The Next Steps Service Local Offer for Care Experienced Young People in Solihull

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A Local Offer for and developed with care experienced young people in Solihull

Working for Children and Families in Solihull

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the Local Offer for our care experienced young people aged 16 and above in Solihull.

This document will tell you about the Next Steps service and opportunities that are available to you. We want you to have access to the best possible offers that will support you, as you transition into and throughout your adulthood. We want to ensure you are aware of all the offers available to you and how to access these.

We have the pleasure of launching our new Local Offer to support young adults who are care experienced within Solihull Council. Our offer to you is ambitious and creative and, we hope, will provide all care experienced young adults in Solihull with the best possible chance of success.

As corporate parents, we want only the best for our children and young people. We are actively focusing on our commitments and responsibilities in our parental role. Feedback from Our Voice Our Services (OVOS), our Children in Care Council, as well as a wider group of children and young people have helped us to shape this new offer based on priorities for them and their peers.
The Corporate Parenting Strategy drives our services for children and young people of all ages who are in or have left our care. To complement this strategy, Solihull has supported our young adults to develop 'Our Promise to You' from Solihull as your corporate parent. This Promise can be accessed here:

www.solihull.gov.uk/children-and-families/support-care-experienced-children-and-young-people

The Promise is deeply important to us as your corporate parent, as are the contents of this Offer. We take them seriously and hope the strength behind the words is easy to see.

At Solihull Council we believe that it is vital that we provide good support and advocacy for our care experienced young people. This is a joint responsibility for every employee and elected member at Solihull Council, and we take this responsibility very seriously. We look forward to seeing positive outcomes for our young people as you take up the support contained in this Offer.

2. Who is a care experienced young person

There are different categories of care experienced young person, and you are deemed in law to be care experienced if you're:

- Over the age of 16 years and cared for by Solihull Council, or
- You have been cared for by Solihull Council for a period of time after your 16th birthday

The type of care experienced category young person you are depends on:

- Your age
- Whether you are currently cared for by Solihull Council
- How many weeks you were cared for by Solihull Council after your 16th birthday

Leaving care before the age of 18

You can choose to leave care before you turn 18 but we do not encourage it. It can affect some of your rights and entitlements and could mean a reduced package of support. If you do choose to leave care and are entitled to our services, we will continue to support you. We will continue to complete a Pathway plan with you, we will ensure that you are in safe and stable accommodation and will support you with your health, relationships, finances, training and education.

The Director of Children's Services must agree to allow a 16- or 17-year-old to leave care.

Categories of care experienced young person

You are an **'Eligible'** care experienced young person if:

- You are currently cared for by Solihull Councill; and
- You're aged 16 or 17; and
- You have been cared for by Solihull Council for a period of 13 weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks) which began after you reached 14 and ended after you reached 16.

You are a **'Relevant'** care experienced young person if you are no longer cared for by Solihull Council, but;

- You have been 'eligible'; and
- You're aged 16 or 17
- Immediately before being detained or in hospital you were 'eligible'; or
- You have lived for a continuous period of 6 months or more with a parent, someone with parental responsibility and where those arrangements break down.

You are a **'Qualifying'** care experienced young person if:

- You are at least 16 but under 25; and
- You were a cared for immediately prior to the making of a special guardianship order which was in force when you reached 18, or
- If at any time after reaching the age of 16, but before reaching the age of 18 you have been cared for by Solihull Council

As a qualifying care experienced young person you can ask for advice and befriending. You can get some assistance with costs associated with education, based on a needs assessment. This will be completed by the Next Steps service. You will not be entitled to the full care experienced local offer.

3. Your personal advisor

As a care experienced young person, you can expect the following support:

You will have an **allocated personal advisor (PA)** by the time you are 16 and they will work alongside you and your allocated social worker. Your personal advisor will listen to you and help you with decisions that will affect your future. You will be provided with the information and support you need to help you make decisions about where you are going to live, what you are going to do and how we are going to support you to learn to look after yourself.

Until you are 18 you will also have a social worker to support you and develop your **pathway plan** and an Independent Reviewing Officer who will review your Plan and make sure it stays right for you.

What will my personal advisor do?

Your personal advisor and social worker will help you to develop and work with a support network which may include family, friends, cultural or religious organisations, and other support services or professionals.

