

Camden's leaving care local offer

Support for 16 and 17 year olds care leavers living in semi-independent accommodation

2023-24

Introduction

Camden has a duty to make sure care leavers get the support they need to make a successful move to independence. This leaflet explains what support you can expect from Camden when you move into semi-independent accommodation in the Young People's Pathway and up to your 18th birthday. until you reach 18 and what Camden expects of you in return.

Your entitlement

- While you are aged between 16 and 18 and you are looked after by Camden you will be **an eligible child**; Camden will be responsible for providing your accommodation and living costs and will help you prepare for leaving care and living independently.
- You can choose to leave care at 16 and will become a **relevant child** if you were looked after for more than 13 weeks since the age of 14 and are living independently of your family. Camden will still be responsible for providing you with accommodation and financial support until you are 18.

People who will support you

- Your **social worker** will continue to work with you to support you and will be responsible for helping you plan for your future.
- Your **Independent Reviewing Officer** will chair your Care Plan and Pathway Reviews and make sure Camden is carrying out their legal duty to prepare you for leaving care.
- Your **key worker** will work with you to help you to prepare for independence and making sure you learn the skills you will need to live independently.

Preparing for independence

Between the ages of 16 and 17 we will be helping you to prepare for when you leave care by giving you the opportunity to learn the vital practical skills you'll need to manage when you are living independently.

Camden has an independence programme to help you learn these skills and you will work through the programme with your keyworker. Practical skills that we teach you include:

- eating healthily, shopping for food and cooking
- managing your home and keeping it clean
- managing money and budgeting
- looking after your health
- keeping yourself safe and your home secure
- accessing services and support.

You will also be expected to be in some form of education, training or employment during this time.

How we make decisions about payments

The financial support you are given is to help you reach the goals set out in your pathway plan and support you in your education, training and employment. All decisions about how much you will be paid and what this money is to be used for is decided during your pathway needs assessment and set out in your pathway plan. You need to make sure you get involved in this process so you can have a say about what support you may need.

What we pay

By law, we **must** pay for your accommodation costs and give you money for your living expenses as long as you meet the conditions set out below. We will also carry out an assessment to see what other financial help you need but these payments are discretionary and based on your assessed needs.

- Subject to conditions, you will be paid a weekly allowance of **£67.20**
- Rent for your accommodation will be paid directly to the housing provider as long as you are living there **but you must pay the service charge** from your weekly allowance (this is currently under review).
- You **may** get an extra **£20** per week on your social worker's recommendation if you are working well with the 16+ service. Ask your social worker for details.
- You can apply for a student bursary to help with education or training expenses. Ask the Connexions advisor for advice on how to apply.
- Your social worker will carry out a travel assessment to see how we can help with your travel costs to college, training courses or work.
- We will pay a clothing allowance of **£300** per year to each young person living in semi-independent accommodation. If you need any further help with clothing costs, ask your social worker for an assessment.
- Mothers to be will get a one-off payment of **£150** in the 20th week of pregnancy.

- You can get a monthly payment of **£9.95** towards leisure activities as well as a Camden Leisure Card so that you can get reduced rates on leisure facilities in the borough. If you are placed out of Camden you will be given the local equivalent to this but you need to ask your social worker.
- You will get a gift, gift vouchers or a cash payment worth £90 from your 17th birthday to your 20th birthday and £100 for your 21st birthday as long as you remain in contact with your social worker. You should speak to your social worker about what you would prefer.
- We will pay for you to get a copy of your birth certificate and may help with the costs of applying for a passport or travel document depending on your assessed needs.

Claiming benefits

Young people under 18 years are generally not able to claim any benefits unless they are parents or have a disability. If you think you may be entitled to benefits, you need to check with your social worker.

How we pay

We will only make payments into your bank account so you must make sure you open an account before you leave foster care. Your social worker will be able to help you with this.

Payments are normally made weekly though some may be monthly but if you are having trouble with making your money last, your social worker may arrange to pay money on a more regular basis while you learn to budget. We can give you food vouchers in an emergency but this will be subject to an assessment.

Your responsibilities

All financial support is paid on the understanding that you will:

- pursue your education, training and employment plan and regularly attend at college and training programmes; we will check with colleges and trainers to find out your level of commitment;
- live in pathway accommodation according to the terms of the licence agreement;
- meet regularly with your social worker and keyworker and attend pathway reviews
- pay your service charge; any arrears will be deducted from your weekly allowance.

Failure to meet these conditions may result in your weekly allowance being reduced or put your accommodation at risk.

You must also notify your social worker if you:

- start or finish working
- start at or leave college or training programme

- receive benefits or have benefits stopped
- have a baby
- change accommodation
- change immigration status.