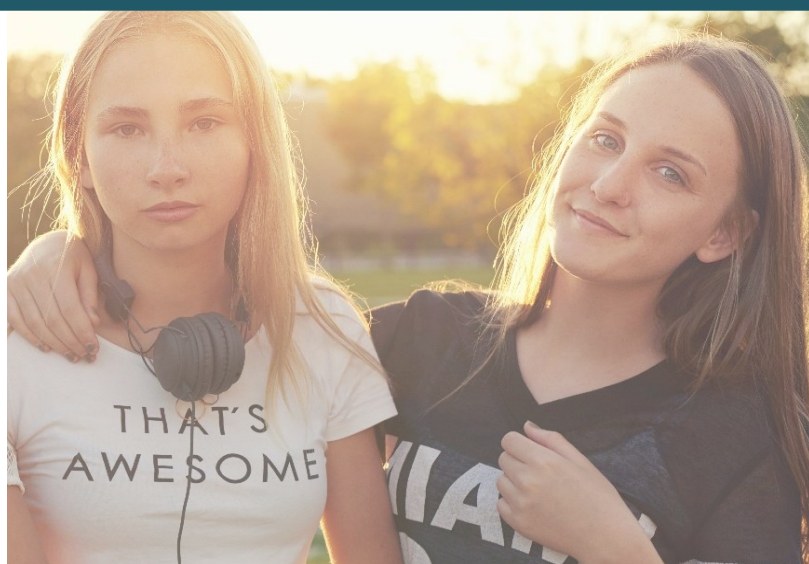


# LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS



This is our offer to you, so you know what to expect and what help and guidance we will support you with throughout your journey from care to adulthood



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## Your Personal Adviser

**Name:**

**Telephone:**

**Email:**

**Normal working hours:**

## What is our local offer to care leavers?

All local authorities have a legal obligation to support young people make the transition from care to independence. It is our responsibility to ensure you know what services are available to you and what you can expect while you are in our care. Our local offer to care leavers is reviewed every 3-years to ensure it is up to date and reflects any changes in legislation.

## What does our leaving care service do?

You will remain within the children in care teams until you are 18 years old when you will transition to our 18+ Care Leavers Service, however, you can become a care leaver prior to this, and pathway planning should start as soon as you turn 16 years old to plan your transition.

When you become looked after or a child in care, Kent County Council becomes your corporate parent. Being a corporate parent means that it is our responsibility to be good parents to all our young people in care. Being a good parent means keeping you safe but also ensuring that you can grow, learn, and provide you with the level of support to recognise and meet your individual needs with the purpose of enabling you to make a successful transition to independence.

We can assist you in accessing housing, education, training, work experience and health services; whilst being here to support you to make the most of leaving our care; we are also able to assist you by providing practical advice, emotional support, encouragement, and financial advice to help you make the most of your journey through the care system and beyond.

Our care leavers service is part of Integrated Childrens Services and has a legal obligation to support and provide you with assistance up until the age of 25. Your active participation and engagement in that support is important but can cease at age 21 if you do not wish to receive an ongoing service at that point.

## Our contact details

**Telephone:** 03000 421 124

**Email:** [18+businesssupport@kent.gov.uk](mailto:18+businesssupport@kent.gov.uk)

**Address:** Worrall House, 30 Kings Hill Avenue, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4AE

**Address:** Kent County Council's 18+ Care Leavers Service, C/O Dover Civic Centre, White Cliffs Business Park, Dover, CT16 3PJ.

**Out of hour emergency support (from 17:00):** 03000 419 191

If you have any concerns about the care you receive during your time with us, please do not hesitate to contact us directly, as we are here to listen. We care. If you cannot contact your Personal Advisor as they are not at work, you can contact the duty team. The duty team are available 09:00-17:00, weekdays.

## Emergency contact information

**Police, ambulance and fire brigade**

**Telephone:** 999

**Ready Homes officers**

Contact details can be found on your home's notice board.

**Duty Team**

**Telephone (09:00-17:00 Monday-Friday):** 03000 421 124

**Front Door Service**

**Telephone (out of hours):** 03000 419 191

## Our drop ins and information zone locations

We run a number of drop ins across Kent, some are on a weekly basis others on monthly basis, this is an opportunity for you to meet with Personal Advisors in the community along with a number of our specialist Personal Advisors, to get advice and support around housing, benefits, mental health, education, training and employment or to just meet up and socialise with friends. We hope to see you there!

Please call the duty number on 03000 421 124 or your Personal Adviser for information about where your local drop in is. You can also find the drop in information on our Facebook page called: 18 Plus Care Leavers Service Kent.

## Other services that provide leaving care services

All young people who meet the criteria for leaving care services but are supported in other teams and services, can access the same support and assistance as those in the 18+ service and will be supported by Case workers in those teams, including Social Workers, Social Work Assistants or Case Officers who will carry out the same tasks as a Personal Adviser.

When reference is made to Personal Advisers or the 18+ Care Leavers Service in this document, this includes Social Work staff and Managers in other teams fulfilling the Personal Adviser duties. Reference to the children in care teams or Social Workers may apply to Social Workers in the Strengthening Independence Service

## Feedback and suggestions for Virtual School Kent

**Email:** [vsk\\_participation@kent.gov.uk](mailto:vsk_participation@kent.gov.uk) and [VSK@kent.gov.uk](mailto:VSK@kent.gov.uk)

**Telephone:** 03000 412777

## Useful contact information

There are many services available which can offer advice and support to you, detailed below. If you are looking for other support, please speak to your Personal Adviser who might be able to signpost you to a service who can help.

## Complaints or compliments

You have the right to complain if you are unhappy with the services you receive. We encourage you to try to find a solution with your Personal Adviser or Team Manager in the first instance.

**Email:** [cscomplaints@kent.gov.uk](mailto:cscomplaints@kent.gov.uk)

**Telephone:** 03000 410 304

**Text:** 07860 008 025 – start your message with the word ‘complaint’

**Address:** Kent Children's Social Services, Customer Care, Kroner House, Eurogate Business Park, Ashford, TN24 8XU

**Website:** [Kent County Council](http://Kent County Council)

## Financial, mental health, employment and accommodation support services

### Become Charity

A charity that supports care leavers looking for help and advice about the care system, rights and entitlements.

**Telephone:** 0800 023 2033

**Email:** [advice@becomecharity.org.uk](mailto:advice@becomecharity.org.uk)

### Citizens Advice Bureau

We provide free, confidential, and impartial advice. Our goal is to help everyone find a way forward, whatever problem they face. People come to us with all sorts of issues. You may have money, benefit, housing, or employment problems. You may be facing a crisis or just considering your options.

**Telephone:** 08444 111 444

## Eligible young people

Eligible young people are aged 16 or 17, have been looked after for a period or periods totalling at least 13 weeks starting after their 14th birthday and are still in care. This total does not include a series of pre-planned short-term placements of up to four weeks where the child has returned to the parent. There is a duty to support these young people up to the age of 18, wherever they are living.

The statutory definition and requirements to undertake a needs assessment, prepare a pathway plan, keep the pathway plan under review and appoint a Personal Adviser are covered by Regulations 42, 43 and 44 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010.

## Relevant young people

Relevant young people are aged 16 or 17 and are no longer looked after, having previously been in the category of eligible young child when in care, that is, they have been looked after for a period, or periods, totalling at least 13 weeks starting after their 14th birthday and up to their 16th birthday. However, if after leaving care, a young person returns home for a period of 6 months or more to be cared for by a parent and the return home has been formally agreed as successful, they will no longer be a relevant young person.

A young person is also relevant if, having been in care for three months or more, they are then detained after their 16th birthday either in a hospital, remand centre, young offenders' institution, or secure training centre. There is a duty to support relevant young people up to the age of 18, wherever they are living.

The statutory definition and requirements to stay in touch with the young person, undertake a needs assessment, unless this was done when the young person was eligible, prepare and keep the Pathway plan under review, appoint a Personal Adviser, unless this was done when the young person was eligible, and provide accommodation and assistance to meet their needs in relation to education, training or employment are now covered by Regulations 4 to 9 of the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010.

## Former relevant young people

Former relevant young people are aged 18 to 25 and have left care having been previously either eligible, relevant or both. There is a duty to consider the need to support these young people wherever they are living.

1. Were you in care on or after your 16th birthday?
  - No → You have no leaving care status.
  - Yes → Go to Step 2.
2. Are you still in care and under 18?
  - Yes → You are an eligible child.
  - No → Go to Step 3.
3. Did you leave care after turning 16 but before turning 18?
  - Yes → You are a relevant child.
  - No → Go to Step 4.
4. Are you aged 18 to 25 and were previously an eligible or relevant child?
  - Yes → You are a former relevant young person.

- No → Go to Step 5.
5. Were you in care for at least one day after your 16th birthday, but not for 13 weeks total since age 14?
- Yes → You are a young person qualifying (YPQ).
  - No → You have no leaving care status.

