



Local Offer for Care Leavers

SUMMARY

This document is our local offer for care leavers and provides the information of what young people are entitled to and what we can expect from them.

OWNER

Service Manager for Children looked After, Leaving care team

VERSION or DRAFT

V1.1

DATE

November 2021

REVIEW

November 2023

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Introduction

The process of leaving care and transitioning to adult life can be a challenging and confusing time. This guide has been created to tell you about all the support that we have in Brighter Futures for Children and Reading for you as a care leaver.

We know that it is a big step when you move out of care and start living on your own or with friends. 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 to for advice and help.

We will continue to listen to your views and to make sure the services we offer are what you need, and with that in mind, our local care leavers have helped develop this offer.

To be able to get the support set out in this offer, you must have been in care for a period of at least 13 weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks) which began after age 14 and included some time after your 16th birthday. If you are not sure whether you qualify for support, then please contact the Leaving Care Service. Please see section [Eligible](#) below.

Your social worker or leaving care advisor will talk with you about the information in this guide and can provide further information.

This guide is also available online at: <https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/>

The Leaving Care Service

Who can access support from the Leaving Care Service?

In order to understand the type of support that you will receive from the Leaving Care Service you will need to understand some key words which are used to describe the 4 categories of care leaver.

These key words and definitions are described below; if when you have read the key words and you still need help in understanding them, then you can discuss these with your social worker or leaving care advisor.

Key Words – Categories of care leavers

Eligible

You are an eligible care leaver if...

- you are aged 16 or 17; and
- you are currently a young person in care, and
- you have been in care for a period of at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, which must include at least 1 day since your 16th birthday.

Relevant

You are a relevant care leaver if...

- You are no longer cared for by the local authority, but you have previously been an 'Eligible' care leaver and,
- You are 16 or 17 years old.



Former Relevant

You are a former relevant care leaver if...

- You are aged between 18 and 21 and before reaching 18 you were or had been a Relevant Care Leaver or immediately before you stopped being cared for you were an eligible care leaver
- If at the age of 21 and up to reaching the age of 25 where you continue or return to be in full time education or training, then you can remain as a former relevant care leaver for the duration of the agreed programme.

Qualifying

You are a qualifying care leaver if...

- You are at least 16 but under 21, and
- You were a cared for young person prior to the making of a Special Guardianship Order which was in force when you reached 18, or
- If at any time after you reached the age of 16 you were no longer looked after, or accommodated or,
- You were privately fostered and assessed to be in need.

Support up to 25

Following changes introduced through the Children & Social Work Act 2017, care leavers are now entitled to support from a leaving care advisor up to the age of 25, whether continuing in education or training or not. From the age of 21 all former relevant care leavers will continue to receive support if in agreement and having been assessed as having unmet needs within their pathway plan. Where involvement has ended care leavers can request a continuation of support up to the age of 25. A pathway plan will be undertaken, and support will continue in line with any unmet needs.

The role of social workers

All eligible care leavers will be allocated a social worker who will act as your lead worker and be responsible for the regular update of your pathway plan (see [Pathway Planning](#)). As an eligible care leaver, you will be jointly allocated to a leaving care advisor.

As an eligible care leaver, you will remain allocated to your social worker until you either leave care or reach 18 years of age. However, you will remain allocated to your leaving care advisor whilst you continue to have a care leaver status, therefore this will be until you reach 21 years of age and possibly up to the age of 25 if you request a continued service and are assessed as having unmet needs.

If you are a young person who requires the support of an adult social worker because of additional needs such as disability or mental health issues, you will continue to receive support from your current social worker until you transition to Adult Services. The Leaving Care Service will allocate you a leaving care advisor from the age of 16 who will work alongside your existing social worker and later on your Adults Service's worker to fully support your transition to adulthood.

Support from a leaving care advisor

All eligible, relevant and former relevant care leavers will be allocated a leaving care advisor from the age of 16.

Your leaving care advisor will support you to develop the skills that will assist you to live independently at a time when you are ready to do so. A key role of the leaving care advisor is to provide and coordinate the support, advice and guidance you will need in support of your transition to adult life.

Contacting your social worker or leaving care advisor

Your leaving care advisor will be introduced to you by your existing social worker. Your leaving care advisor will provide you with their telephone and email contact details.

