

Camden's local offer for care leavers

March 2019



Introduction

If you are leaving care, you may be worried about what will happen to you, where you'll be living and how you'll manage, as well as what happens if things don't work out.

Most young people continue to get support from their parents even after leaving home, and as a corporate parent, Camden will continue to support care leavers as they move towards independence.

This leaflet sets out Camden's local offer for care leavers, explaining what services and support you can expect from us. For more details of what help you can get, visit our website: (link to local offer tbc)

Camden's promise to care leavers

Camden has a duty to make sure that young people who have been looked after by the council continue to get the support they need to make a smooth move to independent living once they leave care so that they can be successful in adult life.



To do this, we will make sure:

- you are well-supported by your professional network, including your personal advisor, your housing pathway key worker and any other professional working with you
- there is always someone available that you can contact for help in an emergency
- you have a safe, stable and suitable place to live and that you have an opportunity to learn the practical skills you need for independent living
- you can take up education, training and employment opportunities and become financially independent
- you know how to get advice about local services so you can access suitable support from a wide range of agencies
- there is a contingency plan in place so that if things don't work out you can get back on track quickly.

1. Your rights to services

To be able to get the support set out in this leaflet, you must have been looked after by Camden for more than 13 weeks since your 14th birthday and ending after your 16th birthday.

If you were accommodated after your 16th birthday you will qualify for a leaving care service if you were looked after for 13 weeks after your 16th birthday. Leaving care services begin once you are 18 up to the age of 25

By law, the leaving care service must:

- **Make sure you have a personal advisor to you to provide you with advice and support:**

You will have an allocated personal advisor once you are 18 although your social worker is likely to carry on working with you for a short time to ensure you have the support you need while the case is being transferred. We aim to ensure you have the same personal advisor throughout your journey to independence who will stay in touch with you to make sure you are getting the support you need.

- **Assess your support needs and put a pathway plan in place to show how we will support you**

Your personal advisor will carry out an assessment of your support needs and work with you to put together a pathway plan to plan for your future. This plan is reviewed every 6 months when you and your personal advisor will review the progress you have made towards living independently and whether any changes need to be made to the plan.

- **Make sure you are involved in all planning and decision making for your future**

Your personal advisor will work with you to get the most out of pathway planning by making sure you have a chance to get involved so that your views and wishes are taken into account and your plan is right for you and reflects what you want to do in life.



- **Support you to pursue education, training and employment opportunities**

Camden will provide support and advice, including financial support, to follow your plans for education, training and work. This includes a £3000 bursary, which is inclusive of the £2000 government bursary, if you go to University.

- **Help you access an independent advocate if you feel you need one**

Camden will put you in touch with advocates at Coram Voice, an independent charity whose trained advocates can advise you on your rights, support you if you want to make a complaint, and help you get your voice heard in meetings.

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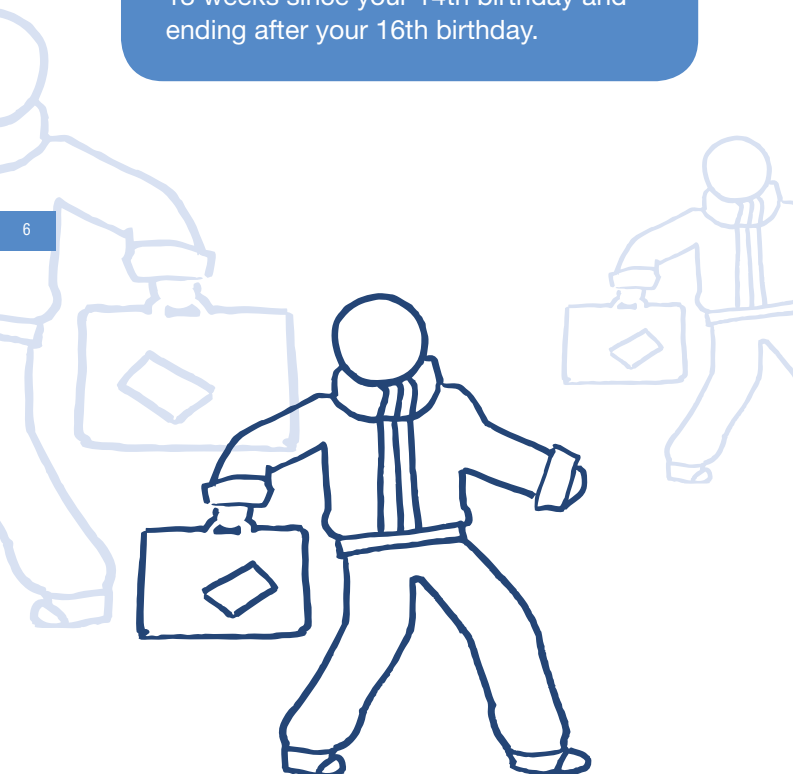


