



Department  
for Education

# Consultation on the Corporate Parenting Principles Statutory Guidance and Local Offer: Guide for young people

## Corporate Parenting Principles

When you are in care, your local authority (or council) is responsible for looking after you. That means doing everything possible to help you feel listened to, happy and safe. Your council should make sure you are supported in the best way for you. You may have heard the words 'corporate parent'. This means that every part of the council should be doing its best for you when you are in care and leaving care.

Your council should have high hopes for you and give you love, care and stability.

Being a great corporate parent is not just the responsibility of one person or one department in the council. It is the whole organisation that should work together to make sure you have a happy and healthy life during your time in care and when you leave care.

The Children Act 1989 already describes what councils must do to promote the welfare and educational achievement of the children they look after. That means, for example, making good decisions about where you live, making sure you stay healthy, helping you enjoy and do well at school, college or university, talking to you about your wishes and feelings and helping you to stay in touch with your family. The 1989 Act also says what councils must do to help young people when they are leaving care and starting their adult lives.

Doing the best to meet your needs is so important that a new law has been passed by the Houses of Parliament. This law is called the Children and Social Work Act 2017. It has a list of seven principles (or needs) that councils must always take into account when they are making decisions during your time in care and when you are leaving care. Councils must start using these corporate parenting principles from April 2018.

These seven principles are:

### **1 to act in your best interests, and promote your physical and mental health and wellbeing**

- This means making decisions and doing things that are best for you. Your wishes and feelings will be a very important part of working out what is best for you.
- You should be encouraged to follow your dreams and have hobbies and interests.
- Wherever you live, you should have the support you need to grow and stay healthy.
- Your council should think about how it can help you to get the best support when you are going through difficult times.

## **2 to encourage you to express your views, wishes and feelings**

- You should be listened to every day by the people who care for you.
- Whenever decisions are going to be made about you, the adults involved should ask you how you want to be listened to. Some children and young people prefer to express their views in writing or drawing, or making a video. You know what works best for you.
- Children in Care Councils and Care Leaver forums should have a real say in council rules (policies) and decisions.
- Your council should also ask you about support to care leavers (which can be up to the age of 25). This is known as the 'local offer'.

## **3 to take into account your views, wishes and feelings**

- This is all about you being heard and respected. Your local authority is being a great corporate parent when you feel that you are listened to, understood, and your views are taken seriously.
- You should have an advocate whenever you need help to get your views, wishes and feelings taken seriously. Advocates are separate from social services.

## **4 to help you to gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and the organisations it works with**

- All children and young people use services run by the council and others. Some examples are careers advice, counselling, homework clubs, leisure centres, libraries, parks, playgroups, work experience and youth services. Your council should help you benefit from these services.
- This means your council will work with other organisations to make sure everyone can do their best for you, in care and when you leave care.

## **5 to have high aspirations for you, and help you to achieve the best outcomes you can**

- A great corporate parent will want the best for you, now and in your future. It will help you to gain confidence and feel good about yourself. It will celebrate your achievements.
- Your council should help you to do the best you can at school, college and university if you decide this is for you. It will help you have the same opportunities as other young people, such as taking part in the National Citizen Service.
- If you have been in trouble with the police or things have been difficult at school, this should never affect people's hopes and ambitions for you.

## 6 for you to be safe, and to have stability in your home lives, relationships, education and work

- Councils will want every child and young person to feel safe and secure. Stability means not having too many changes or disruptions in your life, like moving home and school or losing touch with family and friends.
- Your council should always think about ways to help you feel safe and secure.

## 7 to prepare you for adulthood and independent living

- As you get older, your council should make sure you are being supported as you to prepare for your adult life. Different parts of the council should think about how to make sure you are safe and have a successful adult life – in for example, your health and relationships, employment, studies, and where you live
- Your council should think about how ways to support you before, during, and after you leave care.
- Your council's local offer will tell you what services and support are there for you.

The Department for Education has written guidance for local authorities to help them think about these seven principles when caring for you. We would love to hear your views about how your council can take these principles into account and examples of what they can do to help you have a happy childhood and, when you're older, be ready for your adult life.

### Your advice:

1. How can councils show that they take into account these seven principles when they are looking after children and supporting care leavers? Please tell us your ideas for each principle. For example, how could your council show it listens to you and involves you in decisions (principles 2 and 3)?
2. What could the government do to help children and young people to know about these corporate parenting principles?

You can email your views directly to [CSWACT.CONULTATION@education.gov.uk](mailto:CSWACT.CONULTATION@education.gov.uk) You can access the full consultation on [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK). The deadline to give us your views is 5pm 27 November 2017.