Your personal advisor will visit you as frequently as you need, to give you the maximum amount of support. They will aim to see you at least every eight weeks until you are 21 and every twelve weeks after that until you are 25, but will always see you more often if needed.

Your personal advisor will be in touch to say hello around the time of you turning sixteen and plan how best for you to get to know each other and meet. Your personal advisor will be able to keep in touch with you through text, e-mail, phone and video call as well as visiting you. You can tell us what works best for you.

4. Your pathway plan

What is a pathway plan?

The pathway plan covers many aspects of your life and how we can support you in each area. Sections within your plan will include:

Your social worker and personal advisor will work alongside you to develop a pathway plan which clearly sets out:

- Your achievements so far
- What you might be worried about
- Identity and relationships
- Health, wellbeing and leisure
- Life skills support
- Accommodation
- Education, training and employment and your aspirations
- Your money

The following will also be added if relevant to you:

- Young parent / carer
- Immigration and legal status
- Youth offending and probation

Your pathway plan will be reviewed at least every six months for as long as we are supporting you, which we will do until you are at least 21, but this can continue up until you reach 25 years old if this support is needed.

Collaborating and producing your plan together

Your plan is all about you and we want you to be as involved in its creation as you can be. Your social Worker or personal advisor can sit with you to complete your plan in one go or you could do this over a couple of sessions. If you wish, your social worker or personal advisor can leave a blank plan with you so that you can write down your thoughts and views / wishes and give this back to the workers to be incorporated into your plan. If you find the format of the plan overwhelming or difficult to understand and want to keep things brief you can, you can send your workers a list of bullet points for what you feel your priorities and needs are in each of the areas set out above (the different areas of your plan). We will then incorporate your views and feedback within your plan and think with you about how we can support you to achieve your aspirations.

If you want additional support to enable you to fully engage and contribute to pathway planning, or to other aspects of communicating with services and ensuring that your views are heard, you may wish to request the support of an advocate. See the support and advocacy section for further information.

5. Care Leavers Covenant

Solihull expects all care experienced young people to have the same opportunities with education, employment and training as those who have not been in care. In fact, Solihull Council has made this a specific priority in our Corporate Parenting Strategy and we are working hard with local and national businesses to provide extra opportunities that are only open to young people who are care experienced.

Have you heard about the care leaver covenant? www.mycovenant.org.uk.

The covenant is a pledge made by public, private and voluntary organisations to support all care experienced young people, like you, to be successful and thrive. It details many exciting opportunities for you to apply for and get involved with.

Opportunities range from employment, work placements and internships with big businesses, government departments, museums, theatres, or Premier League football clubs, as well as training workshops and life-skills coaching. Your personal advisor can help you to find and apply for these opportunities via national and local initiatives.

6. Your home

Where will I live?

One of the most important decisions we must support you to make as a young person is where you are going to live when you leave care. It's very important that wherever you live is safe and feels like a home.

Your personal advisor is there to help you with this, working through the options available to you and helping you to decide on what will be best for you at that time. All plans for where you live will be included in your Pathway Plan and agreed at your reviews.

When you are ready, a permanent home with either a social housing or private housing tenancy will be considered. Your legal status as a 'Care Leaver' gives you the right to be accepted on to the housing list. However, it is important that this does not happen until you feel able to live completely on your own and manage the responsibilities this brings. We can plan for this when we are writing your pathway plan.

Moving to live on your own is a massive step; it's not just about paying bills and cooking your own food. It's also about staying healthy, getting on with your neighbours and knowing what to do in an emergency. Your social worker and/or personal advisor will talk to you as part of the pathway planning process about the best ways for this to be a success that lasts.

Having somewhere warm and safe to live is very important. If you were living in a family with your parents, it is unlikely you would move away to live alone at the young age of 18 years old. That's why in Solihull, we will encourage you to stay living with the carers you know, or very close by, so you have good support around you when you need it most.

If you have been living in residential care like a children's home, we will help you to stay in touch with important adults there when you leave. We will try to help you to live locally to Solihull so you can maintain your important relationships. If you have been living away from Solihull and feel connected to the community where you have been in care, we will support you to identify accommodation that meets your needs and keeps you in the local area that you identify most closely with.

We are excited to help you to move on but will also want to make sure you are ready, and we will discuss it together a lot. Your pathway plan will make very clear what is likely to work for you and how we are going to manage this together.

