

**The Right Side  
of Care**

Wirral Council's Local Offer for  
**Care Leavers**

**Positive Impact,  
Achieving Aspirations**

 **WIRRAL**

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**Wirral Council's Local Offer for Care Leavers, with the involvement of Care Leavers, the Leaving Care Service and all parts of Wirral Council, its partner agencies and other stakeholders, seeks to provide an outstanding service for Wirral Care Leavers.**

It aspires to be innovative and adapt the Local Offer for Care Leavers to the ever-changing and evolving world that young people live in.

It also seeks to challenge and improve existing services, responses and resources and develop new ways of supporting Care Leavers to achieve their full potential as well-rounded positive young adults for the future good of themselves and society.

Wirral Council's Local Offer for Care Leavers will continue to develop and evolve over time.

# Are you a Care Leaver?

If you have ever been looked after by someone other than your parents or by Social Services, or through Education or the Health Service; or remanded in custody as a child or young person, you may be a Care Leaver and entitled to services and support; in some cases up to your 25th birthday.

Some rules apply and it can be a bit complicated.

**If you aren't sure whether you are a Care Leaver contact the Wirral Leaving Care Service to check:**

■ Tel: **0151 666 3777** (1pm-4pm, Monday to Fridays)

If you aren't a Care Leaver, the Local Offer for Care Leavers does not apply to you, however;

**If you are under 18 and need help you can still contact Children's Social Care to discuss your situation:**

■ Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm - Tel: **0151 606 2008**

■ Outside of these hours - Tel: **0151 677 6557**

■ Email: [ifd@wirral.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:ifd@wirral.gcsx.gov.uk)

## **Legal definitions of Care Leaver status**

It's important to know which Care Leaver definition applies to you, as the type of support and services you are entitled to will depend on this. Your age and circumstances are also relevant.

### **Eligible Young Person**

If you are a young person aged 16 or 17 and have been looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and you are over 16; and have been looked after for at least 1 day since your 16th birthday.







### **Relevant Young Person**

If you are a young person aged 16 or 17 and have been looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and you are over 16 and have been looked after for at least 1 day since your 16th birthday but have stopped being looked after 'left care' before your 18th birthday.

### **Former Relevant Young Person**

If you were an Eligible or Relevant Young Person and have reached the age of 18, you will continue to be offered support up to your 21st birthday. It is your choice if you want your support to continue after this; or you can come back any time; until your 25th birthday.

### **Qualifying Care Leaver (Any of the following)**

-  If you have ever been the subject of a Special Guardianship Order and were looked after immediately before the making of the order.
-  If you were already a Care Leaver but returned to the care of someone who has Parental Responsibility or has been given Parental Responsibility for you via a Court Order and then lived with them for at least 6 months before your 18th birthday.
-  You don't meet the 13 week criteria for being a Care Leaver but were looked after for at least 1 day since your 16th birthday.
-  You were privately fostered with registered private foster carers.
-  You were accommodated for at least 3 months via either Education or Health Service.
-  You have had 'Short Breaks'

If you meet any of the above you are a Qualifying Care Leaver. If you are a Qualifying Care Leaver we must assess your need if you require this and can offer you appropriate advice, guidance and assistance. Support for Qualifying Care Leavers ends at their 21st birthday unless they are in education in which case it may continue up to their 25th birthday.

# Wirral Care Leavers' Charter

**We want to make sure that every Care Leaver has the opportunity and support to achieve their full potential and goals in life.**

This is a set of principles and promises that Care Leavers want the staff of Wirral Childrens Services to make. This will help in the decisions made about young peoples' lives. It does not replace any laws but gives guidance to show how laws are designed to be interpreted.

Wirral's Care Leavers' Charter is designed to raise expectations, understanding and the aspirations of what care leavers need and want from a good Corporate Parent.

## To Respect You

- We will support you and what you choose to believe in.
- We will respect your uniqueness and support you to express this positively to others. We will value and support relationships that are important to you.
- We will respect how you feel and help you.