The statutory definition and requirements to stay in touch with the young person, keep the pathway plan under review, continue the appointment of a Personal Adviser and provide financial assistance near where the young person is employed or seeking employment to enable the young person to pursue education or training remain unchanged; they are now covered by Regulations 4 to 9 of the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010.

These duties continue until the young person becomes 21 or, where the pathway plan sets out a programme of education or training beyond 21, they continue so long as the young person pursues the programme. The duty to pay a higher education bursary also continues, as before, for those who started a course of higher education after 2008.

Our duties are extended in relation to former relevant young people who inform us of their wish to receive a service after the age of 21 and under the age of 25. In relation to these young people, we have a duty to:

- Appoint a Personal Adviser.
- Carry out an assessment of the needs to determine what assistance, if any, would be appropriate to provide.
- Prepare a pathway plan.
- Give assistance to the extent that the young person's educational or training needs require it. The kinds of assistance are contributing to expenses incurred by the young person in living near the place where they are, or will be, receiving education or training; or making a grant to enable the young person to meet expenses connected with their education and training.
- For those in full-time education, aged 16-19, access to the bursary fund which came into place in 2011.
- The duties of the Local Authority subsist for as long as the young person pursues the programme of education or training in accordance with the pathway plan, and the Local Authority may disregard any interruption in the education or training if it is satisfied that the young person will resume it as soon as is reasonably practicable.

In each case where a young person requests this support, we will need to assess the appropriateness of the course and how it will help the young person to achieve their ambitions. The extent of the practical and financial assistance provided will reflect the type of course, whether full or part-time, and the young person's existing income.

## Qualifying young people

Qualifying young people are aged 16 and over and under the age of 21, and are:

- Subject to a special guardianship order, or were when you reached 18, and were looked after immediately before the making of that order.
- At any time after 16, but whilst still a child, were looked after, accommodated, or fostered.

Looked after, accommodated or fostered includes:

- Looked after by a local authority.
- Accommodated by or on behalf of a voluntary organisation.
- Accommodated in a private children's home.
- Accommodated for a consecutive period of at least 3 months, including even before the child was 16, by a Health Authority, CCG or Local Authority providing education, in:
  - A care home
  - Independent hospital
  - National Health Service or Foundation Trust
  - Privately fostered - but do not qualify as eligible, relevant, or former relevant

Where a Local Authority looked after, accommodated, or fostered a young person, and they are deemed as qualifying for advice and assistance, and has a duty to take reasonable steps to contact them with a view to advising and assisting them. They may receive support, advice, and assistance, including, in exceptional circumstances, financial or accommodation support, wherever they are living.

If in full-time further or higher education, this may include contributing financial assistance to living expenses relating to their education or training or making a grant towards meeting their education or training expenses, including in relation to securing vacation accommodation up to the age of 24.

## What you can expect from us

Our local offer for care leavers has the objective to provide details of the support available when you are aged 18-21yrs and 22-25-years-old. We have consulted with the Young Adult Council that advised us their views and opinions on the content of our offer.

The government has introduced corporate parenting principles that require all departments within a local authority to recognise their role as a corporate parent and encourage them to look at the support and services they provide. This requirement extends to all parts of a local authority including local councils. These principles require corporate parents:

- To act in the best interest and promote the physical, mental health and wellbeing of those children and young people.
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To consider the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
- To help those children and young people to gain access to, and make the best use of, the 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.
- To ensure those children and young people are safe and have stability in their home lives, relationships, education or workplace.
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

## What is the role of my Personal Advisor?

When you turn 18-years old, your Social Worker will handover to a Personal Adviser, who will be your main point of contact and continue supporting you up until the age of 22 years. You will then

be transferred to our post-22 team, who will either provide you an allocated Personal Adviser if required or provide support by the 18+ Duty Service until your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Your Personal Adviser will be identified for you after you become 17-years old; this is for you to build a relationship with them before they become your allocated worker, we refer to this as transition working. Your Personal Adviser will stay connected and arrange meetings, they will visit you at home, university and arrange out of county and community visits in liaison with you. It is important for your Personal Adviser to remain in contact with you, so please tell them your preferred method of contact, they will also need to meet you on a regular basis in person.

The visit from your Personal Adviser is your chance to allow your voice to be heard, speak to them about any problems and provide you advice, information, and guidance to help you make the best choices and decisions that enable you to take responsibility for yourself and become independent.

The relationship between yourself and your Personal Adviser is important to make the most of what you can access through our service. In exceptional circumstances you can request to have your Personal Adviser changed. It is important to speak to your Personal Adviser first, to work out any issues that you may have. To request a new Personal Adviser, you will need to speak to one of our Team Managers to discuss this.

You will be provided with your Personal Adviser's mobile number and email address. They work from 09:00-17:00, Monday to Friday and can offer you support during that time. Our Out of Hours number is 03000 419 191. Occasionally our Personal Advisers move on to other roles, if this does happen then your Personal Adviser will say goodbye to you at least 2-weeks before this. If this does not happen, we will explain to you why.

You can also attend the drop-in sessions in your local area. There will be other Personal Advisers and often other professionals like Mental Health Social Worker, Asylum Social Worker, Education, Training and Employment specialist, Welfare Benefit Adviser, Accommodation and Housing Advisers, who can offer you advice, assistance, and support.

## What is my Pathway Plan?

Every young person between 16-25-years old who is in care or is a care leaver is provided with a pathway plan. Your pathway plan is started by your Social Worker when you turn 16; this will be reviewed with your care plan twice per year and when you turn 18, your Personal Adviser will take over the duties in managing this for you.

Your first pathway plan meeting will be chaired by your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and evaluated with your care plan and personal education plan, should you have one. The pathway plan has information on the best way for us to support you in your transition to independence and adulthood. This can include other key professionals, agencies and support networks involved in your life.

Your pathway plan is written in such a way that should meet your individual needs, and it will capture your hopes for the future, it will also include your views and key messages. Your pathway plan will be regularly reviewed with you, and this will take place at least every 6-months. These meetings will ensure that your goals and milestones are still correct and being met. It is an agreement between you, your Personal Adviser and the local authority about how you want that support provided and who is going to do what to help you achieve those identified goals and aspirations.

## Your safety

As your corporate parent, your safety is our upmost priority, and we will do our best to keep you safe and ensure you have a safe place to live. We will work with outside agencies to support you to ensure your safety, this may include the police, education, health, and housing.

## A safe home and keeping safe

If your home is unsafe, we will collaborate with you to move somewhere that is safe. Please make sure you tell us when you are worried about something and do not allow strangers into your home. Report incidences to your Personal Adviser or the police if you feel you are in danger. We will provide you with guidance and practical advice on how to keep yourself practically and emotionally safe and we may refer you to a counsellor or mentor to enable this. Your Personal Adviser may contact emergency services if serious safeguarding concerns are raised about your safety. You must collaborate with us and other organisations to keep you safe and ensure you attend appointments.

## Keeping you in touch

Where appropriate, Personal Advisers can help you to stay connected with relatives and friends that you have met whilst in care. If you have lost contact with your family and friends or would like to re-establish a relationship with them, we could offer a referral to Lifelong Links, a service that helps find and bring together people who care about you.

It is important for you to tell us who you wish to be in touch with, you might have lost touch with friends or family, and we will need your help to support you in finding these people.

## If you are in custody

We will offer you support if you are detained in custody. We work closely with prisons and probation service to monitor and support you as you enter or leave custody. We will establish close working partnerships with the resettlement officers and the local prisons.

A financial payment of £10 per week is provided for those aged 18-21 years, for those young people described as former relevant while they are in custody, who are engaging in positive activities whilst in prison, e.g. training and education.

Personal Advisers will continue to visit 6-8 weekly and communicate with your support network. During the final sentence over a 12-week period your children in care Social Worker or Personal Adviser will be exploring your housing and support options before you are released. The discharge plan will be formulated into the pathway plan. We will work with Probation, NACRO Charity and Offender Management Unit.

## Your money

This section will provide you with information on what financial assistance may be available to you. The amount of financial support that you will be provided with depends on your age and the accommodation that you stay in. If, following a mental capacity assessment, you do not have capacity to manage your money, we will support you to identify who should look after it for you and support you to make the decisions you can. There is a lot of information for care leavers on the

[Kent Cares Town](#) website. The [Preparing for Adulthood](#) website has a lot of ideas to support young people with disabilities.

## Universal Credit

Your Social Worker will help you to start the application for Universal Credit in the 4 weeks leading up to your 18th birthday. It is a single monthly payment for people in or out of work. There are two parts to it – a payment to you for your expenses and a payment to help you pay your rent. The rent part must be paid to your landlord. We can arrange for the rent element to be paid direct to your landlord.

If you have applied for benefits and are waiting to be paid, you will be paid 2 weeks essential living allowance from your Social Worker. After that you can apply for an advance payment of universal credit.

You need to help us to help you make your claim for Universal Credit. You must attend your appointments at the Job Centre and engage with your work coach. Failure to do so could lead to a sanction on your claim and Universal Credit not being paid. If you receive the rent element of Universal Credit you must pay this over to your landlord. If you are sanctioned and do not receive your payment, we will refer you to your local food bank.