2. Leaving care before 18

You can choose to leave care at 16 and if you were looked after for more than 13 weeks since the age of 14 and are living independently of your family, Camden will continue to provide accommodation and financial support until you are 18.

However Camden prefers to look after you until you are 18 and will discourage you from leaving care before that time.

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3. Services from 21 to 25 years



At 21 you can choose to become fully independent and end contact with the Leaving Care service or you can continue to receive services and support up to the age of 25.

If you choose to end contact, you can still return and request support from the Leaving Care team up to the age of 25.

Extra support

Camden will provide extra support to you if your personal circumstances warrant it, for example, if you:

- are a young parent
- are in contact with the criminal justice system or in or about to leave custody
- have a disability or learning difficulty
- are an unaccompanied asylum seeking child. manage living independently.



4. Accommodation and housing options

Your personal advisor will help you to look at your housing options and to choose the most suitable accommodation for you.

Options include:

- supported accommodation within the Young People's Pathway where you will be responsible for paying your rent and service charges and will sign an agreement to abide by the terms and conditions of the licence agreement
- working with Housing Services to find suitable housing solutions if you are not ready or don't want to have your own tenancy
- support to remain living with your foster carer under a Staying Put arrangement

If you are in need of housing, as a care leaver you will be allocated a number of points by the Housing Service depending on your circumstances that allows you to bid for council properties and as a care leaver, you will be given priority.



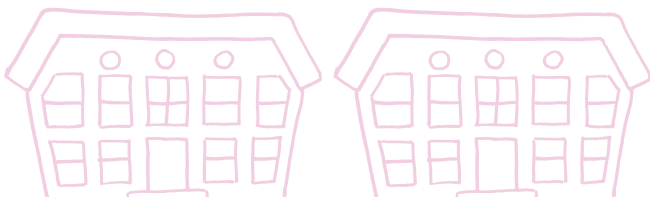
Further support around accommodation includes the following:

- You will get help and advice to prepare for independent living by learning key skills through the **Steps to Independence** assessment as well as practical advice from Housing Services and the Leaving Care team on holding down your own tenancy. You must show evidence that you have learnt these skills before you can move to your own tenancy.
- If you live in Camden, you won't have to pay council tax; if you live in another borough your personal advisor will contact the local authority to see if they can offer you any assistance with council tax exemption.
- When you move to your own home you will get a "**Setting up Home Allowance**" of up to £2000 depending on your individual needs for items such as appliances or furniture.
- If you run into difficulties, or face eviction, your case will be discussed at the **Young People's Pathway Panel** to see what further support we can offer you and we will work with housing providers to try to make sure you do not become intentionally homeless.

Other support

As well as your personal advisor, you can get help and advice from the following:

- While you live in Camden's Housing Pathway accommodation you will have an allocated key worker to support you.
- A specialist benefits advisor from the Department of Work and Pensions will be available on a weekly basis at Vadnie Bish House to give benefits advice if you need it;
- Your foster carer and/or keyworker will help you to develop key practical skills under our Steps to independence assessment so you are able to manage living independently



5. Financial support

At 18 as a care leaver, you should be financially independent either by working, claiming benefits or through student grants and loans as Camden will no longer be responsible for providing financial support for rent and living costs.

However, Camden will:

- make sure you have been issued with your National Insurance number
- make sure you have a bank account and can access the money that has been saved for you whilst you have been in care
- pay the following birthday allowances:

18th birthday	£75	20th birthday	£75
19th birthday	£75	21st birthday	£100

Other support

A specialist benefits advisor from the Department of Work and Pensions will be available on a weekly basis at Vadnie Bish House to give benefits advice if you need it.



6. Education, training and employment

Camden will pay for reasonable expenses connected with your education or training such as travel costs, books and equipment but this will be subject to an assessment of your needs.

If you are planning to go to university, your personal advisor will be able to help you with applications for places and to apply for any student loans, grants or bursaries you can access.