## Local Offer for Care Leavers

As set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017, councils will be required to publish a local offer for you as a care leaver. The local offer is a document that provides information about all the services and support that is available to you in the local area where you live when you leave care. It should include information about your legal entitlements (rights) as well as any extra support that the council might choose to give you.

The local offer must include details of the services and support that your council provides in relation to:

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

When councils start to work on their local offer, they should discuss and involve you to make sure they get it right. This could be through the Children in Care Council or Care Leaver Forum.

The Department for Education has written an example of a local offer. This is to help councils think about the types of things they might want to include when drafting their own local offer.

We would very much appreciate your comments and advice on this. The example local offer can be found at the back of this document.

### Your advice:

1. If your local council included the information in the example local offer, would it help you as a care leaver?
2. Is there any other information you think should be added to the local offer?
3. Is there anything we haven't got right, that you think we should change or take out?
4. What ways should we encourage councils to communicate and publicise the local offer to care leavers?
5. Do you have any other advice?

You can email your views directly to [CSWACT.CONULTATION@education.gov.uk](mailto:CSWACT.CONULTATION@education.gov.uk) You can access the full consultation on [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK). The deadline to give us your views is 5pm 27 November 2017.

# Example Local Offer for Care Leavers

## 1. Introduction

This leaflet tells you about all the support that we have in **[name of place]** for you as a care leaver. We know that it is a big step when you move out of care and start living on your own or with friends.

Just because you are leaving care, or have already left care, we haven't stopped caring about you. We want to make sure that you feel safe and supported and know where and who to go to for advice and help.

Local care leavers have helped make this leaflet. We will continue to listen to your views to make sure the services we offer are what you need. We have written this leaflet with the care leavers' forum.

To be able to get the support set out in this leaflet, you must have been in care for at least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 16 (including your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday) or for 13 weeks after your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. If you are not sure whether you qualify for support, then ask your personal adviser.

This leaflet is available online at [*website*], you can email [*contact*] to request more copies.

Your personal adviser will talk with you about the information in this leaflet.

## 2. The support we must give you by law

### A Personal Adviser

The law currently says that we must appoint a personal adviser to support you until you reach age 21 (or to age 25 if you are in education or training).

Following changes that will be made through the Children & Social Work Act 2017, you will be able to ask to have support from your personal adviser up to the age of 25 whether you are in education or training or not. This is to try to make sure care leavers receive similar support to young adults who live with their families.

Your personal adviser is there to help you to prepare to live independently and to offer advice and support after you leave care. Personal advisers get involved in discussions about your needs and your pathway plan.

Your pathway plan is written by the council after consultation with you and important people in your life. It sets out your needs, views and future goals, and exactly what support you will receive from us. We review your pathway plan with you regularly so that it is kept up-to-date.

We will try to let you keep the same personal adviser, though this will not always be possible. The amount of support that you receive from your Personal Adviser will depend on what you want and your circumstances.

Your leaving care team will consider with you what extra support you may need. You might, for example, need extra support because:

- You have special educational needs or a disability.
- You are an unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC) and your immigration status is unclear.
- You are in or leaving custody or you have had contact with the criminal justice system;
- You are a young parent; or
- You are going through a difficult time in your personal life.

### Your right to be heard and taken seriously

You have a right to be involved in all decisions about your plans for leaving care. You have a right to support from an independent advocate if you are thinking about challenging decisions about the care we give you.

Independent advocates can inform you about your rights and help you to be heard in meetings. They are separate from social services.

**[Local authorities should set out how young people can access advocacy support].**

You have a right to see the information we keep about you, including the files and records written about you when you were in care.

## **Leaving care before turning 18**

We will encourage you to stay in care until you are 18. Most young people still live at home with their families at this age.

If you choose to leave care before age 18, the law says we must provide you with suitable accommodation.

## **Support to engage in education, employment or training**

We want to make sure every young person leaving care has the support to achieve their goals in life.

The law says we must provide you with assistance with expenses linked with employment, education and training. In particular:

- We will provide you with a Higher Education (HE) bursary of at least £2,000 if you go to University.
- We will provide somewhere for you to stay during University holidays (or funding for this if you would prefer to make your own arrangements) if you are in HE or in residential further education.

