



Our Offer to Care Leavers 2024 - 2026

Introduction

As your corporate parent, Brent Council continues to be responsible for you after you turn 18. We must make sure that you are safe, healthy and are achieving your goals. As any good parent, we want to make sure you have the best possible support to help you thrive as you transition into adulthood.

We will do our best to help you achieve your full potential. We know that it is a big step when you move out of care and start living on your own. Being a good parent means keeping in touch and providing you with the support you need to meet your individual needs.

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 for advice and help.

This local offer is made by Brent Council to all care leavers and sets out how we will support you.

To be able to get the support set out in this offer, you must have been in care for at least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 16 (including your 16th birthday) or for 13 weeks after your 16th birthday. Your personal advisor will talk with you about the information in this offer.

Support we must provide by law

Following changes introduced through the Children and Social Work Act 2017, you can ask for support from your personal advisor until you reach the age of 25. This is to make sure you receive similar support that young adults who live with their families would normally expect.

Personal Advisor

Once you turn 18, in most cases, you'll no longer have a social worker, so your personal advisor, we call them PAs, will make sure you get the services you need and help co-ordinate your pathway plan and reviews.

Your PA is there to help you to think about your future, what you are studying, what you want to do in the future and your independence skills. Your PA will talk to you and other people who are important to you to find out more about you and your needs.

Your PA can help you with lots of things in your life. The main things they will do are:

- Be involved in understanding your needs and preparing your Pathway Plan so that you can get a good idea of what you want to do with your life
- Review your Pathway Plan at least every six months to help you to stay on track and achieve the things you want from life
- Financial assistance towards an activity twice a year that you and your personal advisor can do together

- With your agreement, seek the views of our partner agencies when completing your pathway plan. This may include housing, education, training and employment providers, benefits and health services. PAs will also liaise with youth offending services and probation if needed
- Even if your case has been closed you can still get in touch with us before your 25th birthday and we will assess what help or assistance we may be able to give you
- If you are a disabled care leaver and have been assessed to have eligible needs under the Care Act 2014, a social worker will regularly review your Care and Support Plan to ensure that the right support is in place to meet your assessed needs. The Care and Support Plan must be reviewed at least once a year.

Support we Offer

Education, Employment and Training

Good parents want to help their children achieve the right qualifications, training and skills to enable them to succeed in life. As your corporate parent, we want to make sure you have this solid foundation so that you are able to find the right career and job that goes with it. To do this we will make sure you have good advice, support and assistance.

If you have an Education Health and Care Plan, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014 states that your plan will need to be maintained and reviewed by our Special Education Needs team until you reach the goals set out in the plan, or your 25th birthday.

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 £2,000 if you go to University, to help with books and materials, this will be paid in equal instalment over the duration of your degree course (incl. your foundation year)
- We will provide somewhere for you to stay during your summer University holiday (or funding if you would prefer to make your own arrangements) if you are in higher education or in residential further education. This will be based on a financial assessment carried out by your personal advisor.

Our other education and training support offer to you includes:

- A guaranteed offer of a careers appointment with Brent Virtual School or Prospects (Connexions) to discuss your career options post 18. Prospects are able to help you in CV writing, improve your job interviews skills, and help you apply for employment, education, or training opportunities
- A care leavers link on the Brent Works portal highlighting specific training and employment opportunities available in Brent
- Support to meet your transport costs when travelling to training, school/college, apprenticeships or job interviews
- Support, if not available through student finance, to purchase course equipment up to £100
- We will encourage you to work through the national ASDAN Living Independently Award, to help you gain skills for independent living
- We will encourage you to attend The Gordon Brown residential weekend to test out your independent living skills before you are nominated for your own tenancy.
- Support and advice if you choose to go to university, such as helping you apply for tuition fees and maintenance loan

- In partnership with Brent Works we will send your personal advisor employment, training and apprenticeship opportunities to help you get into employment, training or an apprenticeship scheme within the council or elsewhere
- A Department of Work and Pensions worker linked to the leaving care team who is able to assist you in claiming benefits and avoid you getting undue benefit sanctions
- A celebration event to share the positive education and training experiences of care leavers
- An annual review of your education health and care plan in line with SEND Code of Practice.

Accommodation

Your PA will help you to find suitable accommodation. We will work with you to ensure you are provided with the most suitable housing options. Our accommodation support offer to you includes:

The law says the following about how we must support you with your accommodation:

- We will encourage you to stay in care until you are 18, but if you choose to leave care before the age of 18 we must provide you with suitable accommodation.

