

CARE LEAVER LOCAL OFFER: THEMATIC REPORT

Local Authorities (LAs) are now required to publish a local offer for care leavers that includes information about statutory entitlements, but also additional support that LAs choose to provide for care leavers. Government Guidance states the local offer should cover six main areas: **health and well-being; relationships; education and training; employment; accommodation** and **participation in society**¹. The National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum (NLCBF) has produced a toolkit to help members learn from each other and support them with ideas on how to continue to improve their own local offer. The project focuses on the additional support recorded in local offers; it looks at the six main areas and includes support for finances and different groups of care leavers.

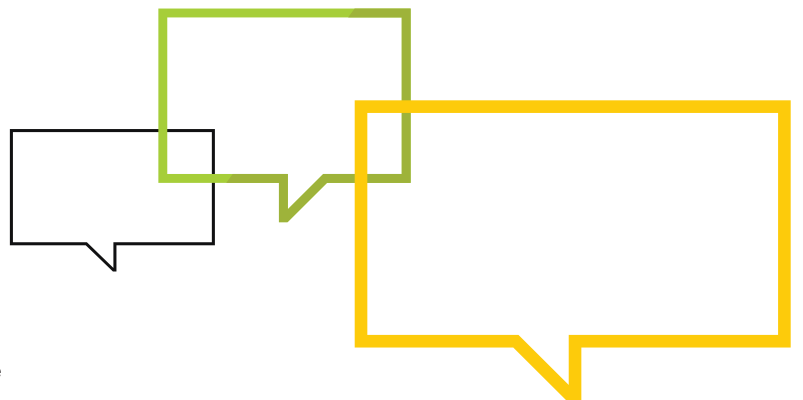
The printed toolkit comprises of:

- **Guide and Key Messages** - describes the background of the project, summarises key findings and recommendations
- **Survey Findings Summary** - details members' views and experiences of developing their local offer
- **Audit Tool** - based on systematic mapping of a sample of 20 members' local offers. This tool helps local authorities (with young people) review and improve their local offer

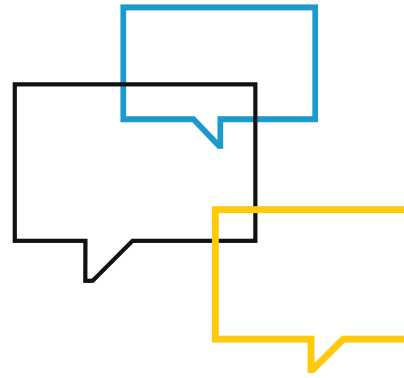
If you are an NLCBF member, you can access the full Care Leaver Local Offer Toolkit here: www.leavingcare.org or contact nlcbf@catch-22.org.uk

Additional online toolkit resources:

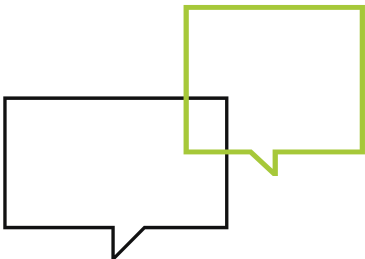
- **Mapping** - interactive tool that systematically maps a sample of 20 members' local offers
- **Thematic Report** - full write-up of the project findings from which key messages are based
This document is the Thematic Report
- **Survey Findings** - full version



¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-offer-guidance>



Introduction	4
A note on the mapping	4
What’s in this publication?	4
Key Findings	5
Guide to mapping	5
Health and Well-being	6
Relationships	9
Education and training	12
Employment	14
Accommodation	17
Participation in society	20
‘Other’ groups of care leavers	24
Finance	26
Format and development of the local offer	28
Concluding thoughts	30
Thank you	31



INTRODUCTION

The local offer guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE) states that:

“ The local offer should include - and differentiate between - both care leavers’ statutory entitlements (which all care leavers in England are entitled to) and other additional support that LAs choose to provide to demonstrate their commitment to being the young person’s ‘corporate parent’. ”
(DfE Care leaver local offer guidance, 2018:6)

In order to explore more about what types of additional support local authorities (LAs) have included in their local offer, we systematically mapped a sample of 20 local offers. We randomly selected 20 local offers from the NLCBF member authorities who responded to the Local Offer Survey². This publication contains a narrative analysis of the results of the mapping exercise; NLCBF members can view the Excel database from which this is based, along with the other resources in the Care Leaver Local Offer Toolkit here: www.leavingcare.org.uk.

A note on the mapping

The mapping exercise took place between June and August 2019 and reviewed the content of local offers that had been published online. During the mapping, we focused only on the additional support that LAs offered their care leavers, rather than statutory support. The local offer is just one part of the work that LAs do to support care leavers. It is likely that LAs have not included details of everything they do to support young people as much of what is provided will be based on young people’s individual circumstances. We were only able to record details about what had been written in the published offer at the time of mapping. During our mapping we may have missed some details. When considering the findings these potential gaps should be taken into account.

What’s in this publication?

The findings in this publication follow the headings contained in the DfE local offer guidance: health and well-being; relationships; education and training; employment; accommodation and participation in society. Each section starts with an excerpt from the guidance. We have included additional sections on finance and ‘groups’ of care leavers.






In addition to information collected during the mapping exercise, key findings include information from:

- A focus group with seven Champions from the Young People’s Benchmarking Forum (YPBMF) that explored the question: ‘what would a really good care leaver local offer look like to you?’
- Short examples of promising practice found in local offers; in some cases extra detail about the work was gathered via interviews with LA representatives.

² Representatives from 34 NLCBF member authorities responded to the Local Offer Survey about experiences of developing their local offer in April 2019. See Survey Summary and Full report for more information.