## To Believe in You

- We will value you as an individual and encourage you to meet your goals and reach your potential, always looking for the best in you and not judging you on your past.
- We will be understanding and offer you any emotional support you want to help you move forward.
- We will support you and make sure that you receive the care you want and not the care we think you need.

### To Listen to You

- ☞ We will respect what you have to say and won't rush you when we are talking.
- ☞ We will not interrupt you and not forget what you say to us.
- ☞ We will always try to understand where you are coming from and take your past into account, reflecting on what you tell us and acting on it when we need to.
- ☞ If we should disagree with anything you say, we will always explain why and do this in a kind and understanding way.

### To Inform You

- ☞ We will inform you of what takes place at any of your meetings that you do not attend and keep you updated on your rights and entitlements.
- ☞ We will inform you about what has happened and what's going to happen during your time in care and let you know straight away about any changes.
- ☞ We will inform you who is responsible for making these decisions and inform you how this information is being recorded.
- ☞ We will also inform you about how your information is shared with others and ask you what information you would like or not like to be shared with your siblings.
- ☞ We will inform you how we are making sure that your voice is heard in everything that we do.
- ☞ We will provide you with all the contact details you need.

### To Support You

- ☞ We will support you through the good and bad, not bringing up any of your past mistakes.
- ☞ We will not judge you, pity you or view you only as a case number.
- ☞ We will ask you what you would like support with and help you with this.
- ☞ We will not presume to know when, how or why you need certain support but will always be there to help you when you need it.

- We will always let you know about other groups or organisations that may also be able to help.
- We will come and see you and your siblings separately, always offering each of you the same level of support.

### **To Find a Home**

- We will work with you to find you a home that you want and is right for you in your preferred area.
- We will do our best to support you until you decide you don't need our support anymore.
- We will help prepare you for independent living so that when you do decide to live on your own, you are ready and understand how to manage day to day tasks.
- We will do everything in our power to ensure your happiness.

### **To be a Lifelong Champion**

- We will do our best to help you with everything that you need help with, from housing, health and finances to college, university, employment and training.
- We will treat you with respect and good manners. Even when you feel you don't need us anymore, we will still be here for you up to your 25th birthday.
- We will help you to understand how and why certain decisions are made for and about you and we will support not just you, but also the rest of your family.
- We want you to trust us and we will do everything we can so this can be achieved. We will walk alongside you and do our best for you at all times.

# Your Rights

Everyone has Rights and a responsibility to respect the Rights of others.

Laws such as the Children Act 1989, Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, & the Children & Social Work Act 2017 make sure that you are treated properly and fairly, wherever you are living.

## **Your Rights include:**

- The right to be helped by the Children and Young People's Department if you are in need of help or support
- The right to health care
- The right to education
- The right to be protected if you are or have been mistreated or harmed
- The right to see what is written about you
- The right to have contact with family and friends
- The right to be treated fairly by the Children and Young People's Department
- The right to complain and be given help to sort out your problems
- The right to have your wishes and feelings taken into account

We believe and promote your right to be heard and will involve you in all decisions made about your care experience, Pathway Planning and arrangements for Leaving Care.



# Care Leaver Participation & Engagement

Care Leavers have the opportunity to have their voices heard both via their own individual Pathway Plans but also in a wider sense that can influence and shape how services for Care Leavers develop in Wirral. This can happen in a variety of ways and is facilitated by staff employed to support Care Leavers do this:

- Care Leavers Council 16 to 21
- Care Leavers Council 21 Plus
- Young Inspectors
- Care Leavers Week
- Annual Care Leavers Conference
- Surveys & Questionnaires
- Annual Celebration Events
- Meeting with Senior Staff & Councillors
- Participation in National Care Leaver Events
- Representation at the Wirral Corporate Parenting Board
- Interviewing potential new staff
- Influencing new policies and procedures

# How does being a Care Leaver actually work?

Anytime from when you are 15 ½ years old your Social Worker should start to talk about your Pathway Plan Assessment. This will normally take several meetings with you. When this has been completed they will write your Pathway Plan with you. This is your plan for the next few years and it really important that you work on the plan with your Social Worker because it's your plan and it's about your future.

