

Introduction

What is Lambeth's Offer to Care Leavers about?

Lambeth's Offer to care leavers is a summary of the support we can provide as you begin adult life. For instance help with your housing, getting a job, getting into university and much more. The following information will give an overview of what our team of Personal Advisors can do to support you.

What sort of things are included in the Care Leaver offer?

To keep it brief and clear what Lambeth is offering you, we have broken the offer down into six sections:

Preparing to Live Independently

Your money

Your home

Education, employment and training

Health and Happiness

Participation in society

What is meant by a Care Leaver?

Care leavers are young people who are 16 – 25 years old, who have been 'looked after' at some point since they were 14 years old, and were in care on or after their 16th birthday. They are entitled to some ongoing help and support from children's services after they have left care (the leaving care age in England is 18 years, but some young people leave care at 16 or 17). There are different categories of care leavers depending upon your age, when you were in care and for how long. You may also be entitled to a leaving care service if you were placed with a friend or relative under a Special Guardianship Order.

If you are classified as a *'Former Relevant'* care leaver, you will receive the full leaving care service, but please speak to your Personal Advisor or Social Worker if you are not already clear about which category you come under. For more information about the categories and the type of service you can expect to receive have a look at the "Service Entitlements – Care Leavers" document.

21 – 25 years old

If you are 21 – 25 years old and in Higher Education, you can continue to receive the same support as a Former Relevant Care Leaver. Even if you are not in Higher Education, you can still access some advice and support from us, but you may find that you don't need the same level of assistance as when you were younger. For instance, you may have a difficult situation with a neighbour and just want some advice about how to manage that, so you could call us to talk it through with a PA. Or it may be that you want more in-depth support if there are a range of things that you're struggling with, in which case we may allocate you a PA and complete a pathway plan with you.

You can contact our duty phone number on phone: 0207 926 6315 to request assistance.

Pledges

We have made a list of promises which guarantee looked after children and care leavers that we will provide consistent support to improve their life chances and quality of life. These pledges include: helping you to stay safe, enabling you to make a difference, helping you to stay happy and healthy, supporting you to be successful and preparing you for your future.

<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/children-looked-after-and-care-leavers/our-pledge>

Don't live in Lambeth?

Whilst some of the information on this website is relevant to Lambeth care leavers whether you live in the borough or not, there will be some services that you won't be able to access if you are not a Lambeth resident. We are keen to support you with finding out what's available locally to you, to make sure that you still have access to the resources you need. Sometimes we will contact the care leaver's team in your area for information, and some of the organisations we work with also operate in other areas of London and the UK.

Preparing to Live Independently

What is a Personal Advisor (PA)?

Lambeth's Personal Advisors are a team of friendly and helpful workers who work with care leavers once they turn 18. As you begin to make independent decisions as a young adult, your Personal Advisor (PA) will provide you with advice, information and guidance to help you make the best choices. Your PA will be your go-to-contact, meeting you in your home or in the community, and you will hear from her / him at least every 8 weeks (often more). You can also contact your PA in-between meetings if you want some advice, or even just to say hello.

With your agreement, your PA will also work with other agencies to make the transition into adult life easier for you. This may include health, housing, colleges / universities, DWP, probation and community organisations.

If you are 16 – 18 years old, your Social Worker will continue to be your worker.

Do get in touch with your Personal Advisor or Social Worker if you see anything in this offer which you are interested in.

Your Pathway Plan

Around the time of your 16th birthday, your Social Worker will complete a pathway plan with you. This plan will help you and those around you identify what support you need to prepare you for living independently as an adult. It will also help you to think about things like your goals for your education, where you want to live, and your relationships. The plan is for you, so it's important that you have your say and can talk about what's going well, but also any worries you might have. The plan will be reviewed every six months, to make sure it's still relevant for you.

You will continue to have a pathway plan until you are at least 21 years old (or older if you are in higher education).

