will not be entitled to the full Care Leaver offer.

Your Social Worker or Personal Advisor can help you to understand which of these categories applies to you.

# Who supports you as a Care Leaver?

## 16-18 (Prior to receiving services from the leaving care team)

### Pathway Plan

Your Social Worker will work with you to prepare and agree a Pathway Plan. This is your own individual plan about your needs, views, and future goals and how we can help you in your successful move on to adult life. Once you turn 16, your Social Worker will work with you and your wider support network to prepare you for independence.

Your Social Worker and Personal Advisor will review your Pathway Plan with you at least every 6 months when you become eligible for support from the Leaving Care Team. With your agreement we will seek the views of partner agencies. This may include housing, education, training, health services and any other services or people that are important to you. This is to ensure we all work together to provide you with clear and consistent advice and support.

### Personal Advisor

You may be currently supported by a social worker, foster carer/and or key worker. Prior to your 18th birth you will be allocated a Personal Advisor. This would allow you to get to know them before they become your main point of contact at age 18, when you transition to leaving care team.

### Your Personal Advisor will help you with:

- developing your independence skills
- training and employment opportunities.
- finding somewhere suitable to live; and
- managing your finances and claiming benefits.

### Extra Support

You and your Personal Advisor will look at any extra support you need. You might need extra support because:

- you have special educational needs or a disability
- you were an unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child (UASC) and your immigration status is still unclear
- you are in or leaving custody or you have had contact with the criminal justice system
- you are a young parent; or
- you are going through a difficult time in your personal life.

*We will be here if things in your life don't go to plan or you chose to have a change in direction. If you already have a Personal Advisor they will be able to help you and if you don't you can contact us.*

## **Additional Information for former Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)**

If you are unable to claim benefits because your immigration status is still not clear, help is available through your Personal Advisor and if necessary, specialist immigration services.

If you are unable to claim social housing because you are waiting for your decision from the Home Office and therefore have no recourse to public funds, we will support you until the Home Office decide on your claim.

If you claimed asylum as an unaccompanied child and have been supported by us, you can get the same support as a Care Leaver.

## **Additional information for young people with additional needs or a disability**

Care leavers who have additional needs or a disability may be able to also access support via the Children and Families Act (2014) and Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0 – 25 years (2015). If you have severe or profound additional needs or a disability which meet the criteria for adult services, your Social Worker will complete a Transition Assessment with you or your carer. It will be carried out in a reasonable timescale to allow greater flexibility in the timing of transition. During the transition from children's social care to adult care your support will not change until your social worker finishes your assessment.

*From 18-21, Redbridge Council will provide you with a Personal Advisor.  
If you're in education your Personal Advisor will automatically continue to support you until you are 25.*



# What is the local offer for Care Leavers?

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 help. We know that some of our Care Leavers live outside the borough and therefore need additional help in finding resources local to you.

The council, as your 'corporate parents', makes this commitment to you – the children, young people and Care Leavers we look after.

We have worked with Care Leavers over the years and listened to their voices as well as the voices of those young people accessing services now or in the process of transitioning to the Leaving Care Service. These voices have helped us put together this offer. We will continue to listen to your views to make sure the services we provide are what you need.

We commit to:

- offer you support and guidance throughout your time in care.
- maximize your potential so that you achieve your aspirations.
- involve you in decisions about your life so that you feel fully prepared for your transition into adulthood.
- tailor our housing support and advice so that you are provided with a safe and happy home.
- recognizing and celebrating your achievements in the Redbridge Children in Care and annual Care Leavers Celebration Event;
- hearing your voice through the Don't Whisper Senior Children in Care Council at the Corporate Parenting Board where senior leaders can hear feedback about the service directly from Care Leavers and looked after children.

*This booklet may not include all the support available to you. If you are not sure what level of support you are entitled to or have any questions, contact your Personal Advisor who will be able to help.*

# Education, Employment and Training

## Aged 16+

Redbridge's Virtual School can help you to succeed in your learning. If you are aged 16-17, the Virtual School, alongside your Social Worker and Personal Advisor will help you with your Personal Education Plan (PEP).