Your options for where you can live once you are 18 years old include:

You will have a place of your own that is safe and homely which will match your individual needs. We will help you understand your options and make the best choice for you. You will be supported to apply to be placed on the housing register 54 days before your 18th birthday if applying for housing in Solihull, and you will be given priority in line with the Care Leaver protocol between Children's Services and Solihull Community Housing. This will mean that when you are ready for a permanent home, you can begin to consider a social housing home. We will also support you to apply for social housing outside of Solihull if this is your preference and advocate for you with other councils where you feel you have a local connection.

The different options for where you live when you turn 18 years old are:

- **Staying put:** This is an arrangement where we will help you to remain with your foster family (if you are already living with that family when you turn 18) for as long as possible, if that is what you want. Moving into semi-independence or full independence will only happen when you are practically, mentally and emotionally ready to make this happen.

- **Supported accommodation:** This is a self-contained house or flat where you have your own room but share some facilities with other young people and receive support from a Housing Support Officer.

- **Supported lodgings:** This is where you would share a safe space and home with an adult who will be there to help if you need it, but who will also be able to support you to live independently in their home.

- **Independent accommodation:** This is where you would live in a home from a housing association (either in Solihull or an area of your choice) or a home that has a private landlord. We will support you to secure this accommodation and ensure you have the right skills to manage living on your own.

- **Returning to live with your family:** Where it is safe to do so, we will support you to leave care and return to your family if this is what you want.

Moving in day

We will be there to make sure everything goes smoothly on your moving in day. If you are moving around the time of your 18th birthday, we won't expect this to happen on the day and will make sure you have time to celebrate your birthday before taking the step into your new place.

We realise this can be an exciting but also scary time. Your personal advisor will be there with you every step of the way for emotional and practical support. We will help you to move your belongings, settle in and make sure all practical things are in place such as water, gas and electricity, furniture and Wi-Fi.

7. Immigration support

You may be a young adult leaving our care who was a separated child or young person who came to the UK seeking asylum when you were younger.

Separated children and young people may need specific support to enable them to move forward into adulthood.

In order to ensure you are supported we will:

- ensure that you have accommodation while your immigration status remains unresolved
- support you to access legal representation in relation to your immigration status – unless you are deemed to have had "Appeal Rights Exhausted" by the Home Office.
- support you to make applications to the home office
- support you with access to education, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- ensure you receive weekly personal allowance payments while you are unable to access other forms of financial support
- support you to prepare for all outcomes of your asylum application through triple planning as part of your pathway plan
- provide you with information about the voluntary returns service if this is something you would like
- provide translation services where required

Note: All rights exhausted" (ARE) is an immigration status in the UK meaning that an individual has had their asylum claim refused and has exhausted all available avenues for appeal.

8. Education, employment and training

In Solihull, we believe every single young person can and should be able to work or study. Therefore, your personal advisor will stick by you when you are deciding what you want to do; and will be there to give you advice and encouragement when you are unsure or not confident in what you can do so that you can go on to make decisions that you are in control of and give you the best chances in life.

Your PA will support you to access a specialist education and employment advisor via the Virtual School and / or our Employment and Skills team or the Link Worker for Employment and Training based within the Next Steps service. The aim is to help you into education, employment or training. We will also help you to access some of the opportunities provided to care experienced young people by the Council, its partners and the wider business community to help kick start your chosen career.

As your corporate parent, we have high ambitions for you and make it our priority to support you into a job that is good for you, an academic option such as a university course, an apprenticeship or a training course. We will help you get the funding you need to do well. Your personal advisor will support you with any practical things like equipment that you may need.

It does not matter if you have a gap in your education because of other things going on in your life. We will help you to start again as soon as is reasonably possible. Your personal advisor will help you to make applications that may financially support your education and training placements.

Financial support is also in place for young people who have left our care and attend higher education at a university or equivalent. In this case, you will be entitled to education equipment and living costs, ask your personal advisor for the current amounts. You are entitled to apply for student loans and grants. Student loans and maintenance loans are administered by Student Finance. Both will need to be repaid when your earnings reach a certain amount after you have completed your course of further study. See the student finance website (**www.studentfinance.campaign.gov.uk/**) for further information.

You may also be entitled to a Higher Education Bursary to meet the costs of your 'out of term' accommodation. Please visit the government funded website on supporting university finances for further information at **www.gov.uk/extra-money-pay-university**. Your PA will talk this through with you as well as any support available to you from the particular place where you choose to study.