If you want to learn more about what's in a pathway plan, have a look at this 'Become' factsheet: http://www.becomecharity.org.uk/media/1414/factsheet3_pathway_plans_english.pdf

Learning new skills

Most of us look forward to having more independence and eventually moving on to our own accommodation, but it can also be a hard time for young people and so it's important to be well prepared for such a move. Your carer or keyworker will help you learn skills so you can feel more confident when living independently in the future. This will include things like:

- Budgeting your money each week so you have enough money to pay your rent and bills.
- Preparing and cooking meals so you can eat cheaply and healthily.
- Looking after your living space and doing minor maintenance.
- How to get along with your neighbours and resolve problems.
- Making and attending appointments independently (ie GP, housing).

To plan for your transition, it's also important to think about who you can rely upon to offer support when needed, and ways to reduce the pressure on you - including managing feelings such as loneliness or stress.

What Happens Next?

When you and your PA think that you have done well with developing your independent living skills, the next step for you may be to attend the What Happens Next course. This is a 6 – 8 week course (one night a week), which tells you about what to expect when you get your own flat, and your rights and responsibilities when you have a tenancy. The course gives you lots of good information about subjects like your tenancy agreement and legal issues, who to go to for help, setting up utilities and paying bills, effective communication, and how to keep yourself safe in your home. There will be guest speakers, and these may include other care leavers to give you lots of valuable tips from their own experiences.

Once you have completed this course, you can discuss with your PA about whether you are ready to receive a bidding number for your own tenancy in Lambeth (see accommodation section for more information). You will only be eligible if you are a former relevant care leaver between the ages of 18 to 21 years old, your PA assesses you to have the skills to manage a tenancy (with the right support), and have an immigration status such as British citizenship or Leave to Remain which means you are eligible to access public funds to support your tenancy.

Gracefields Hub

The 18+ team is currently based at Gracefield Gardens in Streatham. We have other services join us there to make it easy for you to access their support (ie DWP, Drive Forward and DASH / Brooks). It's a bit like a one-stop shop! More information about these other services can be found on this website, or speak to your PA.

Become Coaching

If you want a bit of extra help from someone independent to think about your life and the changes you'd like to make, then you might benefit from the Become Coaching programme for care leavers. Coaching isn't the same as having a counsellor, mentor, or adviser. In coaching, you learn how to create goals for yourself, and move towards the life you want. Its free, and they will even pay for your expenses when you attend sessions:

<http://www.becomecharity.org.uk/for-young-people/the-become-coaching-programme/>

Money Matters

Financial guidance

What financial support you may be able to access depends upon your age, whether you are working or in education, and whether or not you come under the 'former relevant' group of care leavers. So we have a separate Care Leavers' Financial Guidance document which can be found on the homepage, your PA can go through this with you.

Now that you're 18 you will no longer receive a weekly leaving care allowance. If you are not receiving an income from employment, apprenticeship or in Higher Education then you will need to make a claim for benefits for your weekly income and rent.

If you don't have British citizenship or a biometric card, you may not be entitled to public funds such as Universal Credit, and so your Personal Advisor will speak with you about what financial support you can access.

Regular income

We have a dedicated work coach from DWP who you can support you with gaining financial independence. With your permission, we'll share your details with the work coach to make sure you get all the help you need to get a job, training, some education or general help with money. Even if you're in education, you may be eligible for some financial support. The work coach also has access to great apprenticeship opportunities. If you are eligible to apply for benefits, your work coach will meet with you prior to your 18th birthday to help you apply for benefits so that everything is in place for when you turn 18. If you're not in education and chose to look for work instead, its still best to apply whilst you are looking for that great job, as sometimes it can take at least a month for your first pay to come through from your employer.

Check to see if you are eligible for universal credit here:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/universal-credit/before-you-apply/Check-if-youre-eligible-for-Universal-Credit/>

Visit the TURN2US website for more money advice <https://www.turn2us.org.uk/>

Budgeting

We want you to learn how to manage your finances and feel confident that you can do this well. Making sure you have enough money for all your bills can become stressful though, so we also want you to have enough support when things are difficult. Budgeting might seem like an annoying job, but it is important to learn this skill so you can have enough money to cover your rent and other living costs. Thinking about your spending now can help you to develop good habits which can last a lifetime. Your PA and keyworker / carer can help you with preparing your own budget plan, and there are also lots of good tools around to help you stick to a realistic budget.