KEY FINDINGS

Guide to mapping

Icon	Frequency	What this means
	VERY HIGH	19 or 20 local offers included reference to the additional support example
	HIGH	12 to 18 local offers included reference to the additional support example
	MEDIUM	7 to 11 local offers included reference to the additional support example
	LOW	3 to 6 local offers included reference to the additional support example
	VERY LOW	1 or 2 local offers included reference to the additional support example



HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

“ This will include services that teach about, support and enable good health and wellbeing. It should include links to, or information about, universal health services that might be particularly relevant to care leavers, as well as specific health and wellbeing services targeted at them. ”

(DfE Care leaver local offer guidance, 2018:5)

Looking across the ‘health and well-being’ sections of the 20 local offers reviewed, four main additional support areas were identified: (1) specialist health project or worker; (2) support with health appointments; (3) ‘health passports’ and (4) access to leisure services. Information on these areas is described in more detail below.

Specialist health project or worker



5 of 20 offers described that support was available from emotional well-being practitioners or psychologists who were based within leaving care teams



5 of 20 offers included information on the fact that support for health and mental health was available to care leavers up to age 25



4 of 20 offers included information about specific sessions or activities for care leavers that focussed on exercise, healthy eating and cooking

WIGAN

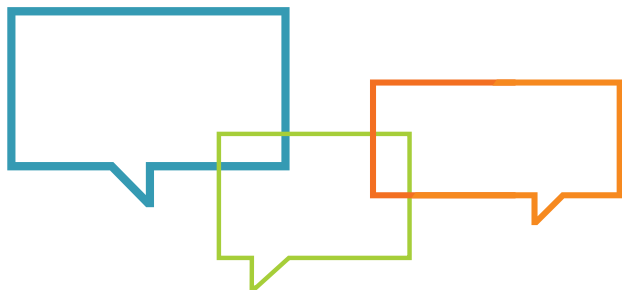


Care leavers can access the council’s Employee Assistance Programme (365 days a year 24/7). This provides a range of support including confidential counselling, debt advice and free prescriptions until 25th Birthday.

WALTHAM FOREST



Covered the cost of a three month travel pass for young people living out of area so they could access the relevant local LA provision.



Support with health appointments



8 of 20 offers described how the LA covered transport costs to doctor or hospital appointments. Sometimes this had conditionality attached to it such as support being dependent on financial circumstances or regularity of appointments



3 of 20 offers let young people know that their leaving care workers could attend appointments with them if they wanted

STOCKPORT



Mindfulness, stress reduction and communication skills training available for care leavers.

WEST SUSSEX



Offered up to £300 support towards health costs, such as glasses, dentistry or accessing medical appointments.

Health passport



17 of 20 offers reported that young people would receive a health passport, containing information about their health history

Access to leisure



13 of 20 offers included information about free or discounted leisure passes. The offers ranged from:

- Free leisure membership of LA facilities. Sometimes this included an age cut-off such as ending at age 21, or from age 22+ care leavers would receive discounted (not free) membership
- Free leisure membership with a 'plus one' (take a friend, carer or mentor)
- Discounted (not free) leisure membership of LA facilities



1 of 20 made reference to what would happen in relation to accessing leisure provision if a young person was living outside of their LA area

YOUNG PEOPLE SAID:

Have a mental health professional in the leaving care team so care leavers can access the support they need quickly

Help with the cost of dentists and opticians because they can cost a lot of money

PROMISING PRACTICE ■ MIDDLESBROUGH

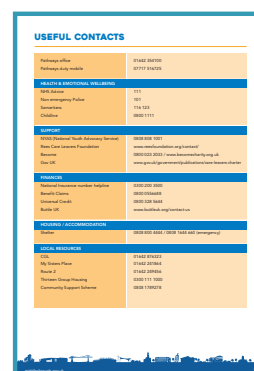
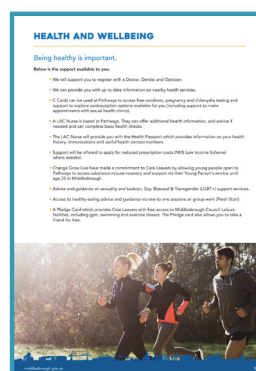
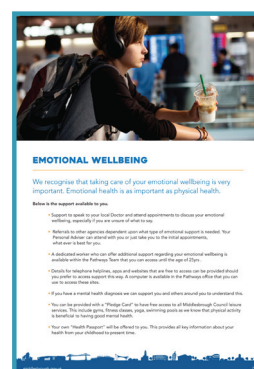
Strengthening the health offer for care leavers through partnership working

Middlesbrough have a dedicated worker available to support care leavers with mental health needs up to age 25. They wanted to use the development of the local offer to improve the support available in relation to substance misuse. Young people aged under 18 benefited from the Change Grow Live service. But once care leavers turned 18 they could no longer access this service and had to use adult substance misuse support.

The leaving care service organised a meeting with the service provider to talk about the local offer and ask whether - as part of the offer - they could extend their youth service to care leavers up till 25. An agreement was made, so that now care leavers can be referred to the youth service as a result they benefit from the more flexible 1:1 approach to engagement. Early feedback is positive about the new arrangements; care leavers aged 18 and over have said that it's working better for them to stay with the youth service than move to adult support.

'It was useful to have the local offer so we could say to partners: the government says we need one of these [local offer], you're a corporate parent too, what more can you offer for our young people.'

Chloe Coxon, Personal Advisor, Pathways Leaving Care Team, Middlesbrough



Reflections: Health and Well-being

The majority of local offers had good signposting to both local and national support services on a range of areas like sexual health, healthy eating and mental health support. However, with some notable exceptions, the information tended to be generic with links to universal health services rather than having specific information about additional health support for care leavers.

The most common type of additional support provided by LAs was provision of a 'health passport' to help young people understand their health history. Just over half of local offers contained information about free or discounted leisure access. Much less common was reference to specialist health workers or health projects for care leavers.