There are many opportunities available in Solihull Council, which would look great on your CV too, including:

1. **Getting involved in recruiting and interviewing new Solihull Children's Services professionals.**
2. **Meeting elected members who are known as councillors, to share your experience and help them consider whether the services for children, young people and young adults are reaching and supporting the right people in the right way.**
3. **Getting involved in one of our focus groups. At different times throughout the year, we may need to have a specific group to help us look at certain areas we would like to change or need advice on.**
4. **Taking up a shadowing or work experience opportunity offered via our corporate parenting partners.**

9. Health and wellbeing

We will help you prepare to leave care by supporting you to develop practical self-care and life skills, health, budgeting, domestic skills and personal and professional relationships.

You will receive a 'health summary' which details your confidential health history. We will help you understand the health and medical information within it. Keep this safe with you for when you may need it. You can also add to and update it at any time.

You can add information about your doctor, dentist, optician or any other medical professional, detailing everything from medical conditions you may have to when you last visited your orthodontist. Give a copy of your health summary to your doctor when you register with one. It will help them to understand your medical history and needs.

A useful way to find out about services available if you are living in Solihull or Birmingham is by accessing The Waiting Room:

https://the-waitingroom.org/

Registering at your local practices: It's important that you register with your local GP, optician and dental practices. We can support you to do this.

Healthy living: It's important you look after your physical and emotional health. Sometimes if you are busy or feeling stressed it is easy to stop taking care of yourself. We can offer advice and support around healthy living and emotional wellbeing. You also get free access to leisure centres in Solihull, and we will also help you with access to exercise opportunities if you are living elsewhere.

If you are concerned about drugs or alcohol, we can discuss this with you and put you in touch with people and services that can help.

Mental health support: Your personal advisor or social worker can support you with making a referral to Solar (an emotional wellbeing and mental health service for children and young people in Solihull, also known as Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS)) and / or other mental health services in your area. Support from Solar is available for all our young people up to their 19th birthday and we can support you to access adult mental health services beyond then.

We know that your emotional wellbeing is critical, and so advice is available for you. We will support you to find out about other community resources that may be able to help you deal with any challenges you may have. We will also make sure you have access to specialist support in relation to your experience if you are an asylum-seeking young person.

Kooth: This is an anonymous online support and counselling service for any emotional wellbeing/ mental health issues if you are aged 11 to 25. You don't need a referral and it's open 365 days a year: **https://www.kooth.com/**

The Living Well Consortium: This service for people aged 16 and over is delivered by Psychological Wellbeing Workers who support people through talking and motivational therapy and activities quickly and easily: **https://livingwellconsortium.com/**

Relationships: Your relationship with your personal advisor and/or social worker is important as they are the main go-to person for any support you may need. Your personal advisor will support you to understand about healthy relationships. We will support you to understand good sexual health and healthy relationships. We can link you with community organisations such as the Umbrella service (who offer free sexual health services for Birmingham and Solihull) to offer advice, guidance and practical support.

We will also help you to build up a good network of people who you can have fun with and turn to for support so that you are less likely to feel lonely or isolated.

SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities): If you have additional needs or disabilities, we will help as much as we can to ensure you get the right help as you become an adult. We know this can be a worrying time for young people who have additional needs and want to make this time of change as smooth as possible, and so will start thinking about this transition once you are 14 years old or as soon as it is clear that this will be needed.

Young parents: If you are going to become a parent, we will support you to get ready for this big and exciting change in your life and to adapt to be the best parent you can be. We will help you to get the most out of services that can help you and your family, like your midwife and health visitor and the Family Hubs (local centres where children, young people, and parents can access support and take part in fun activities) where you live. We will also support you with any challenges that come up for you in your role as a parent.

If you are living in Solihull or Birmingham, information about how health services will support you can be found here: **https://www.birminghamsolihullics.org.uk/our-initiatives/local-maternity-and-neonatal-system/support-care-experienced-parents**

If you live elsewhere, we will help you to find out what's available in your area.

10. Managing your money

As your corporate parent, we want you to learn how to manage your money with confidence so that you can live comfortably and without having to worry too much about your finances. We know that's really hard when you're working with a small income.

Budgeting is hard, but it will help to make sure you can stay where you live, pay the bills and have money for food, clothes and activities. Your PA will help you to manage your money and understand any benefits you may be entitled to. They will also make sure that there is someone to support you in the event of a crisis or when things do not go according to plan.