Work out your budget with the Citizens Advice Bureau budgeting tool:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/budgeting/budgeting/work-out-your-budget/>

The Share Foundation

The Share Foundation runs a Junior ISA Scheme for looked after children. An ISA is a savings account where money can be kept and gain value, and the Share Foundation sets this up on your behalf and puts £200 in your account to get you started. You can only access the money after you turn 18 years old, and your PA will help you to do this. <https://sharefound.org/>

Council tax

If you are a resident in Lambeth and a former relevant care leaver, your PA can help you apply for the Care Leavers Relief Scheme so that you do not have to pay council tax. This scheme is currently valid until your 25th birthday.

Your Home

Where can I live?

There are several different types of accommodation available to you, depending upon your age and how independent you are. The main options are outlined below. To help decide what's best for you, your PA or Social Worker will need to understand how you are getting on with developing your independent living skills - feedback will be needed from your foster care or keyworker, some direct observations of you completing tasks may take place, and your engagement with the What Happens Next programme will also be considered. All of this information will be part of your pathway plan, and your progress will be reviewed regularly as we want to make sure you have the right support to eventually manage your own tenancy (if this is the best option for you).

Staying Put

You may already be living with a foster family, and if you're happy there and your carer is in agreement, then you can still stay there between 18 to 21 years old. This arrangement is called 'Staying Put'. Staying with your carers will enable you to continue your relationship with them, and it can be really helpful instead of feeling the need to rush into having your own place. We will support you to decide upon an agreement with your carer, which will set out what support you will receive, what is expected of you and your carer in the home, and the financial contribution from you and the leaving care team. You will usually have to claim housing benefit to help cover the costs of your rent, and make a contribution towards bills.

Semi Independent Accommodation

This is generally shared accommodation, some of which will have staff on site 24/7. There are also some units that are standalone, and with less support. You will have access to a keyworker who will help you with learning the skills for living independently. Many young people will either stay with their foster carer, or move into this sort of accommodation between the ages of 16 – 18 years old. Remaining in this accommodation may still be an option if you are over 18 years old, but this has to be agreed with your PA, and you will be expected to be regularly meeting with your keyworker and making use of the support being offered.

Pathways Housing

When you are 18 and becoming more independent, you can access Pathways Housing, where you will be responsible for paying your own rent via housing benefit or wages. There are different organisations which provide this housing, such as Evolve, Camberwell Foyer and Look Ahead. The accommodation may be in a larger hostel, but there are also some smaller units. You will also have access to keyworker support, and sometimes workshops such as budgeting and cooking skills. Pathways Housing is a good option as a stepping stone towards finally managing your own tenancy.

University Accommodation

If you intend on going to university then staying in Halls of Residence may be an option. University accommodation can offer you invaluable opportunities to meet new friends. You're also likely to be conveniently placed close to your lectures and social events. You're also likely to be well supported by the university if anything goes wrong or you need assistance.

Friends and Family

Some young people chose to live with friends and family once they turn 18. This can be a big adjustment for both you and your family, and so it's important to talk this over with your PA or social worker, to help you think through the pros and cons, and consider what support might be needed if it's the right arrangement for you.

Social Housing Tenancy (Council Flat)

Social housing is low rent accommodation that is offered on a secure basis, and as a Lambeth 'former relevant' care leaver, you may eventually be offered priority bidding to get your own tenancy. This will be either a studio or one bedroom flat. You will be responsible for paying the rent on time, paying for all of the bills such as gas and electricity, furnishing the flat (with our support), and reporting any maintenance issues. This is a large responsibility, and you only have one chance for a priority bidding number, so we need to know that you are definitely ready to manage a tenancy before we will consider making an application for you. For some young people, the reality of being in their own flat is not as they had imagined, and it can be a real struggle to keep on top of all of the demands and responsibilities – this has sadly led to some people losing their tenancy.

Your PA will be responsible for assessing whether you are ready for your own tenancy, and you will be expected to have successfully completed the What Happens Next course.

To be eligible for a bidding number, you will also need to be a former relevant care leaver between the ages of 18 to 21 years old, and have an immigration status such as British citizenship or Leave to Remain which means you are able to access public funds to support your tenancy. There are some people who, in special circumstances are able to access a tenancy after they turn 21 years old (i.e. if you have deferred getting a tenancy due to attending university). After we have made the recommendation to housing, the final decision about providing you with a bidding number rests with Lambeth Housing.