Alternatively, you can contact the leaving care duty number:

- Leaving Care Service Duty number: 01189 375320 (Leaving Care)

The Leaving Care Service has a duty system to cover staff absence, if you are unable to contact your social worker or leaving care advisor and if the matter is urgent you can request to speak to the duty worker.

If the matter is really urgent you can also request to speak directly to the practice manager or team manager.

The Leaving Care Service is open during normal office hours, typically 9am till 5pm. If you need to speak to someone urgently outside of these hours you can contact the Reading out of hours service. Support out of hours is limited to emergencies only:

Out of Hours Tel: 01344 786543

Your opinion

At Brighter Futures for Children we value your opinion and experience as a care leaver, we are keen to get it right for you and for others in care. As such we have a Facebook group for all Reading care leavers. We want to keep you informed and updated with local information, events and useful contacts as well as what's going on nationally. The group offers support to you and it's a great opportunity to hear from others in care. If you would like to join the group, please feel free to send a request to join at [Reading care leavers](#). If you have any issues finding the page or issues requesting to join, then please speak with your leaving care advisor, who will be able to help.

We have created a form for you to share your views. We want to know what we did well and what we need to change so that we can help other young people like you get the best service possible. Ask your leaving care advisor for a copy of the form.

There are Reading Care Leaver Ambassadors who meet every six weeks to discuss relevant topics and issues in relation to being in care locally and nationally, they help shape the service that is delivered to all care leavers in Reading. If you would like to be considered to become an ambassador please speak with your allocated social worker or leaving care advisor, they will be able to request an application form for you and provide further information.

Adult Services

If you are a care leaver identified as having complex additional needs in relation to your transition to adult life your social worker will discuss with you and seek your consent to complete a referral to Adult Services. A member of the transition team will then work alongside your social worker or leaving care advisor to undertake an assessment of your needs which will identify your level of independence and your future support needs as provided by Adult Services.

Pathway planning

Pathway plans will be prepared for all eligible, relevant and former relevant young people (please see [Key Words – Categories of Care Leavers](#) for description of eligible, relevant and former relevant). From the age of 16 your pathway plan will replace your care plan. Your pathway plan is about your needs and what we all need to do to ensure your successful transition to adult life.

Your pathway plan is written by Brighter Futures for Children in consultation with you and important people in your life. It sets out your needs, views and future goals, and identifies exactly what support you will receive from us. We will review your pathway plan with you regularly so that it is kept up to date.

We will try to enable you to keep the same leaving care advisor, though this will not always be possible. The amount of support that you receive from your leaving care advisor will depend on what you want and your circumstances.

The Leaving Care Service will consider with you what extra support you may need. You might, for example, need extra support because:

- You have special educational needs or a disability
- You are an unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child (UASC) and your immigration status is unclear
- You are in or leaving custody or you have had contact with the criminal justice system
- You are a young parent, or
- You are going through a difficult time in your personal life.

How will I be involved?

For your pathway plan to be effective it will be based on an up to date needs assessment and will set out the support that you need to achieve your aspirations. We aim to fully involve you in the development of your pathway plan. You have a right to be involved in all decisions about your plans for leaving care. You also have the right to support from an independent advocate if you want to challenge any of the decisions about the support, we give you (see [Advocacy Services](#)).

Who else will be involved?

With your agreement and where it is appropriate, we will seek the views of your parents and carers, we will also seek the views from our partner agencies which may include; Housing, Education, Training and Employment providers, Job Centre, Health services, Youth Offending Services, Transition Support Service and others. Your pathway plan will seek to ensure that all agencies are working together to provide you with clear and consistent advice and support.

When will my pathway plan be completed and reviewed?

Your initial pathway plan will be completed before you are 16 years and 3 months old. If you are already over 16 on entering care of the local authority, then your pathway plan will be completed within 3 months of your accommodation start date.

Your pathway plan will then be reviewed within every 6 months or within every 28 days of any significant change to your plan such as a change of address, significant health event or at your request.

As an eligible care leaver your pathway plan will be written and available at your statutory review which will continue to be chaired by your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). A statutory review must take place before making a decision to confirm that a young person is ready to leave care.

