

Tower Hamlets Local Offer for Care Leavers 2019



What is the Local Offer?

The Local Offer gives you information on services available to young people and this booklet has specifically been designed for care leavers.

Even though you have left care, as a young person who has previously been Looked After by Tower Hamlets, we want you to know where and who to go to for advice and help so you feel safe and supported.

The services and support you can access will depend on your status – the table below shows the different categories of care leavers. Please talk to your social worker or personal adviser to find out more about this.

What is a Care Leaver?

You are a care leaver if you are:

- A young person aged 16 or over who has been looked after by the local authority for a relevant period of time since their 14th birthday, and with a period of care taking place on or after their 16th birthday.

You can also find out more about this by using the information on the Coram Voice website page ‘**Am I a Care Leaver?**’ here: <https://coramvoice.org.uk/young-peoples-zone/am-i-care-leaver?>

Categories of care leaver

Eligible children - looked after, aged 16 or 17, and have been looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks since the age of 14. This entitles you to an allocation of personal advisor and your pathway plan being reviewed on a six monthly basis. As you will have an allocated social worker, a lot of the support can be accessed through your social worker.

Relevant children - aged 16 or 17, have left care, and at the point you left care were Eligible children. This entitles you to an allocation of personal advisor and your pathway plan being reviewed on a six monthly basis.

Former relevant children - aged 18 - 24 who, prior to 18th birthday, were either Eligible or Relevant. This entitles you to an allocation of personal advisor and your pathway plan being reviewed on a six monthly basis.

Qualifying children and young people – aged between 16–24, who:

A: Have been looked after following your 16th birthday, but for less than the 13 weeks since your 14th birthday that would make you Relevant or Former Relevant, and who have now ceased to be looked after.

B: You were accommodated in a non-local authority setting or privately fostered over the age of 16.

Your Personal Adviser

In Tower Hamlets, personal advisers are part of the Leaving Care Service.

Support from your personal adviser continues up until your 21st birthday and you can ask for support at any time up to your 25th birthday.

Up until your 21st birthday your personal advisor will be in touch with you at least 6 times a year, or more if needed. You can always contact your personal advisor at any time if you need advice or support.

Your Pathway Plan

While you are preparing to leave care you will work on your Pathway Plan with your social worker and it will be updated by your personal adviser once you leave care.

Your Pathway Plan looks at the things that are important to you as you move towards independence, such as being ready to leave care, where you live, managing your money, staying healthy, employment, citizenship, education and training and your future.

Your Pathway Plan is also your record of the support that we have agreed to provide.

Financial support

Living costs for 16 and 17 year olds

We provide a subsistence payment to cover your daily living costs if you are living semi-independently and unable to claim benefits. If you find it difficult to budget, we can give you a food voucher as part of the payment to make sure you always have enough for food.

Initial benefits claim

If you are eligible for benefits, six weeks before your 18th birthday you will be supported by your Personal Advisor or Social Worker to make your initial claim, often with an appointment at Jobcentre Plus.

If your circumstances change and you become eligible for benefits after your 18th birthday, then you will need to make a claim as soon as possible – ideally as soon as you know about the change.

Don't worry – we can provide you with weekly subsistence payments for up to 6 weeks while your benefits claim is processed, as long as you continue to attend any Jobcentre Plus appointments you may have and give them all the information they ask for.

If you move from benefits to employment, Universal Credit means there should be no gap in receiving money. Talk to your personal advisor if you have any questions or concerns about benefits.

Remember: *You will also need to make a claim for Housing Benefit or the rent element of Universal Credit when you make a claim for benefits so that you do not fall into rent arrears.*

Important documents

It is important that you have a photographic form of identification, such as a passport or driving licence, and your birth certificate when you leave care. You will usually need these, as well as your National Insurance Number so that you can prove who you are.

When you leave care, you should already have a copy of your birth certificate as well as a renewed passport or a provisional driving licence.

If you need help we may be able to pay for the cost of 1 passport and 1 birth certificate up until you turn 21. We may also pay for a driving licence if you need it for your employment. If you are an unaccompanied young person and there are immigration issues to be resolved, your personal advisor will help you get the right documentation required to prove who you are.

Remember: *Please keep all your documents safe as you will be responsible for paying for any replacements.*

Clothing allowance

If you are aged 16 or 17 and living semi-independently, you may be given a one off clothing allowance of £100 every financial year once an assessment has been made.

Holiday grant

As a former relevant young person in education or training, the Leaving Care Service may be able to provide you with funding towards a holiday. This will be agreed as part of your Pathway Planning process. Please note, this grant is discretionary to a maximum of £200 and you are allowed one request per year. Please discuss with your Personal Advisor how you can access the holiday grant.