## Personal independence payment

If you have a disability, you may be eligible for personal independence payments (PIP) from the Department of Work and Pensions, which your Personal Adviser can help you apply for if you need assistance. We will help you with the claiming process. You must keep your Personal Adviser informed of the progress of the claim and attend any assessments to which you are invited.

## Essential living allowance

We will support you to claim Universal Credit if you are out of work, however if you are not eligible to claim Universal Credit due to your pending Home Office Immigration Status in the U.K. or are 16 or 17 years old, we will offer you a weekly essential living allowance (ELA). This payment will be the equivalent to state benefits, and you will be expected to use this for your essential living costs such as food, including rent and household utility bills. These bills could include gas, electricity, and water.

If you have a Kent card upon transfer because your Social Worker has applied for this, then we can continue making payments on that. However, if you are already 18 and have not got this, the essential living allowance payment will need to be arranged by your Personal Adviser. Once you have leave to remain and become entitled to claim Universal Credit, it is important that you do so as quickly as possible as you will no longer be entitled to ELA and Your Social Worker or Personal Advisor will need to cancel your Kent Card, any overpayments made to the card will be requested to be paid back.

Should your Home Office Immigration Status become appeal rights exhausted, your essential living allowance will be changed to £40 per week. This will also cease once a Human rights Assessment has been completed or where you are no longer entitled to a service from us. At this point you will need to seek financial support from the Home Office.

## Savings

If you have been in care for a long period of time you will have a savings account that you are able to access when you turn 18. Further information about the savings scheme can be found on the [Share Foundation](#) website.

You will need to engage with Share Foundation to receive your savings. You will need to provide the necessary paperwork including your identification and bank details. Prior to your 18th birthday, your Social Worker will support you to contact Share Foundation to access your savings.

Depending on how long you have been in care your savings may be a substantial amount. You can use this money to help you with your future.

## Budgeting

Being able to manage your money is important when moving to independence. If you are not aware how to budget and spend your money wisely then you may struggle when you live on your own. We can offer you support in how to do this. Not being able to budget properly may affect you in the long-term and if you require budgeting support then speak to your Personal Adviser. In some cases, you may have access to a key/support worker where you are living who has dedicated time to help you. This can include helping you to budget. If appropriate, you will need to engage in the support hours offered from your accommodation provider to help you develop independent living skills.

## Setting up home allowance

We will offer you a setting up home allowance to buy essential items for when you move into your own independent accommodation. You can access your setting up home allowance and purchase essential items in a discussion with your Personal Adviser. This will need to be agreed in your pathway plan. You can access setting up home allowance up until your 25th birthday. From 1st April 2023, the value of setting up home allowance has increased to £3,000.

We will pay setting up home allowance in instalments of up to £500 once receipts have been provided verifying previous setting up home allowance payments. You will need to provide us receipts to show that only those essential items have been purchased. Alternately we can order your essential items online which will help to ensure you receive quality goods and do not need to pay out any money in advance.

If you are a parent and have care of the child, we can support you with an additional £200 on top of your setting up home allowance as a one-off payment regardless of the number of children you have. At times you may need essential items of furniture before you move onto independent living; one of our Team Managers must agree costs and only essential items will be considered.

We will support and promote you to progress into independent living in the community, we can provide additional financial support to cover accommodation deposit, 1-months' rent in advance and holding fees in addition to the £3,000 setting up home allowance. We will support you to access a specialist tenancy training to prepare you for this.

We will hold back £500 of the £3,000 setting up home allowance to cover any rent arrears or payment for damages that occur before you reach the point of moving. You must make agreed payments for rent, and you must not damage property or properties deliberately.

## Bursaries for education

Bursaries or money for your education and training can be provided. The bursary for care leavers in Higher Education is up to a maximum of £4,000 provided over 4 years of study, £1000 per academic year, paid in 3 instalments in mid-November, mid-February, and mid-May each academic year upon evidence received of attendance and progress being made.

We can provide financial assistance to help purchase IT equipment and laptops for young people up to the age of 21, or those in Higher Education, up to the age of 25 years, who are in full time further or higher education where there is a need. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and be for a maximum of £300 to help towards these costs. We will assess, on a case-by-case basis, support and financial assistance for college travel fare up to the age of 25.

We need you to work in partnership with us and your education and training provider to ensure you are supported and receiving all the support you need from them. This will involve you taking part in discussions and providing evidence about your progress and attendance before bursary payments are issued. Young adults completing part time higher education course, will be entitled to access the Bursaries to help them meet the expenses associated with their course. However, they will not be entitled to vacation rent as they should not need to identify temporary accommodation for the holiday periods.

## Emergency support for essential items

For emergency support for essential items such as food, we will support you to access food banks and access hygiene packs through our community Drop Ins. A small number of food boxes and hygiene packs are stored at our local offices Any emergency financial support will need to be agreed by a Team Manager, in exceptional circumstances which may include:

- If you are unable to claim benefits
- If you are waiting for your benefits to start

If you have applied for Universal Credit, we expect you to apply for an advance payment. We will ask for proof of your situation, and we fully understand that emergencies do happen. However, it is our expectation that if you are claiming your Universal Credit or receiving money from employment, that you budget for emergencies. Please remember there may be a limit on how many times you can access a food bank; you can sign up to social supermarkets and free food Apps such as Olio.

## Clothing allowance

For young people aged 18-21 years in receipt of benefits or on an apprenticeship that is paid at below the minimum wage income we will pay £120 per year, paid in two separate amounts of £50 in the summer and £70 paid in the winter seasons. Payments will be made during the months of May, summer £50, and September, winter £70. The preferred payment method for clothing allowance payment is an e-voucher, wherever possible. To receive the clothing allowance, young people would need to be claiming all eligible benefits and engaging with the service. We can order clothing online for you.

## Birthday money

This is arranged by the children in care team and your Social Worker. Please speak to your Social Worker about this before you turn 18-years old. £30 paid on 17th birthday and £60 paid on 18th birthday.

## TV licence and contents insurance

For young people aged 18-21 years in receipt of benefits, on an apprenticeship below the minimum wage income or in receipt of essential living allowance, we will pay their full cost of the TV licence, for the first year in your own private rented independent accommodation.

After the first year, we will support you to set up the most suitable method to start paying the TV licence yourself. Please note the amount of TV license can increase each year as published on the [TV Licensing](#) website.

For young people aged 18-21 years in receipt of benefits or on an apprenticeship below the minimum wage, we will pay contents insurance of up to £100 per year for the first year in your own private rented independent accommodation. After the first year, we will support you to access most suitable method to start paying the content insurance premium yourself.

## Housing and Accommodation

[Spare Room](#)

[Right Move](#)

[Gumtree](#)

[Open Rent](#)

Local Estate Agents

## Employment and Education

[Indeed](#)

[Total Jobs](#)

[Open University](#)

[Kent Adult Education](#)

## Financial and Legal Support

[Citizens Advice](#)

[National Debt Line](#)

[Barclays Life Skills](#)

## Migrant and Refugee Support

[Migrant Help UK](#)

[Refugee Council](#)

## **Youth and Personal Development**

[Princes Trust](#)

[Cap UK](#)

## **Energy and Utility Advice**

[Ofgem](#)

[Energy Saving Trust](#)

## **Money Advice Service**

The Money Advice Service helps people manage their money. We do this directly through our own free and impartial advice service. We also work in partnership with other organisations to help people make the most of their money. We are an independent service, set up by government.

**Telephone:** 0300 500 5000

## **Your health**

Your health matters to us, being healthy does not only mean being physically healthy, but it also is defined by your mental and sexual health. There are a lot of services that are provided to ensure all aspects of being healthy are met.

### **Your doctor**

It is important to register with a GP; your Personal Adviser can help you, should you need help. This can often be done both in person and online and GP surgeries often have their own websites.

A GP treats common medical conditions and can refer you to other services if you have a specific condition that requires a specialist practitioner and expert care. The GP will make a referral to them on your behalf. You can also get some medical advice from your local pharmacy on more routine ailments and conditions.

You must provide details of your next of kin to your doctors and other key health services that you access. It is important to keep this up to date, for example, if you become a parent, who would be contacted in an emergency. In some situations, if you have no one else who can act for you as a next of kin you can name your Personal Adviser or Team Manager but please make sure you have discussed this with them first.

Specialist hospital treatment – If you're referred to hospital or other NHS premises for specialist NHS treatment or diagnostic tests by a doctor, dentist or another primary care health professional, you may be able to claim a refund of reasonable travel costs under the [Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme](#), if on a benefit like Universal Credit.

Accessing the right service – Health services in the U.K. are under great demand and it is useful to know that you can access services and support. The [best website to find out about health services](#) including registering with a GP: getting prescriptions, dentists, opticians etc is online or download the NHS App on your phone.

- Local Hospital Accident and Emergency or 999 would be for an emergency, such as risk to life or severe accident.