RELATIONSHIPS

“ Having strong and supportive relationships is crucially important for care leavers as they move to independent adult life. Local authorities will want to consider the services and / or support that is available to help care leavers develop and maintain positive social networks and to understand what positive relationships look like. ”

(DfE Care leaver local offer guidance, 2018:5)

Despite the fact that DfE guidance indicates that ‘relationships’ should be a key area of support in local offers, not all offers had a separate section on this area. From the offers reviewed three main areas of additional support were included: (1) mentoring schemes; (2) understanding life story and (3) general support to maintain and strengthen relationships that care leavers identify as important to them.

Mentoring scheme



11 of 20 offers had information for care leavers on mentoring schemes. Some schemes were aimed at helping young people with their well-being or reducing loneliness, whilst others were more focussed on support with employment, education and training. Mentoring schemes included:

- peer (care leaver) mentors
- general mentors
- one LA offered ‘grandmentors’ (i.e. ‘older adults’)

KENT



Grandmentors meet with care leavers aged 16-24 weekly and offer friendship, support and guidance. Grandmentors are older adults so they have a lot of knowledge and life experience to share.

KNOWSLEY



Virtual memory box to store photos, films and important documents (up to age 25).

Understanding life story



13 of 20 local offers let young people know how they could access their care files. A few described support available for young people to do so, including the opportunity to talk to someone prior to requesting records and support to help young people understand what everything means once they have received their care files.

- Some local offers directed young people directly to data teams
- Others emphasised that support from leaving care workers to apply for records was available

PROMISING PRACTICE ■ EALING

Listening to young people and focusing on relationships

Ealing's Horizons Shout Out Council (HSC) for care leavers helped produce the local offer and quotes from young people have been used throughout. The local offer makes clear who young people should contact if they wish to take up elements of the offer, with the addition of 'who to contact' information.

In some sections, the offer highlights where young people have particularly shaped what is available; for example, drop-in sessions are available so young people can catch up with staff on a more 'ad hoc basis' as well as meet other care leavers. Similarly, young people recommended that information and support on healthy relationships and domestic abuse is included in the local offer and now it features in the offer and forms part of the After Care drop-in sessions. Ealing also have a 'ME' peer mentoring project to support young people build relationships.

'Young people have recommended that we include information and support at the After Care drop in sessions on healthy relationships and domestic abuse'

'We have a really good group of young people who meet regularly, scrutinize policy and feed into the design and content of the local offer. The Chief Executive of the Council and Director of Young People attend Corporate Parenting Panel so young people have unfiltered access to speak to leaders and build relationships. This makes a big difference'
Angela Healey Team Manager, Leaving Care Team, Ealing



YOUNG PEOPLE SAID:



Support to maintain and strengthen important relationships



14 of 20 included general statements offering support for young people to regain or stay in contact with family, friends or past carers. As part of this it was common to reassure young people they could keep in touch with their independent visitors if this was what they wanted



3 of 20 offered young people the opportunity to take part in family and friend group conferencing



2 of 20 LAs offered to cover transport costs to 'family contact'

Reflections: Relationships

Compared to other areas there were less examples of additional support in the 'relationships' section of local offers. Much of what was written tended to be generalised statements about helping young people with their relationships rather than detailing specific support and opportunities available.

The most common types of additional support related to mentoring (in various guises), or support for young people to understand their personal history.

Less frequently local offers contained information about financial assistance available to visit family or the opportunity for family group conferencing in order to connect (or reconnect) with important people.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

“ Care leavers should be supported to access appropriate education or training that will enable them to fulfil their goals. This will include the statutory support available to care leavers, such as the £2,000 bursary for care leavers in Higher Education, as well as any other support from the local authority; and signpost to universal information such as careers advice and financial support for young people. ”
(DfE Care leaver local offer guidance, 2018:5)

Examination of the local offers that were mapped showed two main areas of additional support in relation to education (1) support for care leavers at university and (2) a wide range of other education related incentives.

Extra support at university



8 of 20 offered a bursary (above statutory level of £2,000 over the duration of the course, this ranged from £2,000 - £3,100 per year)



7 of 20 offered to cover the costs of essential equipment (laptops, books, trips associated with degree course)



6 of 20 offered a set payment on graduation (for post graduate study or to help pay towards student loan debt)



6 of 20 provided a weekly living allowance (ranging from £50 - £100)



5 of 20 offered support to attend open days (either transport costs or a worker to accompany young person)



5 of 20 offered travel costs and support to / from university at the start and end of term



4 of 20 referred to potential support for post graduate studies, but did not always specify detail



3 of 20 offered support for graduation costs (usually 2 tickets, gown hire and photograph fee)

NORTH YORKSHIRE

Offer a Higher Education bursary of £3,100 per year for a maximum of four years and £2,000 upon graduation, to assist with the cost of post graduate studies or contribute to paying off student loan.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

£2000 bursary for care leavers who continue their education to postgraduate level.

Additional education and training related incentives



6 of 20 included detail on monetary incentive(s) for young people linked to education or training for travel or living costs (often these were linked to attendance)



4 of 20 referenced the types of support that could be provided towards non-university education related activities; these included help to pay for trips linked to education courses; money towards equipment or clothing associated with education / training or providing laptop (and software), books or stationery



2 of 20 recorded that they gave a celebratory meal, voucher or money on completion of courses or when young people gained a qualification (the amount specified varied)



2 of 20 provided monetary support for registration / exam fees (e.g. re-take Maths / English GCSE); one local offer specifically cited private tuition may be available for young people who wanted to re-take their Maths / English GCSE

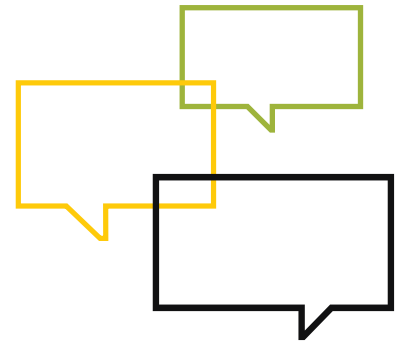


1 of 20 offered the opportunity to undertake LA run health and safety course if relevant to a young person's education or career

Reflections: Education and training

Support to care leavers at university was the most frequent type of additional support; this information tended to be clearly detailed (more so than in many other areas of local offers where what was offered could be general or 'vague'). However, there was much variation between local authorities in what they provided to care leavers at university.

