

Our offer for care experienced children, teenagers and young adults

The Local Offer for Care Leavers
of Bromley Council



linkinbromley.co.uk

January 2023

Get in touch

We're here for you.

Call us

020 8313 4108

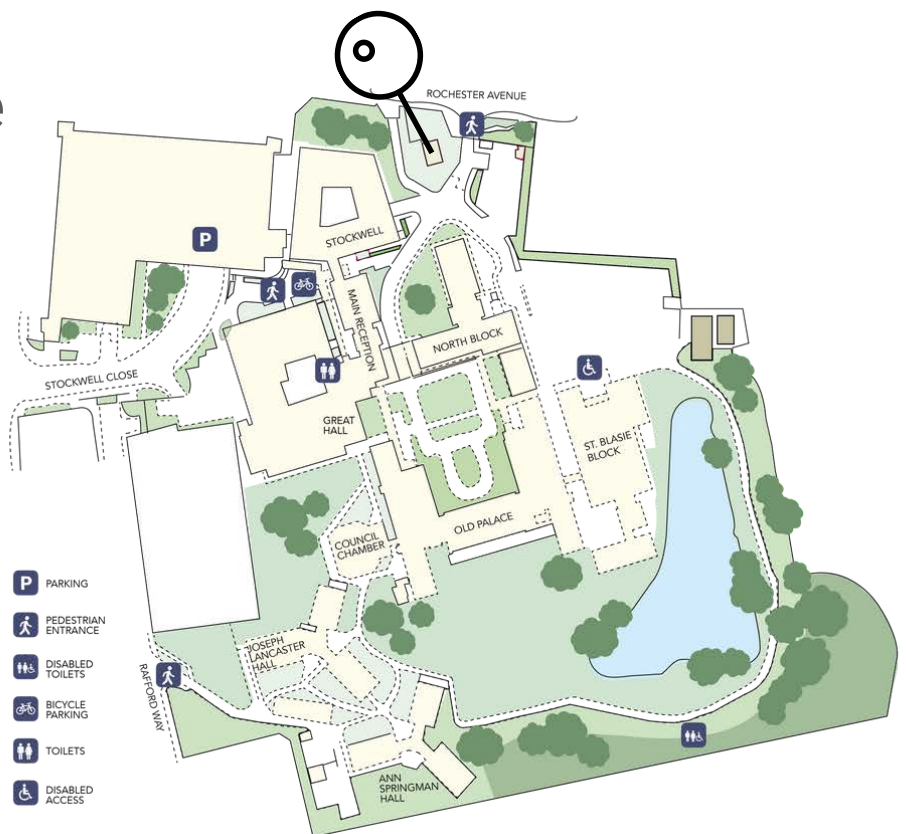
Email us

16+lc@bromley.gov.uk

Find Our House



Our House
Civic Centre
Stockwell Close
Bromley
BR1 3UH



Can I receive support?

To get the full support of the Local Offer you must:



Have been in care for at least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 16 (including your 16th birthday)

or



Have been in care for 13 weeks after your 16th birthday

Please note: The amount of support you get will depend on your age and circumstances.

Welcome

to our Local Offer for Care Leavers

Leaving care can be an exciting time. It can also feel quite scary and overwhelming. Some care experienced young people will have good support from Children's Services, but others may feel they could have more guidance.

Although our Children's Social Care service will be there to help you with the practical aspects of becoming more independent, it can be difficult to help manage the stressful changes this involves. Becoming a young adult is not always easy, especially if you have had a difficult time growing up.

We recognise that the help and support you receive from our Leaving Care Team is critical in helping you transition from care to independence. We take our responsibilities very seriously and want to be the best corporate parents we can be. We have high aspirations for you and want you to have the support you need to achieve your goals and potential.

We can help you access housing, education, training, work, physical and mental health support.

This offer focuses on the support we offer from the Leaving Care Team, but also the support you can access across services in Bromley.

The amount of support you get will depend on your age and circumstances. To get the full support of the Local Offer you must have been in care for at least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 16 (including your 16th birthday) or in care for 13 weeks after your 16th birthday. If you are unsure of your status or what support you are entitled to, please speak to your Young Person's Advisor (known as a YPA) or our duty team who can help you understand your rights and entitlements.