Birthday Gifts

You may receive a £30 gift voucher on your 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st birthday if you stay in touch with us.

Festivities Grant

You may receive a £30 yearly festive grant to celebrate one significant religious or cultural event if you are in touch with your personal advisor.

Social and leisure activities

We want you to be happy and healthy, so will encourage you to take part in social and leisure activities. If you are aged 16 or 17, you can apply for a local leisure card. If you live outside Tower Hamlets, your personal advisor may be able to help you get one for where you live. If there are other activities you are interested in, we may be able to pay for these – you will need to speak to your personal advisor about other options.

Savings

Tower Hamlets Children's Services makes sure that your carer saves £10 a week during the time you are in care. This is to ensure that you have a lump sum of money which you can use in the future. You will not normally be able to access the bank account until you are eighteen.

Before your 18th birthday your Independent Review Officer (the person who chairs your review meetings) will discuss with you how to manage your savings when you turn 18.

'MyBnk' – financial education for young people

If you need support with budgeting, being independent, banking and borrowing 'MyBank' offer money management sessions. The Money Works programme maps into a range of accredited life skills, money management and employability certificates. If you attend the full programme, you can also qualify for a Level 1 Personal Money Management accreditation.

You can find out more about MyBank here: www.mybnk.org

Accommodation

We want to make sure that once you leave our care we help you find suitable accommodation that meets your needs. We know not all young people will be ready to live unsupported on their own straight away. Your personal advisor will work with you to agree accommodation plans for when you are no longer in care and include them in your Pathway Plan.

At least six months prior to your 18th birthday (or earlier if you leave care at a younger age), your social worker will need to present your case to the Tower Hamlets Leaving Care Independent Placement Overview Panel, where you will have the opportunity to also attend and make your views heard.

There are a range of placements - in supported housing providing low, medium and high support depending on your need. Some information about these is below:

Supported Accommodation:

Some supported housing schemes have 24 hour support meaning staff sleep in overnight, whereas others have staff available during the day only, although there will be an on-call service available off site. You would be placed into the one that best meets your need.

Self-Contained Accommodation

You would be provided with a self-contained flat. Floating support would be provided to help you settle into your accommodation and community.

Shared Housing

This can be an important step for care leavers, as it allows you to gain independence, although support is still available as and when required.

University Accommodation

If you plan to go to university the Leaving Care Service will work in partnership with you to identify the most suitable accommodation. During the summer break, when you are not at university, we may be able to help you find somewhere to live. Although the financial support we provide covers the academic year, we may be able to contribute to any additional rent costs you may have during the summer break.

Emergency Accommodation

We understand sometimes you may need emergency accommodation. We have a number of short term and emergency accommodation available for these circumstances.

Family home

If you decide to return to your family home, floating support will be available in addition to the support from your personal advisor. If this happens, we will want to ensure there is an alternative plan in case you need one.

Council Housing

Tower Hamlets may also be able to offer tenancies in council housing. The Council's Children's Leaving Care Team can sponsor you for housing priority. If you have not moved in to permanent accommodation within 6 months then your application will be included on lists for all suitable and reasonable vacant homes that become available.

Private Rented Accommodation

Some care leavers decide to rent privately instead of using the option offered by Tower Hamlets. We will still provide advice and guidance as required and agreed in the Pathway Plan. It is likely your landlord will require a deposit and rent in advance before they will agree to a tenancy. If you are over 18 and assessed as being ready for a tenancy, we will support you to access rent deposit schemes, or if appropriate, you could also speak to your personal advisor about accessing a Setting Up Home Allowance to pay for this.

Staying Put

A staying put arrangement is where you stay in your foster placement past your 18th birthday. This decision is made with you and your social worker/s, foster carer and personal advisor.

Living costs

As a care leaver you will be expected to claim the relevant benefits to assist with paying your rent.

Council tax exemption scheme

Any care leaver, who has previously been in Tower Hamlets' care, aged 18-25, who lives in the borough and is liable to pay Council Tax, will be able to apply for a council tax exemption. If you live outside the borough, the council may pay your council tax on your behalf to the local authority. Your Personal Advisor will help you with the application to be exempted from council tax payment.

Setting up Home Allowance

When you leave care and you are assessed as being ready to live independently, you may be eligible for a Setting Up Home Allowance of £2,200, which your personal advisor will help you apply for through the Social Fund.

If the Social Fund is not accessible or the amount is less than £2,200, then we may be able to pay the full amount or the difference. This allowance is to provide you with furniture or equipment when moving into independent permanent housing and will be written into your Pathway Plan.

