

## **BOLTON'S OFFER TO CARE LEAVERS 2018-2020**

### **1. What is a Care Leavers offer and why do we need one?**

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 means that Council's corporate parenting responsibilities for people leaving care now extend up until 25 years old. Corporate Parents are people like Councillors, Directors, senior managers and officers in the council. They are also those who work with them such as those in Health Service, Education and Police who have a role in making sure children in care as well as those who leave care are safe, healthy and happy.

The focus of corporate parenting should not be on getting the young person to the age of 25 when that responsibility ends, but preparing the young person for life, ensuring they have the skills to support themselves for their whole lives and ultimately thrive.

Through the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Government introduced the requirement for local authorities to publish a 'Care Leaver Offer', which outlines the services for care leavers available within the local authority area. It outlines 6 areas the local offer should relate to that may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living. These are:

- Health and wellbeing
- Relationships
- Education and training
- Employment
- Accommodation
- Participation in society

The Government have also introduced a set of corporate parenting principles that require *all departments* within each Council to encourage them to provide effective support to young people who leave care. The principles require corporate parents:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

The Leaving Care legislation lists 4 different categories of Care Leaver. They are:

<b>Care Leaver 1: Eligible</b>	<b>Care Leaver 2: Relevant</b>	<b>Care Leaver 3: Former relevant</b>	<b>Care Leaver 4: Qualifying</b>
You are aged 16 or 17 and still in care.	You are aged 16 or 17 and have been	You are aged 18 – 21 and have been <u>Eligible</u> or <u>Relevant</u>	You are a Qualifying Young Person if you are 16 and under 21 <b>and:</b>
You must have been in care for 13 weeks after you were 14	<u>Eligible</u> but you are no longer in care.	Up to the age of 25 you can be <u>Former Relevant</u> if you remain in full time education or training	You were looked after before having a Special Guardianship Order which was in force when you reached 18
			You were Privately fostered until age 16
			You were in care following your 16 <sup>th</sup> birthday but did not meet the criteria for <u>Eligible</u> or <u>Relevant</u> as above.

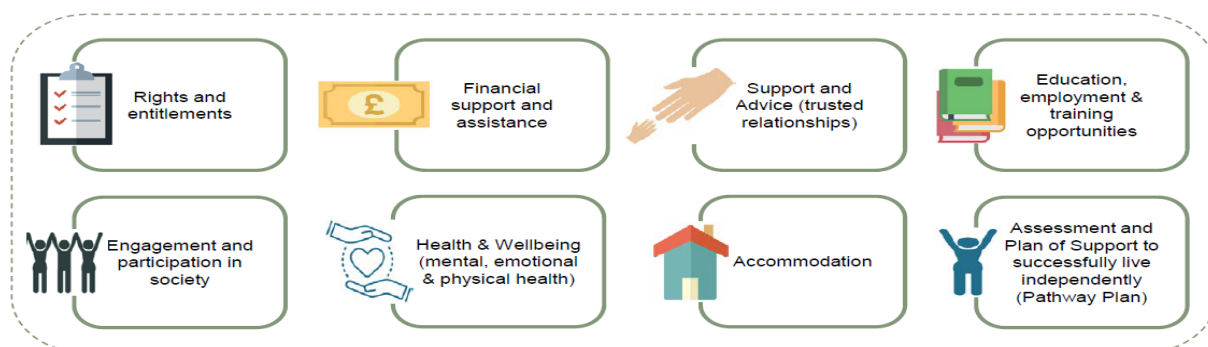
As a Qualifying Young Person you are entitled to support, advice and assistance. You are able to claim benefits so we do not pay the financial support for living expenses and accommodation given to Eligible and Relevant Young People. You will have a named Leaving Care worker who will undertake an assessment of need and will keep in touch with you to offer support. Bolton Leaving Care Team will assist you into education employment and training.

## 2. What will the Bolton Care Leavers' Offer include and how with young people help to develop it?





In developing this offer for Care Leavers, Bolton Council have consulted with young people who are both looked after as well as leaving care to ensure that is useful and meets the needs of young people.



The Bolton Care Leavers' Offer 2018-20 will be reviewed on an annual basis, owned strategically by the Corporate Parenting Board. The Head of Service responsible for Care Leavers will take operational ownership of the document and will ensure all care leavers receive a copy in addition to publishing the offer on the Bolton Council Website.