Remember, we are here to support you. Please do reach out and get in touch if you have any questions or if we can help with anything.

With my best wishes

Richard Baldwin

Director: Children's Services



This guide was co-produced with care experienced young people

Who we are

Who are the Leaving Care Team?
And what do we do?

We are your corporate parents. This means that it is our responsibility to be good parents to you and all care experienced young people.

We have **four teams** each made up of:



Team Manager



**Young Persons
Advisors (YPA)**



Social Workers

We also have a Group Manager who oversees the service and some specialist workers who can offer more specialist support. It is all our jobs to support you in your journey towards independent living. We have a legal duty to support you until you are 21 – or up to the age of 25 if you are in education or would like that ongoing support.

We are based at the Civic Centre near Bromley town centre and are part of the Council's Children's Services.

Our contact details are:



Address: Leaving Care Team, Civic Centre,
Stockwell Close, Bromley BR1 3UH



Telephone: 020 8313 4108



Email: 16+lc@bromley.gov.uk

We also have a building on the Civic Centre site dedicated to supporting our care experienced young people, 'Our House'. This is where many of our groups are run.

There is also a lot more information about the support and services we offer on our website:

linkinbromley.co.uk

Your voice is important

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.

Advocacy

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

Advocacy support is provided by an organisation called Advocacy For All.

You do not need to arrange this contact through your worker. You can contact them directly by calling 0345 310 1812 or visiting advocacyforbromley.org

Change for Care Leavers

Change for Care Leavers (CfCL)
is our Care Leavers Forum.



It meets regularly and helps us to improve our offer and support to young people.

You can find more information about them on our website:

linkinbromley.co.uk/cfcl



Preparing for leaving care

Pathway Plans

Every young person we are working with over the age of 16 who is care experienced will have a Pathway Plan up to the time we are no longer working together. The Pathway Plan will:



be made with you



identify your needs



**identify how we will
support you in
meeting those needs**

It is a very important document because it sets out clearly what we will be doing for you. You should always have an up-to-date copy of your Pathway Plan and you can always look at what is written in it to make sure that you are receiving all the support you are entitled to.

Your Pathway Plan will be reviewed with you:



at least every 6 months

or



whenever there is a significant change in your circumstances

or



if you ask for a review

The Pathway Plan has information on how we will support you towards full independence. It will cover, where relevant to you, the following parts of your life:

- health and care
- education and training
- employment
- living arrangements (accommodation)
- money and finances
- relationships
- practical and life skills
- culture and identity
- leisure activities
- emotional development and wellbeing
- any legal or immigration issues

Visits

We always want to keep in touch with you to make sure things are going well.

While you remain in care your social worker will visit you at least every 4 weeks. This is unless there has been an agreement with you, your carers and your Independent Reviewing Officer (known as an IRO) that because of your circumstances, and because you are settled, the visits will be less frequent. In these cases, your social worker will visit you at least every 8 weeks.

Once you become a care leaver your social worker or YPA will visit you at least every 8 weeks.

These are minimum expectations and your social or YPA should discuss with you what will work for you and what frequency of visits you need.



Support available

We have provided details of the support that is available over the next few pages.

Please note: The amount of support you get will depend on your age and circumstances.





Education, learning and training

We want to make sure you have the support you need to achieve your goals in life.

You may wish to continue in education. If that's your preferred pathway we will help you access college courses, university or other training.

We will provide you with a laptop to assist with any courses, studies or applications you are doing and can assess additional financial support if there are specific requirements of a course you are undertaking, such as equipment or clothing.

Alternatively, you may wish to go into work and we will support you in this route also.

We will provide you with assistance with expenses linked with education, training or employment, and the virtual school will continue to support you until the end of Year 13. You can learn more about our virtual school on our website:

linkinbromley.co.uk/education

University study

Our higher education offer includes a bursary of £2,100 over the duration of your degree. This is usually split into 3 annual payments of £700 (for a 3-year degree).

There is also a further contribution of up to another £2,000 per year, for a maximum of 4 years, for books, rent and course materials. We will assess how much of this you need, which depends on whether we are also providing accommodation for you, such as staying put with former foster carers or semi-independent accommodation.

We will provide somewhere for you to stay during holidays, or support for this if you would prefer to make your own arrangements, if you are in higher education (at university) or in residential further education.