You can also get:

- an annual grant from Camden
- help with travel costs (based on an assessment of need)
- funding to help with the costs of accommodation during vacations (based on an assessment of need).

Other support

A Connexions worker based in the Looked After Children and Leaving Care team at Vadnie Bish House can give you specialist advice and support on education, training and careers particularly if you are not in education, employment or training.



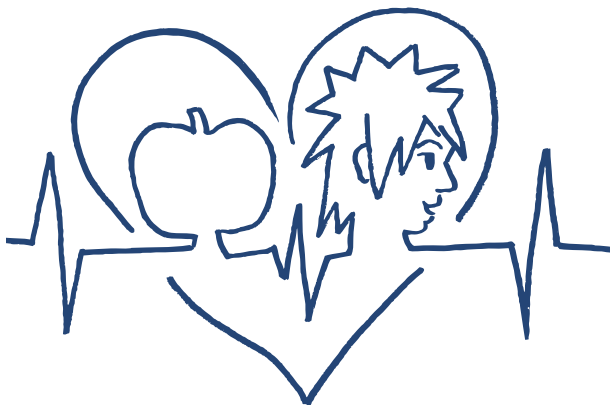
7. Health and wellbeing

Camden aims to make sure you can look after your health and follow a healthy lifestyle so you can enjoy good health throughout your life.

At 18, the LAC nurse will:

- give you a discharge summary or “health passport” with your medical history and any outstanding health issues;
- give you any relevant information about your family’s health history if this may affect your long-term health;
- offer you advice on your health and signpost you to where you can get help for health issues such as contraception, sexual health, mental health or substance misuse;
- make any necessary transfers to adult health services.

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8. Relationships and positive identity

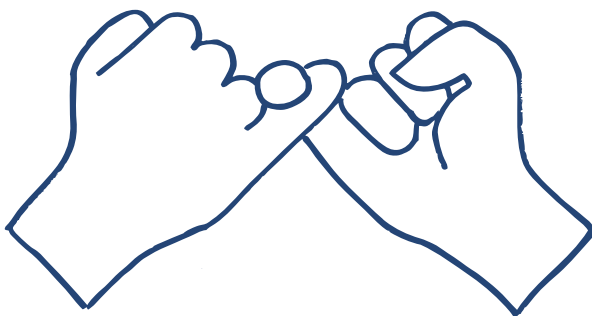
Care leavers often report feeling lonely once and feel they have no-one to turn to for help and support.

To overcome this, your personal advisor will:

- help you to maintain contact with important people in your life so you can build a support network;
- put you in touch with organisations that can provide mentors or other one to one support;
- advise and support you should you choose to return home to live with your family.

Participation

- Camden has a designated Participation Officer who can help care leavers take an active role in designing services for care leavers. This includes membership of the Children in Care Council and other forums where you can work with councillors and senior council officers to improve your services.
- Your personal advisor can also advise you on how you can take up volunteering opportunities so you can make a difference to your local neighbourhood environment and help other people.



9. Useful contacts

Contact us

During office hours, your personal advisor, the Leaving Care duty worker or your key worker at your accommodation are all available to help you if there are any emergencies.

The LACCL duty number is

020 7974 7217/6169

Outside of office hours you can contact:

The Emergency Duty team outside of office hours on

020 7974 4444

The Belsize Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Drop In service is at Vadnie Bish House, 33-43

Caversham Road



What to do in an emergency

- If you need money in an emergency, you need to contact your social worker or personal advisor. They will carry out an assessment before any payment is made and it is more likely you will receive vouchers rather than cash.
- If you are about to be evicted or cannot return to your accommodation for any reason you need to contact your social worker or personal advisor (or the Emergency Duty team out of hours) so that arrangements can be made for alternative accommodation to be found.

Other useful contacts

Rees: The Care Leavers Foundation

www.reesfoundation.org

The care leavers association. A charity aimed at improving the lives of care leavers

<http://www.careleavers.com>

Become. Online advice and information for care leavers

<http://www.becomecharity.org.uk>

Propel. Information on what support is available for care leavers at university

<http://propel.org.uk/UK>

Shelter. Provides housing advice

<https://england.shelter.org.uk>

National government benefits calculator. Information on benefits

www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators

Citizens Advice Bureau. Information about money, benefits, your rights, employment, housing and the law.

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Buttle Trust: **www.buttleuk.org/need-support**

Refugee council: **www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/**