Bolton's Leaving Care Offer will include information on the following areas:



3. What work have we already been doing in Bolton to improve support offered young people who leave care?

Bolton's Care Leavers' Offer	Bolton's Offer
 <p>Rights and entitlements</p>	<p><b>Right and entitlements</b></p> <p>Information can be found in this document that we have produced called <i>Bolton Leaving Care Team and You</i> it also tells you where you can go to get more information or advice</p>  <p>BOLTON LEAVING CARE TEAM AND YOL</p> <p><b>We will publish this information on Bolton Council's website</b></p>
 <p>Assessment and Plan of Support to successfully live independently (Pathway Plan)</p>	<p><b>Pathway Planning and coordination of support</b></p> <p>Prior to the young person's 16th birthday a worker from the Leaving Care Team will be allocated to draw up a Pathway Plan with the young person to support them in their transition to adulthood. They remain in regular contact with Care Leavers; make sure they have a plan relevant to them; live somewhere that is suitable and safe; and ensure they are helped into education employment or training. All Care leavers have a right for this to be extended up to the age of 25.</p> <p>For young adults who meet the criteria for a Care Act Assessment the Transition Team will provide support to improve the transition into adult services whether this is linked to social care or accessing mainstream/ universal support</p>
 <p>Education, employment &amp; training opportunities</p>	<p><b>Education, Employment and Training</b></p> <p>Care Leavers have targeted advice, information and guidance to support them into the right choices. Connexions advisors are based in schools to give that advice initially and Care Leavers up to age 19 not in education employment or training are allocated a named Connexions worker. As requested in consultation with young people this service will be extended to up to 25 for Care Leavers who are not in employment education and training and request support</p> <p>Connexions can give provide impartial careers advice and guidance, help with CV writing, interview techniques, job opportunities, apprenticeships, traineeships and information about accessing college and university courses. They also run courses about interview preparation and techniques, confidence building, etc.</p> <p>A preparation for work scheme is offered which provides bespoke packages for individual young people to help build their employability skills.</p> <p>Bolton provides a Support into Employment Scheme for Care Leavers (LASE) whereby participants are supported by the scheme coordinator throughout paid work placements which may be in the council or the private sector.</p> <p>For young people who need to develop their employability skills we will offer the 'The Passport onto Work' POW scheme which</p>

	<p>provides young people with a record of employability skills they have achieved.</p> <p>'Working Wardrobe' provided by Bolton at Home will offer support for Care Leavers and will help with preparation for interviews, writing cvs etc.</p> <p>The Council's HR team will offer career advice and practical one to one support for Care Leavers.</p> <p>Prior to apprenticeships within the council being advertised externally they will be advertised to Care Leavers first. An interview will be guaranteed in all cases unless the essential criteria are clearly not met.</p> <p>As requested during consultation with young people information about what is available from the DWP for Care Leavers will be displayed at BASE.</p> <p>We will consult with young people to develop models of support to help them into education employment and training.</p> <p>We will provide information about a range of opportunities including jobs.</p> <p>Within the future review of its recruitment policy Bolton Council will look for opportunities to make council jobs more accessible to Bolton Care Leavers. This will include the consideration of offering guaranteed interviews for Care Leavers where they meet the essential requirements for the post.</p>
 <p>The icon features a yellow banknote with a pound symbol (£) on the left, connected by a green line to a rounded green box on the right containing the text "Financial support and assistance".</p>	<p>Information about financial assistance can be found in the following booklet</p>  <p>BOLTON LEAVING CARE TEAM AND YOU</p> <p>Bolton has a Money Skills team which provides individual advice and group work or training to help with financial management.</p> <p>From April 2019 the Money Skills team will provide a dedicated service for Care Leavers offering support on a range of financial issues such as budgeting, saving, energy efficiency.</p> <p>There are 2 named workers linked to the Leaving Care Team from Job Centre Plus who offer advice and support to Care Leavers and social workers to ensure full access to all possible benefits and entitlements.</p> <p>There is joint working between the Leaving Care Team and Job Centre Plus where the Care Leaver's PA is contacted before a sanction is applied</p> <p>Linked to promoting further education we also have a good package of financial support for young people at university; covering reasonable costs of accommodation, a weekly maintenance payment and some travel costs.</p>

