



Bury Council Care Leavers local offer

Overview

The process of leaving care and transitioning to adult life can be a challenging and confusing time. This guide describes Bury's Local Offer in support of all of our Care Leavers. The aim is to clearly set out the support Care Leavers can expect from the Council as they make their individual journeys to independence and adult life.

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.

Who is a Care Leaver?

To be able to get the support set out in this leaflet, 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 speak to your personal adviser. The amount and type of support you will be able to access depends on your age and your circumstances. In order to understand the support that you are entitled to receive you will need to understand some key words which are used to describe the status of care leavers.

Eligible

You are an Eligible Care Leaver if...

- you are aged 16 or 17; and
- you are currently a young person in care, and
- you have been in care for a period of at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, which must include at least 1 day after your 16th birthday.

Relevant

You are a Relevant Care Leaver if...

- you are no longer cared for by the Local Authority but you have previously been an 'Eligible' care leaver and,
- you are 16 or 17 years old.

Former Relevant

You are a Former Relevant Care Leaver if...

- you are aged between 18 and 21 and before reaching 18 you were or had been a Relevant Care Leaver or
- Immediately before you stopped being cared for you were an Eligible Care Leaver.
- If at the age of 21 and up to reaching the age of 25 where you continue or return to be in full time education or training then you can remain as a Former Relevant Care Leaver for the duration of the agreed programme.

Qualifying

You are a Qualifying Care Leaver if...

- You are at least 16 and
- You were a cared for young person prior to the making of a Special Guardianship Order which was in force when you reached 18, or
- If at any time after you reached the age of 16 you were no longer looked after, or accommodated or,
- You were privately fostered and assessed to be in need.
- As a Qualifying Care Leaver you are able to access advice and assistance based on an updated needs assessment completed by the Through Care Team.

Extension to 25 years old

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 extends the age of which you can access support and guidance up to 25 regardless of if you are in education, employment or training. If you are unsure if you entitled to receive this support then please contact the Through Care Team office on 0161 253 6666 and ask to speak to the duty worker.

What support can you access as a Care Leaver?

A Personal Adviser

All Eligible, Relevant, Former Relevant and Qualifying Care Leavers will be allocated a PA from the Through Care Team from the age 16 and they will work alongside your social worker to assist you in preparing for your transition into adult life.

Your PA will support you to develop the skills that will assist you to live independently at a time when you are ready to do so. A key role of the PA is to provide and coordinate the support, advice and guidance you will need to live in your own accommodation. Your PA may offer you support via referrals to partner agencies and will also complete direct work with you around developing your independence skills, budgeting and cooking etc through sessions available at the 'HUB' based at the New Kershaw Centre. Your Personal Adviser will work alongside your Social Worker to develop your Pathway Plan until you leave care at which point your personal adviser will be responsible for working with you to develop the plan.

Learning the necessary skills to live independently does not begin after you have left care, it begins when you are still in care and young people will be encouraged to develop these skills in both their placements and via the HUB at New Kershaw Centre.

Pathway Plan

Pathway Plans will be prepared for all Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant young people. From the age of 16 your Pathway Plan will replace your Care Plan. Your Pathway Plan is about your needs and what we all need to do to ensure your successful transition to adult life.

How will I be involved?

For your Pathway Plan to be effective it will be based on an up to date needs assessment and will set out the support that you need to achieve your aspirations. We aim to fully involve you in the development of your Pathway Plan.

With your agreement and where it is appropriate we will seek the views of your parents and carers, we will also seek the views from our partner agencies which may include; Housing, Education, Training and Employment providers, Benefits, Health services, Youth Offending Services and Youth Support Services. Your Pathway Plan will seek to ensure that all agencies are working together to provide you with clear and consistent advice and support. We will also consider if you have any extra support needs. These could be because:

- You have special education needs or disability
- You are an unaccompanied asylum seeker
- You are in custody
- You are pregnant or are a parent

Your right to be heard and taken seriously

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 would like support from an independent advocate you can ask your personal adviser to support you to access this service or you can contact Children's Rights directly on 0161 253 6339.