- NHS walk in and urgent care centres are available in most towns and can help with minor injuries and treatment.
- The GP can assess for non-emergency health care and direct people to the right services or make referrals to Hospital or other specialist community services.
- A pharmacy can give advice on some conditions, medication and their treatment.
- The NHS 111 number can be used for advice on any non-urgent medical matter or if you are unsure which service to use, along with any dental emergencies.

You are expected to pay for your travel and then claim back within 3 months. If you need any support with this, please contact your Personal Advisor, or if you are with the Young People's Team, then your allocated practitioner.

If you move home, it will be your responsibility to inform your GP and sign up with a different one. Sometimes surgeries can be busy, and you will need to be patient and persistent when calling to make an appointment.

You need to keep your Personal Adviser up to date with your GP and your next of kin details. All our care leavers have a health passport which is a record of your health needs and treatments including any immunisations you may have had so if you have any questions about this please speak to your Personal Adviser. Next of kin would be someone to contact if you become unwell such as an emergency contact, this does not have to be a family member but can be another trusted adult. Health services can provide interpreters if requested.

Your health information is private to you so if you need us to speak with health colleagues on your behalf, they will only share information if you give written consent. If you ever find yourself out, and in a medical emergency, using 'What Three Words' on your phone could help emergency services find your location.

If you are receiving benefits, you should be able to access free dental and optician care. They are also free if you are under 18 or are in full-time education. If you are awaiting asylum or appeal rights exhausted, we can support you to complete a HC2 certificate for help with health costs visit:

If you apply to the [NHS Low Income Scheme](#) and receive an HC2 certificate for help with health costs, you are entitled to:

- Free NHS prescriptions
- Free NHS dental treatment
- Free NHS sight tests
- Help with the cost of glasses or contact lenses
- Help with the cost of travelling to receive NHS treatment
- Free NHS wigs and fabric support

## Going to the dentist

Do not forget to go to the dentist for a check-up. The time between check-ups can vary from 3 months to 2 years, depending on how healthy your teeth and gums are and your risk of future problems.

It is important to be aware that most dentists accept both NHS and private patients, however, the number of NHS patients they accept may be limited and you may need to join a waiting list. If you are new to the area or have not registered with a dental practice, you can search for an NHS dentist near you on the [NHS website](#).

If you have not a dentist and need urgent treatment ring 111 and speak to a health advisor for options. Only attend Accident and Emergency if you have severe pain, heavy bleeding, or injuries to face or mouth or teeth. We are happy to help where we can, but we want to support you to be able to speak with dentists and opticians independently.

## Going to the opticians

Even if you have perfect vision you should go to the opticians to get your eyes checked at least every two years, or sooner if you think you need to. You might be entitled to a free NHS eye test and optical voucher to help towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses.

## Your mental health and emotional well-being

If you need someone to talk to about any concerns that you do not feel comfortable sharing with your Personal Adviser or a trusted person, then we can signpost you to relevant services that may be able to provide support.

The service has two experienced mental health professionals that can also provide some support and help you access the relevant services. Please speak to your Personal Adviser if you would like to meet with one of them and seek their support.

There are services available that can provide support in several life events that may present with difficulties. If you are struggling, speak up. There are a lot of people who are here to help you. To help you with your emotional wellbeing, it is important for you to engage with the services offered within Kent County Council and the community.

### Mind

0300 123 3393

86463

### Every Mind Matters

### Sane

0300 304 7000

### Kooth

### Barnardo's Boloh (mental health and wellbeing)

0800 151 2605

### Samaritans

116 123

[jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

### Papyrus

0800 068 41 41

07786 209 697

### Live Well Kent

0800 567 7699

### My view – Therapy service (Refugee Council)

The [Royal College of Psychiatrists](#) explain mental health information and conditions in different languages.

## Involve Kent moving forward service

Employs Care Leaver Navigators and is described as a social prescribing service. They Co-produce person centred, goal focused action plans with the care leaver which focus on what

matters to them and what they want to achieve. Support will be a combination of intensive support if/when needed, combined with elements of “Social Prescribing” and connecting to community services, groups and resources for support or to pursue an activity or interest. Visit [Involve Kent](#) or phone 03000 810 005. In addition, there are services specifically for asylum-seeking young people.

## Positive and healthy lifestyles

For those aged 18-25yrs, if you would like help to access leisure care, sport or fitness activities then speak to your Personal Adviser who can help you to see what is available in your local area for free leisure facilities. There are many free fitness facilities in local parks and beach fronts you can access. Sport is a great way to keep fit, healthy and stay connected.

We will help you to explore access to free leisure facilities in your local area. If you are accessing education, you may be able to access facilities from them or receive discounted rates.

[Kent Sport](#) has information about sport opportunities, including disability clubs and activities in Kent and Medway

[Live it Well](#) offers activities and support groups run by people with similar experiences

[Young Lives Foundation](#), offering advocacy, mentoring, befriending and activity programmes

For asylum-seeking young people,

Kent Refugee Action Network (KRAN) provide:

- Wellbeing and activities
- Football in Canterbury, Ashford and Folkestone
- Drama groups
- Cricket project
- Women's group
- Art sessions
- Summer trips and visits and more

For young people who have an Education, Health and Care Plan, there may be developmental and social opportunities that can be sourced to support you.

[Kent Active.](#)

## Sexual health and identity

If you need help and support with sexual health, your Personal Adviser will refer you to the right service. Your support worker or key worker may also give you advice and guidance.

If you are having sex or thinking about having sex it is important that you protect yourself against sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy by using a condom and planned contraception. If you do not feel comfortable in discussing this with your personal adviser, please see information provided.

[Gum.](#)

[Your Sexual Health Matters](#)

0800 328 3383

[Let Us Talk About It](#) has a helpful website which includes information on types of contraception and where to get this, consent, staying safe online, sexual health services and support for young people who identify as LGBTQ+.

For further links and support regarding LGBTQ+ please see the section on Your Identity, which has further links to organisations that provide support help and advice

[Live Well Kent.](#)  
[Be You Project.](#)

KCC has some [webpages with links](#) to services that can help with relationships, sex and the law, domestic abuse and the influence of drugs and alcohol on your relationships

Keep yourself safe, if you do not use a condom, you will be at risk of becoming a young parent and catching sexually transmitted infections. There are services that provide you with free condoms, contraception, pregnancy tests and much more.

## Drug and alcohol support

There are services that can help with drug and alcohol treatment, including advice, information, drop-in-services, structured treatment, counselling, harm reduction techniques. We can help you contact these services. If you need their help, please speak to your Personal Adviser.

East Kent: [Forward Trust](#)

0300 123 1186

West Kent: [Change Grow Live](#)

0844 225 0652

[Alcoholics Anonymous](#)

0800 917 7690

[Talk to Frank](#)

0300 123 6600

## Health passports

When you become a care leaver you will be given a health passport by the looked after children nurse at your last statutory health check, which will contain all your health information. Your health history will be a summary of your overall health and will be provided just before your 18th birthday.

This will be useful to use when you access health services and adult services. If you have a learning disability, you are entitled to have a free annual health check with your GP from the age of 14.

## Emotional health and wellbeing support services

Contact your Personal advisor who can signpost you to specialist support and access our mental health support service. There is also other support available to you, some of the services are listed below.

### **Mind**

Mind provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. Mind campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding. They will not give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets support and respect. Every year, one in four of us will experience a mental health problem. But hundreds of thousands of people are still struggling. Mind believe no one should have to face a mental health problem alone. They will listen, give you support and advice, and fight your corner.

You can use the Mind website.

**Telephone:** 0300 123 3393

## **Samaritans**

Samaritans can offer you a safe place to talk any time you like, in your own way – about whatever is getting to you. They will not judge you or tell you what to do, they will listen to you. Whatever you are going through, a Samaritan will face it with you. We are here 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They will be waiting for your call if you need them. If you want to keep up to date with news about Samaritans services, programmes, and events, you can subscribe to their newsletter. From time to time, they will include information about their fundraising activities and how you can get involved.

**Telephone:** 116 123.

## **YoungMinds**

YoungMinds are leading the fight for a future where all young minds are supported and empowered, whatever the challenges. They are here to make sure they get the best possible mental health support and have the resilience to overcome life's difficulties. The crisis in children and young people's mental health is real and it is urgent. More children and young people than ever before are reaching out for help with their mental health. But for those who take that brave step, help is much too hard to find. Together, we are changing this. We are fighting for young people's mental health. Join our fight. You can text the Young Minds Crisis Messenger, for free 24/7 support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health crisis. Trained volunteers answer all texts, with support from experienced clinical supervisors. Texts are free from EE, O2, Vodafone, 3, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, giffgaff, Tesco Mobile and Telecom Plus.

**Text:** 'YM' to 85258

## **Kent County Council Health**

Search 'health and wellbeing services in Kent.'

## **NHS health service**

Including doctors, dentists, opticians, mental health, and sexual health services.

## **Accommodation and housing options**

Housing is a fundamental need and so something that you will need to proactively engage with from your 18th Birthday. It is important to know your rights and your responsibilities. There are various kinds of housing options available to you some of which come with support. Your Social Worker and Personal Adviser will be visiting you and where you choose to live will be agreed in your Pathway Plan.