The Pathway Plan should record your strengths and achievements and any things you feel you need help with. The Social Worker does have to include anything they are worried about but should also include your opinion about it.

**Don't worry, your Pathway Plan isn't fixed in stone as it must be updated as things change and your views and wishes change as you get older.**

By the time you are 16 ¼ years old your Social Worker should have completed your Pathway Plan Assessment and Pathway Plan with you. (Your Independent Reviewing Officer will ask them if they have.) You should have been fully involved and know exactly what is in your Pathway Plan.

Your Pathway Plan is all about you - all the great things about you; your strengths and achievements and where you want to go and what you want to do and what you want to be. It may also include anything that you or anyone else is worried about, but only so we can sort it out.

Your Pathway Plan should be clearly written, and you should be able to understand everything in it. It should have your views, opinions, ideas, and wishes written down and dated as part of the Pathway Plan. It should be very clear and tell you exactly what you plan is. It's like a map from here to where you want to get to. It should cover all different part of what you want to do, how you are going to be helped and supported, and by whom.

# Personal Advisor 'PA'

If you are a Care Leaver, we will make sure you have a Leaving Care Personal Advisor to support you. It is their job to keep in touch with you, check that you are alright, help you get what you need, ensure your accommodation is suitable and encourage and support you in your education, training or employment.

Your personal advisor is there to help and advise you with your plans and make sure you have support while you move from being a young person to a young adult.

## **We will:**

Allocate a 'Personal Advisor' to support you from your 16th birthday or shortly after.

Your PA will work with you and your Social Worker to ensure your Pathway Plan covers all aspects of you and your plans for the future; how you are going to get there, who is going to help; anything you or your workers are worried about and how this is going to be sorted out.

Your PA will continue working with you until you are 21, and if you wish at any time after this up to your 25th birthday.

We will try not to change your PA unless you want this. (Sometimes things happen that are beyond our control.) In theory you might have the same PA for 9 years!

Your PA will keep in touch with you as agreed with you; but at least once every 56 days until you are 21 but more often if needed. After 21 you can decide and agree how often your PA contacts you.

# Advice and Support

Your Social Worker and PA are there to work with you as a team to help you prepare for being a successful and capable young adult. They can help and advise you with anything you need and if they can't they will find someone who can. They will talk a lot about your Pathway Plan as this is central to ensuring everything you need is addressed, sorted out and planned for in a clear way that you understand.

For your Pathway Plan to be effective and help you as much as possible, it needs to be based on an up-to-date assessment of your strengths, what you want and what you or anyone helping you is concerned about. The Pathway Plan then needs to set out how we get from where you are now to where you want to be for each part of the Plan. It needs to include exactly what needs to happen, who exactly will do it, when it should be done by, how we know when it has been achieved and what should happen if it doesn't or doesn't work as well as planned. You should be fully involved in the development of your Pathway Plan and you will be offered support by your Social Worker and Personal Adviser to express your wishes and views. **It's really important that you are involved!**

With your agreement, we may need to seek the views of other people and agencies when completing your Pathway Plan. This may include individual or organisations dealing with things like Housing, Education, Training and Employment, Benefits Agency, Health Service, Youth Offending Services and Transitions / Adult Social Care to ensure you get the best possible support.

Your PA will work with you from when you are 16 and focus on helping to prepare you for independent living so that when you do decide to live with less support or completely on your own, you are ready and well prepared. Doing this early makes the process easier and can give you more options and 'open doors' for you if you can show you are ready to move on.

