READING CARE LEAVERS

Know Your Rights and Entitlements
Leaving Care Eligibility

If you have been in care for 13 weeks without a break and are in care on or after your 16th birthday, you have the right to leaving care services.

For young care leavers Reading Borough Council has duties to:

- appoint a personal Leaving Care Advisor
- assess your needs and provide support accordingly
- prepare a Pathway Plan and review this regularly to reflect changes in your circumstances
- contribute to the cost of living associated with studying at university including paying for non term-time accommodation
- help with the cost of travelling to training or college
- help to access bursaries to which you are entitled

Your Leaving Care Advisor

Your Leaving Care Adviser will help you to access the relevant services that affect your life such as:

- studying
- family/relationships
- immigration
- health
Financial Support

Your Pathway Plan will support you to be in either education, training or employment. There may be circumstances where you are unable to work.

If you are under 18 we will pay you a living allowance. This is usually equivalent to the benefit rate.

If you are over 18 your Leaving Care Advisor will help you:

- make benefit claims two weeks before your 18th birthday to minimise delay of your first payment
- apply for Universal Credits, Housing/Council Tax Benefit and Employment Support Allowance

While you are waiting for your benefits or first paid income and you do not qualify for a DWP hardship payment we will provide a living allowance, depending on your circumstances.

When you have moved to independent accommodation we will provide a ‘setting up home’ grant of £2000 and if you are a parent your entitlement is £2500.

We will fund the cost of obtaining important documents such as your first adult passport or birth certificate.

If you are under the age of 18 and in custody, we will provide a postal order for a clothing allowance of up to £10 per week.
Educational/ Employment Support

We will give you financial help for education/training and employment purposes.

- A Higher Education grant of up to £2000 for the duration of your course, payable in instalments after successful completion of each term.

- We are responsible for your accommodation during term breaks. This could include ‘staying put’ with a previous carer or family member, payment of rent in private accommodation or your own tenancy.

- We help you access a vulnerable pupil bursary if you are at college or other similar educational institutions in England.

- We will help you with the cost of buying suitable clothing for work related and employment opportunities if you show commitment and proactivity towards employment and training.

- If you live independently will provide you with an allowance to maintain your apprenticeship, training or education in line with your Pathway Plan. We will recognise your achievement with an incentive including a free bus pass to your place of work or education.

- If your work requires specific clothing, equipment or qualifications, we will provide financial assistance to enable you to access these, this includes the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS).
Housing

We will support you in getting accommodation depending on your age and circumstances, the options are:

- supported lodgings as a member of a household with the choice of being part of the family
- staying-put with your previously approved carer
- semi-independent shared housing with other young people and/or an independent studio flat with key worker support
- training flat independent accommodation with outreach tenancy support
- permanent tenancy accommodation through the Care Leavers housing queue if you choose to live in Reading after leaving care
- private renting on the open market

We will:

- act as a guarantor for private rented accommodation while you are under 18 and live independently
- help you move home where you are unable to access support to do so
- store your personal possessions and identity documents, where possible, while you are either in student accommodation or in custody or in unsuitable accommodation

Other services and assistance can be available if this is identified and included in your Pathway Plan or agreed as necessary to meet your needs.
Useful websites and organisations:

**www.gov.uk**
The latest news and information on benefits is available on this national website. You can search for individual benefits and use the ‘benefits adviser’ interactive tool that can help you find out what benefits and tax credits you may be entitled to.

**Benefit Enquiry Line**
A telephone advice and information service you can call if you are sick or disabled or if you are caring for someone and acting on their behalf.

T: 0800 88 22 00
Textphone: 0800 24 33 55

**Citizens Advice Bureau**
Helps people resolve their immigration, housing, money and other problems by providing free advice.

T: 0870 8408080
E: enquiry@cabline.org
W: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

**Shelter housing advice helpline**
Shelter provides a free, national telephone advice line staffed by trained housing advisers.

T: 0808 800 4444 (8am-midnight 7 days per week, Freephone)
E: info@shelter.org.uk
W: www.shelter.org.uk

**Turn2us**
Helps people access welfare benefits, grants and other help. There is a benefits calculator on their website to work out what benefits you could be entitled to.

Freephone: 0808 802 2000
W: www.turn2us.org.uk
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<th><strong>Coram Voice</strong></th>
<th><strong>The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)</strong></th>
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<td>Helps young people in care have their voice heard. There is also a specific section on leaving care. Freephone: 0808 800 5792 E: <a href="mailto:help@coramvoice.org.uk">help@coramvoice.org.uk</a> W: <a href="http://www.coramvoice.org.uk">www.coramvoice.org.uk</a></td>
<td>NYAS offer information, advice, advocacy and legal representation to children and young people through a network of advocates throughout England and Wales. Freephone: 0300 330 3131 E: <a href="mailto:help@nyas.net">help@nyas.net</a> W: <a href="http://www.nyas.net">www.nyas.net</a></td>
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<th><strong>The Who Cares? Trust</strong></th>
<th><strong>Migrant Children’s Project at Coram Children’s Legal Centre</strong></th>
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<td>Has a range of resources for professionals and young people, including the HE handbook. W: <a href="http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk">www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk</a></td>
<td>Provide one-to-one advice on asylum and migration issues through an advice line and outreach advice work and a range of free resources and online information. Legal Advice Line: 020 7636 8505 E: <a href="mailto:mcp@essex.ac.uk">mcp@essex.ac.uk</a> W: <a href="http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com">www.childrenslegalcentre.com</a></td>
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<th><strong><a href="http://www.leavingcare.org">www.leavingcare.org</a> / Catch22 NCAS website</strong></th>
<th><strong>The Share Foundation</strong></th>
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<td>The latest news and information on all issues relating to transitions from care and care leavers are available on Catch22 NCAS website.</td>
<td>They administer the Junior ISA for looked after children. W: <a href="http://www.sharefound.org">www.sharefound.org</a></td>
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Your Leaving Care Team is located at:

Civic Offices,
Bridge Street,
Reading, RG1 2LU

E: leavingcareduty@reading.gov.uk
T: 0118 937 5320

In an emergency you can call
01344 786543