

People Directorate

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Date 03 January 2019



Our offer to care leavers

Support for care leavers in Milton Keynes



Forward

We have high hopes for all of our children and young people in care and a belief that with the right support, you can achieve incredible things. We want to give you the stability and support you need to make progress. We will help you to access new resources and experiences that will inspire you to set ambitious goals.

We will celebrate your successes but also understand that you will sometimes make mistakes and need help to get back on track. You may need support to gain the skills and confidence to live an independent life but we will assist you when the going gets tough.

It is our responsibility to protect you and promote the welfare of the children and young people in our care. Working closely with groups across Milton Keynes, we have a clear plan to achieve this but will never feel that our job is 'done'.

We must continue to listen to our children and young people, involving you in the decisions we take and ensuring you understand how the choices we make will affect you personally.

Whether you are in care, on the edge of care or leaving care, we want the very best for you just as we do for our own children. We hope you'll be able to look back at your time in care as a positive experience, full of good memories and new opportunities.



Cllr Zoe Nolan
Lead member
Children's Services



Mac Heath
Director
Children's Services



Cllr Norman Miles
Chair
Corporate Parenting Panel

Your Future

We want you to achieve the best in life and have put in place support to help you do this. We will ensure that you can access up to date and impartial Careers Information, Advice and Guidance to help you make informed choices for your future.

Services we provide for you include a **daily drop-in centre** (for 16-25yr olds) where you can access the following:

- One to one advice and support from a qualified IAG Personal Adviser.
- Online tools to explore potential career paths.
- Help with writing your CV and interview techniques.
- Help with all aspects of applications for employment, education and training including Apprenticeships.
- Resources including printer, laptop, etc.
- Advice on welfare benefits.
- Signposting to support organisations.
- Regular careers fairs with local training providers.

Careers Information Advice and Guidance can help you to:

- Understand yourself, your needs and raise your aspirations.
- Think about the type of work or career that may interest you.
- Understand the options and choices available to you in education, employment and training and achieve your goals.
- Increase your level of skills and qualifications.
- Make informed, realistic choices for the future.
- Become part of the community when you have been out of education or training for a while.

We will regularly review this service with you to ensure that it continues to meet your needs.

1. Introduction:

This leaflet tells you about all the support that we have in **Milton Keynes** for you as a care leaver. We know that it is a big step when you move out of care and start living on your own or with friends.

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.

Local care leavers have helped make this leaflet. We will continue to listen to your views to make sure the services we offer are what you need. We have written this leaflet with the care leavers' forum.

To be able to get the support set out in this leaflet, you must have been in care for at least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 16 (including your 16th birthday) or for 13 weeks after your 16th birthday.

If you are not sure whether you qualify for support, ask your personal adviser or social worker.

This leaflet is available online at: <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/children-young-people-families/care-leavers-hub>

You can email: corporateparenting@milton-keynes.gov.uk to request more copies.

2. The support we must give you by law

A Personal Adviser:

Following changes introduced through the Children & Social Work Act 2017, you will be able to ask to have support from your personal adviser up to the age of 25, whether you are in education or training or not. This is to make sure care leavers receive similar support to young adults who live with their families. Your personal adviser is there to help you to prepare to live independently and to offer advice and support after you leave care.

Our Personal Advisors are experienced, enthusiastic and committed team. They are trained in Motivational Interviewing, understanding your benefits, mental health and supporting you with accessing the right accommodation. Your personal adviser will be happy to talk with you about the information in this leaflet.

Pathway Planning for your future:

Just before you turn 16, your social worker will complete an assessment of your needs with you. This will help to form your first Pathway Plan which will be in place on your 16th birthday. This will set out what your goals and aspirations you have for your future and what support you will need in achieving them.

Your Pathway Plan is written by the local authority after consultation with you and important people in your life. It sets out your needs, views and future goals, and exactly what support you will receive from us. We review your Pathway Plan with you every 6 months so that it is kept up-to-date.

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 are thinking about challenging decisions about the care 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 Social Care.