Advice and Support is also available from other services and professionals. Your Social Worker or PA can signpost you to these, or is happy to support you to get in touch or actually attend with you if you wish:

### These include:

- Health: GP Doctors, Practice Nurses, Teenage Looked After Young People's Nurses, Dentist & Opticians; and other specialist help like CAMHS, and Sexual Health & Contraception advice.
- Learning, Skills & Employment Service
- Participation and Engagement Service
- Advocacy and Independent Visitors
- Safeguarding: Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)
- Many others, just ask your Social Worker or PA

### You can also get information and advice from;

- **The Leaving Care Leaflets** (which covers all aspects of Leaving Care support)
- **'Right Side of Care' packs & 'Right Side of Care' website** (This contains lots of useful information; including a section on Leaving Care; and is well worth looking at: [www.therightsideofcare.com/leaving-care](http://www.therightsideofcare.com/leaving-care))
- **Pathway Hub** - Personal Advisors are available every afternoon to deal with any issue you may need support with. Address: **19 Argyle St, Birkenhead CH41 1AD**  
Tel: **0151 666 3777**  
Open 1pm-4pm, Monday to Friday. No appointment required.

# Accommodation: Where you live

We are trying to improve systems and processes and increase the range of accommodation options available you. We want to make it simpler, quicker and provide more choice of accommodation for Care Leavers.

**We will support you to find somewhere to live when you are ready to move, based on:**

- Your views and wishes
- Your age, maturity and what independence skills you have or may still need to develop to live independently safely.
- What accommodation options are available to you in the area you want to live?
- How much you can afford for accommodation based on your income or benefit entitlement?

**Common types of accommodation:**

## **Staying Put**

- Lodging with your former Foster Carer if you both want this to happen and it is the best option from age 18-21.

## **Supported Semi-independent Living**

- Accommodation with staff supporting you either part or full-time; either visiting your accommodation or based on-site.

## **Foyers or Hostels Accommodation via 'Mainstay' process**

### **Social Housing**

- Provided by a Housing Associations via 'Property Pool Plus' or direct applications.

## **Privately Rented accommodation owned privately by a Landlord / House Shares**

- PA will advise and support you with the various accommodation options; the pros & cons, the good points and bad points; the criteria and how to apply.
- PAs will continue to support you through the process of applying for accommodation as the time it takes to get an offer of accommodation can vary.
- We may be able to support you with agency fees, deposits and rent in advance depending on individual circumstances.

### **Your options based on age:**

**16 year-old Care Leavers** - We would encourage you to remain in your residential placement, Foster placement or semi-Independent living placement, whilst we continue to support you to prepare for Independent living. Your Social Worker, PA & IRO need to feel you are ready and it is safe for you to move on.

**If you are 17 years old** - We would help you to consider the most appropriate housing solution for you. This will probably be some form of supported accommodation via the 'Mainstay' process.

**If you are 18-25 years old** - We will support you to look at the whole range of housing options dependent on your wishes and individual needs.

From 18 we won't directly provide or fund your accommodation but will support you with finding accommodation you can afford and help you claim benefits to pay for it.

**All Wirral Care Leavers are entitled to a 'B' Priority status under the 'Property Pool Plus' system.**

### **When you have been offered accommodation:**

You will be offered advice and support 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.

### **Your PAs will help you with:**

- Applying for benefits
- Ensuring your rent will be paid
- Registering with Gas, Electric & Water
- Registering to Vote
- Helping you set a weekly budget
- Arranging for you to get help moving in
- Help with setting up your new home.

Wirral provides a 'First Home Grant' of £2,000 to cover the essential items necessary to set up your new home.

You will need to write a list of things you need, and their approximate cost with your PA. They will have a lot of experience with this having done it with other young people.

We do have limited amounts for certain items.

Your PA will then discuss this with the Leaving Care Service Manager. Occasionally we will ask you to look at an item again.

We strongly advise not using all of your grant at once.

If you don't use all your First Home Grant you won't lose it.

Your PA will support you if you have a housing crisis, including help if you are threatened with, or actually lose your accommodation.

### **Homelessness**

Care leavers aged 18-20 have a legal priority need in homelessness legislation.

If as a Care Leaver over 18 and find yourself without any accommodation, your PA will support you to find accommodation and engage with the Wirral Council Housing Options Team in an emergency to find immediate accommodation whilst longer-term accommodation is identified.



