

Information For Care Leavers



BLACKBURN
with
DARWEN
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Information For Care Leavers

* Leaving Care Offer

In this guide you will find out about the support and services available to you as a Blackburn with Darwen care leaver aged 16+.

* Who is a Care Leaver

A care leaver is a young person who has previously been in the care of the local authority. This can be foster care, residential care and in some cases living with family. Your right to support as a care leaver will depend on when and how long you were in care.

* Eligible

Young people aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who are still looked after (in care).

* Relevant

Young people aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who have left care.

This includes young people who were detained (e.g. in a youth offending institution or hospital) when they turned 16 but immediately before that were looked after.

* Former relevant

Young people over 18 who have previously been 'eligible' or 'relevant'.

Local authorities provide support until age 21 or longer if in progressive education or training.

* Qualifying

Young people under 21 (or 24 if in education or training) who ceases to be looked after or accommodated in a variety of other settings or is privately fostered, after the age of 16.

Our Approach

At age 16 years an assessment of need will be completed with your social worker and a pathway plan will be developed. You will also have an allocated leaving care personal adviser to support you.

Your well-being, achievements, aspirations and hopes are important to us. We want to support you so you can establish yourself as an independent and successful member of the local community. Therefore we will work hard to ensure you have access to the opportunities, services and support you need to achieve your goals.

Services and Support

There are a wide range of services and support available for care leavers in Blackburn and Darwen. Some of these services are provided directly by the council, and some are provided in partnership with other agencies.

The types of services offered to care leavers include an allocated personal advisor, and support with accommodation, education, employment and training, higher education, financial support and support with your health and well-being.

Local Authority Statutory Responsibilities

The responsibilities that Local Authorities have towards care leavers are set out in the Statutory Guidance and Regulations called Planning Transitions to Adulthood for Care Leavers.

These responsibilities Include:

- » **Keeping in touch with you**
- » **Keeping your Pathway Plan under regular review**
- » **Providing you with a Personal Advisor to offer advice and support**
- » **Pay a higher education bursary if you are at university**

When you turn **21** support will change depending on your circumstances.

Due to new laws from 2017 care leavers under the age of 25, who tell their Local Authority that they have returned, or want to return, to education or training are entitled to an assessment of their educational needs.

If at age 21 you are already in education or training then leaving care support continues until this ends but if at age 21 you are not in education support from leaving care will stop.

If you are entitled to on-going support you will be allocated a Personal Adviser, and a new pathway plan will be written with focus on the support you will need to be able to meet your agreed education or training goals.

Leaving Care Support

- » **Allocated worker/Personal Advisor** – care leavers have an allocated personal advisor to provide and co-ordinate the support that you need.
- » **Keeping in Touch** – your allocated worker will see you at least once every 2 months, and will keep in touch with you in between visits. The exact level of contact will be agreed between you and your allocated worker.
- » **Mobile Phone/text contact** – all our staff have mobile phones so you can keep in touch via text.
- » **Pathway plan and reviews** – your pathway plan will be updated and reviewed regularly, at least every 6 months, and more often if needed or if you request it. Your pathway plan should be detailed, clear and relevant to your circumstances at the time.

Accommodation 18+

- » **Staying Put**— young people in foster care are encouraged to “stay put” with their carers when they turn 18. This arrangement allows you to remain with your foster carer till the age of 21. Your allocated personal advisor can provide you with the full details.
- » **Priority access to supported accommodation**—if you do choose to move on from your placement, then care leavers have priority access to some supported accommodation projects in Blackburn with Darwen.
- » **Housing Allocations** – following submission of your pathway plan and assessment by the housing department, care leavers are given priority access to accommodation. When it is assessed that you are ready to live independently you will be supported to bid for suitable properties.

However if you do not live in Blackburn or Darwen we will support you to find suitable accommodation in the area where you do live.

Education, Employment, Training

Your personal advisor will work with you to ensure that you have all the information that you need about the different education, employment and training opportunities that are available.

Care leavers may have priority access to the 16-19 year college bursary paid to young people in education or training.

Care leavers aged 21 or over are encouraged to come back to request support to access education or training opportunities. Blackburn with Darwen has a policy in place that which information on how young people can get in touch, how we will work with you to develop a new education and training focused pathway plan, and information about any financial support you may receive.

Higher Education

We work closely with our local Universities to provide opportunities for care leavers to experience University life.

Blackburn with Darwen provides a financial package of support for care leavers going on to University.

For undergraduates we provide accommodation costs including holidays, a Higher Education bursary of £2000 will be allocated to you and assistance to access other financial and welfare support through the University.

Also your personal advisor will monitor you throughout your course.

Once enrolled and the personal assistant will advise you on how to utilise this money.