Much less appeared to be written about additional support to care leavers in other types of education; such as those in further education or studying at post graduate level. Though it was encouraging to see a small number of local authorities detailing the support they gave their care leavers when they graduated.



“ This will include information to care leavers about general employment support, such as careers support and links to local Job Centre Plus. Local authorities should also include any other employment support that they or partners deliver that is specifically available to care leavers, for example, any apprenticeships that the local authority offers, in particular where such opportunities are ring-fenced for care leavers. ”

(DfE Care leaver local offer guidance, 2018:6)

Four main themes for the additional support described in local offers were identified: (1) specialist employment project or worker; (2) support with apprenticeships; (3) other employment related support and (4) financial support with employment.

Specialist employment project or worker



7 of 20 local offers detailed that employment specialist worker(s) were available in the leaving care service; there were different terms used for this role (e.g. work-readiness adviser). At times there were age limits on access to this support. The types of help available included interview practice, help with CV writing and support with applying for jobs



4 of 20 had brokered arrangements to refer care leavers for support from other employability support teams or organisations (sometimes 'priority' access had been negotiated)



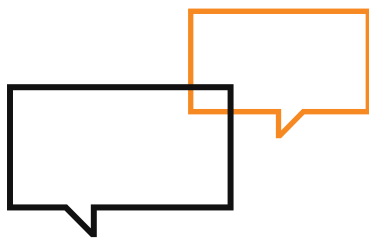
4 of 20 mentioned a designated contact at the Job Centre available to support young people in seeking employment



3 of 20 offered an intensive training programme related to getting into employment



3 of 20 mentioned groups or drop in sessions aimed at supporting young people with 'getting ready for work'



Apprenticeships



9 of 20 local offers gave details on their LA-run apprenticeship scheme for care leavers which offered ring-fenced opportunities



3 of 20 detailed that support was available to apply for apprenticeships in the business community (sometimes care leavers have prior notification of opportunities)



2 of 20 guaranteed (suitably qualified) care leavers an interview



1 of 20 gave information on their supported programme to help young people who were not yet ready for an apprenticeship work towards this

NORTH YORKSHIRE



'Opportunity broker' worker available in leaving care team focused on seeking out individualised opportunities for care leavers based on young people's interests and aspirations

MIDDLESBROUGH



Provide a guaranteed interview for their apprenticeships and jobs for care leavers who fit the essential criteria. The Work Readiness Practitioner is an Apprenticeship Champion who can support care leavers into apprenticeships

Work experience related support



11 of 20 offers detailed the range of work experience placements that were available to care leavers; many of these were available within the LA with councillors or council departments

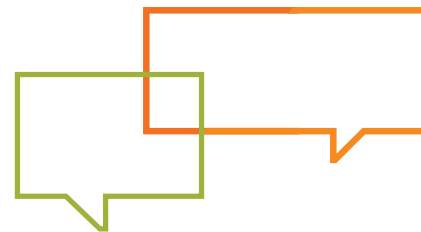


3 of 20 offers specifically mentioned that care leavers can have mentoring support from senior managers from the LA

YOUNG PEOPLE SAID:



Make sure there is support for young people who may be struggling with a full time job



Additional financial support with employment



12 of 20 detailed support with the costs associated with work uniform, interview clothes or equipment needed for the work. One local offer detailed support with costs gaining industry accreditation or vehicle licences needed for work (e.g. CITB – Construction Industry Training Board tested)



6 of 20 offered support with transport costs for interview(s) and / or travelling to work. Various conditionality was in place such as support towards cost of bus / train pass for first month till a young person was paid, or up to 100 travel journeys for young people



4 of 20 local offers had information on financial help in relation to young people's personal allowance to make sure there was financial benefit to working or to help during first weeks of working when wage not yet paid



1 of 20 mentioned help with child care costs (this was only available in exceptional circumstances)

Reflections: Employment

Lots of local authorities offered practical support in relation to employment; for example, LA-run apprenticeship schemes and opportunities for work experience were common. Local offers also tended to include details on the help they could give young people with essential equipment or travel costs related to work. Very few local offers appeared to have information on help with child care.

Though less frequent, it was encouraging to see local authorities offering mentoring opportunities for care leavers from senior managers and councillors and brokering offers of work experience or apprenticeships from the local business community and organisations the local authority had contracted.



ACCOMMODATION

“Care leavers should be supported to access appropriate and suitable accommodation. The local authority should include relevant information about their Staying Put policy, the support available from Housing Services and any other assistance that is available to care leavers, such as advice on maintaining a tenancy.”

(DfE Care leaver local offer guidance, 2018:6)

The mapping of our sample of local offers indicated additional support in the following areas: (1) specialist housing project or worker(s); (2) arrangements for care leavers to access priority housing; (3) additional financial or practical support in relation to accommodation and (4) arrangements for council tax exemption or reduction.

Specialist housing project or worker



7 of 20 offered 'independence programmes' and pre-tenancy courses (some of these were accredited)



3 of 20 referred to support from housing worker(s) based within leaving care team

Priority housing

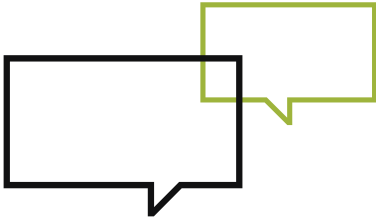


7 of 20 local offers explained that care leavers had some kind of access to priority local authority housing

COVENTRY



Included a commitment to finding no care leaver intentionally homeless (if they were working with the LA to resolve the situation). Coventry also offers a 'second chance' to care leavers if their first move to independence did not work out for them, backdating this to young people's 16th birthday.