Your Personal Advisor can also support you to secure work experience.

We have a specialist panel who work with the leaving care team to ensure that young people are in education, employment and training.

Your Personal Advisor can help you with arranging volunteering opportunities.

Redbridge Council is committed to working with residents to find employment and training opportunities particularly those who were previously looked after by the authority.

## Further education aged 16-19

You may be able to get financial support of £1,200 a year direct from your school, further education college, or learning provider.

## Aged 19+

You can apply for a discretionary learner bursary as an older learner, direct from your education provider.

If you are not able to receive a further education bursary and are not eligible for benefits, your PA can support you in looking at other options.

## Higher education aged 18-25

All young people in higher education will receive a £2,000 bursary which will be paid in instalments over three years.

We want you to do well and have committed to paying for your rent during term times. You will be supported with finding accommodation during the holidays. You will have access to the Higher Education Financial Support Package which includes funds for books, travel and Wi-Fi.

You will be expected to claim your maximum entitlement from Student Finance for tuition fees and a maintenance loan.

Several universities offer bursaries for Care Leavers. You can see which universities offer this at [www.propel.org.uk](http://www.propel.org.uk)

# Accommodation

We will always support you to find a home within Redbridge if that is the best thing to do. If you've left the area and wish to return and we will try and help you to do this, provided it's a safe option. Sometimes this may not be possible, or you may not wish to stay in Redbridge so we may work with you to find a place to live outside of the borough. There are link staff in both the Redbridge Leaving Care Team and the Housing Options Service who specialize in work with Care Leavers and offer bespoke support.

## Options for 16-17 years old Care Leavers

The Council will ensure that you have a suitable place to live such as with a foster carer, in a children's home, or a semi-independent provision. We will start working with you on your Pathway Plan when you are 16 so there is lots of time to decide what you will need when you live independently. You can look at all the options available, with the support of your Social Worker and Personal Advisor, to make sure that you can find somewhere suitable and affordable when you are an adult.

## Supported lodgings (aged 16+)

If you are leaving foster care or a children's home, supported lodgings can provide a 'bridge' between being in care and independence. The aim of the scheme is to place older teenagers in a home where they can settle and be happy and at the same time receive guidance and encouragement to learn life skills. You will live with an adult, or family, who can support you to develop skills for adulthood.

## Supported housing or semi-independent living aged 16+

This could consist of your own room/studio flat, sometimes with shared kitchen and living space. You will have a key worker at each place who will work with you to agree a plan that sets out what support you need to work towards having your own independence.





## Accommodation options for 18-25-year-old Care Leavers

### Living with friends and family

Once you have turned 18, you may decide to live with your birth family or friends. If this is an option you wish to consider, then your Personal Advisor can help you to achieve it. If you live back at home with your family, this can affect how long you get a leaving care service support for. We will work with you to ensure that you get the support you need to achieve this successfully. This is a way of helping everyone who is important to you to work together to support you.

### Staying put (aged 18+)

If you are living with foster carers, there may be the option to remain there after you are 18, up until you are ready to move on. Your carer will help you to develop skills that will be useful when you move to independent living.

Redbridge Council will pay your foster carer a weekly payment, but you may need to claim Universal Credit if you are paying rent; your Personal Advisor will help in this process.

### Independent living

This could be a Council or Housing Association property or accommodation that is offered by a private landlord.

If you are living independently, you can receive help from the Housing Options Officer in Redbridge Housing to manage your tenancy well. Your Personal Advisor or the Housing Officer based in the Leaving Care Team can give you more information about this.

Independent living might include university halls or other student accommodation if you are in higher education.

The Redbridge Leaving Care Team can help you to find somewhere to live which may include helping you with your first month's rent on your first property (subject to the property being satisfactory).

### Council Tax

We pay the council tax for young people who were previously looked after by Redbridge Children Social Care up to the age of 25 regardless of where they currently reside. (However we do not pay the council tax for other care leavers who reside in Redbridge but are placed by other authorities).