If you are a relevant care leaver your pathway plan review meeting will be held within every 6 months or 28 days of a significant change. Your pathway plan review will be undertaken by your leaving care advisor who will consult with you and when in-line with your wishes other important people and professionals.

If you are a former relevant care leaver your pathway plan will continue to be updated within every 6 months or 28 days of a change of address. Your pathway plan review will be undertaken by your leaving care advisor who will consult with you and when in-line with your wishes other important people and professionals.

Independent skills development

Learning the necessary skills to live independently does not begin after you have left care, it begins when you are still in care. You will be supported by your leaving care advisor to gain these skills and three times a year you will be able to access the Skills 4 a Brighter Future programme alongside other young people in care.

This programme has been designed specifically for you as care leavers. It consists of 6 modules that covers the following topic:

My Money

Finances, benefits, budgeting, and making your money go further/ how to look for bargains!

My Health. Drugs, alcohol, keeping fit, healthy eating, and healthy feelings

My Future

Writing a CV, applying for jobs, interviews, education and grants

My Friends.

Peer influences, friendships, healthy relationships and sexual health and consent

My Safety

Internet dating, social media, support networks, who to turn to for help, avoiding internet fraud, cyber safety

My Home

Housing options, managing a tenancy, Budgeting for bills, cleaning and being a good neighbour

Prior to each session there is the opportunity to learn to cook and share lunch with all those on the course.



For attending the programme, you will receive an AQA accredited certificate on completion of each session, this is evidence for your record of achievement.

The course will equip you with all the skills you need to live on your own and provide you with important contacts and people you can turn to for support.

Additionally, your social worker and leaving care advisor will support the assessment of your independence skills and will provide support, advice and guidance on a range of issues relating to leaving care including:

- Accessing Education, Employment and training
- Developing Independence skills
- Finding and managing suitable and secure accommodation
- Managing your finances and claiming benefits
- Support to access Health services including access to emotional and mental health support needs.

Your social worker or leaving care advisor will also help you to access specialist support when you need it, this may include counselling and advice services, issues relating to alcohol and drug use, sexual health, budgeting and benefits such as universal credit.

Accommodation

You will be provided information on all the various accommodation pathways by your social worker and leaving care advisor. Your accommodation needs will be reviewed and will likely change over time as you continue towards adulthood. The ultimate aim is for you to be confident to manage your accommodation and to live as independently as possible.

Staying Put

Brighter Futures for Children's pledge to Children Looked After includes our commitment to supporting young people to remain in their foster care placements beyond the age of 18 and up to the age of 21. This is irrespective of whether the foster carer is a Brighter Futures for Children foster carer, Family and Friends foster carer or a foster carer from an independent fostering agency. Plans for Staying Put will be discussed with all involved and agreed at a pathway plan review. For more information on Staying Put arrangements and finances then please request information from your social worker or leaving care advisor.

We have a staying put policy and you can request this from your leaving care advisor at any time.

16+ accommodation

There are several different types of accommodation that might be available to a care leaver, depending on need and what is agreed in the pathway plan. The different types are:

Supported Lodgings is accommodation within a family home. The young person is provided with their own bedroom and must be engaged in education, employment or training. Support is provided informally by the host family. The young person is expected to make a contribution towards living costs and purchase their own food for lunches and evening meals.

Supported Living Multi Occupancy provisions in Reading are run by private providers; these properties usually accommodate between two and five care leavers and have support staff on site

24 hours. The higher staffing ratio provides for more intense support to enable young people to engage with services and appointments as well as supporting the development of independence skills and occasional assistance with transport.

Semi-independent Occupancy provisions in Reading are run by private providers. These properties are usually standalone properties, flats, apartments or homes of multiple occupancy. A young person can expect to have their own room, kitchen and bathroom. In these provisions, young people are given an opportunity to understand the realities and challenges of living independently. Support is classed as floating support and can be provided by the private provider depending on needs. The Leaving Care Service will continue to offer floating support alongside the young person's visits.

Reading housing and social housing providers

You will be offered support from your leaving care advisor to apply for social housing, you will need to be 18 and if assessed as tenancy ready your leaving care advisor will provide you with a supporting letter to support your application. You will need to provide Housing with a copy of your identification, and you will need an active bank account for your application to be progressed.