We will support you financially if you are living independently and not eligible to claim benefits – such as if you are still under 18 or if your immigration status has not been sorted out. Payment amounts will be in line with benefits levels. Although you may still receive some financial support once you are 18, you will no longer receive a weekly personal allowance. You will be expected to find your income from work, education grants and, if eligible, benefits. In most instances, we will not be responsible for your daily living costs, but your personal advisor will talk you through what happens if you are at university or waiting for a decision on your asylum application.

If you are not working or in higher education or a training programme, you will need to make a claim for benefits. Your personal advisor will be able to help you with this. You will need identification documents and a bank account (if you don't already have one) for the benefits to be paid. Your PA will help you to get these in place before your 18th birthday.

We will ensure you have a birth certificate and both a provisional driving licence and passport, whether or not you are planning to claim benefits. We will support you to apply for your benefits before your birthday so that everything is set up in time and reduce any delays in payments.

If you are receiving benefits and find yourself in a 'sanction' from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), which usually means your benefit payments are reduced or stopped for a period of time, if you don't meet certain conditions; you should contact your personal advisor urgently and we will do all we can to help. We work with a DWP Champion for care experienced young people who can help you to plan ahead and manage your appointments and processes to avoid sanctions where possible, and if not, will show you how to challenge a sanction.

Debt and money worries can have a serious impact on your wellbeing. In Solihull, we want to know as soon as you start to worry about having enough money. At that moment, we will help you. We won't necessarily be able to give you more money than you are entitled to, but we will find ways for your life and living arrangements to be manageable. Please don't keep these worries to yourself – get in touch!

a. Emergency payments

There may be unexpected situations that arise that may leave you in a financial crisis or at risk of not being able to eat, travel to work or college or heat your home. In these times, a one-off emergency payment can sometimes be made.

b. Help with your rent

If you are over 18 years old, living away from your family and are studying full-time in further education (up to and including A Level or equivalent), you can claim Housing Benefit. You can enrol in your course of study at any time up to your 21st birthday and can continue to receive these benefits up to the end of your studies or the end of the academic year in which you become 21 years old, whichever is earlier.

This help is also available to you if you have stayed on with your former foster carers (Staying Put). Housing benefit can pay for all or part of your rent. If you are likely to have difficulty paying your full rent, you can approach the Council and ask for Discretionary Housing Payments. These are not guaranteed, but the Council may be able to help you financially for a period until you find other accommodation or earn enough to pay your rent yourself.

c. Help with your council tax

Council tax is a payment made to your local authority for local services such as collecting your rubbish, clearing streets, running services (including providing social workers) and the local parks. Solihull Council decided to exempt all care leavers living in the Solihull area from paying council tax up to the age of 25 years.

This means as a young adult leaving the Council's care, you will not have to pay council tax until after your 25th birthday if you are living in Solihull. Speak to your personal advisor about council tax if you are living outside Solihull or living with a partner.

d. TV licence

Everyone who watches live TV, even if it is only via a catch-up service or online on your laptop must pay for a TV licence. You are at risk of a fine or worse if you do not have a licence. Payments can be divided into weekly or monthly payments, and your PA will support you to apply or to register your address for a license.

https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk

e. Setting up home allowance

It is an exciting time being able to choose your own furniture and how your home will look. We will provide you with a sum of money to set up your home and will also help to source other support via our partners so that you have as much as possible to spend. This will not be given to you in one lump sum and will be spent with your personal advisor according to your needs. The grant is not intended to meet the costs of personal support or accommodation costs. This payment is an important mark of your independence, so we want you to spend it wisely and on things that will help you to make this important step towards independence.

We will also support you to ensure you are able to access the internet in your home in whatever way works best for you.

f. Additional payments

In addition to any benefit or subsistence payments received, please speak to your personal advisor about support we may be able to provide you with. For example:

Birthday and festival allowances:

- You will receive a birthday and festival allowance each year until your 21st birthday and this will continue up until your 25th birthday if you are still working with a personal advisor. You and your personal advisor will agree how this will be paid (by cash, direct debit, or voucher/ gift card).

- If you are 16 or 17 and still in foster care or residential care, your birthday and festival allowance will be made through your carers.