# Health and Wellbeing

Whilst you are looked after (aged 16-18), you will continue to be offered an annual Health Assessment by one of our Looked After Children (LAC) Nurses. You will be provided with a 'Health Passport' when you turn 18 which is a summary of your health information. If you are unsure if you have received this, please speak to your Personal Advisor.

## When you reach the age of 18

Your Personal Advisor can:

- help you register with health services, such as a GP, dentist, and optician when you move home.
- help you access support to attend hospital or doctor's appointments.
- information and support to access local sexual health services – GPs, pharmacies, and sexual health clinics.

## Access to emotional, mental health and wellbeing services

You will also have access to emotional, mental health and wellbeing services in Redbridge. (If you live outside Redbridge area your PA will support you in identifying services in that area.

If you feel that you need a little more help or that you may be experiencing a mental health problem, then contact your GP or doctor. They can offer advice or refer you to specialist services.

You can also contact the Access, Assessment and Brief Intervention Service (Redbridge). This is for adults aged 18 to 65 enquiring about mental health services in the borough. The service is provided by NELFT NHS Foundation Trust. Visit NELFT website or contact 0300 555 1088.



## Additional support

**Talking Therapies in Redbridge** is a free, confidential NHS service that will work with you to help you feel better. They can help with a range of problems such as depression, anxiety, stress, bereavement and relationship problems. To access the service complete an online Talking Therapies form or call 0300 300 1554 (Option 1) to arrange an initial telephone appointment.

**One Place East** provides information and signposting for people experiencing or recovering from mental health problems and run many services including drop-in sessions, a befriending scheme for those who have become isolated and a volunteering project to support people into volunteering activities.

**There is also a mental health information directory and a user group called RUN-UP** (Redbridge User Network User Pressure Group) that is open to people experiencing mental health problems and their carers. Visit One Place East [www.rcmh.org.uk](http://www.rcmh.org.uk) or call 020 8925 2435

**Imagine mental health** provides a range of services in Redbridge including recovery support planning, social inclusion, user-led groups and peer support groups and a two-hour drop-in service open six days a week. You can contact the Imagine Redbridge Team on 020 8551 5314 or email [imagine@redbridge.org.uk](mailto:imagine@redbridge.org.uk)

If you have had an experience of a mental health illness and would like to return to employment or adult education or are at risk of losing your job, then Richmond Fellowship Employment Service can help. Visit Richmond Fellowship website [www.richmondfellowship.org.uk](http://www.richmondfellowship.org.uk)

There is always someone you can talk to at Samaritans (Redbridge). They provide free and confidential emotional support if you are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which may lead to suicide. Visit [www.redbridge.gov.uk](http://www.redbridge.gov.uk) and search Samaritans.

## Should you need support with alcohol or substance misuse issues

You will have access to specialist substance misuse services in Redbridge, called R3, who can work with you. R3 (Redbridge, Recovery and Reintegration) is a free and confidential support service for individuals and their families affected by drug and alcohol problems.

The service is delivered by WDP and supports individuals and their families who wish to receive advice, assessment, and treatment for their drug and/or alcohol problems. For more information telephone 0300 303 4612.

# Relationships

As well as support from your Social Worker and Personal Advisor, we may be able to offer you other practical and emotional support, for example:

- linking you up with a mentor just for you who can be there to listen and give encouragement and support.
- providing an independent visitor (up until the age of 18);
- helping you to maintain or regain contact with people who were special to you or who cared for you in the past, like former foster carers, children's home staff and Social Workers.
- helping you to form and keep healthy relationships with your friends and family.

We can arrange meetings with people who are important to you like family members and friends to talk about how everyone can work together to support you in the best way.

## Getting involved and getting heard

We want our Care Leavers to be active members of society, and to have all the chances in life that other young adults have.

To help you participate in society, we can:

- give you information about groups and clubs you can join, including our Care Leavers' forum.
- invite you on trips to the theatre, sporting events and other activities.
- give you opportunities to work for us as an interview panel member.
- tell you about awards, schemes, and competitions you can enter that reflect your talents and interests.
- help you enroll on the electoral register, so you can vote in elections.
- tell you about voluntary work opportunities.
- tell you about leisure activities and possibly help finance them.
- help you challenge any discrimination you face as a Care Leaver.