Setting Up Home Allowance

When you leave care to set up home for yourself independently, we will provide you with financial support to buy household essentials such as furniture and kitchen appliances. Lambeth will provide you with up to £2,000 to purchase these items and an additional £200 cover for broken or forgotten items. If you are a parent, we will provide an additional £500 to support you to buy furniture for your child / children.

Living outside of Lambeth?

If you don't live in Lambeth, and want to stay where you are currently living, we will help you to explore what options are available to you in that area. Unfortunately it can be difficult for young people to access social housing in some areas, and you may not be put on the council's priority bidding list. In this case you could consider either renting privately, or moving back to Lambeth for a year to access social housing here and then do a housing swap in the future. Your PA can help you think through the possibilities.

Education, Employment and Training

Financial Help

There is a lot of support available to help you continue with your education, or to find that ideal job. Please see the financial guidance on the homepage to find out what funding is available from Lambeth. We can also help you to apply for scholarships if you intend to go to University, or support you to access some smart clothing for job interviews. You can also access the 16-19 Bursary Fund, which means that if you are in a Further Education college you can get paid up to £1,200 a year to support you during your college course.

Drive Forward - Help with Finding Work

We have a dedicated Employment Consultant from Drive Forward who works alongside us in our office at least once a week, and is also available to meet in their Waterloo office. This person will help you think about what your skills and strengths are, match you to employers who might spark your interest, and support you to secure an interesting job. Drive Forward can also offer you peer mentoring from other care leavers; updating CVs and interview skills; working through difficult workplace scenarios; mindfulness courses; and ongoing support once you've started your job. You can have a look at everything they offer here <http://www.driveforwardfoundation.com/momentum-made-by-you/>

DWP Work Coach

We also work very closely with DWP and have a dedicated care leavers work coach who is sometimes based from our office. The work coach is able to support you with any issues with your benefits, but also help you to find employment or an apprenticeship. Check out DWPs website where you can search for jobs <https://findajob.dwp.gov.uk/>

You can also get advice from the National Careers Service <https://www.gov.uk/careers-helpline-for-teenagers>

Lambeth Apprentices

Throughout the year we have new apprenticeship opportunities available within Lambeth Council. These are in areas such as ICT, Recruitment, Customers Services, Adults Social Care and Parks. As a Lambeth Apprentice, you will gain experience in the normal day-to-day job, and also have off-the-job training to complete a course of study. There are also a range of other apprenticeship opportunities through Lambeth Council's supply chain and partners.

If you think you're not quite ready for taking on an apprenticeship, you could join the Lambeth Council Pre-Apprenticeship training programme. This will help prepare you for employment, and in particular apprenticeships. The programme consists of personal development workshops, workplace visits and one to one tailored support to help you overcome your barriers to employment. On completion of the course, you will be given the opportunity to apply for, and interview for apprenticeships within Lambeth Council, or with one of their partners.

Employment and Education Fairs

As there are so many different organisations we work with, sometimes we will organise an employment fair where we get lots of businesses and providers in one place to offer you advice, and hopefully an interview. The fair is specifically aimed at care leavers, but there are other employment fairs going on in other areas of Lambeth and wider London.

We also work with some of the following agencies who can help you into employment or training:

Working Chance, work with young women leaving care to find employment
<https://workingchance.org/>

Spear is a personal and career development programme for 16-24 year olds, offering six weeks of coaching workshops to get you work-ready, and 12 months of personalised in-work support
<http://www.resurgo.org.uk/spear/>

Continuing in Education?

Going on to college, or even university may be a sensible move for you, and could improve your chance of getting a good job later. We can support you with enrolling in a local college, or making an application for a university. You are entitled to certain financial support if you go on to further education such as studying A-Levels, or starting training or an apprenticeship. There is also support if you are a new parent returning to education, and you may be eligible to have child care costs paid for. Check out more information here about what is on offer, including info about bursaries and student finance, courses and qualifications <https://www.gov.uk/browse/education>

University

You may be entitled to various grants, loans and other benefits if you are studying. Also see the financial guidance document on the homepage for details about other support, including a Higher Education Bursary of £2000 and holiday rent. Some of the universities have their own care leaver leads, who can offer a lot of good advice, and preparation for entrance interviews, so ask at your chosen university about this. Our Virtual School are also available to answer any tricky questions.