As a Reading care leaver, you will have priority Housing status and your Leaving care advisor will be able to support you through the process.

Alternatively, you may wish to secure a private let (with a private landlord) but please be aware that the local authority cannot act as a Guarantor for any private rental arrangements, however, your leaving care advisor will be able to provide you with a reference if you're assessed as being tenancy ready and further information, advice and guidance on accessing housing related financial support and benefits.

Social housing outside of Reading

You may need to provide evidence of a local connection if you wish to apply for social housing in another local authority. Your leaving care advisor will be able to provide you with advice, guidance and support throughout this process.

Information and advice on the level of support you require, and further details of the accommodation options can be discussed with your social worker or leaving care advisor. Your pathway plan will detail your accommodation arrangements and the support that you can expect from the local authority, alongside information on organisations that provide support services that could help meet your accommodation needs.

Ensuring suitable accommodation

As a care leaver you will be offered advice, guidance and support from your leaving care advisor when planning a change of address. Your leaving care advisor will offer to support viewings and undertake an assessment of the property ([Schedule 2, volume 3 Children Act 1989](#)). This assessment of the property will primarily seek to ensure your safety and will also make recommendations in relation to suitability, highlighting any issues that need addressing and advice on who you can contact for works and in case of emergency.

Care leaver financial contribution

Our aim is to help you become independent and able to manage your own living arrangement.

The work we do with you whilst you are looked after (under 18) will help us to decide whether you are ready to take on the responsibility of managing your own budgets and then your own tenancy. When you turn 18 and move on to semi-independent, supported accommodation or 'Stay Put' with your foster carers your status will change and from this you will be expected to contribute funds to your living accommodation and work towards being ready to move on.

You will be supported by your care leaving advisor to work, study or claim benefits and to then contribute to your living costs.

Contributing to your living costs enables you to budget and take responsibility for looking after yourself. After your 18th birthday you will be expected to self-fund from your benefits or wages you receive.

In order to understand what allowances, you can claim, working or not, you can look at the detail available here:

Information on Universal Credits: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit>

Local Housing Allowance calculator: <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/>

As an example, as of February 2021 for a one bed property in Reading, you could be entitled to £182.96 per week. From this, a sum will be contributed back to Brighter Futures for Children if you are living in an accommodation funded by us.

Achieving best outcomes panel – approval for accommodation

If you are a care leaver identified as requiring a planned accommodation move, then your social worker or leaving care advisor will be able to represent your wishes and needs at the achieving best outcomes panel. This panel is chaired by the Director of Childrens Social Care and other representatives across Brighter Futures for Children, including housing.

Brighter Futures for Children arranges the panel to enable us to undertake joined up planning and to be better able to promote care leavers needs with our partner agencies and to also prioritise our accommodation options to ensure that we have suitable accommodation available that meets all of our care leavers needs.

Education, Training and Employment



Telephone: 0118 937 2204
Email: elevate@brighterfuturesforchildren.org
Address: Reading Central Library, 3rd Floor, Abbey Square, Reading, RG1 3BQ
Drop in sessions: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Fridays
Opening times: 10am-4pm (or call to arrange an appointment)

Our aim is to help NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) or risk of NEET young people aged 16-18 to make informed career choices about their future. Supporting them into Education, Employment or Training.



We are flexible in our delivery, if you would like us to come to you to meet with young people, please call the Post 16 NEET Team Manager on 07929178133 or email elevate@brighterfuturesforchildren.org to discuss your needs.

The Elevate Team:

Elevate are an impartial team within Brighter Futures for Children who are wholly owned and independent services that operate on behalf of Reading Borough Council. Professionally qualified Career Coaches, who are fully knowledgeable with safeguarding procedures, data protection regulations, local, regional and national labour market information.

For most young people, the world beyond school or college is becoming increasingly an unknown and varied map. The future careers for young people are more complex than ever, the employment market and Apprenticeships is more challenging than it has ever been.

Supporting young people to make choices about their futures has never been more important and we aim to do just that.