In some cases you may also be able to use the money as a deposit to rent private accommodation or other important matter relating to housing. You would need to discuss this with personal advisor.

Starter Pack

When you move into your first non-looked after accommodation, you may receive a one off payment of up to £200 to purchase essential items such as bedding, cutlery etc.

Remember: *When most young people leave home to live independently they cannot always afford everything they need straight away and cannot always afford everything new. Your savings are there for you to use in your transition to independence and into later adulthood.*

Financial support whilst in education, training and/or employment

Education Bursary for 16 to 19 year olds

If you are in education or training your college will be able to let you know if you are eligible for a 16–19 Bursary. Your personal advisor can support you to complete the application if you would like, and they can provide you with confirmation of your status to help with entitlement.

Grants

Support grant – you may be entitled to receive £150 support grant per financial year, but your attendance will have to be of a minimum of 90% per academic year.

Reward grant - if you have passed exams, completed a course/training, had another significant achievement or coped with a challenging situation you may be entitled to a reward grant. Decisions on reward grants are made by looking at your individual circumstances.

Rewards for exam achievements	
GCSE passes A-G	£15.00 per GCSE
One year courses such as Basic Skills, Entry level, ESOL, GNVQ Foundation, GNVQ Intermediate, NVQ1, NVQ2	£50.00
AVCE, BTEC National, AS/A levels, NVQ3	£100.00 on completion or £50.00 for passing each year.
Life Skills Programme	£20.00
Access courses	£100.00
HND, Degree	£100.00 for passing each year
On graduation	£250.00

Incentive payment

You could also be entitled to £33 per week incentive payment if you are in education or training. This is subject to meeting attendance requirements and if you are not in receipt of college bursary. You would need to obtain proof of your attendance record and provide this to your personal advisor.

Fares

If you are in education or training you may be able to get financial assistance with travel costs during your term time and some fares for family contact, leisure and

culture activities. An assessment would be carried out and you would need to provide information about your costs and circumstances.

Support in pregnancy

You may be entitled to a maternity grant of £150, eleven weeks before your baby is born if you are aged 16 or 17 and pregnant.

You may also be entitled to a grant of £500 from the Department of Work and Pensions to buy essentials when your baby is born. You can talk to your personal advisor and midwife about these grants and other support that might be available to you.

Starting university – please see further information in the section below about financial support for when you are starting university.

Education, training and employment

We want you to be able to continue your education or training or find work when you leave care. Below is a summary of the support available to you. Talk to your social worker or personal adviser to find out more.

18 to 21 year olds wanting to go to college

Support can include:

- Your Personal Advisor keeping in touch with you and reviewing your Pathway Plan to ensure you are getting the support you need.
- Assistance with some expenses for education, training and employment if needed, this may include help with purchasing industry specific clothing for example.
- Income Support and Housing Benefit should be available if you have been in care and remain separated from your family and are in:
 - Full time further/non-advanced education - this is up to A-level standard or equivalent or, in direct training for 12 hours a week or more
 - Income Support and Housing Benefit should continue to be paid until the end of the academic year that you turn 21.
 - In exceptional circumstances we may be able to make a contribution towards course workbooks, field trips, special equipment or materials, clothing for work experience or job interviews.

21 to 24 year olds wanting to go into education or training

Support can include:

- When you are 21 years old - assessing your circumstances and offering guidance to you if this is needed until the age of 25. In respect of education or training this will be offered to you for the duration of your course.

- If you are over 21 and want to go back into education or training – advice and guidance to consider your options by a personal advisor in the Leaving Care Service. This would include:
 - Suitability of the course.
 - Using any savings you have to support you during this time.
 - Combining work and study.
 - Applying for financial support from charities and trusts.
 - Considering if you are eligible for funding from your employer.
- If we do provide you with guidance after 21, we will also provide you with a Personal Advisor who will update your Pathway Plan with you and keep in touch.

Support for young people wanting to go to university

Support related to attending university is dependent on eligibility – the information below provides some information about this but please also talk to your social worker or personal adviser:

- You must have completed BTEC level 3 or A-levels and be enrolled on a course of higher education, which includes first degree and higher education qualifications that are over 12 hours per week of study, including some distance learning courses.
- You must commence the course of higher education prior to your 25th birthday and have confirmation of your student loan. If you were originally an asylum seeker you must also have confirmation of your immigration status for the duration of your course.
- Your personal advisor would formally authorise any higher education course you have chosen.

