



# North Tyneside Local Offer for Care Leavers



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# North Tyneside Local Offer for Care Leavers

Our Local Offer for Care Leavers tells you what **advice** and **help** is available as you move towards adulthood. It covers topics such as **support available, accommodation options** and **financial help**.

The Local Offer is for you if you have been in care in North Tyneside for 13 weeks after the age of 14. If you weren't in care for that time but were in care on or after your 16th birthday, you can still access some parts of the Local Offer (as a qualifying young person). Your social worker or personal advisor can explain this to you.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 states we must do the following as your corporate parent:

- Act in your best interests, and promote your physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Encourage you to express your views, wishes and feelings, and take them into account, while promoting high aspirations and trying to secure the best outcomes for you
- Make sure you have access to services
- Make sure you are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work
- Prepare you for adulthood and living in your own home.

The information is set out in these areas:

1. Support
2. Financial support
3. Accommodation
4. Education and employment
5. Health and wellbeing
6. How to have your say

You can also find this information on the council's website [www.northtyneside.gov.uk](http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk) We will soon have a Local Offer website that will be updated regularly and link to other services and information.



# + Support

We are here to support you

## Planning your future

As you get older you will be thinking about what you want to do in the future, about training and employment, where you want to live and what is available to you.

To help with this, at 16 we will start your **Pathway Plan** assessment. This looks at what you want to do and all the things you need to move towards adulthood. We know these things can change so your plan will be reviewed every six months but if your plan changes or you want to review it before six months, this can be brought forward. Up until age 18 your review will still involve your IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer).

## Your pathway plan

This sets out what support is available to you and what everyone will do, including you, to **reach your goals**. This is about you and will focus on your needs and interests in the areas below but will also add any other things that are important to you:

- Where you live
- Your education training and employment
- Feeling safe and well
- Your family and support network
- Looking after yourself

Planning for your future also helps us think about what happens if things change or go wrong.

## Seeing your social worker or personal advisor

Up until age 18 your **social worker** will visit you every six weeks until you are settled in a long-term placement and then they may visit you every six months. If you need anything your social worker can see you more often than this and you can always ring them to ask questions.

You will be introduced to your **personal advisor** at 17 to give you time to get to know them before joining the Leaving Care Team at 18. Your social worker and personal advisor will complete a **Young Person's Profile** with you before this so that everyone knows what your plans are.



## When you're 18

Even though you're not in care anymore at 18, we don't want you to leave us! You are entitled to support up to the age of 21, or 25 if you still want support and are eligible for it (where you have been in care for 13 weeks after your 14th birthday).

When you join the **Leaving Care Team** your personal advisor will see you every eight weeks unless you ask for this to be changed. They will be happy to see you more than this and are always available to talk to; if your personal advisor isn't around then a duty service is available, and you are always welcome to call in to **the Lodge** (our address is on the back).

You will still have a Pathway Plan review every six months, or sooner if you want to, that will plan what you want to achieve

## And at 21

At 21 you could still be eligible for support as explained above and your personal advisor will see you every 12 - 24 weeks, or more if you wish.

Your Pathway Plan will continue and might look at certain things that are important for you or might cover all areas.

## If you go back home

If you return to live with your parents and this is in your best interests, we can help you by continuing to support you for six months to make sure everything is going well. After this services could end but you can always ask for advice or return to services if you need further help.

## Ending involvement

You have the right to end your involvement with us, but we hope that you don't. Even after the age of 21 or 25 we hope you will stay in touch and we are there to offer advice if you need anything. If you have ended involvement but want to come back for support, up to the age of 21 or 25, a member of the team will assess your needs and either restart the relevant area of your pathway plan or signpost you to other services.



# Financial Support

## 16-18 years

You may be entitled to an **allowance** up to the level of general weekly benefits to help you with living and travel costs (this can start in September after GCSEs). You can also apply for an education bursary if you are at college.

The allowance is agreed individually with your social worker and depends on any income or savings you have and whether any of your living costs are being met such as food or gas and electric. If you aren't attending or actively looking for training or employment, your needs will be less and your allowance may be reduced. If you are using your allowance for anything that could cause you harm, then you will not be provided with cash and will need to spend your allowance with an adult.



## Over 18 years

Once you are 18, we hope that you will have an income from work or be studying and receiving student finance. If necessary your social worker and personal advisor can help you to apply for Universal Credit and can arrange some financial support until your money is available.

## Budgeting and saving

Lots of young people struggle to budget. We can help you to plan and **manage your budget** and to think about saving for things you want in the future. To get you started the government provide you with an **ISA** (Individual Savings Account) which they pay money into; at 18 this becomes your property, you can withdraw the money but it's a good way to **start saving**.