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. You can access your files mail to: data.protection@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Leaving care before turning 18:

We will encourage you to stay in care until you are 18. Most young people still live at home with their families at this age.

If you choose to leave care before age 18, the law says we must provide you with suitable accommodation.

16+ services available to you:

Your Social Worker and Personal Advisor will work with you to ensure you are prepared for the transition to adulthood at 18. Your social worker will visit you as a minimum of 6 weekly. You can contact your social worker and personal advisor at any time to talk about plans for the future, ask any questions or seek advice and support.

18+ services available to you:

When you turn 18, your Personal Advisor will take over full responsibility for you. They will continue to meet with you as a minimum of 8 weekly and review your Pathway Plan every 6 months. You can contact your Personal Advisor at any time or pop into the office for advice and support. You may be signposted to other agencies who can offer you support and advice.

21+ services available to you:

Before you turn 21 you will need to talk to your Personal Advisor to discuss what support you continue to need after your 21st birthday. Your Personal Advisor will complete an assessment of your needs and update your Pathway Plan. If you require ongoing support, advice and

guidance we can assist you up to the age of 25 years. We will keep in touch with you every 6 months.

Support to engage in education, employment or training:

We want to make sure every young person leaving care has the support to achieve their goals in life.

The law says we must provide you with assistance with expenses linked with employment, education and training. You can find out what financial support you are entitled to in our Finance Policy.

3. Other support we offer

Accommodation:

We want to ensure that you have the right support with accommodation. Setting up your home is an important step for you. We want to ensure you are prepared for this to enable you to have every success. We will ensure you have the opportunity to learn

We will begin discussions with you around your 16th birthday about where you would like to live at 18 and what options are available to you.

If you are living with a foster family you may decide you want to remain living with your foster family after you turn 18. This is called a 'Staying Put' arrangement. We will arrange a meeting with you and your foster family to discuss these arrangements with you to ensure it runs smoothly.

Shared lives scheme is arranged through Adult Social Care. It is a scheme for more vulnerable adults who require that additional support. Your PA will discuss with you whether this would be a suitable option for you.

You may decide at 16 that you want more independence. Semi-independent provision may be a suitable option for you. This is for young people who have the skills to manage on their own. You have your own room with shared kitchen and living facilities. Look Ahead Care in Milton Keynes offers semi-independent accommodation to young people. If you are living at Look Ahead Care then you will be able to remain with Look Ahead Care beyond your 18th birthday.

Just before you are 18 you can register with Milton Keynes Housing.

If you are aged over 18, your personal adviser will help you to find suitable accommodation.

Your Personal Advisor will give you advice and support with the following:

- Advice about holding a tenancy, including avoiding rent or Council Tax arrears, paying bills and budgeting. 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 Milton Keynes you are exempt from Council Tax,

- Helping you to claim universal credit. We will support you with appointments at the Job Centre if you need to make a benefits claim.
- Practical support with moving into and furnishing your new home. We will provide you with a setting up home allowance (details can found in Finance Policy).
- Supporting you if you have a housing crisis, this includes helping if you are threatened with or losing a tenancy.

Education, training and employment

We want you to succeed in your education, training and employment. We will ask you how you are doing and be ready to celebrate your achievements with you.

We will offer you:

- Careers information and advice.
- If you attend University, a bursary of £2,000 to help with the cost of books and materials, which is provided through the University.
- Support to meet your transport costs when travelling to training, school/college, apprenticeships or job interviews.
- Support to buy tools, equipment, essential clothing, and books.
- Support if you choose to go to university, such as helping you obtain tuition fees and maintenance loans, travel costs at the start and end of term, and making sure you have somewhere to live during the holidays. We will help you choose the right course and university that matches your talents and interests.
- Opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships and employment within the council.
- The chance to attend and help organise celebration events when young people achieve education, training and employment milestones.

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:

- Give information on healthy living.
- Give information on getting help to pay for prescriptions.
- Support you to register with a GP.