Your views are important to us and we encourage you to tell us what you think we can do to help and support you. You can do this by:

- Attending the care leavers forum - dates are displayed in the Hub and on our Facebook page. You can also speak to your Personal Adviser for more information
- Completing regular questionnaires or putting suggestions in the suggestion box at the HUB.
- Attending participation events held at the HUB. For more information contact your PA or check out our Facebook page.
- Have an active role in helping us to deliver a better service by attending our Corporate parenting Board meetings and National benchmarking events.

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 would like to access your file then speak your your PA who can support you to do this.

Accommodation

Your Personal Adviser will support you to find suitable accommodation. This might include:

- **Staying Put** - if this is what you and your foster carers want we will support you to remain in you placement under what is called a 'Staying Put' placement. This can continue until you are 21.
- **Semi-independent accommodation** - You can access semi-independent accommodation if you are not ready or don't want your own tenancy. Your Social Worker and PA are available to provide you with guidance, advice and information in relation to your accommodation options.

- **Supported Lodgings** - this is accommodation within a family home. The young person is provided with their own bedroom and must be engaged in education, employment or training. Support is provided informally by the host family. The young person is expected to make a contribution towards living costs and purchase their own food for lunches and evening meals.
- **Children's HEN** - this consists of tenancies provided by the Department of Communities and Wellbeing for the sole use of Children's Services. The accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds consists of one and two bed social housing properties within Bury. The HEN team provide Low level tenancy related support.
- **House of multiple occupancy** - these are run by private providers across Bury, these properties usually accommodate between two and four care leavers and are staffed 24/7. The higher staffing ratio provides for more intense support for semi-independent care leavers to engage with services and appointments as well as the development of their independence skills and occasional assistance with transport. Children Services will fund this type of placement up to a maximum of 18years of age.

Independent living options, Social Housing and Private Tenancies

Your Personal Adviser will help to you to consider whether you are tenancy ready and will provide you with support to make decisions about your housing. This might include:

- Supporting you to complete a housing application. As a care leaver in Bury you will have an automatic priority status on the housing waiting list and will be placed in to band 2. There is a commitment from Bury Council to increase this offer band 1 in the near future.
- Access to a tenancy ready course is available for you to access and is run twice a year at the HUB with support from housing. A 'get ready for adult life course' is also run at the HUB by the Greater Manchester Youth Network twice a year. This course is accredited which means you can gain qualifications as well as developing your independence skills.
- Practical support including linking you up with an independent visitor who can support you with moving into, furnishing and decorating your own tenancy.
- Support with claiming housing benefit/Universal credit.
- We know it can be very hard having your own place for the first time. We will do whatever we can to ease the pressures on you. In Bury Care leavers are exempt from paying council tax until age 25.

If you wish to apply for Social Housing in another Local Authority you will have to provide evidence of a local connection. Your PA will be able to provide you with advice, guidance and support throughout this process.

Alternatively, you may wish to secure a private let but please be aware that the Local Authority cannot act as a Guarantor for any private rental arrangements, however, your PA will be able to provide you with a reference if you are assessed as being tenancy ready and information, advice and guidance on accessing Housing related financial support and benefits.

Support in a crisis

We understand that at times young people may have a housing crisis. In these circumstances we will work closely with the housing team to try and find you temporary accommodation while more permanent accommodation can be found. More information regarding this is available from your PA or you can contact the housing department directly on 0161 253 5251 and ask to speak to the duty worker.

Education, training and employment

We want to make sure that every care leaver has the support they need to achieve their goals and aspirations. We will offer you:

- Careers information and advice e.g. CV development, interview techniques, how to prepare for an interview etc.
- Support to meet transport costs when travelling to training, school/college, apprenticeships or job interviews.
- Support to buy tools, equipment, essential clothing and books.
- Access to 'Breakthrough' a bespoke transition programme to help you to access education, employment, training, and independent living opportunities.
- Guaranteed interviews for Bury Council apprenticeships where candidates meet all essential criteria for the role.
- Incentive payments to support and encourage you to access EET opportunities
- A range of work experience opportunities within Bury Council.
- The opportunity to access all GM Higher programmes designed to support you if you are interested in going to university.
- Monthly employment workshops with the Job Centre
- Personal Adviser support until you are 25 years old if this is what you want.
- Care Leavers are a priority group and can access the 16-19 bursary fund of up to £1200 a year from their education provider if in Further education.
- Financial support if you choose to go to University to pay for your accommodation during term time and a contribution to holiday accommodation. Speak to your PA for further information.
- Support with applying for tuition fees and maintenance loans if you attend University and support to access care leaver grants.
- Support with accessing the £1000 apprenticeship bursary from your education provider if you are on an apprenticeship.
- Personal Education Plans to identify what support may be needed and to celebrate achievements