Your celebration of success meal:

When you stop receiving a service from us, either because you are turning 25 or you have decided between the ages of 21 and 25 that you no longer need our support, we will pay for you and your personal advisor to go for a meal together to celebrate your achievements and say goodbye.

11. Relationships and your care journey

We want to support you to build new positive relationships. The Next Steps team, OVOS and our Family Hubs in Solihull offer a range of events and activities and clubs including sports, cooking, CV writing, arts and crafts and many more. Any ideas that you may have for future activities will be appreciated so please share these with your personal advisor.

We also want to support you to explore your identity more generally and will work with you to help you understand and affirm your identity.

Following feedback from care experienced young people in Solihull we have introduced new drop-in sessions and get togethers which give young people the opportunity to come together and build relationships, and have fun / develop skills and seek support from the Next Steps service. For more information and to find out when these events take place please speak to your PA or access the timetable online:

www.solihull.gov.uk/children-and-families/care-experienced-children-and-young-people

Help reconnecting with people from your past

If you would like our support to reconnect with people from your past, then please let your personal advisor know. We can help you in trying to research and find out contact details and can support you through this journey. This could be family, friends, previous carers, residential care staff, teachers and other people who played an important role in your earlier life. You might also wish for us to act as an intermediary initially - this is where you do not give your personal details but instead use your worker and our office address as the contact point for the other person. We can explore this review if you feel that it will be helpful as it may give you time to work through your thoughts and feelings before making direct contact.

Access to your social care records

You may wish to request copies of your social care records. It is best to speak to your personal advisor in the first instance about this, if you no longer have a PA, you can contact the Next Steps service to discuss this with a PA.

Before you request your records, you should think about:

- Is this the right time for me and is there support in place to help me with this?
- All the specific bits of the record that you want so you can understand why certain decisions were made or why things happened?
- Have you discussed this with your PA or another trusted adult in your life?

We want to support you in accessing your records when you are ready. Reading through your records can be a difficult and sometimes traumatic experience. You may disagree with some of the decisions that were made about you or some of the information which is recorded. Where possible our preference will be that you read through your records with your worker who can help you understand what is written and support you through any difficulties. We also have links with local emotional support services who may be able to support you if you are struggling with processing the information that you receive.

We can arrange to support you to read your records at home, or you can come to visit us at the Next Steps service, and we can book a private space to look through your records together. If you are struggling, then your PA or social worker can help you access emotional health support and will discuss with you what your options are for this.

Your PA can also help you put together a plan for how you will deal with the emotions that you may feel after reading your records. We would urge you to make use of the support that we offer to help you process your feelings about your records.

Important reference numbers

We can access your social care records to help you get information including reference numbers such as your National Insurance number or NHS number. Ask your social worker or personal advisor if you wish to be given these reference numbers. If you do not already have your National Insurance number, we can support you in contacting HMRC to request this.

Maintaining relationships with important people

Relationships are an important aspect of who we are and how we understand ourselves. We will support you to maintain contact with important people in your life and will explore with you who these important people are for you. We can help you in planning for spending time with these people. We may also be able to support you with transport costs to maintain your relationship with 'family' members if this is not affordable for you - speak to your social worker or personal advisor about this as requests are assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Remember the term 'family' doesn't necessarily have to include blood relatives!

We want to hear your views so we can improve the experience for other young people leaving care.

You will be encouraged to get involved in activities and opportunities to meet other care experienced young people. You may also like to get involved with Our Voice Our Services (OVOS) to join activities and share your views about what works well and what more is needed for care experienced young people, so you can influence what is offered to all children and young people. Find out more here: **www.ovossolihull.co.uk/**