- Support you to move from CAMHS to adult services.
- Give information about counselling services that are available locally.
- Give you help with transports costs when attending health appointments.
- If you are a young parent, take an interest in your child/children and support you to do the best for them. We will help you arrange childcare, if this is what you want.
- Offer free or subsidised access to the leisure centres we run.
- Give you information about health drop-in centres.
- Work with you to make a 'health passport' containing key information from your childhood (for example, when and if you have had immunisations) and your current health needs.
- Sexual Health – accessing sexual health support.
- Substance misuse – accessing services to address substance misuse.

Finances

We will help you financially, in a similar way to how parents would support their own children.

Our aim is to support you to learn how to be financially independent. This includes being able to manage your money, understanding how to budgeting well, borrowing money, student loans and identity fraud.

Finance policy can be found on our website <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/children-young-people-families/care-leavers-hub>

Having a good financial understanding will hopefully ensure you have the skills to manage your money independently.

'*Young Money Matters*' is a helpful guide to assisting young people manage and understand their money. Click on the link to access:

<https://www.young-money.org.uk/sites/default/files/Your%20Money%20Matters.pdf>

Our help includes:

- Providing a leaving care grant to help you buy essential things when moving into your own home, which government recommends should be a minimum of £2,000.
- Giving you exemptions to or discounts on paying Council Tax.
- Providing or telling you about relevant money management courses.

- Information on how to access your Junior ISA, if you have one (a fund of money set aside by the government and the council).
- Support to open a bank account.
- Support to gain important identification documents, such as a passport and/or provisional driving licence, before your 18th birthday.
- Support to get your National Insurance number.
- Exceptional financial support in emergencies.
- Providing a financial gift at birthdays and Christmas or other celebrations.
- If you have received Criminal Injuries Compensation whilst in care we will ensure we offer you independent financial advice to ensure you know how to invest this money for your future.

Relationships

As well as support from a Personal Adviser, we may be able to offer you additional practical and emotional support, such as through:

- Providing you with a mentor/peer mentor; The Grandmentors' scheme is run by Volunteer Matters. The scheme is set up to empower you to helping you achieve your potential. (Ask your Personal Adviser for further details on how to access a Grandmentor).
- Where appropriate, continuing to support contact with the 'Independent Visitor' you had while you were in care.
- Help to maintain or regain contact with people special to you or who cared for you in the past, like former foster carers or social workers.
- Before you leave care we will look at the support networks you have and how we can help you to maintain and sustain these positive important relationships in your life. With your agreement we will set up a Family Group Conference to look at the support available to you.
- We also have a friendship, support and mentoring service delivered by Attain project. They will support you to consider your aspirations and goals for the future (ask your Personal Adviser for further details).

Participation in Society

We want our care leavers to be active members of 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:

- Providing information on groups and clubs you may wish to join.

- Informing you about relevant awards, schemes and competitions you can enter, in line with your talents and interests.
- Encouraging and helping you to enrol on the Electoral Register, so you can vote in elections.
- Offering work experience with our councillors.
- Informing you about voluntary work that we think you may be interested in.
- Informing and possibly helping with the cost of leisure activities.
- Advice and help to challenge any discrimination you face as a care leaver.

Emma Hoskins is our Participation Worker, you can contact her at: emma.hosking@milton-keynes.gov.uk

4. Who can help?

Key contact details for:

- Care leaving team: 01908 253434 (Duty PA)
- Housing advice – Civic Office a Housing Support Officer will be able to assist

Other places you can go for help:

- Princes Trust - <https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/>
- The Rees Foundation - <http://www.reesfoundation.org/>
- Care Leavers' Foundation - <http://www.thecareleaversfoundation.org/>

Relevant universal services:

- Brook Sexual Health Services: <https://www.brook.org.uk/find-a-service/regions/milton-keynes>
- Drug/alcohol support - <http://www.compass-uk.org/compass-milton-keynes/>
- Information regarding Higher education:
<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/universities/applying-to-university-as-a-care-leaver/>
- Parenting support groups – www.MiltonKeynes.gov.uk/family-centres
- Citizenship Advice Bureau - <https://www.miltonkeynescab.org.uk/>