## Maternity grant

If you are pregnant under the age of 18 and can't access benefits, your social worker will arrange to spend your maternity grant with you at 29 weeks. This is £500 to buy things that you will need for your baby.

## Other extras

We all often need little extras. If you have an income, you will be helped to think about saving for these. If you do not have an income and are under the age of 18, your social worker will support you to access money for travelling to interviews, family time, clothing for work or training and equipment needed. This will be on an individual basis and will not usually be paid in cash.

Your social worker will make sure you have a **bank account** and a **passport**; you will also be able to apply for your **provisional driving licence** if you want to.

Post 18 you can access fares and clothing for interviews from the job centre. Although additional finances are not usually provided, you can access up to £100 per year for additional family-related travel, training or employment-related travel, clothing and equipment.

# Accommodation

We have listened to our young people in North Tyneside and have developed a range of accommodation; your social worker and personal advisor can explain your options to you.

Living on your own or with friends means being able to look after yourself, do all the things you need to do and **being part of your community**. There are practical skills to learn such as cooking and cleaning; it is important to pay bills, arrange services, look after your health and have a routine. It is also important to be happy and living alone can be a big change, sometimes a lonely one. Your Pathway Plan will look at what you want to learn before moving to your own place and agree who will help you with this and how.

**Budgeting** is a major skill for everyone, it is hard to start thinking about paying rent, water, gas, electric, wi-fi and phone bills! You need to plan what you can afford and how much spare money you have left. Your personal advisor will help you to work out a **budget plan** and to avoid getting into debt which can be very stressful. It is much better to manage with the money that you have.

## What we can do:

- Explain your accommodation options to you so you can think about your future
- Help you develop the skills you need to manage your next steps, including a budgeting plan
- Support you to apply to housing and other agencies

## What we can't do:

- Give you a flat or act as a guarantor
- Pay deposits and bonds for private property
- Replace your setting up costs
- Pay any debts or rent arrears that you get

# What are your options?

## Riverdale and Sycamore

These are our children's homes where young people can live until 17. Sycamore House has now established Elm House so that young people moving on from Sycamore or Riverdale can stay in nearby supported accommodation until age 21 and get support from staff they already know.

## Starting Point

We can offer you supported accommodation where you have your own flat or live in shared accommodation and there are staff available on site. There is also the option to move on to a Starting Point trainer flat or to your own tenancy and get ongoing outreach support from people you know, and you are always welcome to come and visit.

## Staying Put

If you live with foster carers and you would both like this to continue after 18, you can make a Staying Put agreement where you can stay at home until 21 or until you are ready to move on. Your social worker will talk to you about this at 17 or earlier.

## Gateway

Your social worker or personal advisor can help you to apply to Gateway for other supported accommodation in YMCA, DePaul or Maritime. These are good stepping stones for getting ready to manage your own place and offer a mixture of communal living or flats with support.

## Going to university

The Leaving Care Team will provide you with accommodation throughout the year when you go to university, this will be in halls of residence or shared student accommodation. If this accommodation is not available all year round, arrangements can be made for holiday times.

## Council Tax

North Tyneside Council offers council tax exemption up to age 25 for young people leaving care who have their own tenancy. You should inform your personal advisor every time that you move so that the council can be informed. If you live with a friend or partner who is not exempt, they will be expected to pay 50% of the council tax amount. If you return to live with family, you will no longer be exempt as the council tax relates to the property.





## Your responsibilities

Wherever you live it is your responsibility to make sure you do what is expected of you, including keeping the place tidy, helping with chores and making a financial contribution or paying bills if required. Once you are 18 you will be asked to pay rent in all supported accommodation places, and you might be asked to make a contribution to the family home if you are Staying Put.

## Getting your own place

When you are 18 you can make a **Homefinder** application for social housing either on your own or with someone else.

Having your own tenancy is a big responsibility so we need to make sure you are ready for it; if you lose it through not paying bills or through disturbing other people, it can be very difficult to get another tenancy. Housing will undertake a budgeting assessment with you to see what you can afford and you may be offered an introductory tenancy to help you get used to managing things like bills.

If you are receiving Universal Credit, it is a good idea to get the housing element of that paid directly to your landlord so that you know your rent is paid. Your personal advisor can help you with this. You are still responsible for paying your water rates.