It is important to remember that the actions you take can really have influence in being successful in securing good quality sustainable accommodation. Working and earning an income, if you are able, is going to be one of the biggest tools in helping you achieve your accommodation goals. If you are studying and in education, you may have to compromise about the sort of accommodation you live in for the short term and work towards what you want; being in education and gaining qualifications will help give you a wider variety of options in the longer term.

## **Independent housing**

We will provide you with Rent in Advance and a deposit at least once to help you secure private rented accommodation. It is important to know that you are likely to have a greater range of choices for accessing private rented accommodation if you are in education, training, or paid employment, and can access our Rent Guarantor Scheme. Without these in place, your choices

are likely to be limited. Please speak to your Personal Adviser or a member of the housing team and they can give you more details about this offer.

Many young people start out sharing accommodation, sometimes with friends and sometimes with people they have never met before, and this often tends to be the cheapest option as you rent a room in a house and share the other costs or have them included as part of your single payment.

You will also need to be able to budget, cook and keep your home tidy. If you are living outside of Kent, we will advise you about your housing options for the area in which you wish to live, however we cannot give you any guarantees that suitable accommodation may be found.

When you are in independent accommodation you are responsible for yourself and for paying your bills, such as gas, electricity, council tax, water, and broadband. It is important to keep on top of your bills and to abide by your tenancy agreement, you can work with your Personal Adviser to help you with this as if you do not keep to your tenancy agreement, you may be at risk of eviction and homelessness.

Alternatively, if you are a young person who is claiming rent payments through Universal Credit and are not confident that you will be able to manage the responsibility of paying your rent to your landlord, you can speak to your work coach and arrange for this to be paid directly to them. Please speak to them, or your Personal Adviser, about direct payments to landlords.

It is an expectation that all our young people complete the tenancy training eLearning course prior to accessing their Setting up Home Allowance.

If you have needs which mean you require social housing, you can attempt to access the local housing authority's housing register. This is a long process and should not be relied upon, in all but a few cases. In most cases, you should be able to access work or benefits to pay for your rent in a private rented property. There is no guarantee that because you want social housing, you will be eligible or able to access this.

Landlords may ask for references, and we will be happy to provide a reference for you, but we will be honest with the Landlord. Please remember that if you are experiencing any difficulties with your housing it is always best to let someone like your Personal Adviser know so they can help you sort it out before it becomes too big.

## Rent guarantor scheme

In addition to providing you with rent in advance, we have a rent deposit and Rent Guarantor Scheme that can be accessed by care leavers, enabling them to seek housing in the private rented sector. You must be in employment or in higher education to ensure you can afford to pay the rent to be eligible for the Rent Guarantor Scheme. The scheme is available for those aged 18- 24yrs and will cease on your 25th birthday. This is called a Rent Guarantor Scheme and is for a maximum period of 12-months' only. The Rent Guarantor Scheme should not necessarily be continuous once a care leaver has demonstrated their ability to effectively manage a tenancy, however, where a care leaver needs a further "Rent Guarantor", because they continue to remain at University and need the help of this scheme to secure accommodation to complete their course of study then this can be given due consideration and agreement providing there have been no previous issues in managing the tenancy.

You must be able to show you can manage the rent payments and not get into debt. You must let your Personal Adviser know as soon as possible if your financial circumstances change and this

impacts on being able to pay your rent. Once you turn 25-years old, you will be responsible for your rent payments as the rent guarantor scheme will end at this point, if not prior to this if the maximum 12 months has ended.

## Tenancy training

We have developed a tenancy training programme online via our Delta training platform. This is a course designed as part of your preparation for independence to help you understand your rights and responsibilities about being a tenant and will give you some advice about other accommodation options. We would like all the young people we are working with to complete this course and access to some of our accommodation offer will be dependent on you successfully completing this such as the Rent Guarantor Scheme.

## Contracted shared accommodation

Kent County Council is not a housing provider and does not have a statutory duty to provide accommodation; however, we may be able to offer you some temporary accommodation for a period in our contracted shared accommodation houses often referred to as Ready Homes. This operates in two forms: there is supported shared housing for 16 and 17 years old and then unsupported shared accommodation for 18 to 19 years old.

This accommodation is time-limited, and as you would be sharing with other young people, it is important to understand that you will have a collective responsibility for maintaining a reasonable level of cleanliness and care for your home whilst you live there. You will be asked to sign an agreement setting out what those expectations are and what could happen if you breach them.

For 18- to 19-year-olds, it is expected that you will contribute to your accommodation costs, either via Universal Credit housing element payments made directly to your landlord or from your wages if you are working and earning money.

The purpose of this accommodation is to help provide you some stability and encourage you to learn the skills you need to manage your own tenancy. It is expected that you will move on from this accommodation by the age of 19.

## Staying put

If you and your foster carer agree, you can keep living in your foster home until you reach 21, this is called a Staying Put arrangement. You will be a lodger in their home, in that you will be renting a room from them, and you will be expected to pay a contribution for your keep including rent and utilities. Whilst here, you will be supported to develop your independent living skills further with your career. Once you turn 18 and cease to be in care, your foster carer becomes known as a host.

This will mean that you continue to receive that extra care and support you might need before taking on your own independent accommodation. Many young people are not ready to move into their own accommodation at 18 and this can be a good way of remaining part of a family and making sure you are confident in taking your next step towards independence. Staying put will help you maintain a supportive relationship with your carers and, if you decide to do this, we will still help you apply for independent accommodation at the age of 21.

Do not be in a rush to get your own property as independent living can be hard, so make sure you make the right choice for you.

## Kent Supported Homes

The 18+ service also run and managers a service called Kent Supported Homes, this is an accommodation option for young people from 16 to 21, where the young person lives in a “host’s” home where you are provided support to reach your independence. A young adult requesting to be placed in Kent Supported Homes (KSH) will be expected to learn the skills needed for them to live independently, but it is within a family environment like foster care. At 18 years of age a young adult will be expected to pay their rent and budget for their food. A young adult can remain in this form of supported accommodation until they are 21 years old.

## Housing support and plan

You can request a housing plan to be completed with one of our specialist Housing Personal Advisers that will help set out the options available to you, give you advice about what your best options are and help you think about what you can afford. This is in addition to and should complement your pathway plan which should also cover your accommodation needs and aspirations. Please ask your Personal Adviser about this if you would like to arrange this meeting.

## University accommodation and vacation periods

You will need to apply to Student Finance England to receive a student loan to cover the cost of your university rent during term time: you will be responsible for this. You can apply to [Student Finance England](#) to access financial support. We can pay your holiday accommodation rent if there is a need.

The amount paid will be agreed by the Head of the 18+ Care Leavers Service up to a maximum of the relevant Local Housing Allowance Rate. Holiday time means non-term time and each university will have an official start and end of term. It is important that you speak to your Personal Adviser and get this agreed before the end of term. If you do not use your accommodation, then you may be at risk of losing it.

If you are in receipt of a scholarship or bursary for your university rent to be paid for 52 weeks of the year, you will not be able to seek support with university holiday rent.

## Shared lives and supported living

If you are disabled or need more support than can be offered through Staying Put, Shared Lives might be a possible option for you, either with your current carers if they apply to become Shared Lives carers or another. Shared Lives can only be accessed via the Strengthening Independence Service Young People’s Team or one of the Adult Services Teams and should be considered by the Children in Care or the young people’s teams before you turn 18-years of age.

If you have extensive or more complex needs including housing needs a supported living provider may meet these, and exceptionally in a residential provision. The level of support you require from the provider will be detailed in your pathway plan.

## Young persons supported accommodation and floating support service

There are some organisations who provide supported accommodation in the community, these are often managed by a staff team working with you and other young people living in the same accommodation where you can get some support.

If you feel this is the right sort of accommodation for you then your Personal Adviser can make an application to them on your behalf. However, there is often limited availability in these types of accommodation option, and it will be time limited, so you can only stay there up to your 18th Birthday.

It is important to remember to engage with your support worker as they will help you access local services and connect with your local community and, if you have any problems with settling in, your support worker will help you.

## Council tax

Council tax is a payment for local services and many people over 18 are liable to pay it. We will support you to claim all eligible council tax benefits and reductions. From 1st April 2020, KCC will fund the council tax payments for young people aged 18 years old up to their 21st birthday, aged 18 to 20 inclusive, who have been in Kent Local Authority Care and are eligible for a Kent Care Leavers Service. Only those young people who are named on a tenancy agreement, can access this payment.

All young people will be expected to claim any applicable council tax discount or benefit entitlement such as council tax support, single person discount, student exemption, and more. Many young people who are care leavers will already have their council tax funded through these entitlements, which should continue and will not be affected by the scheme.