If you are starting university you may be eligible for the support detailed below:

- Your personal advisor would review and update your Pathway Plan and keep in touch with you.
- We may provide you with an education bursary of £2,000 which covers the duration of the whole course. This would be paid to you in instalments over the course of your degree programme, spread over a maximum of four years.
- We may pay a top-up amount to assist with your living costs whilst at university. An assessment would be carried out to calculate the amount based on your circumstances.
- We may be able to help you with up to £150 (per academic year) to buy

books and materials. If your course requires it we may be able to help you with a grant to buy a laptop in your first year of study.

- If you decide at the end of the first year you are on the wrong course, we may provide an additional year's funding for you to change to another course. You would only receive 4 years funding in total.
- If you are unsuccessful in a year of your education, financial support would be re-assessed in your Pathway Plan. A maximum of one year's additional financial support may be provided.

Tower Hamlets Virtual School

The Tower Hamlets Virtual School will provide you with support throughout your education, helping you as you move on to different stages and offering you opportunities to explore different education, training and employment options as you plan for your future. Your Pupil Education Plan will be a record of how you are supported, including your views about your education and what you want to achieve.

Attendance

If there is any disagreement about your attendance, your personal advisor will ask you to provide a letter of attendance from your Higher Education Institution (for example, your University). If you are not attending your course as set out in your Pathway Plan, we may withhold payment of any bursary and other financial support provided by Tower Hamlets. Where you have been paid but decide not to attend, we would ask for the money to be repaid.

Additional funding

There may be other sources of additional funding that you can make use of for financial support, including seeking part-time employment, student loans, grants and hardship grants. Some universities offer a Care Leavers Bursary or financial support through the 'Access to Learning' fund. Your personal advisor can discuss these with you.

Support after university

We can continue to offer you advice and guidance, if you want it, up until you are 25, for employment, education or training.

However, when you have completed your university course, if you do not have paid work, you will be expected to claim benefits, unless you are considering going on to a post-graduate course.

If you want to go on to complete a post graduate course, we can offer you support and guidance to help identify financial support for you to continue your education and

will advise you how to access this. We will not be able to pay your fees or living expenses.

Support for parents with child care

If you want to access training or education you should find out what child care support is on offer from your employer, training provider, college or university.

Remember: *All 3 year olds are entitled to free nursery hours from Early Years Services. In some areas they also offer free provision for 2 year olds.*

Tower Hamlet's Apprenticeship Programme

An apprenticeship is a full time job which combines training and study – you would learn as you earn. Apprenticeship training takes place for a minimum of a year, but can last for up to four years depending on the qualification you take.

As a care leaver you need to be aged 18 to 24 and not have a qualification at Level 4 or above to be eligible to apply for an apprenticeship. Level 4 qualifications are above A levels and an example is a Higher National Certificate (HNC).

Custody

We understand that being taken into custody can be a stressful experience and when you are approaching the end of your sentence, you may be worried about where you will live and what you will do next.

You will have access to your personal advisor whilst you are in custody up to the age of 25 if you choose. While you are in custody, we can provide you with £10 a month financial help up until you are 21. Any benefit payments would be stopped, but your claim would stay active and in place ready for your release.

There are some education, training and employment opportunities you could explore with your personal advisor such as a Green Skill Partnership Construction course, a referral to St Giles Trust or the Tower Hamlets Workpath.

Staying healthy

Health assessments are available annually until your 18th birthday, which will be carried out by a 'Looked After Children' (LAC) Health Nurse.

From the age of 14 you can ask for a copy of your health assessment from the LAC Health Team. You can either request this from your Social Worker or contact the LAC Health Team directly by calling them on 020 8121 4110 or by emailing them at BHNT.LACHealthTeam@nhs.net.

Once you have had your final health assessment (before you turn 18) you will be sent a health summary which will include your immunisation record, a copy of your last health assessment, how to access a GP, dentist or optician and where to go for health advice and information.

When you turn 18 you can be offered support by your personal advisor to register with a GP and Dentist Surgery in the area where you live.

Health Passport

As a Tower Hamlets looked after child or care leaver you will have a health passport. This is a record of your medical and healthcare history, designed to help you keep and take ownership of your own personal health information.

Eye care

You may be eligible for free eye tests and vouchers towards glasses/contact lenses if you are:

- Aged 16 to 18 and in full time education
- Receiving certain benefits, such as Universal Credit
- On a low income and have a Health Credit Certificate (known as HC2 or HC3 certificate)

Prescriptions

Advice and support can be provided about prescription fees but we are not able to pay for the costs of prescriptions for you to get medication. You are eligible for free prescriptions if you are:

- Aged 16 to 18 and in full time education
- Receiving certain benefits, such as Universal Credit
- Pregnant or have had a baby in the last 12 months (you will need an exemption certificate from your GP)
- Receiving treatment in hospital

Pregnancy

Looked after young people who are pregnant can be referred to the Gateway Midwife who can offer Ante-Natal support. The Family Nurse Partnership Service offers a home visiting programme for first time young mums, aged under 20. A specially trained family nurse would visit regularly, from the early stages of pregnancy until the child is two years old.