You can apply for a scholarship with Unite Foundation to have your bills and rent paid for a year!
<http://www.unitefoundation.co.uk/get-a-scholarship/>

Click here for more information about student finance <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance>

Virtual School

Our friendly teachers in our Virtual School work hard to help make transitioning between schools, colleges and university run smoother for you. If you are in education (age 16-18) they will offer you support via your PEP meetings to help you achieve to the best of your ability. If you are retaking your Math and/or English at GCSE level or below, you can get 10 hours of 1:1 support to assist you to achieve the grade that you need, and also 10 hours of 1:1 support with English if you are doing an ESOL course. The team are also available to meet with you if you are at University, to discuss any

problems you may have and signpost you to services that can offer you further support. Any meetings with the Virtual School can be made through your SW or PA. Your contact at Lambeth Virtual School is: Prash Sothinathan PSothinathan@lambeth.gov.uk

Learning needs

If you are struggling with your learning and you'd like some extra support, or if this is putting you off attending college / education, please do speak with your PA about this. Sometimes a bit of extra support and understanding can make a big difference to your learning. We can also help you apply for an education, health and care plan (EHCP), which is for young people aged up to 25 who would benefit from some extra support. For further information about support in Lambeth for educational needs, visit the Lambeth SEN Local Offer website <https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/send-local-offer/young-adults-14-to-25/going-to-college-sixth-form-or-university>

Reach for the Stars

We hold an event every year which you will be invited to, so we can all celebrate the achievements of our young people, including your academic successes. This is a fun time of music, food, games and good company, and often involves a dress up theme. We hope that you can join us!

Health and Happiness

General health

When you leave care it is important that you have access to good health advice. If you're under 18, you will be supported by the looked after children nurse, so that we can make sure you're getting good medical support. After your last health assessment when you are 18 years old, the nurse will provide you with your 'Health Passport'. This has information about your health history and advice for your future health needs. You can give a copy to your G.P. Most health services for adults are accessed through your G.P. so your PA can help you to register with a local doctor if you change addresses, and also with a dentist and optician. NHS Go is an online confidential health advice service designed by young people, with lots of important and interesting information about your health. Download the app here <https://nhs.go.uk/>

Lambeth Leisure Card

A great way to stay healthy is to stay active through sports and fitness. If you'd like to get involved with local sports groups, or use a leisure centre to go swimming or to the gym, then you may qualify for a Lambeth Leisure Card which will give you free access to a network of leisure centres across the borough. You can get some great tips about how to stay healthy here: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/>

Or why not join a sports team <http://blackprincetrust.org.uk/activities/>

Not feeling yourself?

Being healthy isn't just about your physical body, but also about your mood. We all have times when we're feeling low, angry, or anxious, but if you feel like this a lot of the time, you can talk with someone to help figure out why you're not feeling so great. You can speak with your G.P about these things, or your PA could help you to access someone from the Well Centre (<https://www.thewellcentre.org/>), or a similar service close to where you live.

You might find one of the mindfulness groups at Drive Forward helpful for learning how to manage stress.

There are also websites that have lots of helpful suggestions:

Young Minds <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/>

To chat to a professional online, try the Mix <https://www.themix.org.uk/> or Kooth <https://kooth.com/>

If things are really difficult for you and we think a higher level of support might help, then we can refer you to one of our CLAMHs workers (if you're 18), or to one of the adults mental health services such as the Living Well Hub (<http://lambethcollaborative.org.uk/lwn-hub>), or the Community Mental Health Team via your GP.

Don't forget...

If you drink alcohol or use cannabis (or something harder), and this is worrying you or you'd just like some advice, you can speak to your PA or someone at DASH (<https://www.brook.org.uk/find-a-service/regions/london/dash-lambeth>).