We will also offer you a mentor if you are attending university to help you to consider your time at university and what you wish to do afterwards.

If you attend university, you will also be supported by your Social Worker or YPA to explore what additional financial support you may be eligible for either from your university or from Student Finance, such as via a student loan.



Finding a job

We have a dedicated Education, Training and Employment (ETE) Advisor for care experienced young people who can help you and your social worker or YPA plan your next steps.

Our ETE advisor and Active Involvement team also regularly run our New Beginnings Programme at Our House to support you into ETE, including plans for work experience which all care leavers are able to access.

We work closely with other local organisations, such as Jobcentre Plus, the Education Business Partnership and the Targeted Youth Support Service, to promote opportunities. We will encourage you to proactively engage with them to understand your options.

We will also work with you to provide work experience or apprenticeships both within Bromley and with our partners. What's more, we can offer additional support, such as preparing a CV, interview practice and a mentor to speak to about your future plans and aspirations.



Somewhere suitable to live

One myth that some care experienced young people hold is that they need to move out when they turn 18. This is often not the case. We want to support you to move on when you are ready and not just because you have turned 18.

There are different types of accommodation we can provide you with and these will be tailored to your individual needs and discussed with you. This can include:

- Staying Put with an existing foster family
- Living at university
- Supported lodgings, semi-independent accommodation and supported housing
- Permanent and private tenancy

Our website contains some information about the different types of accommodation we have access to:

linkinbromley.co.uk/accommodation

Living independently

All our care leavers are entitled to a priority nomination for a social housing tenancy in the borough.

You will be supported by your social worker or YPA to register for housing and discuss with them when you will start bidding with the aim that you will have moved on to independent living by the age of 21.

Living outside of Bromley

You may not want to remain in Bromley, or you might be currently living outside of Bromley.

If so, we will work with you and the local Council that you live in to plan how you can best stay in the area you feel comfortable and at home in. Different Councils have different rules about who is eligible for their housing and we will help you explore this.



Private renting

If you are not eligible for a local social housing tenancy or would rather move into private rental, pending an affordability assessment, we can offer support in paying one month's rent and a deposit.

A moving in gift

Once you have moved on to independent living, our Living in Care Council and CfCL offer everyone a moving in gift which you can access by speaking with your social worker or YPA.



Staying healthy and well

Your health and wellbeing are very important to us. Being healthy doesn't just mean eating vegetables, exercising regularly and keeping your teeth clean. It also means feeling strong and well emotionally, making positive relationship choices, feeling safe where you live and not smoking, doing drugs or drinking alcohol excessively.

We encourage you to speak up if you are struggling with anything so we can help you access the support you need.

We will provide a health summary to you whether you have chosen to continue having your annual health reviews or not, and you can ask your social worker or YPA if you ever need another copy of this.

We will help you register at a doctor's surgery and at other health services if you move home.



Emotional and mental health

We will work closely with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (known as CAMHS) and adult mental health services if they are involved in your care and support to make sure you are receiving the best level of support possible.

We will also assist you in considering what additional help you could access whenever you need more support, such as counselling or group sessions.

We have a dedicated mental health practitioner in the leaving care team who can help you if you are struggling with your mental health. This could be doing visits with you one-to-one, joint visits with your social worker or YPA, or helping you to navigate what are sometimes confusing pathways in adult services, for example.

We also have the Thrive therapeutic service who offer both one-to-one and group work support, including to care experienced parents.



Your official documents

Identification

Before your 18th birthday we will support you to obtain important identification documents, such as a passport and provisional driving licence.

National Insurance number

We will support you to get your National Insurance number if you have not received one.

Your National Insurance number is your own personal account number. It is unique to you and you keep the same one all your life. It makes sure that the National Insurance contributions and tax you pay are properly recorded against your name. It also acts as a reference number when communicating with the Department for Work and Pensions and HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC).

Immigration status

We will support you with any claims you need to make in relation to your immigration status and wherever possible will ensure that your status has been secured in the UK before you turn 18 (where it is in our power to do so).

For those who have ongoing claims, such as for asylum, we will continue to liaise with your solicitors and the Home Office to try and help progress these claims.





Your money

We provide financial advice and support to help you prepare for independent living and to best manage your money.