# Council Tax

If you are a Wirral Care Leaver living in Wirral you do not have to pay Wirral Council Tax if you are under 25.

## **If you get a Council Tax bill don't ignore it!**

Please let the Wirral Council Tax Department know if you are a Wirral Care Leaver which we will confirm.

Tell your PA if you are under 21 or still have a PA if you are aged 21-25.

If you are a Wirral Care Leaver aged 21-25 who does not have a PA please contact us on **0151 666 3777** between 1pm to 4pm, Monday to Fridays.

# Employment, Education and Training

We are trying to provide the best possible support for education, training and employment for you so that you are able to access the best possible vocational, academic or employment opportunities and fulfil your full potential.

We are delighted to tell you that we have a specialist team called the Learning, Skills and Employment Service; dedicated to identifying, promoting and supporting education, training and employment opportunities for young people who are looked after and Care Leavers up to the age of 21.

This team; who will work very closely with you and your PA will help and support you intensively with all aspects of employment, education and training. As well as your PA you will have a personal 'Employability Coach' who will work with you until the age of 21. This includes CV writing, application form support, job search skills, interview techniques, college and university visits, career guidance, supporting individual work placements, and running our own preparation for employment course with a residential trip in the Lake District.

You may be entitled to financial help with travel, lunches, and a weekly incentive payment if you are undertaking education, training or employment; depending on your individual circumstances.

We will pay for any essential work clothing, safety boots and equipment, provided that your course, placement or employer requires this.

# Work Experience, Apprenticeships & Employment

We offer an expanding number of opportunities to Care Leavers for work experience, apprenticeships and employment within Wirral Council, its key partners and contract holders, and other Wirral businesses.

## **Apprenticeships**

To get your career started you usually need a combination of experience and qualifications. An apprenticeship gives you both by combining on the job training with study (usually one day a week) meaning you can earn while you learn. With some apprenticeships you can even get a degree.

It usually takes between one and four years to complete an apprenticeship depending on which level you take. Apprenticeships are available across a wide range of industries and many high-quality, prestigious companies offer them.

For more information and to apply for apprenticeships:

[www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship](http://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship)

[www.apprenticeshiphub.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeshiphub.org.uk)

You can also explore local opportunities and events through the Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Hub.

Wirral Council offers internal apprenticeships in a range of areas and as part of our Corporate Parent Responsibility we ring-fence several opportunities each year for our Care Leavers.

Wirral Council delivers The Wirral Apprentice Programme, which offers local employers a grant to recruit a young person as an apprentice. Participants have to be Not in Education Employment or Training, aged 16-24 and be a Wirral resident. A select number of these opportunities are ring-fenced for our Care Leavers, and employers can claim an enhanced grant offer for recruiting a care-experienced young person.

For more information contact Gareth Jones on **0151 666 5233** or **[garethjones@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:garethjones@wirral.gov.uk)**

### **Traineeships**

A traineeship is an education and training programme with work experience that unlocks the great potential of young people and prepares them for their future careers by helping them to become 'work ready'.

Designed to help young people aged 16 to 24 who don't yet have the appropriate skills or experience, traineeships provide the essential work preparation training, English, maths and work experience needed to secure an apprenticeship or employment.

For more information and to apply for Traineeships:  
**[www.gov.uk/find-traineeship](http://www.gov.uk/find-traineeship)**

### **Study Programme**

Let's take a look at what employers want from the perfect candidate. Will they assess you based on great exam results and solid technical skills? Of course this is a factor, but whilst these are key requirements of the job, employers know that young people can be moulded and taught technical skills.

Skills such as communication, attitude, and workplace etiquette and general likability are much harder skills to teach. When given the choice, an employer may be more likely to hire someone who has a well-rounded skillset and is keen to learn, than someone who is very technically gifted and obviously capable but is let down by poor employability skills.

This is where the study programme format comes in. Participants will be taught these vital skills as well as your chosen technical and professional skills to bolster your job prospects, improve your employability and help you to land a job after their course. You'll now have the chance to engage in personal and professional development as well as brushing up on your English and maths as part of your qualification.