Health and Well-Being

The leaving care team specialist nurse supports care leavers to access appropriate health services dependant on individual need. The health and well-being of care leavers is paramount to us and the specialist nurse will work closely with the care leaver, personal advisor and other agencies to ensure that their health is promoted, supported and encouraged. Care leavers have the opportunity to access support from the specialist nurse at the weekly drop in at the Everybody Centre, via telephone, face to face visits or joint visits if preferred.

Celebrating your Achievements

We will celebrate your achievements with you whatever these may be – personal, academic, sporting, arts or vocational. We hold an awards evening every year where we can celebrate the successes and achievements of our care leavers.

Financial Support

Care leavers will receive financial support from Blackburn with Darwen Council and other agencies including department of work and pensions and colleges. Your Personal Advisor will be able to explain this in more detail.

How to Complain

We hope that you as a care leaver are satisfied with the services and support that you receive, but if you have any concerns then you should raise these with your personal advisor or their manager and we hope to resolve these quickly.

An advocacy service is available to support you as a care leaver up to the age of 18.

For more information about services and support for care leavers in Blackburn and Darwen please speak to your personal advisor.

Financial Entitlements/Support

The type of financial help you will receive from Blackburn with Darwen's Children and Young Peoples Directorate will depend on whether you are an eligible, relevant, former relevant or a qualifying young person. This quick guide below will help you understand what you may receive. Your personal adviser will assist you in understanding the details and what other financial support maybe available depending on your circumstances

Financial Support	Eligible	Relevant	Former Relevant	Qualifying
Basic allowance from children's services (incorporates personal allowance and living allowance)	Yes	Yes	No	No

Financial Support - Rent/Accommodation Costs	Eligible	Relevant	Former Relevant	Qualifying
Supported accommodation	Yes	Yes	No	No
Semi-independent living	Yes	Yes	No	No
Independent living rent	Yes	Yes	No (in certain circumstances can be paid)	No
Vacation Accommodation if in higher education	No	No	Yes	Yes

Financial Support - Standard Grants (if living independent)	Eligible	Relevant	Former Relevant	Qualifying
Christmas/Festival £10	Yes	Yes	No	No
Birthday £50	£50	Yes	Up to and including 21st Birthday only	No

Financial Entitlements/Support

Financial Support - Education/Training	Eligible	Relevant	Former Relevant	Qualifying
Transport to education/training	Yes – if costs cannot be funded by Bursary fund or training provider			No
Higher Education - Under graduate degree, Bursary paid over the 3 years	Non Applicable	Non Applicable	Yes	No

Financial Support - Setting up home	Eligible	Relevant	Former Relevant	Qualifying
Setting up home allowance (includes removal costs) £2000	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Discretionary Payments

Leaving Care Grant	Eligible	Relevant	Former Relevant	Qualifying
Discretionary payments can be made dependant on situation or need	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

You may also be able to receive additional funding for some of the following. This will be based on an assessment of need and your personal advisor will discuss any additional payments with you when you are completing your pathway plan.

1. Educational materials/equipment
2. Staying in touch with your family or significant others
3. Hobbies or leisure
4. Travel to education/training/employment
5. Emergency payments for food and heating in exceptional circumstances
6. Financial assistance whilst waiting for benefits to be processed providing requests/ requirements of the DWP have been followed - This is repayable.
7. Basic Allowance enhancement may be paid in certain circumstance i.e. completing voluntary work, training
8. Cold weather fuel payments in extreme conditions

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Useful References for Further advice

Official Government Website for the UK: www.directgov.co.uk

National Care Advisory Service: www.leavingcare.org

The Prince's Trust:

www.princes-trust.org.uk/need_help/grants/development_awards.aspx

The Prince's Trust Development Award provides practical help - including financial support. It can also buy equipment for courses.

Educational Grants Advisory Service:

www.family-action.org.uk

The Educational Grants Services (EGS) specialises in identifying funding from charitable trusts for educational purposes, and maintains a database of trusts and charities that assist students. Advice regarding Health costs: Health cost advice line: 0300 330 1343

www.directgov.co.uk

A National Voice:

www.anationalvoice.org

An organisation run by and for young people who are in or leaving care

Care Leavers Association:

www.careleavers.com

A user-led charity run by care leavers for care leavers UCAS:

www.ucas.ac.uk

GOV.UK:

www.gov.uk/student-finance

Student Finance England:

www.studentfinanceengland.co.uk

Information about and how to apply for financial support for care leavers applying for university

Other Useful Numbers You May Need:

You can use this space with your allocated worker to record other important numbers i.e. your allocated workers number and the teams duty number and also local numbers in your area that maybe able to support you:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

Allocated worker number: _____