Some district councils such as Folkstone and Hythe District Council offer some additional support to care leavers with council tax up to the age of 25: [Financial support payment scheme for council tax | Folkestone & Hythe District Council \(folkestone-hythe.gov.uk\)](https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/financial-support-payment-scheme-for-council-tax) We are aware that there are other District Councils looking to make a similar offer to Care leavers living in their communities so please enquire with them directly or ask your PA to help you find out what support might be available.

## Moving home and education provision

We will aim to keep you safe in one place and if you do move, we will try to make this planned. If you must change school or college, we will make sure you are well supported with this transition, and we will seek to adhere to the principles of staying close.

If you are unhappy where you are living speak to your Social Worker or Personal Adviser and they will be able to guide you. From the age of 17.5 years your PA will attend your looked after child review and pathway planning meetings so you can talk about your home and any plans to move so you will be fully involved in any housing decisions.

## Social housing and register

The responsibility to provide housing lies with the district councils of which there are 12 in Kent. They hold the local housing register often know as Kent Home Choice. You can apply to go on this

register at 18, this is done through a portal and is a form you need to complete. You can ask for support in completing this form and after a period including you actively bidding on properties, you may be lucky in being offered what is often referred to as social housing, with a housing association.

Accessing social housing is popular and whilst as a care leaver you have a priority status, the reality is that there is a scarcity of provision e.g. demand outstrips supply. You may have to wait a long time and may need to consider other options in the meantime, again please speak to your Personal Adviser and or Specialist Housing Personal Adviser who will be able to advise you. You can make an application to [Kent Home Choice](#).

## Ongoing housing support

Your Personal Adviser will assist and guide you with housing issues and if you live in supported housing, you will have a support worker who will work with you to help you build your independence skills.

Your Personal Adviser may refer you to a floating support worker if you live in your own flat who will help with your personal life and practical life skills, such as budgeting. For a period, you will have the support of your Personal Adviser when you get your permanent home, to help you settle in. We will undertake a pathway plan review when you have been in your home for 28-days and at least every 6-months after that.

We will provide you with a Personal Adviser who visits within a week of you moving into your new home and then visit at least every 2-months after that. If you are allocated a worker and you do not go to meetings the support may stop, so try to engage with your workers and get the maximum benefit from them as they are there to support you.

We may also be able to help you with an address chronology should you need it, to help with things like applying for a Disclosure and Barring Service Certificate which you may need to help your secure employment.

### **Shelter Free**

Advice on homelessness, private renting, social housing, and housing benefit.

**Telephone:** 08088 004 444

## Identity and social relationships

Having a supportive network of family and friends around you can help as you make the transition from care to independence. These could be your family members, relatives, former foster carers, or friends.

## Relationships with family and friends

Contact with younger siblings who are under 18, or your own children can be discussed with your Personal Adviser. For those aged 18-21yrs we can support with travel up to 4 times a year to see the family and friends that are important to you. If they live outside of the county and they cannot visit by bus, we can purchase the most cost-effective train tickets for you.

If you have lost contact with your family from your country of origin, we will support you by linking you with agencies who help to trace families, for example British Red Cross. You will need to let

your Personal Adviser know who is important to you, giving you positive support so that we can help you to contact them. You need to let us know who you would like to have as your next of kin for emergency issues.

## Visiting places of worship

For those aged 18-21yrs, if you wish to attend a specific place of worship, we will support your travel costs on special occasions, for example during festive periods. We will fund up to £50 for the year and we will purchase the cost-effective train tickets for you. If you need support in finding a safe place of worship closest to you, please speak to your Personal Adviser.

## Other community resources available

### **Ramsgate Youth Centre, High St, St Lawrence, Ramsgate, CT11 0QG**

Music Open Arms Programme/ Open Access: welcomes unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and refugees, it is a Music charity for youth - open to all young people but have specific groups such as a programme welcoming unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) aged 12-21 to a weekly Friday social club, providing a safe and fun environment to meet friends, cook international food, play music, art and games.

### **Kent Cricket Community Trust - The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence, Old Dover Road, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 3NZ**

Running activity for 12 months for 8–24-year-olds. Kent and Canterbury based programmes for children and young people. Street cricket primarily refugees and UASC now also girls only sessions links to Canterbury secondary school, summer sport programme, link to pie factory and youth in east Kent especially Afghans who are interested in cricket. Link to foster carers regarding equipment and linking with other cricket clubs KRAN coaching qualifications.

### **Kent County Council - Social Connections, Family Group Conference**

Lifelong links lead in the Social Connections Service supporting children and young people to reconnect with family members and other important people, getting a sense of belonging so that young people are supported to find their own family to do this safely to find positive links. Holding UASC events in the community to support networking and developing connections sense of belonging, working with UASC to support reconnecting with important people in the UK.

## Useful information for asylum seeking young people

### **Moving on**

Easy to navigate/translated version of our local offer on Kent Cares Town website.

**Website:** [Kent Cares Town](#)

- Asylum Process Journey Map  
A Detailed picture to Navigate the Asylum process for care leavers.
- Asylum navigation board – Right to Remain (in various languages)
- Right to Remain Toolkit (in various languages)
- ARC (Application Registration Card) Enquiry Form
- BRP Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs): What a BRP is - GOV.UK

- Anyone with BRP or Biometric card holder must apply for E Visa. Click on this link to apply: [Create a UKVI account to get access to your eVisa \(online immigration status\) - GOV.UK](#)
- Find a Solicitor using the [Law Society](#).
- CORAM's Young Citizens' Project - for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds Starting Life in the UK - Coram's Young Citizens created six videos with advice for young people new to the country. They share their experiences and top tips on getting into college, learning the language, getting a bank account and more.
- Translated: Navigating the NHS – a resource for asylum seekers and refugees
- Welcome: A Guide for new refugees This is a GUIDEBOOK for adults who have been granted
- Asylum or Humanitarian Protection in England to access public services and make the most of the opportunities in the UK.
- Barnardo's BOLOH project: Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of Adult Asylum Seekers across the UK
- IMO is a voice for teenagers in care and for care leavers. It is somewhere you can share stories, experiences, and achievements, get and give advice, and find loads of great free stuff! listen to the IMO Podcast: open and honest conversations with care leavers.

## Become

A charity for children in care and young care leavers offers advice to children and young people in care or leaving care. Talk to them in confidence – online or over the phone on a dedicated helpline for young people.

**Telephone:** 08000 232 033 between 10:30-17:00, Monday to Friday

**Email:** [advice@becomecharity.org.uk](mailto:advice@becomecharity.org.uk)

## Important documents

We all need important documents because without them we are unable to do simple things such as applying for a course, claim benefits or open a bank account. We will ensure you have the important documents that you require in adulthood, such as a passport and a birth certificate. We will also keep copies of your important documents safely on our files and you will be responsible for keeping the original documents safe.

## Your National Insurance number

When you are 15-years and 9-months old, your Children in Care Social Worker or Strengthening Independence Social Worker, will apply for you to have a National Insurance (NI) number.

Ask your Social Worker if you do not receive this. You no longer receive a NI Card, so you need to keep your number safe. If you have lost or forgotten your National Insurance number, or need a letter confirming it, you can call 0300 200 3500 if:

- You are between 15 years and 9 months and 20 years old and have not received a National Insurance number.
- You cannot register for a new personal tax account to view your National Insurance number or print the confirmation letter.
- You are over 20 years old and have not got a National Insurance number, apply for a National Insurance number.

HMRC will not tell you your National Insurance number over the phone. They will post it to you, and it will arrive within 15 working days.

If you are an asylum-seeking young person and have been granted leave to remain by the Home Office, you may have your National Insurance number printed on the back of your Biometric Residence Permit. What a biometric residence permits are - GOV.UK [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

## Passport

For those aged 18-25yrs we will support you with an application for a 10-year passport, if you have not already had one through the Children in Care or Strengthening Independence Team. This will be your main source of identification. We will fund application for a travel document for our asylum young people.

We will contribute £75 towards your travel document for former unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people with refugee or humanitarian protection status. This will be a one-off payment for both passport and travel document.

Do not lose this or you will have to apply and pay for a new one. If you do lose this, then you will not be allowed to leave the country or travel, and you may be at risk of identity theft. You must keep your Passport in a safe place.

## Provisional driving licence

For those aged 18-24-years old, if you need to learn to drive, we will fund your provisional driving licence and one theory test, and if you pass, we will fund:

- Up to 10 hours of driving lessons with total amount of maximum £300
- One practical driving test

You are unable to drive without a provisional driving licence. If you lose your licence you will have to pay for a new one and if you do not turn up for driving lessons, we will discontinue our contribution. Once you have passed your tests, you must ensure you are insured to drive and have a road worthy car which is taxed and has an MOT.

## Birth certificate

If you do not have a birth certificate, we will apply for you to get one. If you lose this document, you will have to pay for a new copy.

## Keeping documents safe

We will keep copies of all your documents safe for you and you will keep the original documents. At certain times you will need your original documents and copies of documents will not be accepted; for example, opening a bank account.

## British citizenship

If you are eligible to apply for British citizenship before the age of 18, then your Child in Care Social Worker will support in how to complete the application. For care leavers aged 18 to 25, if you become eligible and wish to apply for British citizenship, then you will have to pay for it. Unfortunately, we will not be able to fund the cost of your British citizenship application.