### **Mapped Out - Local Directory**

Mapped Out is an online directory of Apprenticeships and other training opportunities for young people aged 16 to 18 on Merseyside, including Traineeships, Study Programmes and Employability Programmes. You can search by provider, location, programme or sector.

For more information and to search for opportunities:

[www.gmlpf.net/mappedout](http://www.gmlpf.net/mappedout)

### **Further Education**

Wirral has several schools which offer 6th Forms, an independent 6th Form College and a dedicated Further Education college. Provision covers a range of subjects at a range of levels to meet all academic and vocational needs.

<https://wmc.ac.uk>

<https://www.bsfc.ac.uk>

### **For more information FE provision:**

[www.ucas.com/?schemes=16-18\\_Choices&theme=all\\_stages](http://www.ucas.com/?schemes=16-18_Choices&theme=all_stages)

### **Supported Employment**

The Intermediate Labour Market Programme is a Liverpool City Region initiative funded by European Social Fund to help support some of those most vulnerable to enter the job market. This is done by offering a wage subsidy to employers to support them to recruit a young person with a view to an offer of sustainable employment after the subsidy period.

For more information contact Joanne Smith at

[joannesmith@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:joannesmith@wirral.gov.uk)

## **Mersey Interactive Portal**

Mersey Interactive is an online portal which provides information to young people and parents. Here you'll find a world of learning and employment information that will help you to plan the best future for you.

Click on the Apps, these will take you to resources and organisations to help you understand your education, career options and tips, personal support needs, such as financial, travel and childcare.

You can find more information at:

<http://www.merseyinteractive.com/Default.aspx>

## **Higher Education**

We are delighted to support your success and aspirations if you choose to go to university. More and more Care Leavers are choosing to go on to Higher Education.

Wirral is located within reach of some of the country's best universities including Liverpool University, John Moores University, Liverpool Hope University, Edge Hill University and Chester University.

For more information on Higher Education and to search for courses go to:

[www.ucas.com/?schemes=16-18\\_Choices&theme=all\\_stages](http://www.ucas.com/?schemes=16-18_Choices&theme=all_stages)

Your PA and the Learning, Skills & Employment Service will assist and support you with choosing the right course and university that matches your talents and interests if you wish.

Your PA will support you with all aspects of application processes, applying for Student Grants & Loans, and help with securing and paying deposits for student accommodation.

They will also advise you on what packages different universities offer to Care Leavers. They do vary enormously from none, to being very generous at some universities.

Some universities offer 365 day a year accommodation, whilst most offer term time accommodation.

There are schemes nationally that offer free accommodation for Care Leavers at a limited number of universities, and your PA will have information about this.

Up to £500 is available to Wirral Care Leavers for a new laptop at the start of your degree course.

Wirral Council offers a £2,000 **Higher Education Bursary** that we will pay to you, spread over the duration of your course in an agreed way.

We will also pay for your travel to-and-from university at the start and end of each term.

We will help you with the cost of accommodation during holidays, up to £60 per week.

We will also pay you a personal allowance during holiday periods if you have no other income.

When you graduate we will be delighted to recognise your achievement with a graduation gift of £100.

# Financial Support

If you are a Care Leaver you can access different types of financial support, but this does depend on what type of Care Leaver you are, your age, where you are living, your benefit entitlements and your individual circumstances. Your PA will help you to understand what types of financial support you may be entitled to and how much you are able to get.

Your PA will help you to create a budget to see what you can afford, which helps you understand your options; like where you can afford to live, and what you can afford to do?

Sorting out and managing your money is a challenge whatever you age, but particularly if you are just starting for the first time. **It's important to understand what money you have coming in each week and what things you will need to pay from this.**

You may not have enough money for everything you need to pay for, so you will need to make some decisions and decide on priorities.

Your PA will help you with this and with making a budget, which will make things much clearer.