Health and wellbeing

Below are some of the ways our care leaving team and your personal adviser can support you to stay healthy and look after your physical and mental health. We can:

- Offer a weekly health and well-being drop in session at the Hub with a health trainer who can advise you on healthy living, diet and exercise advice, giving up smoking, drug and alcohol services, mental health.
- Access to the specialist LAC/care leavers nurse at the HUB on a weekly basis for support and advice up to 25 years.
- Give you information on how to get help to pay for prescriptions.
- Support you to register with a GP, dentist and optician
- Support you to transition from Healthy Young Minds to adult services
- Social Care CAMHS will offer a consultation with professionals involved with Care leavers aged 18-25 so they can support and sign post you to the appropriate service.
- Give you information about counselling services that are available locally
- Give you help with transport costs when attending health appointments
- Offer free taster vouchers for our leisure facilities including studio classes and swim sessions
- Provide you with a free active lifestyle discount card to give you access to discounts on leisure activities
- Provide you with a 'health passport' containing key information from your childhood (for example, when and if you have had immunisations) and your current health needs.
- Train staff working with you so they have a broader understanding of your health needs and the services available to support you.

Financial support

When you leave care you may be able to access some financial support to assist you. This support can include:

- Providing a setting up home grant of £2000 to purchase essential items for your home. Your PA will support you to access this money.
- Support you to open a bank account
- Being exempt from council tax payments until you are 25 years old.
- Providing discretionary payments in an emergency
- Providing a financial gift on birthdays, Christmas or another festival of your choice.
- Support you to access your junior ISA if you have one. (For more information speak to your PA)
- Incentive payments if you are in education, training or volunteering.
- Providing you with a passport, driving licence and birth certificate before you reach 18.
- Providing financial assistance while your benefits are being processed if you have not received an advance payment from the Job Centre.

- Providing food parcels for those in crisis from the HUB and referring you to other food banks in the local community.

We recognise that managing money can be difficult especially when you are doing it for the first time. We will provide you with support and advice to try and help you with this. This includes:

- Money matters and 'Get ready for adult life course's run at the HUB by GMYN.
- One to one budgeting sessions with your PA
- Access to the tenancy ready course at the HUB including budgeting support.
- Monthly drop in sessions at the HUB with the DWP for advice on accessing benefits and support with Job Searches

Participation in Society

We want our care leavers to be active members in society, and to have all the chances in life that other young adults have. We can help you participate in society in the following ways:

- Informing you about relevant awards, schemes and competitions you can enter, in line with your talents and interests
- Encouraging and helping you to register on the Electoral Register so you can vote in elections
- Offering work experience within the council
- Links with agencies who offer volunteering and personal development courses
- Regular programme of activities throughout the year including the care leaver forum
- Through Care Team Facebook page to share information on events and activities
- Helping you open a bank account

How to contact us

Your PA will be introduced to you by your existing Social Worker. Your YPSAW will provide you with telephone and email contact numbers. Alternatively they can be found at:-

***Through Care Team
New Kershaw Centre
Deal Street
Bury
BL9 7PZ***

If you need to contact your PA and they are not available you can contact the Through Care Team on:

0161 253 6666

The Through Care Team runs a Duty system to cover staff absence, if you are unable to contact your PA and the matter is urgent you can request the Duty PA on the above number. Alternatively, there is also a Care Leavers Duty Drop in at New Kershaw every weekday from 9.30 until 5pm.

If the matter is really urgent you can also request to speak directly to:

Team Manager: Kim Harwood

Assistant Team Manager: Sarah Thomason

The Through Care Team is only open during normal office hours. If you need to speak to someone urgently outside of these hours you should contact the Bury Emergency Duty Team on:

0161 253 6606