How we can help:

- Exploring career ideas and making choices
- Choosing options at 16 and 18
- Alternative Training Provisions
- Support for Job Hunting including interview skills & CV writing
- Apprenticeships
- Further education options
- Higher education
- Alternatives to Higher Education

Personal Education Plans (PEP)

The Virtual School and the Leaving Care Team ensures that all eligible care leavers are supported through Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings held in the Autumn, Spring and Summer term. PEP's are an integral part of a young person's pathway plan and remain a statutory document to be reviewed termly.

The PEP should reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning which secures good basic skills, stretches aspiration and builds life chances.

The PEP must record SMART targets which need to be agreed with the young person and will detail key educational outcomes and achievements alongside a focus on a young person's emotional health and well-being.

The PEP must specify timescales for action and review and identify funding sources for implementing the plan e.g. the 16-19 Bursary which all care leavers are entitled to.

Education, Health Care Plan (EHCP)

An EHC plan identifies a child's special educational needs, and where relevant, brings together education, health and care services to achieve agreed outcomes. An EHC plan will only be written for an eligible child on the completion of a SEND needs assessment.

Children, young people and families are at the centre of the assessment and planning process and this should be reflected in the EHC plan. The focus is very much on what is important for the child or young person – what they want to achieve now and in the future.

Your EHC plan will be reviewed by the local authority a minimum of every twelve months. These reviews will focus on your progression towards achieving the outcomes specified in your plan. The review will also consider whether the outcomes and supporting targets remain appropriate.

Bank Accounts

As a care leaver you will be supported to open a bank account by your social worker or leaving care advisor who will ensure you have the necessary ID and a supporting letter in order for you to do this. A payment schedule of your entitlements will be confirmed prior to entitlements being paid directly into your account. Brighter Futures for Children may choose **not** to make direct cash payments to you where there are concerns around budgeting or risky behaviours.

Payments can be made to all high street banks and we recommend you shop around for the best offer when identifying a bank, we also strongly recommend you consider opening an account.

For information regarding savings and ISA, please see [Appendix one – Savings accounts and ISAs](#)

Health

Children Looked After health team

The Children's Looked After Health Team are responsible for coordinating the health of looked after children 0 – 18. The teams promote the health and wellbeing of children and young people in care by working closely with them and those involved in their care, including parents, foster carers, social workers, leaving care personal advisors, teachers, school nurses and health visitors, and GPs and paediatricians.

Further information and how to access the service can be found here: [Children and Young People in Care.](#)

Below are some of the ways your Leaving Care Service and your leaving care advisor can support you to stay healthy and look after your physical and mental health. We can:

- Give you information on healthy living
- Give you information on getting help to pay for prescriptions
- Support you to register with a GP
- Support you to move from CAMHS to adult services
- Give you information about counselling services that are available locally
- Give you help with transport costs when attending health appointments
- If you are a young parent, we will support you to do the best for them.
- We will help you arrange childcare, if this is what you want.
- Give you information about health drop-in centres
- The Children Looked After Nurse will work with you to develop a 'health passport' containing key information from your childhood (for example, when and if you have had immunisations) and your current health needs.

As part of supporting you to stay fit and healthy all Reading care leavers have access to FREE gym

membership under the Reading Sport and Leisure scheme. Care Leavers are entitled to the bronze membership level which allows unlimited use of the RSL gyms any time of the week. These include Meadway, Palmer Park and South Reading Centres. To apply, please speak to your leaving care advisor and the BFFC participation officer.

Health passport: When you turn 18, you will receive your health passport, this will include useful information of how to access your health history and details of your immunisations. You can check on what illnesses or treatments you've had, any allergies you may have, and whether you have had any vaccinations. It's also useful to know of any previous medications you've taken, and you may need to know about your medical history for future employers or for travel insurance purposes, for example.

If you don't have your health passport, speak to your leaving care advisor. It's your right to have a record of what you have been treated for in the past.

As a care leaver if you want a full health check, please talk to your leaving care advisor or social worker about how one can be provided for you.