Our other accommodation support offer to you includes:

- Supported accommodation if you are not ready for your tenancy
- Welcome Pack when you first move to supported accommodation (given by the provider), which will include cooking utensils, cups and saucers, kettle and toaster amongst other essential items provided the
- Supporting you to remain with your foster carers under what's called a 'Staying Put' arrangement. This will be reviewed every six months as part of your pathway plan review to make sure its meeting your needs
- Supported lodgings if you have a disability and have been assessed to have eligible needs under the Care Act 2014
- Return to your family if it is safe for you to do so and if you have a disability and have been assessed to have eligible needs under the Care Act 2014, a care package to support you and your parents
- Residential Care if you have a profound disability and have been assessed to have eligible needs under the Care Act 2014
- Once you have reached the stage where you can live independently and completed the ASDAN independent living booklet, attended the Gordon Brown residential weekend, and MyBank course which are part of the pre-tenancy requirement and mandatory. You will then have the option to apply for your own tenancy in Brent (occasionally this may be outside of Brent). Your housing application will be assessed, and you'll initially be given the option to bid for a bedsit for three months before being placed on a waiting list for a Direct Offer (managed by Brent housing or a housing association provider)
- As a care leaver you will be given priority Band B and you will have 3 months to bid for a property on 'Locata'. If you have not secured a property after bidding for 3 months you will be automatically added to the waiting list for a direct offer, alternatively, you can also explore private rental accommodation options
- We will offer a rent deposit scheme to care leavers for whom private rented accommodation is assessed as a suitable option
- Workshops to receive advice about holding down a tenancy, including avoiding rent arrears, paying bills and budgeting effectively
- A 'Setting up Home Allowance' of £3,000 (based on assessed need) for items you need to set up home like appliances, bedding and furniture. If you are parent, you will be entitled to £3200

- If you don't want to live in Brent because you have friends, family or connections elsewhere your PA will offer advice and support you to approach another local authority for where you wish to live to see if they are able to assist you
- To give you advice to prevent you from becoming intentionally homeless and support to sustain your tenancy.

Your Health & Wellbeing

Looking after your physical health and mental wellbeing is extremely important as you get older. Your personal advisor will provide advice, support, and encouragement to you so that you have every opportunity to lead a healthy and active lifestyle. Our health and wellbeing offer to you includes:

- If you live in Brent, you can access a free annual gym membership through Everyone Active. If you live outside Brent, we will support you with free annual gym membership at Pure Gym or an alternative gym up to the age of 21. This will be reviewed annually please speak to your personal advisor on the eligibility criteria.
- Before you reach 18, you will receive a copy of your Care Leaver Health Summary from your social worker. The Care Leaver Health Summary will contain a summary of your medical history, including a list of immunisations you have had.
- Provide you with information about counselling and mental health services that are available locally and support you to move from children's services to adult services if you need to.
- You will be given a copy of the Health Information Booklet which gives you details of local services and your entitlements – your personal advisor will go through the booklet with you during a leaving care visit or when you have your pathway plan review.
- Support to register with a doctor, dentist and optician.
- Providing information on healthy living including 'Staying Healthy' sessions.
- We will, depending on assessment of need, provide assistance towards certain medical costs if they are not covered by the NHS. This particularly applies to young people with no recourse to public funds.
- If you are assessed to have eligible needs under the Care Act 2014 because you have been diagnosed with ASD or Learning Disability an annual health check will be completed by your doctor.

Managing Money and Financial Support

We will provide you with support to become financially independent, in a similar way to how other parents support their own children.

The law and the guidance says:

- We can, depending on assessment of need, provide you financial assistance towards expenses relating to education, employment or training and also access to other sources of funding such as college or university funds or from the Department of Works and Pensions.

Our additional support offer to you includes:

- Support to apply for universal credit or other benefits
- We will offer you financial support whilst you are making your initial benefit application until the first payment is received.
- Offering you the opportunity to attend 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 or if required after your 18th birthday
- You will be exempt from paying Council Tax until the age of 25 years, only after you have maximised the council tax rebate because you are on low income, a student or receiving universal credit
- Signpost to relevant charities or organisations where you could obtain advice on immigration matters.
- Financial support in exceptional emergencies based on your financial assessment undertaken by your personal advisor.
- Help you to apply for the 'Brent Digital Support Offer' for a laptop and internet connectivity.
- All eligible care leavers claiming universal credit will be able to apply for free internet access from TalkTalk (internet provider).
- Help you claim for half price bus and tram travel concession through London Transport.