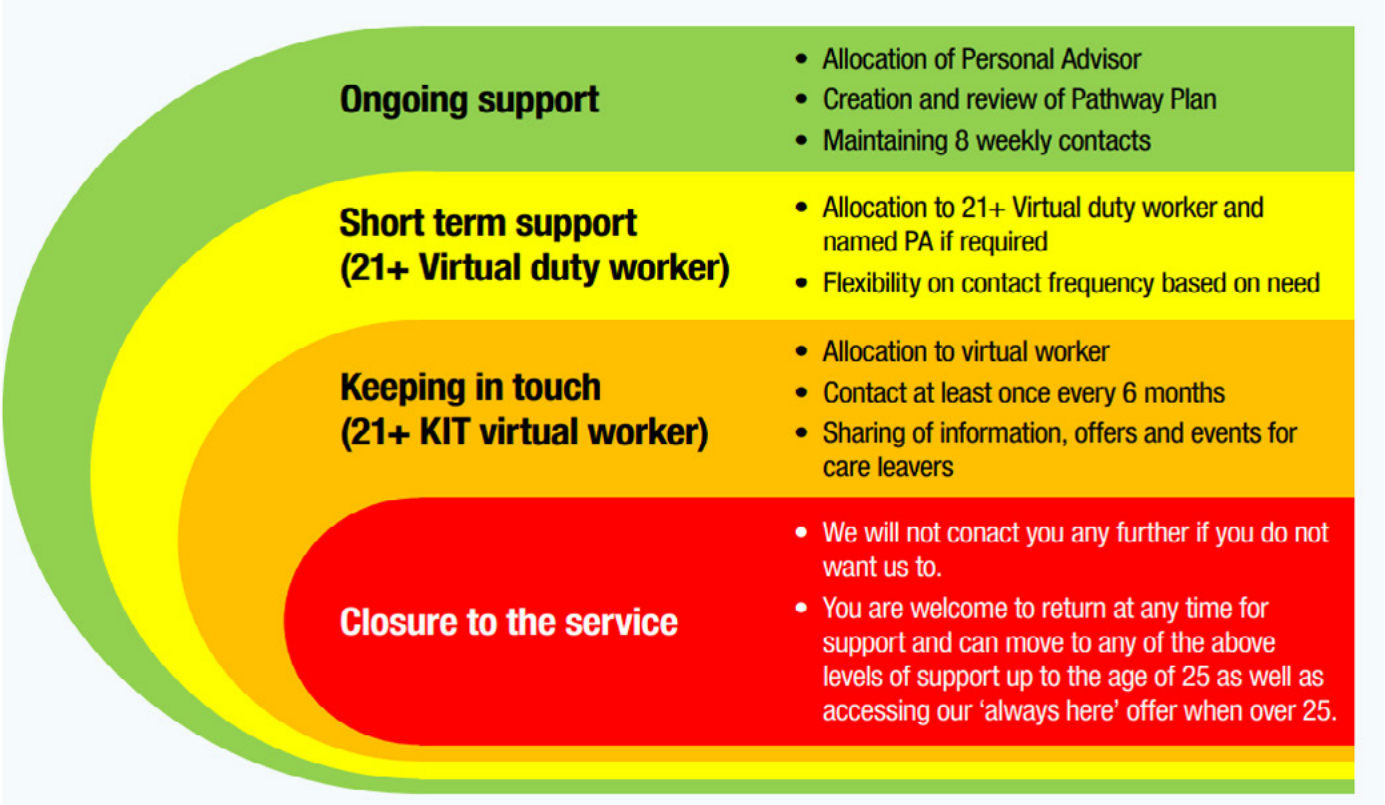
We want to be your lifelong champion and keep in touch with you if this is something you would like. Just before our involvement with you is due to come to an end, we will make sure you know how to contact us and access information that you might need. You are also always welcome to get in touch in the future no matter how old you are, especially if you are in difficulty and need support or a friendly person to talk to, or if you'd just like to say hello and let us know how you're doing!

Transitions pathways

Care experienced young people in Solihull have shared that they wanted greater clarity on the transition's pathways available to them. During consultation events with young people, you have told us that once you reach 21 years of age you don't always want or need the same level of support as you may have done between 16 and 21 years old.

We have listened to you!

When you reach the age of 21 years old you have options about the support you receive from the Next Steps service. We want to support you in the best way we can and in the best way for you. Some young people wish to close to the service, others wish to keep in touch with us and some need ongoing support. In Solihull we have developed a tiered approach to the support we give to young people once they reach 21 years of age.



Once you reach 25 years of age, we have committed to continuing to support you. Whilst you will not be able to access all the services offered within this Local Offer, we will always do our very best to give you advice and support like any good parent would, no matter how old you get! We call this our 'Always Here' Offer. There will be no more pathway plans and we will not chase you.

Advocacy

NYAS is an independent confidential service in Solihull providing advocacy support to care experienced young people up to the age of 25.

The service provides support to young people who are in care, leaving care, or have a social worker.

An advocate is a person who can help you to have your voice heard to say if you don't like something or if you don't agree with the decision that affects your life.