## Setting up costs

Once you have your name on a tenancy, you can access your **setting up costs** up to the value of £2,000. From your setting up costs you must buy carpets for your home, your white goods (cooker, fridge/freezer, washing machine), TV (if you want one) and TV licence, a bed and other necessary items such as furniture before you can start looking at items such as soft furnishings. These are your things and you can take them with you when you move, they are also your responsibility and will not be replaced. If your home already has some of these items, then it is best if you save some of your money for when you move again in future. These items can be bought or ordered with the Leaving Care Team, you are not provided with cash.

If you decide to live with a friend or partner then you can access half of your setting up costs at first. This is to make sure you are settled and happy and don't spend all of your money in one go because if you move you could be left with nothing.

If you return to live with your family then you will not be provided with these setting up costs while living there. You may be able to get help with items such as a bed or particular furniture if this helps you to be settled at home. You can access your setting up costs up to age 25 even if you have left the service as long as you have your name on a tenancy.

If you are a qualifying young person, you can apply for specific support with setting up costs such as a bed or some furniture which will be decided on an individual basis.



# Achieving your goals: education and employment

Your **Pathway Plan** includes your goals of what you want to do now and in the future.

Up to the age of 19 there is a dedicated **Connexions** worker who can provide you with advice and guidance on all post-16 options, help you with job searches and applications for opportunities, looking at different ways of working and learning, and further training, and advise you on what you need to get the career you want. [Connexions.NT@northtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:Connexions.NT@northtyneside.gov.uk)

Until you are 18 your plans will be set out in your **Personal Education Plan** (PEP) and this will continue in your Pathway Plan. We know that Maths and English Level 2 are really important so RHELAC can provide extra tuition if you need a little help.

Connexions provides a weekly **drop-in session** at the Lodge. If you are over 19, **Generation North East** can provide this support and also hold a weekly drop-in at the Lodge.

**The Adult Learning Service** offers a range of support for over 18s that can help you begin to think about what you want to do or access further training or employment.

Their website will give you an overview of everything available  
[www.skillsnorthtyneside.org.uk](http://www.skillsnorthtyneside.org.uk)

We are currently working with the Adult Learning Service on a training pathway specifically for our young people leaving care.

North Tyneside Council also offers work experience and guarantees you an interview if you apply for an apprenticeship within the council.

When you start a new course your social worker or personal advisor will help you to apply for any money you are entitled to – this could include an education bursary or a travel pass or support with equipment like books or a uniform for your training. RHELAC may be able to provide funding for laptops and other college equipment you need – speak to your social worker or personal advisor about this.





## Short courses

To help you with your training or hobbies once you are 18, the Leaving Care Team will pay for one short course for you to the value of £100.

Up to the age of 21 RHELAC may be able to fund up to 10 driving lessons to help you develop your skills or we can look for funding for this.

## Attending university

Many universities have extra financial support for care leavers. Your social worker or personal advisor can help you to apply for this and general student finance. We do not pay university fees but will pay for your accommodation throughout the year. You will also receive a £2,000 bursary across the first three years of any degree level study. This is usually divided over three payments at the end of each successfully passed academic year but you can apply to use it earlier if you need things for your course such as textbooks. RHELAC can help you with funding for travel and accommodation for visits to see universities that you might attend.



# Your health and wellbeing

Your health and wellbeing are very important to us. Under the age of 18 the RHELAC service will work with you to undertake an annual health assessment and complete an SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire), to identify any health needs you have.

When you turn 18 you will receive a Health Passport which provides a summary of your health from when you were born, including immunisations and significant illnesses, if this information is available.



## ASK NHS

A free and confidential app for over 18's with a virtual assistant who can arrange a call back with a 111 nurse to discuss non urgent health symptoms. You can also schedule a GP appointment and search opening times/locations of local healthcare services. Check it out at: [play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=air.com.sensely.asknhs](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=air.com.sensely.asknhs)

## GP online services

You can sign up to GP online services for access to GP appointments and re-ordering prescriptions and to view parts of your GP record including information on medication, immunisations, test results, allergies, previous illnesses. Sign up at: [www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/aboutnhsservices/doctors/pages/gp-online-services.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/aboutnhsservices/doctors/pages/gp-online-services.aspx)

Looking after your health is really important and will be a focus in your Pathway Plan:

### Get active

You can have an Ease card for free access to local leisure centres and reduced entry fee to their gym facilities. This is particularly good because you can take a friend with you for free.

### Want to stop smoking?

Studies show that you're four times more likely to quit with help. Your local Stop Smoking Service offers free one to one support along with smoking medicines, which are available at the cost of a prescription.