Advice

We have a dedicated financial wellbeing advisor who can offer advice to you and to those working with you.

We offer a move on group run by our Senior YPAs before you move on to independent living, covering areas such as how to pay rent, budgeting and financial entitlements.

Allowances and discounts

We provide a setting up home allowance of up to £2,500 to help you buy essential things when moving into your own home. There is an additional £300 if you are a parent.

We will:

- make sure you get the right type of discounts for public transport in London through an Oyster or Zip Card
- provide a financial gift at birthdays up to 21
- pay for your first year's TV licence when you turn 18

We know that everyone is different and has different needs, aims and ambitions. As such we will also offer all care leavers a discretionary fund of £400 to be used in agreement with your social worker or YPA. This could be to access a specific course you would like to do, go on holiday, attend the gym, buy a bike or take driving lessons for example.

Bank accounts and savings

We will:

- provide information on how to access your savings
- help you to open a bank account
- provide you with a pre-paid card if you are unable to open an account or have no recourse to public funds

Benefits

We will help you when you first make a claim for benefits if you are not working when you turn 18 by providing up to 6 weeks subvention money while your claim is being processed.

We will also offer financial support for longer if you are unable to claim benefits and are not working while your entitlements are being established.

Financial struggles

Please let us know if you are struggling financially. At times we are able to offer discretionary financial support in emergency situations so please talk to your Social Worker or YPA if you need help.

You could also be eligible for additional funding dependent upon your age and the type of accommodation you are in. Please speak with your Social worker or YPA to clarify what you are entitled to.

There is further information that can be found on our website:

linkinbromley.co.uk/financial-wellbeing

Additional help and support can be made available if...

...you are a young parent

Being a parent can be difficult and we want to make sure that you get the support you need when you are expecting a child and when you become a parent.

We can:

- help you to access additional support through the Family Nurse Partnership or the Bromley Children Project
- help you register for and attend parenting skills courses if that is what you would like
- offer therapeutic support and guidance about developing a positive relationship with your child via our Thrive therapeutic service

We will provide an additional £300 to your setting up home allowance to help get your home set up for you and your child.

We will also help you with advice on how to register your child's birth and claim any extra benefits you may be entitled to.

There is further information that can be found on our website:

linkinbromley.co.uk/young-parents-2

...you are in custody

We will be there for you if you are in custody and if you want our support.

This will include helping you make arrangements when you are released and working with you and any other agencies supporting you to ensure you have somewhere to go when you are released.

We will stay in touch by visiting you or writing to you depending on what you want.

We will also provide you with a payment of £25 per month until you are 21 years old unless agreed otherwise.

...you are aged over 25

We understand that your needs do not suddenly disappear or change when you turn 25 and you may need somewhere to turn to for support.

Once you turn 25 you can still contact us for information, advice and guidance either via your former YPA or social worker if you are still in touch with them, or via our duty service.

You will no longer have an allocated worker, although you may still be in touch with someone who was, there will be no more pathway plans and we won't chase you, but we will be here if you need us.

Qualifying care leavers

You will be entitled to support from the Leaving Care Team if you:



Left care on or after your 16th birthday and were looked after for less than 13 weeks after your 14th birthday

or



Had a Special Guardianship Order (known as an SGO) or had a SGO when you reached the age of 18 and were looked after immediately before the making of that Order

or



Were in care over 13 weeks but returned home for six months or more and ceased to be looked after prior to turning 18

If you can receive this support, you will not necessarily have an allocated worker or be eligible for all the support outlined in this offer. However, we can offer advice and guidance and can work with you to assess and consider any additional needs you may have. We can also work with you to make a plan for how those needs will be met. We can also offer help with living expenses if you are in higher education, up to the age of 25.

Access to your records

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

You can speak to your YPA or Social Worker about how to access this information. Alternatively, you can access your records by using our online Data Subject Request form on our Council website:

bromley.gov.uk/privacy

Your YPA or Social Worker can support you to look through your records when you receive them if that is what you want.

Want to learn more?

Visit our dedicated website to learn more about the support that is available:

linkinbromley.co.uk



Our offer for care experienced children, teenagers and young adults



For more information, contact:
Children's Services
London Borough of Bromley
Civic Centre, Stockwell Close
Bromley BR1 3UH