Advocates are independent and confidential, they don't work for the Council or children's services, and they will not tell anyone what you say to them without your agreement (unless there is something that might cause harm to you or someone else).

When you are a child cared for by the Council, remember you have the right to:

- Have a say in decisions that affect your life
- Be listened to and taken seriously
- Be supported by an advocate to help look after your rights
- Not be hurt or abused
- Be treated fairly, whatever your ethnicity, religion, sexuality, gender, language or disability
- Have your health looked after
- Get the most out of your school or college

For more information about accessing an advocate please speak with your social worker, personal advisor or independent reviewing officer.

NYAS:
https://www.nyas.net/
Helpline: 0808 808 1001

Coram:
https://www.coramvoice.org.uk
Helpline: 0808 800 5792

12. Financial entitlements for young people from 18 up to 25 years of age

Allowance	Maximum Amount
Birthday allowance age 16/17/19/20/22/23/24/25 years	£50.00
Birthday allowance age 18 and 21 years	£100.00
Bus pass	£40.00 per month
Support for clothing for work / interview	£100.00 per year
Driving lesson/test	£425.00 To be provided in line with the policy on driving lessons / test for Care Experienced Young People
Emergency support for financial hardship	16-21 years old £150.00 per year 21-24 years old £250.00 per year (based on assessment of need and discretionary)
Festival allowance	£50.00 per year
Winter fuel support	£25.00 per month between November and Feb where all other options have been explored (discretionary)
Contribution towards eye test	£20.00 per year
Contribution towards glasses	£100.00 – where all other options have been explored
Goodbye meal with PA and young person	£15.00
Higher education graduation	£250.00
Higher education non-term time rent (not including masters students)	£100.00 – where all other options have been explored (discretionary)

Allowance	Maximum Amount
Support with the cost of moving home	£100.00 per year
Personal allowance for a maximum of 5 weeks whilst Universal Credit claim is completed	£73.15 per week (ongoing for those not entitled to claim universal credit and not deemed ARE)
Pregnancy support at 6 months into the pregnancy	£70.00
Pregnancy support – hospital bag	£50.00
Pregnancy support – initial clothing (when baby is born)	£70.00
Setting up home allowance	£3000.00
Custody payment	£10 per month, increased to £20 per month if taking part in education or training

13. Useful contacts:

- **Police/Ambulance/Fire**
  999

- **Solihull Care Leavers Team**
  0121 717 1473 (option 1)

- **National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)**
  0808 808 1001

- **SOLAR**
  0121 301 2750

- **Solihull Mind**
  0121 742 4941 or 0121 743 4237

- **Solihull Children's Emergency Duty Team**
  0121 605 6060

- **Citizen Advice**
  www.citizensadvice.org.uk
  0800 144 8848

- **Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Team**
  www.bsmhft.nhs.uk/contact-us/
  0121 301 0000

- **Solihull Community Housing Team**
  www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/contact-us/
  0121 717 1515

- **Money Matters**
  www.moneymattersweb.co.uk
  0141 445 5221

- **Solihull Next Steps Service / Local offer for Care Experienced Young People**
  www.solihull.gov.uk/children-and-family-support/support-care-experienced-children-and-young-people
  0121 717 1473 (option 1)

- **Solihull Family Hubs – Care Experienced Young People are welcome any time!**
  www.solihull.gov.uk/children-and-family-support/solihull-family-hubs/hubs-and-activities

- **National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)**
  0808 808 1001

- **Solihull Mind**
  0121 742 4941 or 0121 743 4237

- **Solihull Employment and Skills Team**
  0121 704 8076

- **Care Leaver Covenant**
  www.mycovenant.org.uk/

- **UK Government Directory of support for Care Leavers**
  www.support-for-care-leavers.education.gov.uk/en/home

- **Childrens Commissioner – Help at Hand for Care Leavers**
  www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/help-information-advice/i-am-a-care-leaver/

- **Propel – supporting care experienced young people at college & university**
  www.becomecharity.org.uk/get-support/propel

If you have any questions about your rights as a care experienced young person or any information contained within this document, please don't hesitate to contact the Next Steps service.

We are based at Chelmunds Place, 858 Chester Road, Solihull, B37 7TW.

You can call us on 0121 717 1473 (option 1).

www.solihull.gov.uk/children-and-families/care-experienced-children-and-young-people

Working for Children and Families in Solihull

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council