## **Things you may not have had to think about before;**

- The cost of your accommodation (rent).
- Council Tax (good news; Wirral Care Leavers are exempt from paying Wirral Council Tax until 25 but some rules do apply so discuss with your PA especially if you get a Council Tax bill).
- Paying for Gas, Electric, Water, TV License & Internet
- Buying your weekly food and other stuff that you need like toiletries; washing liquid and loo rolls.
- Setting aside money for clothes



- Getting to work or college and the cost of travel generally (Care Leavers may get some help with this for a time, depending on the circumstances, so please discuss with your PA).
- Affording any hobbies or sports and seeing friends
- Paying for costs associated with socialising
- Other costs

If you think you may be entitled to claim any benefits please discuss this with your PA who will advise and support you with this.

If you are aged 16 or 17 and being looked after then you will need to discuss what money you get with your Foster Carer, Residential Workers, or your Social Worker and PA.

If you are a Care Leaver aged 16 or 17 and no longer looked after we will pay you a weekly allowance equivalent to the national benefit rate (Currently £58.10) as you won't be able to claim benefits until your 18th birthday. We will also give you an additional £60 every 3 months towards clothing provided you have shown receipts previously for clothing grants.

### **Birthdays**

When you are 19 & 20 you will receive a gift card for £50. When you are 18 & 21 we recognize these as special birthdays and you will receive a gift card for £100.

### **Christmas and other Religious Festivals**

All Care Leavers receive a gift card for £20 at Christmas or at another time relating to a significant religious festival depending on what religion you choose to identify yourself as.

### **Individual Savings Accounts**

If you are a Care Leaver; depending on your age; the Government may have set up an Individual Savings Account. Usually there will be £200-£300 in it depending on whether any additional deposits have been made since it was set up.

If you have got one, you manage it from when you are 16 but only make withdrawals from it once you reach the age of 18.

Talk to your PA and they will help you to find out if you have one, discuss what you want to do with it, how to manage it from 16, and how to make withdrawals from it from when you are 18, if you wish.

### **Education, Training & Employment Cost**

We do offer some financial help depending on your individual circumstances - **Please see the section on Education, Employment & Training**

### **Care Leaver Parents**

If you are a parent or have a disability your Social Worker or Personal Advisor will support you to claim any benefits to which you may be entitled.

### **Maternity Grant**

If you are a parent (female or male), you can claim a Maternity Grant of up to £150 from 3 months before the birth to 3 months after the birth. This money must be spent directly on things for the baby, agreed with your PA, and this must be evidenced by receipts.

### **Driving Lessons**

Wirral Care Leaver are able to access the cost of one provisional driving license, one theory test, one practical test and 15 driving lessons.

In order to qualify for this incentive Care Leavers must be positively engaging with their worker and in settled pattern of education, training or employment.

Some behaviour, medical conditions, non-compliance with prescribed medication or alcohol or substance abuse will temporarily exclude Care Leavers from accessing driving lessons until the issue is resolved.

## **Custody**

In the highly unlikely event that you find yourself either remanded or sentenced to custody, your Social Worker and PA will continue to visit you and work with you to ensure you are okay, and make the best plans we can for your discharge via your Pathway Plan by working with you, your family, anyone else important to you and professionals involved in your case.

If you are 16 or 17 we will also pay you a monthly allowance of £20 so you can buy extra items from the prison canteen / shop.

## **Accommodation**

Financial assistance with setting up your first home -  
**Please see Accommodation Section.**

## **Financial assistance when claiming Universal Credit and other benefits**

We recognise that the way that the assessment of some benefits is administered does create hardship due to a built-in delay of up to 5 weeks. Due to this, Care Leavers may be offered some material or financial assistance based on their individual circumstance to avoid severe hardship during the period that their claim is being processed. This does not mean that the equivalent of full-benefit rates will be paid for any or all the period. To be considered for this type of support the Care Leaver must have done everything possible to progress their claim as soon as possible.

## **Internet Access - Benefit claims & job searches**

You can access the Internet at all Wirral Libraries free of charge.