Additional financial or practical support with accommodation



7 of 20 offered to pay for cost of deposit, retainer, first month's rent or agency fee



4 of 20 offered to pay for first TV licence

Council tax exemption or reduction



15 of 20 local offers contained information about a reduction or exemption for care leavers regarding council tax. When included, there was variation in what was on offer, this included:

- Care leavers are exempt (sometimes there was an age restriction specified e.g. up to age 21; up to age 25)
- Care leavers are exempt even when living outside of LA
- Care leavers are exempt conditionality (e.g. exemption only applicable if young person is in education; only applies to certain types of accommodation)
- 'Sliding scale' in place to prepare care leavers for the time when have to pay

PROMISING PRACTICE

Some LAs had brokered offers from partners in order to provide extra support to young people to help them set up their home. Examples included:

MIDDLESBROUGH - pay for removals, cost covered by Revenue and Debt department


YORK - pay for the first year's contents insurance, TV licence and provide practical support to decorate

LANCASHIRE - a one-off payment of £70 towards utilities, cleaning and food


STOCKPORT - white goods starter pack (RRP £1000), through Stockport Local Assistance Scheme



YOUNG PEOPLE SAID:



See if you can offer starter packs with basics like crockery and white goods in addition to the setting up home grant



Train care leavers in painting and decorating skills so they can help others when they move in

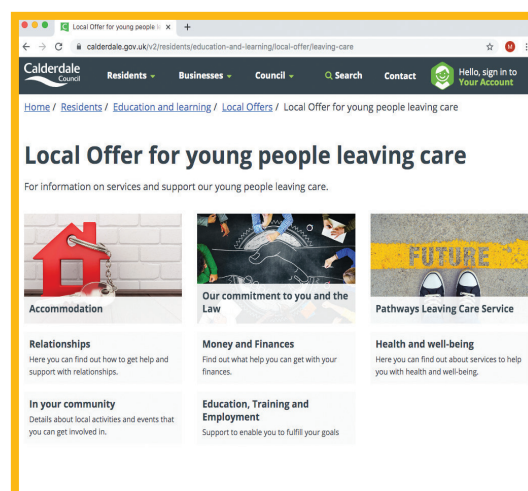
PROMISING PRACTICE ■ CALDERDALE

Preparation for independence programme designed and delivered by care leavers

Calderdale offer an independence programme designed and delivered by care leavers. The Getting on And Living Programme (GOAL) was originally developed by the Care Leavers Association in 2013 and piloted in Calderdale.

The six month programme consists of weekly group sessions that cover all aspects of independent living and life skills. The programme provides a place for young people to make friends, learn new skills and work through a mix of information-based and practical sessions together.

To strengthen the housing support offer, Calderdale have a partnership with a local provider (Young Persons' Prevention and Support Service, YPASS). YPASS provide a daily drop in for young people; extended to 25 for care leavers in Calderdale. One of the YPASS Advisors is also based part time within the leaving care service. This model is proving effective in providing extra support and quick resolving of housing related issues.



'Young people tell us that they love the GOAL programme and we've had a few young people from the course apply to be mentors in the future. It helps young people with practical skills but also increases confidence and self-esteem.'

Claire Hammonds, Pathway Advisor and Participation Officer

Reflections: Accommodation

The most common types of additional support related to council tax exemption or reduction; though on occasion the detail of what was available was not always as clear as it could be. It was positive to note that a number of LAs included in their offer information about pre-tenancy courses and support with moving or decoration when care leavers move into their accommodation.

A small number of LAs contributed towards other housing related expenses such as support towards TV licence or insurance costs.



PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY

“ This will include links to and information about activities, events or volunteering opportunities available in the local area that care leavers can get involved in. ”

(DfE Care leaver local offer guidance, 2018:6)

A wide range of additional support was identified and encompassed under the theme of participation in society: (1) opportunities for young people to have their voices heard; (2) celebration of achievements; (3) dedicated venue for care leavers; (4) support to learn to drive; (5) access to identity documents and finally (6) use of social media.

Opportunities for young people to have their voices heard



18 of 20 offers talked about opportunities for young people to get involved in care leaver forums



2 of 20 referenced the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum and opportunities for young people to get involved



6 of 20 offers talked about other opportunities for care leavers to get involved in interview panels, corporate parenting panels or young inspector programmes

Celebration of achievements



5 of 20 local offers cited their care leavers awards events. These were often annual; on occasion they may have an education focus; sometimes it was mentioned that care leavers helped organise the celebrations

Dedicated space or out of hours support



3 of 20 referred to a dedicated care leavers space/ area where young people could drop-in



2 of 20 offers referenced support for care leavers out of hours or during evenings and weekends

YORK



Young people can be paid for their time when involved in consultation, recruitment interviews, designing publicity materials for care leaver events.

COVENTRY



As well as annual care leaver awards, Coventry also celebrate young people's individual achievements in a personal way, for example by taking them out for a meal to celebrate significant qualifications.

Driving Lessons



6 of 20 offers referred to some kind of support for young people who wanted to learn to drive (car and CBT motorcycling training were sometimes both included in the offer). There was variation in the detail of what was provided:

- Match funding scheme (e.g. care leaver pays for 5 lessons and leaving care service pays for 5 lessons)
- Criteria or eligibility in place (e.g. maximum number of lessons; conditional on being linked to education or training)
- Sometimes costs towards theory test, practical test and provisional driving licence were also included (e.g. 50% of cost)

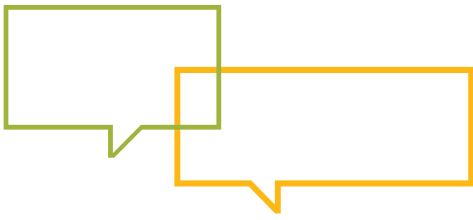
Identity documents



17 of 20 offers indicated support to get identity documents (ID) was available. At times it was not always clear whether the local authority would pay or just support the application or how many forms of ID would be paid for (two local offers offered to keep copies of ID safe for young people)