Talk to Frank is also a good website which has lots of interesting info and live chat for instant advice: <https://www.talktofrank.com/>

Sexual health

It's important that you can feel confident accessing sexual health services to keep you and your partner safe if you are sexually active. There are a lot of places in Lambeth to get this support, including the Well Centre, or you can speak with someone at DASH (previously Brooks). They currently have a clinic at Gracefield Gardens on Wednesday and Friday afternoons, but also work out of colleges and can see you at home

<https://www.brook.org.uk/find-a-service/regions/london/dash-lambeth>

Try this NHS website for online information, including where to find your nearest centre, <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/> or <https://sxt.org.uk/>

Young parents

If you are pregnant and you're not sure what to do, don't worry in silence. Speak to your GP or PA. If you don't feel comfortable talking to them, you can also speak with someone from DASH <https://www.brook.org.uk/find-a-service/regions/london/dash-lambeth>

If you have made a decision to continue with your pregnancy, there is a lot of support available. We work closely with the Family Nurse Partnership who provide advice and emotional support for young parents living in Lambeth. We can also help you with practical things such as living arrangements, getting baby items together, and parenting classes or young mother's groups.

Staying Safe

Some young people are suffering from bullying, sexual abuse, being used by gangs, being targeted online, or are experiencing physical or emotional abuse from a partner or family member. For more information about the many ways that other people can make you feel unsafe, have a look at childline <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/abuse-safety/>

It's really important to us that you do feel safe in your home, college, online, and in your community. If you are worried, please speak with your social worker or PA, or another adult you trust.

The Mix also provides free professional help on the phone, by email or on their webchat, and they have a phone counselling service - Freephone: 0808 808 4994 (13:00-23:00 daily). Check out their website with lots of helpful information www.themix.org.uk

The Gaia Centre in Lambeth provide emotional and practical support for women who have experienced domestic violence. This is a free and confidential service, ph 020 7733 8724.

Participation in Society and Key Contacts

Visions of Success

Visions of Success is the voice of Children in Care in Lambeth. It is a group which represents young people in care and helps to identify ways that Lambeth children's social care could be improved. Visions of Success members talk to senior managers about changes they want to see and get to meet fellow young people in care, or care leavers who have had similar experiences.

For more information, contact Victor Searle, our participation officer who runs the group on ph: 020 7926 0648.

Also check out these other opportunities for having your say

<https://www.coram.org.uk/youngpeoplesprojects>

Community Groups and Activities

There is a lot going on in Lambeth and being involved in different activities can be a good way of meeting new people, learning new skills, and just generally having fun. Explore the rest of the Lambeth Made website for ideas <https://lambethmade.com/>

Interested in spoken word, recording and theatre? Oval House and the Big House have some exciting opportunities <http://www.ovalhouse.com/participation>

<https://thebighouse.uk.com/the-big-house-programme/>

A range of activities for care leavers are also being offered by the Change Foundation

<https://www.thechangefoundation.org.uk/programmes/>

Advocates and Independent Visitors

Advocacy is about supporting young people to make sure that their rights are respected and their views and wishes are heard. An advocate can provide support by helping you to say what you want; making sure you understand your rights; and obtaining the services you are entitled to. Independent Visitors are adult volunteers who are matched with young people in care to form more informal, long-term friendships and can also provide some advocacy.

Speak with your SW / PA if you want to request this support, or contact Loretta Nwanze (participation officer) on: 020 7926 7084

We work with Barnardos, who provide the service <http://www.barnardos.org.uk/london-advocacy.htm>

Accessing Your File

If you make the decision that you would like to gain access to your file, you can request this from the age of 18 years. It is a good idea to speak to your PA before making the final decision, as reading your file may be a difficult experience, and we can help you to think about whether the timing is

right for you, and whether you might benefit from some support when you are going through the information.

Making a Complaint

You are entitled to let us know if you are not satisfied with the support you are getting, or feel that you have not been listened to. We hope that you will first speak with your PA or SW about this, as it may be an issue that can be easily resolved. If this approach doesn't work, or you don't feel comfortable talking to your worker, then you could request contact details for their manager to speak to. If you find that you are still not being listened to, then you can make a formal complaint with the Complaints and Business Support Team. Email them on CBSTeam@lambeth.gov.uk.