

SUPPORT FOR CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

After the age of 21 and
the 'Always Here' Offer



Working
for Children
and Families
in Solihull



Solihull
METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL

1. Introduction

This guidance is to help you understand your care experienced rights and entitlements as a care experienced young person with Solihull Council and the support you can access and expect from the Next Steps Service.

Please read through this document carefully so that you fully understand your rights and entitlements, and do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

This guidance has been put in place following consultation with young people. The aim is for all young people to be able to access the right help for their circumstances at the right time for them.

We're clear in Solihull that our young people do not experience 'care cliff' and that we will always be available and do everything we can to support young people who are care experienced, as any good parent would.

2. Eligibility

Section 24 of the Children Act 1989 sets out that certain young people ('Qualifying' care leavers) may be entitled to leaving care support, subject to an assessment of need undertaken by the local authority's children's services (Solihull Next Steps Service).

The following groups of young people aged over 16 and under 21 (under 25 if the support request is related to education or training) are deemed 'Qualifying Children and Young People':

1. Young people who were subject to a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) and who were looked after immediately prior to the making of the SGO.
2. Young people who were privately fostered and where the arrangement was registered with a local authority.

3. Young people who were looked after by the local authority for more than 24 hours after the age of 16, but less than 13 weeks and were not deemed 'Eligible' or 'Relevant' care leavers.
4. Young people who were deemed 'Eligible' or 'Relevant' care leavers and returned to live with a parent or someone who had parental responsibility; ceased to be looked after and have lived with their parent for six months and then transferred from being an 'Eligible' or 'Relevant' care leaver to being a 'Qualifying' care leaver.
5. Young people who received 'Short Breaks' (respite care) under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.
6. Young people who were accommodated (provided with accommodation) for at least three months, which ended after the age of 16, i.e. they were provided with accommodation by a health authority, a local authority in the exercise of an education function or by a private children's home.

3. What happens when I turn 21 years old?

Young people being supported by the Next Steps Service at Solihull Council have choices about the types and level of support they want and need when they reach 21 years old. We recognise that some young people may be independent and wish to continue moving forward in their lives without our support. We would always encourage you to maintain contact with us and access the support that we offer at least until you turn 25 years old.

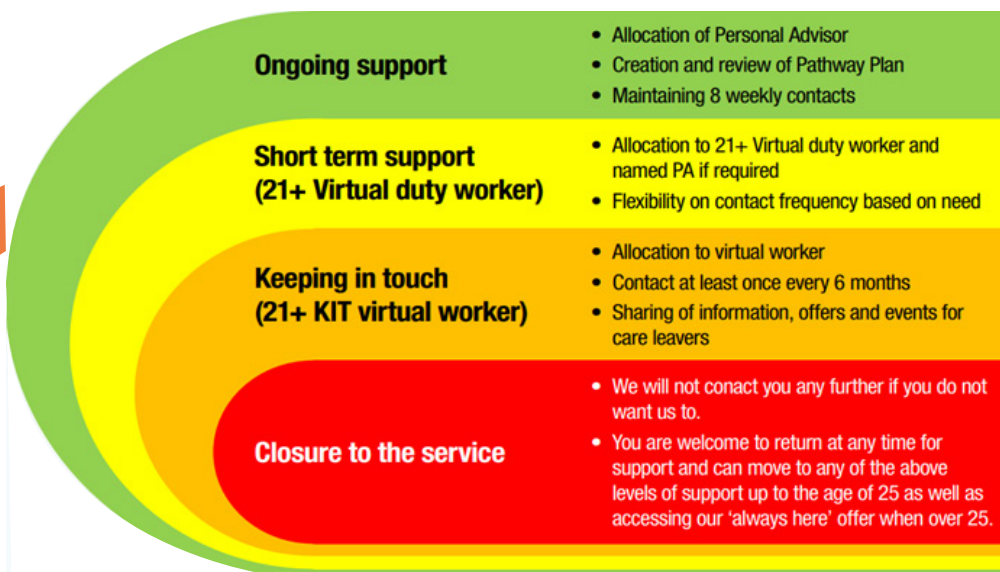
When you're approaching your 21st birthday your Personal Adviser (PA) will start to talk with you about what help and support you will need after you turn 21.