## Education, training and employment

Being engaged in education, employment or training will help you with your chosen career path and move towards independence. Further education is essential for you to gain academic qualifications that you will need when searching for employment later. However, college and university are not the only options and there are training and apprenticeship schemes that are popular and can be a good way to learn whilst you earn an income. Also being involved in positive activity like this will also increase your chances of securing good sustainable accommodation.

### Our education, training and employment team

We have a dedicated team to offer support to ensure that you are achieving the best of your ability. Our team are in place to assist you with your career journey and access provision.

Speak to your Personal Adviser or the education, employment and training team for help, especially if you are not happy on your course or job to see if they can help you to resolve this.

### University

We will provide additional information to support you in your university applications and be on hand if you have concerns or worries. This includes help with your university application form, understanding the financial support and accepting your offers, please see Bursaries Section in Financial Support for more detail. Some universities offer all-year-round accommodation for care leavers and bursaries.

If GCSE English and Math qualifications are required for specific universities, exam costs can be considered on a case-by-case basis. Please see other sections of the local offer to see what support you can get from us in relation to money and accommodation. Please note that the support we can give will end at the end of the academic year you turn 25.

If you decide to go to university, we will assist you with your housing during holiday periods pay rent for the official non-term time, up to the equivalent single room, exempted, housing allowance. It is important that you let your Personal Adviser know in advance when you need the vacation accommodation from and some assistance with travel may also be available, at the beginning and end of term. You are responsible for your accommodation charges and rent during term time, but we may be able to help you get accommodation whilst at university by acting as your rent guarantor. Long-term funding for higher education will be agreed by our management team if necessary.

We will support you for a maximum of 4-years of university study, £1,000 per academic year. This support is available for young people studying on 3/4year undergraduate programmes:

- You will be eligible to apply for a student loan from Student Finance England.
- We will support you to visit universities prior to acceptance by covering travel costs and if required potentially overnight accommodation costs.
- We will assist you with the initial set-up and costs of moving to & from university up to £300 from your setting up home allowance.
- If you have not used your 04<sup>th</sup> year of bursary, then we will make this available to you if you go on to do a master's degree program. Evidence is needed, as it is with your undergraduate degree course. Additional financial support may be available from the [Rees foundation](#).

- We will help with the costs of graduation expenses, such as gown hire and photographs up to the cost of £100 in total.

You may also be able to access additional support from the university who often have additional funds and grants for care leavers. It is important that you make yourself known to the designated member of staff at the university who will be able to advise you about the [universities offer to care leavers](#).

## University support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people

You may study at university if you are an unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person. However, you may not be entitled to pay home fees, and you may not be eligible for student finance. Some universities use their discretionary powers to allow unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people to study as home students.

We are not able to pay your tuition fees, but you would still be entitled to the higher education bursary. If you are interested in applying for university, it will depend on your immigration status, please contact your Personal Adviser who can assist you with this. Check with the individual university before making any commitments to join a course.

There are some organisations through the [Start Network](#) that can help by providing scholarships, which you can apply for.

We may be able to offer some support to you to help secure accommodation at university by providing a deposit if required, please speak to your Personal Adviser about this. There are universities that have scholarships to pay in full or part for courses e.g. Open University and the Sanctuary Scholarship Programme.

We want to make sure you are supported when that big day comes to move to your university, to make sure you settle in, it may be that your foster carers or Kent Supported Homes host will take you and provide you that support as this can be a daunting day, but if not and you would like support at this time your Personal Advisor will support you with this.

## Discretionary leave to remain

You may be able to access university support if:

- You live in England
- You have lived in England for 3-years

## Indefinite leave to remain

You may be entitled to home fees and student finance.

## Support for young people with caring responsibilities

Some universities have accommodation for parents and carers with children. Some young people who have parenting responsibilities may also be entitled to Universal Credit. This needs to be confirmed from the [Department for Work and Pensions](#).

## Designated member of staff

If you are in education, we will liaise with your education provider's designated member of staff, a key contact specifically for care leavers, to access additional support where necessary including financial support.

Speak to the designated members of staff at the university to find out what additional support they offer care leavers. Whilst at university, you may wish to become an ambassador, where you help to show potential students university life – and get paid to do so!

## Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship can be a great way to learn a new skill, achieve a qualification and get paid at the same time. Apprenticeships can also be another way of achieving higher education without accruing university debt as they are available in several levels, from Level 2 up to Level 7.

If you are aged 18-21-years old and get an apprenticeship, we will help you apply for travel costs from the Department of Work and Pensions flexible support fund, this can be claimed for up to 3-months.

Care leavers who choose to start an apprenticeship will receive a £3,000 bursary to help the transition into the workplace. This is paid by the training provider 90-days after the start of the apprenticeship and is paid in instalments.

Bursaries will be paid once to each young person in the eligible age range of 16-24-years-old, starting an apprenticeship after 01<sup>st</sup> August 2018, via their training provider. This new bursary scheme is part of a wider reform of apprenticeship funding by the U.K. Government. Kent County Council also offer many apprenticeships that care leavers can access.

Please speak to your Personal Adviser or the education, employment and training team if you would like to find out more information on apprenticeships, including opportunities within Kent County Council. Kent County Council now pay a living wage for apprenticeships rather than the apprenticeship rate. You can find out more about apprenticeships through the [government website](#).

## Finding work and our interview allowance

We will help you apply for money for interview clothes which can be claimed through the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Prince's Trust and we may be able to offer some small assistance if needed up to £50. We will also help by providing you with interview practice, assisting with applying for jobs and with creating your curriculum vitae and personal statement.

The job centre plus will support you to look and apply for work if you are not in education or employment and adult learning can support you, ask to speak to the work coach at the job centre for help. Please contact your Personal Adviser or support worker about help with getting ready for an interview and with applying for jobs, they can help you with this. If you claim Universal Credit, you will be expected to work with the Department of Work and Pensions to find a job. Local job clubs often provide a clothes bank for interview clothes and shoes.

## Kent supported employment service

If you have additional needs the [Kent Supported Employment Service](#) may be able to

assist. They work with young people with special educational needs and disabilities to encourage and support you to grow your skills and confidence. To access Kent Supported Employment Service you must:

- Be aged 16 or above
- Live in Kent
- Have additional barriers to finding a job because of your disability or health condition
- Want to look to find paid work

They can support you whether you have an education and health care plan or not. Kent County Council also now guarantees care leavers the opportunity to be interviewed for any jobs applied for where the minimum entry requirement has been met.

## Support for students with disabilities

Universities and higher education colleges must make provision for students with disabilities, including long-term conditions and specific learning difficulties. Every university or college has a disability adviser or learning support coordinator to help you get the most out of your time in higher education, who can tell you about the support available to help you with access to accommodation and your academic course.

Disabled students may also be entitled to Disabled Student Allowance, and this can be applied for when completing Student Finance England. Access to Work can help you get or stay in work if you have a physical or mental health condition or disability. The support you get will depend on your needs. Through Access to Work, you can apply for:

- A grant to help pay for practical support with your work
- Support with managing your mental health at work
- Money to pay for communication support at job interviews
- Department of Work and Pensions provide support for people with disability need

Kent Supported Employment provide work coaching support and help to find the right job or work experience. Live Well Kent and Medway provides free mental health support for younger people and adults. Our network of local voluntary organisations and charities can help you:

- Better manage your mental health and wellbeing
- Gain confidence and meet new people
- Get help with money, debt or benefits
- Get support with housing concerns
- Access free therapy and counselling-type services
- Find work, volunteering and education opportunities
- Join activities and support groups run by people with similar experiences

You can get help by contacting us yourself, or someone like your doctor or a friend can contact us for you.

## Further education

You will be supported if you are in further education and there are several funds available to you, however this can change each new academic year - 16-19-year-old bursary for children in care and care leavers.

Please apply for the bursary from your Student Services Adviser at college or school before you start the course. The bursary is to support you with educational related costs, including travel, and is administered by the education provider.

For the 16-19 Bursary, you need to ensure you are clear of the educational providers requirements for receiving the bursary, e.g. 95% attendance, good behaviour. Your attendance and behaviour will be monitored.

## Discretionary learner support fund

This comes from the educational provider. If you are advised that support is not available immediately discuss this with your Personal Adviser who can assist you.

## Care to learn

For young parents, aged 20 and under, there is government funding support in place to assist with nursery and childminder costs for young parents. Speak to your education provider. If you are a young parent, then please contact your Personal Adviser about what extra support is available for you. Speak to the education provider about this before starting any course.

## Education, health and care plan

If you have an Education, Health and Care Plan this may continue up to the age of 25 if you are in school or a further education placement and it is agreed that it is required to meet your educational outcomes. This will be reviewed annually by the school or college and the special educational needs department. If you go to University or Higher Education, your Education, Health and Care Plan will cease but support from disability support allowance and your university will put in a learning plan and a designated member of staff.