11 of 20 offered young people support to join the electoral register



Using social media to keep in touch with young people



5 of 20 had the 'Mind of My Own' app to help care leavers keep in touch with the service



4 of 20 directed young people to Facebook pages to find out about events or contact their workers



4 of 20 referred to a newsletter for care leavers that contained information about events and ways to get involved

KENT



Offer Duke of Edinburgh for care leavers

PROMISING PRACTICE ■ STOCKPORT

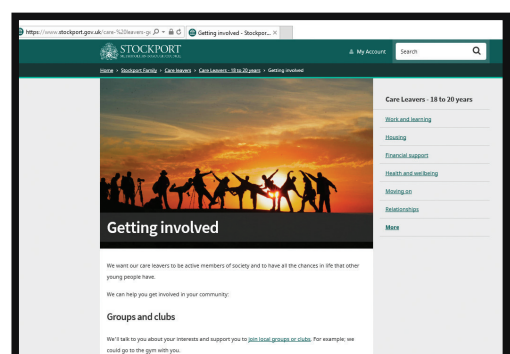
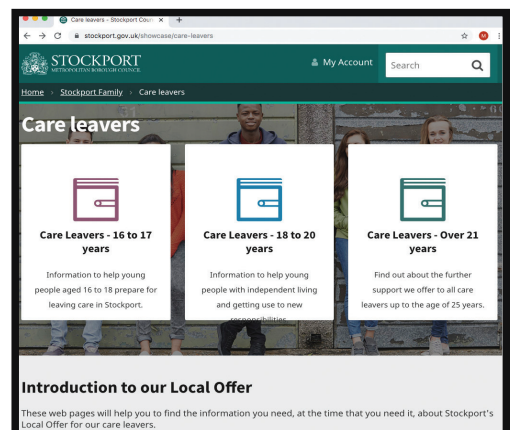
Supporting care leavers to participate in society and have fun

Stockport provides a wide range of activities to encourage care leavers to socialise, take part in activities and build supportive relationships. Two 'intensive support workers' who help coordinate the support and are available on Saturdays and during the evenings. The workers are there to support young people on a one to one basis, in addition to the support of Personal Advisors. They are on hand to help young people deal with crisis situations but also to help young people with community activities such as going to the gym or joining groups.

Stockport also commissions a service from Pure Insight who deliver a range of support and fun activities and opportunities for young people. Pure Insight focus on building relationships with young people which is aided by the 'care leaver engagement worker'. The services for care leavers include: Café Zest which runs every fortnight, a volunteer and peer mentoring programme, parent groups and arts groups. They also offer corporate grand-parenting and babysitting support.

'Young people like the fact that Pure Insight is a charity and not part of the statutory service, it has a different feel to it.'

Karen Bazell, Leaving Care Team Manager, Stockport

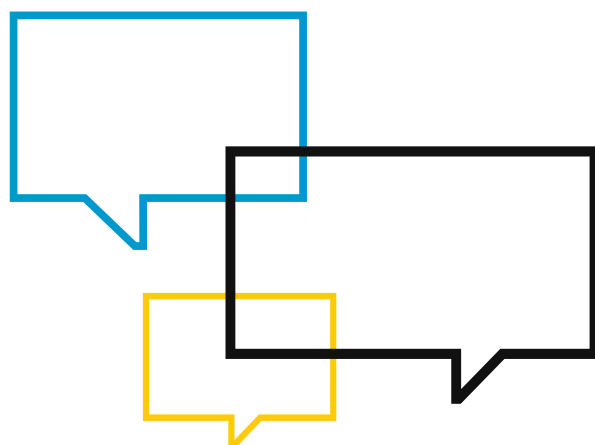


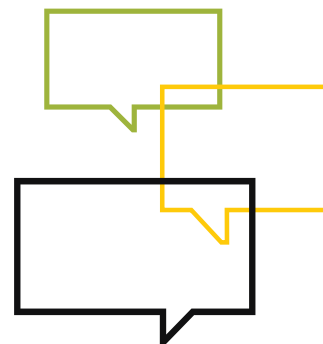
YOUNG PEOPLE SAID:

**Reflections: Participation in society**

Many local offers stated they helped their care leavers to get identity documents. However, there was significant variation in the level of detail and clarity. Also common was information about care leaver forums. Lot of local authorities included help with registering to vote.

Less frequently mentioned were ways to celebrate care leavers' achievements; help with driving lessons or different ways to keep in touch. Very few local offers mentioned there was a care leaver drop in venue or out of hours support available.





'OTHER' GROUPS OF CARE LEAVERS

“Some young people who were placed out of area while they were looked-after may wish to remain in that area once they leave care... In these circumstances, the well-established convention is that the ‘placing’ LA continues to meet any costs associated with their on-going support. The requirement to produce a local offer does not alter that long-standing approach and we would expect the local offer to apply equally to those young people.”

(DfE Care leaver local offer guidance, 2018:8)

We reviewed all the offers in terms of whether they made specific reference to a range of different ‘groups’ of care leavers such as: young parents, those in custody, disabled young people, unaccompanied asylum seeking young people and those who do not live in their local authority (i.e. were ‘out of area’).



7 of 20 offers gave details on support for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people (the types of information included help with legal advice, help at university, health support including checking immunisation or emotional support)



5 of 20 offers referenced support for care leavers who are parents (including support with parenting, mentors and allowances); only one local offer gave information on support for parents who no longer cared for their children



5 of 20 local offers talked about additional support for disabled care leavers (information mainly on financial arrangements and details of who delivered support)



3 of 20 offers referenced support to care leavers in custody (e.g. giving detail of allowance and visiting frequency)

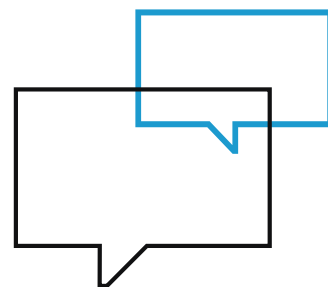


3 of 20 referenced support specifically for LGBTQ young people (this tended to be reference to local support groups)

YOUNG PEOPLE SAID:



Have workshops, support and awareness for LGBTQ care leavers and specialist support for young people from different countries available

**KNOWSLEY**

Information given on a local young people's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender support group.