The key thing to remember here is that you have choices about the support you can receive.

The Next Steps Service wants to support you in the best way we can and in the best way for you. Some young people wish to stop working with the service, others wish to keep in touch with us, and some need ongoing support...the choice is yours!

In Solihull we have developed a tiered approach to the support we give to young people once they reach 21 years of age. The aim of this is to ensure that we can continue to provide young people with the right level of help in the right way and at the right time for them.

If you're between the ages of 21 and 25 years old we want you to know that whatever tier of support you're receiving from us you can always contact us, and we will always try to help you in the best way we can.



4. Accessing help and support

If you contact us in need of support, our priority will be to ensure your safety and check on your circumstances.

If there has been a significant change in your life or circumstances, we will offer you a 'One Page Assessment' which will be completed by a PA. This assessment can take place over the phone, but we would recommend that it takes place face to face, either by a PA visiting you at home or by you coming to the Next Steps Hub.

The One Page Assessment will help us to identify what support you need and what your circumstances are. It will also help us to find out what other support you may already have or be able to draw upon – such as access to universal services (e.g. NHS or Family Hubs) or what income you may have. As part of this assessment, we may ask your permission to speak to other agencies or individuals, such as your family or friends who are able to offer you support. This can help us to get a better understanding of your needs and enable us to advocate on your behalf. You have the right to refuse this permission but doing so may affect what support we are able to offer you.

Once the one-page assessment is completed, we will share a copy of this with you and discuss next steps. It may be that we identify a PA to offer a one-off focussed period of support if this is in line with your needs. Where your needs are more comprehensive and ongoing, we may produce a 'Pathway Plan' with you so that we can coordinate services and support.

It's important that you are involved in this plan. The Pathway Plan touches on many aspects of your life and how we can support you in each area, sections include:

- Your identity
- Family, friends and carers
- Health, wellbeing and leisure
- Life skills support
- Accommodation
- Education, training and employment
- Your money

You can contact us using the information at the end of this guide and our helpful and friendly team will always be happy to hear from you and to help you in any way that we can.

5. Support and the Next Steps Hub

As a Solihull care experienced young person you are welcome to access the range of support on offer from the Next Steps Hub. This is where the Next Steps Service is based and is the home of our care experienced community in Solihull. We have a 'warm space' offer which means that you are welcome to attend during office hours and can just have a drink or a meal if you need one. During office hours we have an 'open door' duty PA system to make sure there's someone to listen or offer support when you need it.

The Next Steps Hub also offers:

- Community food pantry (food for you to take home if you are struggling to afford shopping)
- Free internet access
- Laundry facilities
- Access to Health and Education/ Employment/Training drop in

6. 'Always Here' Offer

In Solihull we recognise that growing up and moving into adult life can be a daunting and scary experience. We are keen that no care experienced young person should experience the 'care cliff' and that's why we have introduced our 'Always Here' Offer for all of our care experienced young people and adults.

This means that regardless of your age you will be able to contact the Next Steps Service for advice, guidance or just to let us know how you're getting on, no matter how old you are.

**The thing to remember is
Solihull is here for you**

You can contact the Next Steps Hub using the details at the end of this guidance. We work closely with a range of partners including NHS, Jobcentre Plus, and local colleges and training providers. This means that we can offer advice around your support options and can help with referrals to these agencies if necessary.

7. How to contact us

Solihull Next Step Service
Chelmunds Place
858 Chester Road
Solihull
B37 7TW

0121 717 1473 (option 1)

Caring4youngpeople@solihull.gov.uk

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

8. Key contacts

Solihull Next Steps Service - 0121 717 1473 (option 1)

The Solihull Next Steps Service offers a duty personal advisor Monday to Friday between the between the times of 9am and 5pm. This service ensures that you can access advice and guidance when you need it.

Rees Foundation – 0330 094 5645

This organisation offers advice and guidance for care leavers. The helpline operates from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

Care Leavers Association - 0161 826 0214 –

www.careleavers.com

This is a national, user-led charity which provides specialist advice, guidance and advocacy for all care leavers.

Children's Commissioner Help at Hand – 0800 528 0731

This organisation offers advice and support for care leavers and can also provide direct advocacy to help you ensure that your rights and entitlements are respected. The helpline operates from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

My notes





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