If you are having difficulty, your PA will support you to access the Internet for specific tasks such as making a benefit claim or updating your benefit log.

## Financial assistance in a crisis

We do understand that sometimes with the best will in the world people genuinely run out of money before their next payments are due. Sometimes this is due to poor decisions or poor budgeting which your PA will want to support you with to avoid similar difficulties in the future.

The responsibility for financial support rest primarily with the DWP and Job Centre Plus and this should be the first place to approach if you are experiencing financial difficulties. Your PA or the Duty PA are available to discuss your situation, support you and offer any additional support we can.

### **Where it is not possible to access financial assistance, your PA or the Duty PA may be able to assist you with the following:**

- Access to the Response Young People's Food Banks for up to 72 hours of food.
- Your PA or the Duty PA can arrange a food shop at the Neo Café Supermarket.
- In very exceptional circumstances your PA or the Duty PA may request a small sum of financial assistance to be considered by a Leaving Care Service Team Manager based on individual circumstances and individual history.
- Your PA will want to help you address any issues that have led to your financial hardship in order to avoid it happening again.

# Health and Wellbeing

It is extremely important to us that Wirral Care Leavers have the best possible health and mental wellbeing.

We are trying to ensure that all our Care Leavers get quick access to any Health Assessment they require and then the best treatment they need as soon as possible.

Social Workers & PAs will ensure that all Care Leavers are registered with a GP, Dentist, and Optician; and support them with any issues relating to accessing any type of health care.

Any health issues will be covered in the Pathway Plan with a detailed plan of how this is being addressed, by whom, and by when. If health issues are not being addressed in a timely fashion, there should be a contingency plan and escalation process.

Care Leavers in Wirral are supported up to the age of 18 by Specialist Teenage Looked After Nurses who are able to support, facilitate and signpost in respect of all aspects of health care.

The Specialist Teenage Looked After Nurses are currently in the process of rolling out **Health Passports** to all Care Leavers aged 16 & 17.

All Care Leavers up to 18 will be offered the opportunity to meet with their Specialist Teenage Looked After Nurse to discuss or ask questions about any aspects of their health. This is not a medical but a health discussion.

# Birth Certificates, Bank Accounts, Passports & Provisional Driving Licenses

We will ensure that all Care Leavers have a copy of their birth certificate, their National Insurance number and a passport. All Care Leavers will also be supported to open up their own bank account if they have not already done so.

Care Leavers can also ask their PA for support with a free provisional driving license as a form of I.D. even if they are not currently learning to drive.

As a Care Leaver you can ask to see the records that Wirral hold on you. Wirral have to provide these records and support you with looking at them within 30 days of your written request.

**Your Social Worker and PA are available to support you with anything you want to discuss or need support with, or they will help find someone else for you to speak to if appropriate.**

# Anything we have missed?

No **Local Offer for Care Leavers** can cover every possible eventuality and situation. While we can't promise to solve every issue confronting Wirral Care Leavers we strive to have a culture such that we will try to work alongside our young people to address issues in a positive and supportive way, with the aim of finding an answer or some help with resolving the issues, and supporting the Care Leaver as far as possible.

## **Suggestions & Comments:**

We welcome any comments and suggestions, which should be made via the Duty PA:  
1pm - 4pm, Monday to Friday  
on Tel: **0151 666 3777**.

# Some useful contact numbers

## **Childline**

Tel: 0800 1111  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

## **Childrens Commissioner for England**

Tel: 020 7783 8330  
[www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

## **Childrens and Young People's Participation and Engagement Team**

Tel: 0151 678 1936  
Mobile: 07799 861 764

## **Childrens Complaints Officer**

Tel: 0151 666 5677

## **Bullybusters**

Tel: 0800 169 6928  
[www.bullybusters.org.uk](http://www.bullybusters.org.uk)

## **Ofsted**

Tel: 0300 123 1231  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## **Wirral Council Central Advice and Duty Team (CADT)**

Tel: 0151 606 1008

## **Wirral Council Emergency Duty Team**

Tel: 0151 677 6557