# Financial Support

## Aged 16-17

If you are living independently (not with a foster carer or in a children's home) you will receive an allowance.

This can be in cash or in another form for example food or vouchers or a mixture of both.

Your Social Worker and Personal Advisor will:

- support you to put in your benefit claim six weeks before your 18th Birthday to ensure this is processed in time to start when you turn 18;
- make sure you have the advice you need to learn to manage your money, and that this is detailed in your Pathway Plan;
- help you open a bank account;
- help you get your National Insurance number;
- celebrate your birthday;
- celebrate special times throughout the year e.g. Eid, or Christmas;
- you may also be able to claim an educational bursary; your Social Worker, carer or Personal Advisor can support you to claim this from your college provider.

## Aged 18-21

From the age of 18 you are entitled to claim benefits. Your Personal Advisor can support you to claim benefits; however, it is important that you take responsibility for this.

During the claim period – which is up to four weeks (post 18) – the Leaving Care Team can support this payment, providing you are maintaining your claim requirements. The Leaving Care Team can also assist you by providing advice on money management.

We will help you celebrate your 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st birthday. (This will be by way of a gift, vouchers, or celebration and will be discussed with you.)

We will support you to celebrate special times through the year. For example, you may want to attend the Care Leavers Celebration Event. Your Personal Advisor is available to provide further advice.

## Leaving care/setting up Home Allowance

From the age of 18 you are entitled to support for setting up your own home (up to £2,000). Your Personal Advisor will be able to support you to purchase items that you may need to live independently. For example: TV license, toaster, pots and pans, carpets. You can discuss your ideas with your Personal Advisor.

## Emergency assistance

You will be expected to contact the Leaving Care Team and arrange to come into the office for this assistance. Subject to a Needs Assessment and if you have no other means to sustain

yourself, the Leaving Care Team will provide you with support to pay for essential items such as food or utility bills.

## Aged 22-25

Your Personal Advisor can support you to access any benefits you are entitled to claim.

## Supplementary Finances

You can see all the financial support we provide in the areas of Accommodation – Education, Employment and Training and Health in other parts of this Local Offer. We also support financial in following ways.

## Identification Documents

We will help fund all Care Leavers with their application for their first passport.

If for any reason you can't get a passport, we will help fund and support you to apply for another form of photographic ID e.g. a provisional or full driving license.

If you lose your I.D. or birth certificate, we will support you with the cost of 1 replacement.

## Keeping in touch

We want to help you to keep in touch with people who are important to you. This can be by way of phone credit, stationery and stamps.

**Clothing** - If you are living independently you could receive support for clothing for interviews or employment.

**Exceptional Circumstances** – If you are living independently you could access support for exceptional circumstances for example, for attending a wedding or funeral of someone close to you.

**Storage** – We can help you with storage provision for a short period of time in an emergency. Your Personal Advisor can assist with this. However, we cannot keep goods in storage for outside of emergency situations.

**Moving** – We can support with moving into your permanent accommodation, including the use of a removal van.

**Cold Weather Payments** – If you are not in receipt of benefits during exceptional long periods of cold weather additional payments towards the cost of heating bills can be provided if you are living in your own home.



# Important Information

## Identity

You have the right to see information that we keep about you, including your files and records written about you when you were in care.

For more information on accessing your social care files please speak to your Personal Advisor.

We will help you gain important identification documents, such as a birth certificate, passport and/or a driving license.

We will provide support around any issues important to your identity such as religion, sexuality, gender, or culture.

## Your right to Advocacy support

If you feel that we are treating you unfairly, have not respected your rights or you want to make a complaint, you have a right to the support of an Advocate.

An Advocate will give you confidential advice and support you to speak up or will speak up on your behalf if you prefer. Making sure your voice is heard and that your views are taken seriously, and your rights are respected.

The Advocate is not part of the Leaving Care Team and will work exclusively for you.

Advocacy is independent & confidential. This means that nothing will be shared outside the advocacy service, without your agreement. (Only in exceptional circumstances would confidentiality be broken, namely where there is a risk of significant harm to you or to someone else, or if disclosure is required by a court order.)