Relationships

As well as support from a Personal Advisor, we will offer you additional practical and emotional support, such as:

- Help you to identify the people most important to you. We can help you to maintain or regain contact with these people who are special to you or who cared for you in the past, like former foster carers, independent visitors, or social workers
- Support to re-connect with family where it is in your best interest
- Signpost you to an advocate if you need one
- If you already have an 'independent visitor' before the age of 18, continuing to support to maintain contact with your 'independent visitor'
- Life skills workshops that will focus on practical skills and managing relationships
- Group work with former Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children regarding relationships to minimise risks of isolation.

Supported to be a Parent

If you are a parent or if you are expecting a baby, we will support you to do the best for them.

- Your GP and midwife can talk to you about the health services available to you
- Your personal adviser can give you information about universal services, financial support and schemes in place to support you
- Your personal adviser can refer you to your local Brent Family Wellbeing Centre, which is a great way to meet other parents and access a wide range of community services and resources for yourself and your child
- If you are a first-time parent, we can make a referral for you to the family nurse partnership for extra support
- We will provide you with a hamper of baby goodies to celebrate the arrival of your new baby
- Invite you to our parenting group when one is running.

Support for young people in custody

We will continue to offer you financial support and a personal adviser, up to the age of 21 or up to 25 depending on individual circumstances, who will visit you to review your pathway plan and prepare for your release from custody.

If you are in custody you will receive:

- £20 per month so that you can pay for food and toiletries from the canteen
- On release from custody for more than a year each care leaver will receive up to £100 to pay for initial expenses.

Getting Your Voice Heard

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:

- Encourage you to join our What's App channel called 'Care Leavers Hub' where we will post details of events, workshops and a chance to win a prize in our 3 monthly draw.
- Support you to enrol on the Electoral Register, so you can vote in elections
- Provide information on groups and clubs you may wish to join
- Option to complete your pathway plan through a digital app.
- Making sure that your personal advisor talks to you about the local offer in your pathway plan review meetings.
- Get involved in Brent Youth Parliament
- Informing you about voluntary work that you may be interested in
- Giving you advice and helping you to challenge any discrimination you face as a care leaver
- You will have access to our Children and Young People's participation service called Brent Care Journeys 2.0 (BCJ 2.0) where you can meet other young people, take part in fun activities and outings, and get involved in decision making on matters that affect children in care and care leavers.
- There are also opportunities to get involved in council decision making by participating in Corporate Parenting Committees or becoming a Youth Ambassador or by contributing to commissioning services or joining an interview panel for recruiting senior council staff.

1. Who else can help?

As a care leaver, there is a range of support services available to you. We have put together a list of useful contact details. If there is anything you do not understand or need further information about then please speak to your PA.

Brent Leaving Care Team Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley.	Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm Duty Number 0208 379 4612 or 4613 during office hours, 24 hour emergency number 0208 863 5250
Disabled Childrens Team	Brent's Family Front Door on 020 8937 4300.
Brent Complaints Team	Tel: 020 8937 1234 or Email: complaints.service@brent.gov.uk
Independent Advocacy – Coram	Tel: 0808 800 5792

[Brent Care Leavers Charter](#): You will find the link to Brent Care Leavers' Charter here;
[Brent Care Leavers Charter.pdf](#)

Other places you can go for help:

- Rees: The Care Leavers Foundation <https://www.reesfoundation.org> Provides small grants for care leavers aged 18-25;
- The care leavers association <http://www.careleavers.com> A charity aimed at improving the lives of care leavers;
- Become <http://www.becomecharity.org.uk> Online advice and information for care leavers;
- Propel <http://propel.org.uk/UK> Information on what support is available for care leavers at university;
- Shelter <https://england.shelter.org.uk> Provides housing advice;
- National government benefits calculator <https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators> Information on benefits;
- Citizens Advice Bureau <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk> Information about money, benefits, your rights, employment, housing and the law.
- Care Leavers Covenant is a national inclusion programme that supports care leavers aged 16-25 to live independently [Home - Care Leaver Covenant \(mycovenant.org.uk\)](https://www.home-care-leaver-covenant.org.uk) it also has several business offering discounts to care leavers.
- Young Brent Foundation works with young people in Brent: <https://youngbrentfoundation.org.uk/>