## 3. Other support we offer

### Accommodation

If you are aged over 18, your personal adviser will help you to find suitable accommodation. This might involve:

- Working with Housing Services to come up with suitable housing options for you, including supported accommodation if you are not ready or don't want to have your own tenancy.
- If this is what you and your foster carers want, supporting you to remain with your foster carers under what's called a 'Staying Put' arrangement. This can last until you are 21 **[Add link to Staying Put policy]**.
- Support to access different housing options including social housing (this is accommodation managed by us or a housing association)
- Advice about holding down a tenancy, including avoiding rent or Council Tax arrears, paying bills and budgeting. We know it can be very hard having your own place for the first time. We will do whatever we can to ease the pressures on you
- Provide information if your council gives you exemptions to or discounts on paying Council Tax.
- Helping you to claim housing benefit/universal credit.
- Practical support with moving into and furnishing your new home.
- Supporting you if you have a housing crisis, including helping if you are threatened with or lose a tenancy **[NB: care leavers aged 18-20 are treated as a priority need group in homelessness legislation]**.

### Education, training and employment

We want you to succeed in your education, training and employment. We will ask you how you are doing and be ready to celebrate your achievements with you.

We will offer you:

- Careers information and advice
- If you attend University, a bursary of £2,000 to help with the cost of books and materials

**[NB: Care leavers are a priority group for the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund administered by FE colleges, which pays a bursary of up to £1,200 a year to support vulnerable young people to participate in education]**



- Support to meet your transport costs when travelling to training, school/college, apprenticeships or job interviews.
- Support to buy tools, equipment, essential clothing, and books.
- Support if you choose to go to university, such as helping you obtain tuition fees and maintenance loans, travel costs at the start and end of term, and making sure you have somewhere to live during the holidays. We will help you choose the right course and university that matches your talents and interests.
- Opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships and employment within the council.
- The chance to attend and help organise celebration events when young people achieve education, training and employment milestones.

## Health and wellbeing

Below are some of the ways our care leaving team and your personal adviser can support you to stay healthy and look after your physical and mental health. We can:

- Give information on healthy living
- Give information on getting help to pay for prescriptions
- Support you to register with a GP
- Support you to move from CAMHS to adult services
- Give information about counselling services that are available locally
- Give you help with transport costs when attending health appointments
- If you are a young parent, take an interest in your child/ren and support you to do the best for them. We will help you arrange childcare, if this is what you want.
- Offer free or subsidised access to the leisure centres we run
- Give you information about health drop-in centres
- Work with you to make a 'health passport' containing key information from your childhood (for example, when and if you have had immunisations) and your current health needs.

## Finances

We will try to help you financially, in a similar way to how parents would support their own children. Our help includes:

- Providing a leaving care grant to help you buy essential things when moving into your own home, which government recommends should be a minimum of £2,000
- Giving you exemptions to or discounts on paying Council Tax
- Providing or telling you about relevant money management courses
- Information on how to access your Junior ISA, if you have one (a fund of money set aside by the government and the council)
- Support to open a bank account.

- Support to gain important identification documents, such as a passport and/or provisional driving licence, before your 18th birthday
- Support to get your National Insurance number.
- Exceptional financial support in emergencies
- Providing a financial gift at birthdays and Christmas or other celebrations.

## Relationships

As well as support from a Personal Adviser, we may be able to offer you additional practical and emotional support, such as through:

- Providing you with a mentor/peer mentor;
- Where appropriate, continuing to support contact with the 'Independent Visitor' you had while you were in care;
- Help to maintain or regain contact with people special to you or who cared for you in the past, like former foster carers or social workers.

## Participation in Society

We want our care leavers to be active members of society, and to have all the chances in life that other young adults have. We can help you participate in society in the following ways:

- Providing information on groups and clubs you may wish to join
- Informing you about relevant awards, schemes and competitions you can enter, in line with your talents and interests
- Encouraging and helping you to enrol on the Electoral Register, so you can vote in elections
- Offering work experience with our councillors
- Informing you about voluntary work that we think you may be interested in
- Informing and possibly helping with the cost of leisure activities
- Giving you advice and helping you to challenge any discrimination you face as a care leaver.

## 4. Who can help?

Key contact numbers for:

- Personal adviser.
- Care leaving team.
- Housing advice.
- Designated doctors/nurses.
- Education, employment or training support.
- Local authority leadership e.g. the Director of Children's Services, Lead Member.
- Care leavers' forum.

Relevant universal services. This might include links to or contacts for:

- Health services such as sexual health clinics and drug/alcohol support.
- Information about further or higher education.
- Relevant youth clubs/groups/activities.
- Parenting support groups.
- Youth Offending Team.
- Citizenship Advice Bureau.