You do not have to tell the Advocate your business. S/he only needs enough information to get your problem sorted.

### Contact the Children's Rights Advocate

Working Days: Wednesday, Thursday and alternate Fridays T: 020 8708 5811

E: [janet.edwards@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:janet.edwards@redbridge.gov.uk)

## Your right to see what information we hold about you

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. Your Personal Advisor can help you to access these.

## The Don't Whisper Senior Children in Care Council

We offer Care Leavers up to 25 the opportunity to share their voices and experiences of being Looked After and a Care Leaver as well as the chance to help shape future services. Speak with your Personal Advisor or the Children's Participation Officer, 020 8708 3448/07908 461 375 if this is something you would be interested in getting involved with.

## Grants

There are charities who give financial help in the form of a grant. Grants may be in the form of products, services or financial which does not have to be paid back. Each charity will have their own aims and objectives based on their cause and individual qualifying criteria.

Here are some charity organizations we have identified who may be able to offer support. Your Personal Advisor will be able to support you in applying for some of these grants.

**Turn2Us** have a grant search tool. Enter your postcode for info on grants you could apply for [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)

**Care Leavers' Foundation** awards grants of up to £400 to Care Leavers aged 18-29 for things like household items, emergency living expenses, education costs, medical needs, training and employment [www.thecareleaversfoundation.org](http://www.thecareleaversfoundation.org)

**Lawrence Atwell's Charity** awards grants of £100-£1,500 to young people aged 16-26 to help with training courses, including buying equipment, living expenses during the course and fees for tuition, enrolment or exams [www.skinners.org.uk/grants-and-trusts/atwell](http://www.skinners.org.uk/grants-and-trusts/atwell)

**The Spark Foundation** awards grants of up to £600 to Care Leavers up to age 25 for setting up home, education/ employment, skills and interests [www.sparkfoundation.org.uk](http://www.sparkfoundation.org.uk)

**Capstone Care Leavers Trust** awards grants of £300- £2,000 to Care Leavers aged 17-25, for education courses and equipment (including travel), driving lessons/tests and household items [www.capstonecareleaverstrust.org](http://www.capstonecareleaverstrust.org)

**Problems with utility bills?** Some major providers have debt relief funds. See which ones, and how to apply at [www.charisgrants.com](http://www.charisgrants.com)

**Buttle UK** awards grants of up to £2,000 to estranged young people aged 16-20 for support with education, employment and training, setting up home, and improving emotional and physical wellbeing. Applications should be made by statutory or voluntary organisations on your behalf [www.buttleUK.org](http://www.buttleUK.org)

**The Prince's Trust** awards grants for young people aged 17-25, working fewer than 16 hours, or in education for fewer than 14 hours per week, to help with getting into work, education or training; loans are also on offer to help you start a business [www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)

## Other places you can go for help and advice

### **New City College**

[www.ncclondon.ac.uk/redbridge](http://www.ncclondon.ac.uk/redbridge)

020 8548 7402

### **Government website student financial support**

[www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance)

### **Job Centre Plus**

[www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus](http://www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus)

### **Citizens Advice**

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

### **Redbridge Housing**

[www.redbridge.gov.uk/housing](http://www.redbridge.gov.uk/housing)

### **Shelter**

[www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

### **Frank**

[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

0300 123 6600

### **Coram Voice**

[www.coram.org.uk](http://www.coram.org.uk)

0808 800 5792

### **National Youth Advisory Service (NYAS)**

[www.nyas.net](http://www.nyas.net)

0151 649 8700

### **UCAS**

[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

### **Prince's Trust**

[www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)

### **Asylum Aid**

[www.asylumaid.org.uk](http://www.asylumaid.org.uk)

### **Asylum Support Tribunal**

[www.gov.uk/appeal-first-tier-asylum-support-tribunal](http://www.gov.uk/appeal-first-tier-asylum-support-tribunal)

### **Refugee Council**

[www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

### **The Albert Kennedy Trust**

[www.akt.org.uk](http://www.akt.org.uk)