More information about the Family Nurse Partnership can be found here:
<https://fnp.nhs.uk/>

Your Social Worker can also make referrals to the MASH Team should further support needs be identified.

Being Heard

The Children in Care Council (CiCC)

The CiCC provides an opportunity for children looked after and care leavers in Tower Hamlets to give their views and shape and influence the parenting that they receive at every level.

The CiCC makes sure there is a way for young people to communicate directly with senior managers and elected members about the things that matter to them.

Joining the CiCC is an opportunity to meet new people and make new friends, gain new skills, take part in fun creative activities and increase your self-esteem and confidence.

Advocacy

As a care leaver we know you may face some challenges and you may want to speak to an independent advocate for advice and support.

This service is provided by the Children's Society in Tower Hamlets – their contact details are on page 16. You can also talk to your personal advisor if you want to know more.

Useful information and contacts

Tower Hamlets Leaving Care Service

Tel: 020 7364 1140

Money Advice Service

Tel: 0800 138 7777

Website: www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

Tower Hamlets Workpath

Tel: 020 7364 0626

Email: workpath@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Looked After Children Health Team

Tel: 020 8121 4110

Email: BHNT.LACHealthTeam@nhs.net

The Children's Society

Tower Hamlets Children's Rights Service

Tel: 020 8221 8234

Mobile: 07958 234612

Website: TowerHamletsAdvocacy@childrenssociety.org.uk

Coram Voice

Freephone: 'Always Heard' Helpline Service 0808 800 5792

Email help@coramvoice.org.uk

Website: www.coramvoice.org.uk

Refugee Council

If you are a child under 18, contact the 'Children's Section'

Tel: 020 7346 1134

Website: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/contact>

Step Forward

Free & confidential services for all young people aged 11-25, living in & around Tower Hamlets. They can provide help with wellbeing, sexual health, LGBTQ+, mental health and personal development

Tel: 020 7739 3082

Email: info@step-forward.org

Drop in before 6pm, at 234 Bethnal Green Road, E2 0AA

Website: www.step-forward.org

Tower Hamlets Independent Visitors Scheme

If you have little or no contact with your family, this service (run by Barnardos) will give you access to an independent supporting adult

Tel: 020 8768 5058

Website: Barnardos.org.uk/london-independent-visitors-scheme

Tower Hamlets' Housing Options Service

Housing Options Service

Albert Jacob House,

62 Roman Road, Bethnal Green

London, E2 0PG

Opening times: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday, 9.30am-4pm,
Wednesday, 1-4pm

Tel: 020 7364 7474

Email: homeless@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Positive East

Positive East provides a range of services that enable people living with HIV to promote their health and well-being, support self-management, and to gain and sustain their independence.

Tel: 020 7791 2855

Email: talktome@positiveeast.org.uk

Website: <https://www.positiveeast.org.uk>

Docklands Outreach

Docklands Outreach provides services to young people in Tower Hamlets - specifically those who are affected by, or at risk from alcohol, drugs and their misuse, crime, homelessness, poor sexual health, conflict resolution, anti-social behaviour, emotional and mental health difficulties and other related issues.

Tel: 020 7538 1601 Website:

Email: info@dockout.org.uk

Website: <http://www.dockout.org.uk/>

Tower Hamlets Mental Health Crisis Line - 24 hours

Callers will be given support and advice from mental health professionals. The crisis line has been designed as a 'first port of call' for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis and can be used, where appropriate, as an alternative to visiting A&E services.

Tel: 0207 771 5807

Reset

Reset which provides drug and alcohol treatment to Tower Hamlets residents aged 18 or over.

Tel: 020 8121 5301

Website: <https://www.elft.nhs.uk/service/362/Reset---Tower-Hamlets-Drug-and-Alcohol-Service>

Spotlight Youth Services

Spotlight is a creative youth service with state of the art studios, film, design and broadcast facilities with performance, dance, boxing, fashion spaces and a café.

Tel: 020 3011 1333

Email: hello@wearespotlight

Website: <https://wearespotlight.com/>

St Giles

St Guiles helps people facing severe disadvantage to find jobs, homes and the right support they need.

Tel: 020 7708 8000

Email: info@stgilestrust.org.uk

Website: <https://www.stgilestrust.org.uk/>