STAFFORDSHIRE

Support offered to care leavers to help them to access parenting support and community activities to help them and their baby to develop their confidence and skills.

KENT

Provide bespoke training to resettlement officers in local prisons where care leavers are detained.

DEVON

Have produced an 'easy' read version of their local offer.

Reflections: 'Other groups' of care leavers

There was little information found in local offers about additional support for specific groups of care leavers (such as those who were parents, in custody or disabled). When support was included, this tended to be taken directly from the DfE guidance and not specific to local circumstances.

Hardly any of the offers had clear information about what the local offer meant for young people who were living outside of their responsible local authority area.



FINANCE

The DfE guidance on local offers does not have a separate section on financial support for care leavers. However, we mapped the additional support in relation to finance and found four main areas of additional support: (1) specialist project or worker relating to financial support; (2) help with savings; (3) financial crisis support and (4) details on personal financial allowance.

Specialist finance project or worker



5 of 20 referenced different ways for care leavers to get help with money management / budgeting training, either from the leaving care service or via local specialist organisations



3 of 20 local offers said there was a benefit or finance adviser available via leaving care team

Savings



12 of 20 local offers indicated that care leavers may have a Junior ISA and that there would be support available to access this



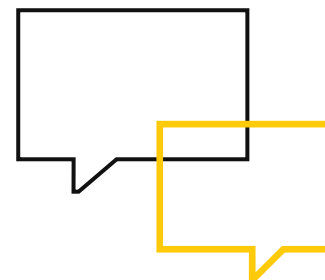
13 of 20 specifically cited that help would be provided to care leavers to open bank account. One offer explained the contingency arrangements they had in place if young people were not able to open a bank account (e.g. LA card that the LA can add money on to)

KENT



Described plans to develop a peer to peer financial mentoring model, where former care leavers could support current care leavers by sharing basic advice and support with issues relating to personal finances and budgeting.

YOUNG PEOPLE SAID:



Financial crisis support



8 of 20 clarified that financial help in emergencies may be available in 'exceptional circumstances'. The arrangements for accessing this support varied: for example, set amount on pre-paid card; money to be treated as a loan which young person needed to pay back; money deducted from setting up home allowance; food vouchers given or referral to voluntary organisation such as food bank



2 of 20 local offers described support during a sanction period or benefit delay / waiting period. This included help with food, heating, transport pass but no cash given or help given to apply for government loan or food vouchers

Personal finance allowance



12 of 20 gave information on birthday gifts or money. Often the amount was specified ranging from £25 up to £150; the amounts detailed sometimes differed by age; sometimes there were age cut off points – older care leavers did not always appear to be entitled to birthday gifts



9 of 20 local offers mentioned money or gifts at festival or Christmas time

Reflections: Financial support

The most common types of additional support related to help with accessing the Junior ISA. Lots of local offers explained they gave their care leavers a birthday gift though there was much variation in the amounts specified and sometimes lack of clarity in whether this applied to older care leavers such as those age 22 or older. A number of local offers detailed the support they gave to care leavers in 'crisis' situations. Some local offers referred to a separate finance policy that young people could look at to find out more specific information regarding finance.

Much less common was information on 'budget training' or access to financial specialist workers.

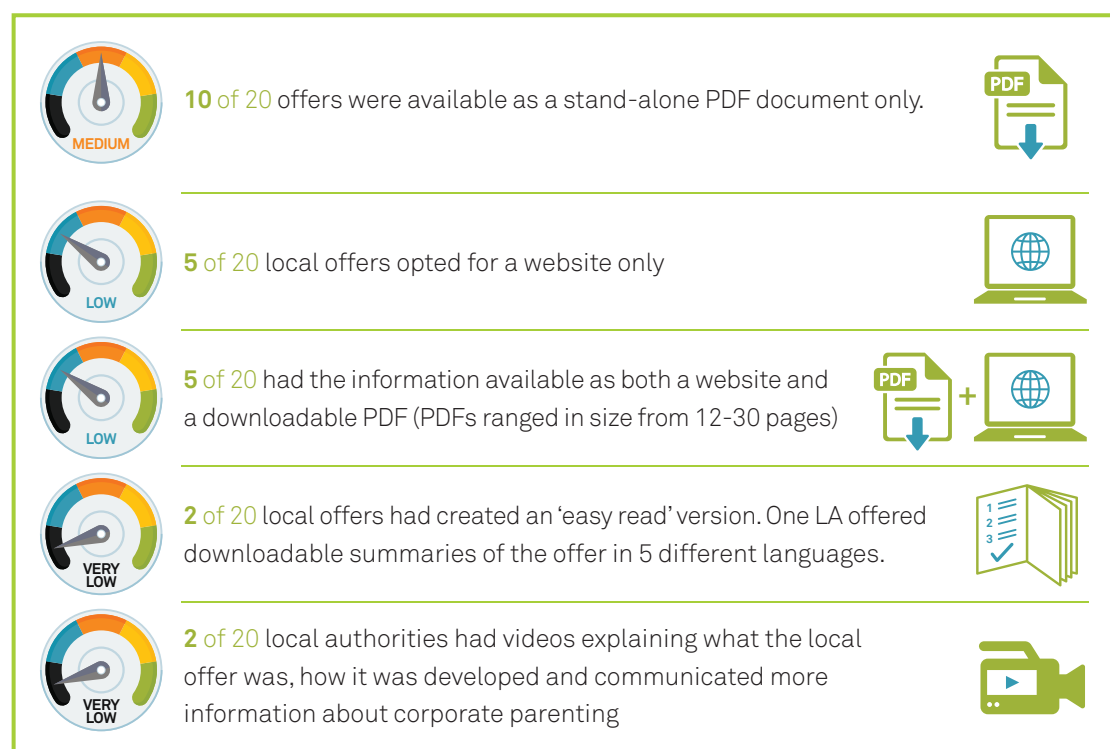
FORMAT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL OFFER

“ The local offer should be easily available and accessible to all care leavers in the local authority area. This may mean that it is made available in a number of formats including printed hard copies, online digital copies and in different languages as appropriate. ”

(DfE Care leaver local offer guidance, 2018:7 and 9)

While mapping the content of local offers, we also recorded information about the format of the offer and information about its development. The most common way of presenting information about the local offer was to follow the headings within the DfE guidance. A small number of LAs broke down the offer into age categories.