## Volunteering

We will support and encourage you to access volunteering opportunities to increase your work experience and develop skills. Kent County Council offers a wide range of [volunteering opportunities and information](#).

## Care leaver covenant

Kent County Council is now a signatory to the Care Leaver Covenant. The Covenant is a promise made by private, public, or voluntary organisations, to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them to live independently. You can search to see what is being offered in your local area or nationally which can include work placements, mentoring, job opportunities, discount on activities.

We will be consistently posting opportunities through our social media platforms, so please keep an eye out and please contact your Personal Adviser or member of the education, training, and employment team to discuss anything you may be interested in. There is also an App you can download that advertises current opportunities to care leavers called the [care leaver covenant](#).

## Travel costs

If you live in Kent, we will provide you with a 16+ travel card which you can use up until the age of 21 years, subject to the travel pass offer and application criteria set by transport service at the time of application.

In exceptional circumstances consideration will be given to additional payments if having to travel outside of Kent in the U.K., to be agreed by 18+ Service Manager/Head of Service.

We can support with travel costs for returning to Kent during university holidays' – to help with any anxiety and settling in. We can offer 3 additional trips to cover travel costs for visits back home outside of the holiday times. If you are in full time education, training and living and learning in London, you can access one of the following:

- 16+ student oyster card- this offers free travel on buses and trams across London
- 18+ student oyster card – this offers 30% off the cost of adult travel fare

If you are under 19 and in full-time education, please apply for the 16+ oyster card, not 18+, as you are eligible for free travel. We will pay a £10 administration cost for you to get an oyster card or equivalent for the area you live in.

## Training

We can support and signpost you to training providers such as, [Runway Training](#), [training and apprenticeships](#) and [Bemix](#).

## Other resources

Propel is a fully searchable website for care leavers providing information on the support available to you at colleges and universities across the UK. Find out using [Propel](#) about all-year-round accommodation, bursaries and grants and key contacts.

## Studying away from home

Funding may be available for those who would like to access specialist courses outside of the local area. This would have to be agreed by our Team Manager before the course is agreed. The 2 main types of funding are:

- Residential bursaries from the college
- Residential support schemes

## Career planning resources for care leavers

[Career planning resources for care leavers.](#)

## Additional education payments

For those aged 18-21years-old, we can contribute towards additional alternative educational programmes. This must be discussed with the education, employment, and training team to confirm the appropriateness of the course.

- We will pay up to a maximum of £200 towards the registration and/or exam fees for your agreed course (once per academic year) if required.
- We will support you with essential equipment and books as agreed on an individual basis.
- We will assist you in paying for graduation tickets, photos, and robes, etc. up to £100.

You will need to discuss courses with us before any applications are made. If agreed, you will need to share updates on your progress. Please contact us if you feel things are going wrong and you are struggling with the course – we can help to support you.

## General careers advice and support

[National Careers](#) and the [Become Charity](#).

## Employment

[Apprenticeship search](#), [find a job](#) and [get my first job](#).

## Being heard – your voice matters

Having a voice and knowing your rights are important when you are a care leaver. As a service, we really want to hear your views, and there are a lot of ways that this can be done. By allowing your voice to be heard you can help us improve our services and the care system, your workers have a duty to listen to you and involve you in decisions that are made. If you use alternative methods of communication, we will ensure that you can still express your views and wishes.

## Young Adult Council

Young Adult Council is a group of young people in care and care leavers aged 16 and over. They meet regularly to have their say about issues that affect them and others in care or those who have left care, so they can make positive changes both in their own lives and for others. Elected members, senior leaders and key professionals at Kent County Council regularly come to meet with the members of Young Adult Council to hear their views on a variety of topics affecting young people in care and care leavers and take their advice before making significant changes or introducing new policies or procedures. The group also like to have fun. They regularly go on trips, take part in activities and fundraise for charity too.

Young Adult Council allows you to have your say and make sure your voice is heard by decision makers in Kent County Council. It is also a fantastic way to meet new people, build confidence and boost your CV. If you are interested in becoming a member of Young Adult Council, please email [VSK\\_Participation@kent.gov.uk](mailto:VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk).

## Challenge cards

Challenge cards are a formal way for you to express your views about issues faced by children in care or care leavers and influence the way Kent County Council delivers services. Once a challenge is received, it is taken to one of the Children in Care Councils where it is discussed. If the Children in Care Council feels that the challenge should be taken forward, it is discussed at a meeting of senior officers. It is the officers at this meeting who have the responsibility to decide on actions to meet the challenge and who will carry out these actions. It is also reported to the Corporate Parenting Panel. The Virtual School Kent Participation team will keep you updated about the progress of your challenge.

Challenges should be about issues that affect many children and young people in care and care leavers. Challenge cards that are related to personal issues are passed to relevant professionals who can help with the issue raised. Email the Virtual School Kent Participation team to find out more about making a challenge to your corporate parents: [VSK\\_Participation@kent.gov.uk](mailto:VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk).

## Recruit crew

Kent County Council believes that it is important to include young people, who have had experience of the care system, when they are recruiting new staff who are going to be working with children and young people. This means that when Personal Advisers or Social Workers, for example, are interviewed there is often a young person on the panel too asking questions about the things they feel are important. The recruit crew is a group of care experienced young people who regularly support these recruitment activities. If you would like to sit on an interview panel, please email: [VSK\\_Participation@kent.gov.uk](mailto:VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk).

The Virtual School Kent Participation Team also offer a one-day level 2 course in Interviewing Skills for Service Users which helps prepare you for taking part. Both this course and any interview panel experience you have can be added to your CV. The experience can also help you when you are interviewed yourself as it gives you a good insight into the recruitment process. You will often receive vouchers as a thank you for attending and will have your travel expenses paid for.

## Participation service

You will have access to Kent's participation service where you can get involved in making changes to the care system, going on trips and much more. Kent County Council offers regular forums, drop-ins and various media platforms for young people to access information and to voice their views, wishes and feelings and share their experience.

We will also promote volunteering opportunities for young people where they can give back to the community and at the same time society can have a different experience and view of young people. Please contact the service as getting involved in group activities, forums and training will help to boost your self-esteem, develop new skills, and help you to build your curriculum vitae.

## Participation in society

We offer the [Duke of Edinburgh award](#) to young people. We believe that the Duke of Edinburgh award would help young people to integrate in the community. The award is for young people between 14 to 24, including those who are disabled, and helps young people stand out from the crowd when they apply for college, university or jobs.

## Registering to vote

For those care leavers who are eligible to vote in the UK, we will support you to register to vote.

## National leaving care benchmarking forum

Kent and the National benchmarking forum work together to share good practice and improve services and support for care experienced young people. If you are interested in attending a [workshop](#) your Personal Adviser can provide you with information.

## Advocacy support

If you would prefer to talk to someone independent of Kent County Council or feel like you need additional support to resolve a problem, you can talk to an advocate. Their role is to listen to your concerns and support you to find solutions. They make sure you understand your rights and what you are entitled to as a young person in care or care leaver in Kent. With your agreement, they can attend meetings with you and contact people who work with you on your behalf. Kent County Council have an independent Advocacy Service with the [Young Lives Foundation](#). You can contact Young Lives Foundation on the following phone number 0808 1640096 or you can email [advocacy@ylf.org.uk](mailto:advocacy@ylf.org.uk).

## Advice and help for care leavers

There are lots of services for young people should you require additional support and guidance. There are lots of national organisations campaigning for better services for young people and they run national consultation events, to hear your views. Contact become charity by calling 0800 023 2033 or emailing [advice@becomecharity.org.uk](mailto:advice@becomecharity.org.uk).

## LGBTQ+

Kent has a flourishing LGBTQ+ community that is celebrated publicly every year with the annual Kent Pride month celebration in June. As well as being a time to celebrate, pride month is also an opportunity to increase awareness, improve the attitudes of society and encourage inclusiveness. If you have not experienced, it – it really is worth being part of!

Kent County Council has a strong LGBTQ+ staff group, so it is something we are serious about supporting. You can find details of local events and groups on our Kent County Council website, but we also want you to know that your Personal Adviser and other people helping you want to make sure you get every opportunity you can to explore your identity without fear of discrimination. Kent County Council embraces its LGBTQ+ community quite passionately and so we want to be certain you feel included, respected and comfortable.

The BeYou Project connects young people in Kent who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary or are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity. The BeYou Project offer a safe, welcoming, and non-judgemental space where young LGBTQ+ people can meet to socialise, have fun and help each other. Want to find out more? Please contact BeYou Project team by emailing [beyou@porchlight.org.uk](mailto:beyou@porchlight.org.uk).

## Young parents

We will support care leavers who become parents through [hubs](#). This would include young fathers; those parents who need just a bit of support; those parents where there are child protection concerns; those parents who might have had their children removed. We will offer a mentor as well as practical support through drop-ins and essential packs of baby essentials.

[Dads Unlimited](#) is support for care leavers who are fathers to enable them to be active within their children's lives. There are many other organisations we can sign post you to who offer support to young parents.