### Do you need some advice around alcohol or drugs?

Your social worker or personal advisor can offer support around substance use; or they can direct you to North Tyneside Recovery Partnership (NTRP) as a service for anyone experiencing problems with drugs and alcohol.

### Having trouble sleeping?

If you have sleep difficulties check out NHS Choices website with lots of information and top tips on how to beat insomnia <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/>

### Not feeling ok? Worried about your mood or mental health?

You can be referred by your GP to CAMHS (Child & Adult Mental Health Services) up to age 18 if you require assessment or support for your mental health and RHELAC can offer some counselling support. Over 18 the service is known as AMHS (Adult Mental Health Services).

### These apps and online support can be helpful for your mood or mental health:

**Kooth** is a free online counselling and emotional wellbeing platform for young people - [kooth.com](http://kooth.com)

**WellMind** is a free NHS mental health and wellbeing app designed to help you with stress, anxiety and depression [www.dwmh.nhs.uk/wellmind](http://www.dwmh.nhs.uk/wellmind)

You can check your mood using this simple questionnaire and get advice on what might help - [www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Mood-self-assessment](http://www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Mood-self-assessment).

### It's also important to feel safe and be safe in relationships:

#### Stay safe if you're having sex

The One to One Centre at Brenkley Avenue, Shiremoor offers a free and confidential sexual health service to anyone. Tel. 0191 297 0441 [www.northumbria.nhs.uk/our-services/healthy-living/sexual-health-services](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk/our-services/healthy-living/sexual-health-services)

#### Need help with a relationship?

Harbour works with families and individuals who are affected by abuse from a partner, former partner or family member. Tel. 0191 251 3305 or 24 hour line 0300 202525 - [info@myharbour.co.uk](mailto:info@myharbour.co.uk)



# Have your say

This is your service and it is important that we know **what you think**. We will contact you every three months to ask your views about the service and specific things we are doing. We recently asked you about this offer and your ideas have been included. If you ever want to give feedback or ask questions please talk to your personal advisor or the manager.

You can also find us on Facebook at NT Leaving Care and we have regular brunch sessions at the Lodge, we would love you to come along and chat to the team.

The **Participation, Advocacy and Engagement** Team works to ensure that children and young people living and attending schools in North Tyneside have their voices heard and their views taken into account and taken seriously, making sure that children and young people are involved in service design, development and delivery.

The team supports children and young people's forums such as the Young Mayor and Cabinet, Youth Council, Children in Care Councils, Children's Council and the Health and Wellbeing Board to encourage children and young people to tell the council and its partners about what life is like growing up and going to school in North Tyneside.

The Participation, Advocacy and Engagement team upholds the rights of children, focusing on Article 12 of the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child), which states that children and young people have the right to be heard and involved in decisions which affect them.





## Groups you can join

### Children in Care Council (CiCC)

CiCC is a group of care experienced children and young people aiming to ensure that all looked after children and care leavers can give their views on the services they receive. In North Tyneside we have one main group that meets weekly, with 12 members aged 12 to 25, as well as some specific working groups focusing on leaving care and small events held as part of the Junior CiCCouncil project.

If you'd like to get involved in this kind of work, learn new skills, meet new people and volunteer with us, contact the Participation, Advocacy and Engagement Team on 0191 643 8216 or text 07971 294247

### Complaints

You have the right to raise concerns or make a complaint if there is something you're not happy with. Any complaint will be taken seriously and you will be given a response. Initially speak to your social worker or personal advisor, however if the claim is about them or you would prefer to speak to someone else, you can speak to the team manager. You will be supported to enter your complaint and will be provided with information about what to expect. If you are unhappy about the outcome of any complaint, you will be provided information about how to take it further.

The council has a process to follow in children's social care – further information can be found on the website [www.northtyneside.gov.uk](http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk)

### North Tyneside Advocacy Service

The Participation, Advocacy and Engagement team provides advocacy to children and young people in care or care leavers to help them tackle difficulties they are having regarding decisions being made about them. If you have questions about decisions made about your care or feel that you're not being listened to, an advocate may be for you to make sure your views and wishes are heard.

An advocate can help to make sure adults in your life listen to you, to help you understand your options and choices and to stand up for you when things are not right in your life or you feel you need something changed

To contact an advocate:

Telephone: 0191 643 8215

Mobile (call or text) 07971 294247

Email [advocacy@northtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:advocacy@northtyneside.gov.uk)

If you don't get an answer, leave a message and we will get back to you.



**Leaving Care Team**

The Lodge  
Riverside Centre  
Minton Lane  
North Shields  
NE29 6DQ

**Telephone 0191 643 8788**