Format



GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Have summaries of the local offer available to download on the council website in Arabic, Kurdish, Pashto, Vietnamese and Tigrinya.

YOUNG PEOPLE SAID:



“ When developing their local offer, local authorities are required to consult with relevant persons, which means care leavers and organisations or people that represent care leavers. Local authorities should consider how best to engage and consult with as many of their care leavers as possible. ”

(DfE Care leaver local offer guidance, 2018:7)

Young people's involvement

Most local offers referred in some way to developing the offer alongside young people.



5 of 20 offers explicitly incorporated the voice of young people throughout the offer. One had a foreword authored by a care leaver, others included 'top tips' from young people throughout and displayed 'what young people said' notes on each section of the offer

Corporate parenting

Often offers referred to corporate parenting principles and 'pledges' to young people and a few made reference to their role as 'corporate grandparents'.



4 of 20 offers included forewords written by lead members and senior corporate parenting representatives or included contact details

Reflections: Format and development of the local offer

The findings from the mapping exercise on the format and development of the local offer echo the findings of the Local Offer Survey; namely whilst much work went into developing the offer they are far from finalised. Many LAs report they will continue to work on getting enhanced support for care leavers from their partners and the wider corporate family. The local offer is a good opportunity to bring together in one place all the support LAs can give their care leavers. It is important that the format of the local offer is appealing, clear and easily accessible to all care leavers.



CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The local offer should play an important part in supporting care leavers; it provides an opportunity to bring together in one place all the support LAs can give their care leavers. It also provides further impetus to ask for more support from corporate parents and partners.

It was evident that a lot of work had been undertaken by LAs (often in partnership with young people) to develop meaningful and in some cases, ambitious offers for care leavers. Some new opportunities had been generated as a result. But our findings show that there were also examples of local offers that appeared to contain very little in terms of additional support for care leavers.

Our mapping exercise highlighted variation in types of additional support offered to care leavers across the country. Some level of variation is inevitable, as services should be based on the wishes of local care leavers who will have different priorities in different areas. The additional support we found in some - but not yet all local offers - is likely to be helpful to all care leavers, regardless of where they live.

Attention needs to turn to how to make this happen. We think that the Care Leaver Local Offer Toolkit can play a pivotal role in this. LAs, young people and others can use the toolkit to learn from each other and address the current variation and work towards making all local offers as robust, accessible and ambitious as young people deserve them to be.

Here at NLCBF we are committed to continuing to support our members and young people with this work at the local level, while also engaging with national policy makers and partners to take forward the key messages from this work. We urge others to do the same.



THANK YOU

NLCBF and the authors would like to thank young people from the Young Peoples Benchmarking Forum (YPBMF) including Jasmin, Joe, Francis, Harlie, Dalal and Miguel. We would also like to thank members of the working group: Jane Hylton, Karen Bazell, Matt Clayton, Steve Swinhoe and Mark Bone and the member authorities who supported the work by responding to the survey and giving up their time to be interviewed. Thanks also to Rana Adnan for his technical support with the mapping database.

“I hope that the Forum’s work can help with the postcode lottery of services for young people. Some councils have the resources to offer really good services and other councils who have less resources aren’t able to keep up. This only penalises young people.

My advice to local authorities is to work with young people to continue to improve the offer”

Joe Shaw, YPBMF Champion

“This toolkit is a game changer. For the first time we’re able to systematically map what is offered to care leavers across the country. It highlights discretionary extras that local authorities are offering such as paying for driving lessons, supporting young people through university and more. Things we would do for our own children.

I now urge local authorities, partner organisations and young people themselves to use the toolkit to continue to raise the bar and provide the very best services for our care leavers.”

Mark Riddell, MBE, National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers

“We would use the audit tool to map my provision and to help stimulate thinking about what else we could / should be offering in our local offer. For me our current offer is a starting place and I would hope this continues to develop, drawing on others ideas is really helpful as I expect different Local Authorities have some parts they are strong and others where more work is needed. I would use this tool with decision makers and key partner agencies to try and encourage more thought and commitment to continue to enhance our offer.”

(NLCBF member)

The printed toolkit comprises of:

- **Guide and Key Messages** - describes the background of the project, summarises key findings and recommendations
- **Survey Findings Summary** - details members' views and experiences of developing their local offer
- **Audit Tool** - based on systematic mapping of a sample of 20 members' local offers. This tool helps local authorities (with young people) review and improve their local offer

If you are an NLCBF member, you can access the full Care Leaver Local Offer Toolkit here: www.leavingcare.org or contact nlcbf@catch-22.org.uk

Additional online toolkit resources:

- **Mapping** - interactive tool that systematically maps a sample of 20 members' local offers
- **Thematic Report** - full write-up of the project findings from which key messages are based
This document is the Thematic Report
- **Survey Findings** - full version



NLCBF The National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum is a national network of over 100 local authorities promoting the development of quality leaving care services with member authorities and partner organisations through a process of benchmarking and shared learning on a national scale. Our aim is to achieve the best outcomes for young people making the transition from care to adulthood.

Catch22 is a social business, a not for profit business with a social mission. For over 200 years we have designed and delivered services that build resilience and aspiration in people and communities.

Authors: **Sarah Wilkinson and Dr Claire Baker with Lisa Holland.**

November 2019

Twitter: **@nlcbf**