Sexual health

Safe Sex Berkshire is a website available from [NHS](#) Berkshire which looks at all aspects of sex and keeping healthy, including: Sexual Health Matters (STD's), Contraception (also emergency), Test Kits for HIV & Chlamydia, Pregnancy, Sex & Relationships, Gender Identity, Consent, Keeping Safe and details of local services available for young people. www.safesexberkshire.nhs.uk

Additional information on similar services can be found here - [Brook](#)

Other information about family planning and support groups can be found in [Appendix two – Family planning and support groups](#)

Relationships

As well as support from a leaving care advisor, we may be able to offer you additional practical and emotional support, such as through:

- Help to maintain or regain contact with people 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 interests.

Participation in society

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:

- Providing information on groups and clubs you may wish to join
- Informing you about relevant awards, schemes and competitions you can enter, in line with your talents and interests
- Encouraging and helping you to enrol on the Electoral Register, so you can vote in elections
- Informing you about voluntary work that we think you may be interested in
- Informing and possibly helping with the cost of leisure activities
- Giving you advice and helping you to challenge any discrimination you face as a care leaver.



Please ask your leaving care advisor or social worker for further details.

Reading Children in Care Council (CiCC)

The Children in Care Council (CICC) is a group of young people who are aged between 11 and 18 who meet every two weeks. They raise issues that impact those in care, and as a result help to shape service delivery. The CICC is a statutory requirement for young people in care, to have their opinions heard loud and clear by decision makers. The CICC is represented at Corporate Parenting Board.

Reconstruct Advocacy Service

This service supports care leavers aged up to 19 years old (Although where there is capacity will consider support up to the age of 21). Reconstruct Advocacy Service will:

- Raise issues and concerns about things care leavers are unhappy about
- Understand what is happening in their lives
- Make their views and wishes known
- Exercise choice about their lives
- Support making a complaint

Reconstruct Independent Visitors Scheme

This service supports care leavers up to 18 years of age to have an Independent Visitor (adult volunteer) who offers support through regular participation in a range of positive, fun activities together.

Unit 37 Easton Business Centre Felix Road
Bristol BS5 OHE
01895 549910

<http://reconstruct.co.uk/childrens-services/>

Return Interviews for Missing Children Service

What to expect if you are a young person –

If you have been reported as missing your allocated Social worker will be notified of the missing episode and will attempt to contact you.

On return from the missing episode, Police will visit you and ask questions. This is to determine if you are safe and well and if there has been any harm suffered.

You will also be contacted by a professional in order for a Return Interview to be offered. This will usually take place within 72 hours of returning from the missing episode. The professional may be your social worker, youth worker, or other key worker who is not involved in your care. You can choose who undertakes the Return Interview with you. The completed return interview is shared with appropriate professionals and the police.

Your social worker or other professional working with you may then help you to identify ways to stay safe and not have any further missing episodes.

Access to Records

As a care leaver you can request access to your records held by Children's Social Care. If you make a formal request for access to your records, you will be asked to put the request in writing and your social worker or leaving care advisor will be able assist you in doing this if necessary.

When your application has been received, the request will be acknowledged promptly and in writing, or other appropriate forms of communication if required. You will be informed about the process and procedure, timescales for dealing with such requests and the services that the authority is able to provide.

An acknowledgement should be sent to you within ten working days, confirming that records exist. If the authority knows that the care records do not exist, we will seek to ensure no delay when informing you of this.

Your social worker and/or leaving care advisor needs to keep a record of your health, education, family members and placement arrangements etc. so in the future you can look back and see what has happened to you and have a record of your time in care. If you have a change of worker your new worker can look at your file to find out about you.

Your social worker and leaving care advisor will take notes of their visits with you and meetings about you. We also keep notes on how we work with you so we can see how we need to improve. In Reading all records are kept on an electronic case file system. This is a secure database and only workers who have been provided security access can view your files. This ensures your records remain confidential.

Can I see my file?

Yes, the law says you have a right to see personal information held about you unless we think it would be emotionally harmful to you (before you are 18). If we decide you cannot see your records, then your social worker or leaving care advisor will explain why to you. When you are 18 you will be able to see all of the records kept in relation to you, and your social worker or leaving care advisor will talk to you about what support you will need to read and understand the papers. There may be circumstances in which reading your file even as an adult may be upsetting for you and this will be discussed as part of the access request.