	<p>We will offer Council Tax exemption to Bolton's Care Leavers up to the age of 25 wherever you live.</p> <p>We will extend the provision of the Setting up Home Grant from 21 years to 25 years old.</p> <p>We will offer enhanced housing benefit payments for Care Leavers from 21 years to 25.</p> <p>We will work in partnership with the DWP to receive regular updates about Universal Credit so that Personal Advisors have the requisite knowledge to advise young people appropriately.</p>
 <p>Engagement and participation in society</p>	<p>Bolton Council commissions a service from a local charity; the Bolton Lads and Girls Club, to offer a mentoring and Independent Visitor Scheme for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.</p> <p>Action for Children provide an advocacy service for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. This includes engagement in activities to raise awareness of Looked After Children and Care Leavers' needs and inform service delivery at a national level.</p> <p>A Participation and Engagement Lead will be recruited in 2019. This role will develop participation work with Care Leavers and work to engage them in the co-design of services and future Local Offer.</p> <p>Bolton Council will ask every business coming into Bolton if they can offer any support to our Care Leavers; this support will vary according to the type and venue of the business in question.</p>
 <p>Support and Advice (trusted relationships)</p>	<p>The Leaving Care Team (LCT) starts to work with young people prior to them becoming 16. The LCT worker will visit the young person several times before they are 16 to build a relationship and to develop a Pathway Plan. This plan should include all the things important to the individual young person and help them to plan their future life. It will show who will help the young person do what to reach their goals. We will aim to be aspirational for our Care Leavers and to support them to be aspirational too. The LCT worker must stay in touch with Care Leavers and see them on a regular basis.</p> <p>The LCT worker will support the young person to develop and / or maintain positive relationships in their life.</p> <p>Since April 2018 new legislation states that Care Leavers can choose to remain open to the Leaving Care Team until they are 25 or return up to the age of 25 if their case has previously been closed. In such cases, the LCT worker will help the young adult access the necessary support.</p>



### Health & Wellbeing (mental, emotional & physical health)

The Parallel is a young persons' health centre where Care Leavers can be given prioritised attention regarding their health needs. The Parallel offers the opportunity for Care Leavers to access the service beyond 19.

The Leaving Care Team also has a named nurse linked to the team to give individual attention to young people and provide a more flexible health service.

As requested in the consultation process with young people, leisure passes are available to Looked After Children and Care Leavers up to 25 years entitling them to free swimming and gym/fitness sessions in Council leisure provision.

All Care Leavers have access to Kooth (an online mental health support system). Leaving Care Workers can provide information about this.

We will work with young people to access a health summary outlining their health history.

Leaving Care workers can signpost and support young people to access the appropriate services around emotional wellbeing from community provision to CAMHS.

As requested by the young people in the consultation process workers on the Leaving Care Team can provide help and support about healthy eating and food preparation.

When we commission supported accommodation for Care Leavers the LCT will outline expectations for the provider in terms of the support required to assist the young person into adulthood. This could include skills in independence such as healthy eating, cooking, how and where to shop on a budget etc.



### Accommodation

#### **Accommodation.**

Care Leavers who have been living in fostering placements now have increased access to 'Staying Put' arrangements where they stay living with their foster carer following their 18th birthday

Bolton commissions a wide range of 16+ supported accommodation to meet the varied needs of young people. This includes 24 hours staffed provision to supported lodgings or flats with floating support. The provision of young people's supported accommodation in Bolton is being revised and renewed in 2019. Bolton council will ensure the needs of Care Leavers are addressed in this process.

At 18+ Care Leavers are given the opportunity to have Priority Status for social housing when considered ready to move into their own tenancies.

Young people are entitled to a £2000 Setting Up Home Grant and Leaving Care workers will advise about how to spend this.

Bolton Leaving Care Team will work in partnership with housing providers to prevent eviction and homeless intentionality judgements. If you are worried about this speak to your Leaving Care Worker as soon as possible.

	We will work with Bolton at Home, other landlords and Housing Options to identify accommodation which can enable support to be offered on an individual basis close to their former carers or residential placement
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4. Workers on the Leaving Care Team will work hard to address need and offer additional support if required. Examples of this may include
- Young people with special educational needs / a disability
  - Young parents
  - Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people who need clarity about immigration status and legal rights.
  - Support to leave custody
  - General support for young people experiencing significant difficulties in their life

**5. What work has been happening across Greater Manchester (GM) to improve support offered young people who leave care?**

Councils across Greater Manchester are coming together to improve support for children who are looked after and those who are leaving care. Below is a list of the things that are considered to be at the top of their list and something that will be worked on over the next two years.

-  Council Tax exemptions for all Care Leavers, until the age of 25, across GM irrespective of 'home authority' 
-  Establish an agreed 'standard' for Greater Manchester's care leavers
-  Free transport offer for Looked After Children and Care Leavers at 16 years of age
-  Housing priority for Care Leavers extended from 21 to 25 years of age
-  DWP no cut of age / date for support – *“once our child, always our child”*
-  Mental Health Services / CAMHS commissioned for Looked After Children to 25 years of age