For more information, please follow this link: [Privacy policy](#) or send an email to: info@BrighterFuturesforChildren.org

Exit Interviews

We at Brighter Futures for Children are keen to hear from you as you leave care. We want to know what we did well and what we need to change so that we can help other young people like you get the best service possible. We have an easy to complete exit interview online and is available here: [Exit Interview form](#).

The exit interview will seek your views on your entire journey through the Leaving Care Service, covering aspects such as education, accommodation support and post 21 planning. Your feedback is vitally important to us to ensure that we continue to review progress and improve services for you.

Appendices

Appendix one – Savings accounts and ISAs

When you leave care, you should have a short-term savings account, with savings you and your carer/residential provider have made while you were in care. Some of this may have been used to buy things before you moved to living independently. It is important when you leave care to try and continue to save in case of emergencies or for special treats. If you do not have a bank account, your leaving care advisor can advise and support you to get one set up. A bank account is not only important to have for savings, but also to pay your wages or benefits into and potentially any financial support you receive from us. If you were in care for more than 12 months you will have a Junior ISA which was set up with £200 initially. When you become 18 years of age, these accounts will become Adult ISAs and you will be able to access this money. Your social worker and leaving care advisor will be able to give you information about the money in your account and advise on how to access this money.

Remember

Your savings are there to support you in your move to independence and adulthood. Dependent on your living arrangement, this may include buying items for your own place, driving lessons and supplementing the financial support available to you if you continue in education or training. It is important that you think before you spend your savings, as once the money has been spent, it may be a long time before you are able to add to them again.

Savings over £16,000

Some young people may have a lot of savings. This includes money in bank accounts, ISAs but can also include inheritance or compensation given by the courts. If you have savings of £16,000 or more, you will not be eligible for Universal Credit.

You can put up to £15,000 of these savings into a tax-free savings account such as an ISA or Trust Fund. If you have a lot of savings, it is important to get appropriate financial advice. Your leaving care advisor will be able to help you to get appropriate financial advice.

Appendix two – Family planning and support groups/services

Family Planning: The Family Planning Association provides information and advice. www.fpa.org.uk

Childline: Part of your sexual identity might involve working out if you are attracted to boys, girls, or both. It is normal for young people to become aware of their emotional and sexual feelings at different times. www.childline.org.uk

ReachOUT is Reading's LGBT's youth provision

ReachOUT is the Youth Club in Reading for young people aged 13-18 who are LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual or Transgender, or Questioning).

The club is held every Wednesday, in a town-centre location, from 6.45pm to 8.45pm, and provides a safe space for young people to come along, participate in fun activities and events, and meet other young people in a similar situation to themselves. They can also receive support from the volunteers and staff at the club on a range of issues they would like help with. ReachOUT has also developed good links with other groups of LGBTQ young-people in the South- East, so you will have the chance to meet young people from other areas.



ReachOUT is really keen to hear from any LGBTQ young people living in the Reading area, so please get in touch!

For more information, please follow this link: [ReachOUT](#) or email: reachout@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

Supportu: A support service for those needing help with LGBT issues based in the Thames Valley. <http://supportu.org.uk>

FRANK

FRANK is a confidential, anonymous, discreet and well-informed ready to offer advice, information and support on drug issues. The helpline is 24 hours a day and the number won't show up on your phone bill. You can talk to FRANK in 120 languages - a translator will be on hand if you need one when you ring.

Tel: 0300 123 6600

Text: 82111

Additional ways to make contact: <https://www.talktofrank.com/contact-frank>

Web: www.talktofrank.com

Iris Reading

Iris Reading is an adult drug and alcohol service available to anyone aged 18 and over, living in Reading

Services offered:

- Immediate health treatment Advice and information
- Harm reduction; overdose prevention
- Blood-borne virus awareness
- Needle exchange
- Assessment and referral
- Support groups
- Drug and alcohol education
- Peer support
- Detoxification
- Substitute prescribing
- One to ones
- Testing and vaccinations (blood-borne viruses and STDs)
- Hep C treatment and support
- Training and voluntary work
- Individual aftercare support
- Aftercare groups and activities
- Access to mutual aid
- SMART Recovery
- Wellbeing and life skills
- Sports and exercise
- Music and arts
- Literacy and numeracy
- Housing support



Iris Reading

127 Oxford Road RG1 7UY Reading United Kingdom

Phone: 0118 955 7333

Email: reading@irispartnership.org.uk

Appendix three – Complaints and compliments

Who can make a complaint, suggestion or compliment?

If you receive a service from Brighter Futures for Children you can make a complaint, suggestion or compliment about that service.

What might you make a complaint, suggestion or compliment about?

You can make a complaint if you are unhappy with the way you are being treated and the services you are receiving. For example:

- if something has happened at your foster placement, or
- if you feel you do not get enough support from your Social Worker or Leaving care advisor

If you think that something about the service you receive could be improved, you may want to make a suggestion. For example:

- you may want more information about your rights in care, or
- you may want to be more involved in the planning of your care.

Alternatively, you may want to make a compliment about a service you have received. For example, if you are happy about something your Social Worker or Leaving care advisor has done for you, or if you feel happy with your foster care placement.

[Who do you tell if you have a complaint, suggestion or compliment?](#)

The Team Manager and Practice Manager are happy to meet with you and listen to any complaints, suggestions or compliments. The contact details for the team manager and practice manager are advertised in the Leaving Care Service office notice board in the reception area.

You should contact your social worker or leaving care advisor; however, if for any reason you are not able to tell your Social Worker, then you can contact the Complaints Manager.

Social Care Complaints,
Civic Offices,
Bridge Street
Reading,
RG1 2LU
Tel: 0118 937 2905 Ext:73748

<https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/about/compliments-and-complaints/>

And

Leaving Care Service Civic Offices Bridge Street
Reading RG1 2LU
Tel: 0118 937 2905

Appendix four – Life journey work

We have an internal policy for life journey work and if you wanted to see it then please request this from your leaving care advisor. Here is some information about life journey work:

Life journey work is important for children looked after and young people to help them make sense of their family history and life outside the care system, as well as why they entered care.

Brighter Futures for Children is committed to ensuring that where it is appropriate to their age and understanding, all children who are in our care are engaged in building life records which enable them to each form an accurate understanding of their individual family background and identity and an age appropriate understanding of their experiences, both prior to becoming looked after and whilst in local authority care.

Life journey work can also be used to help both children and Care Leavers to prepare positively for the future and any planned move. This could be:

- Moving to another foster family
- Moving to the care of a special guardian(s) or an adoptive family
- Moving into a residential care arrangement or supported lodgings
- Moving towards adulthood and independent living.

Appendix five - Prevention for care leavers at risk of offending

For young people who are moving into adulthood and have previously been in the care/criminal justice system this can be a turbulent time in terms of the risk they present to others as well as their safety and wellbeing.

As such it is vital that there is a clear plan to assist and manage these young people and that the Youth Offending Service (YOS) practitioner and leaving care social worker or leaving care advisor will work together to promote independence and risk management.

Moving forward leaving care advisors will attend complex case panel forum's and planning meetings as relevant and it is the responsibility of the YOS practitioner to ensure that they are invited.

The YOS will respond with an offer to a care leaver where the need is flagged, as a referral and this offer will be available until the care leaver turns 18. These referrals will be made by the leaving care advisor to a YOS Manager. It is likely that intervention will be time limited to address any offending risks.

Appendix six - Reading Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

The MARAC is a public protection process that sits alongside Safeguarding Children, Safeguarding Adults and Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). It links also to the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) programme which includes a number of Domestic Abuse perpetrators. The agencies attending the monthly MARAC meeting discuss adult victims who are facing the most dangerous situations of domestic abuse.

We discuss cases at the MARAC where the violence is between boyfriend and girlfriend, husband and wife, separated, divorced or living together or maybe, never having lived together.

We discuss violence in same sex relationships. The victim may be female or male. We help family members facing violence from someone else in their family.

The focus may be a victim of Forced Marriage or “honour” based abuse.

We aim to piece together a wide picture of the family situation to assess just who is at risk of violence, abuse and neglect.

We do not meet to discuss children primarily, but we often highlight dangers facing children to help agencies to protect them. In some situations, we may discuss victims aged 16 – 17 years.

Appendix seven - Brighter Futures for Children Virtual School overview

The Virtual School for Brighter Futures for Children exists to raise educational attainment and aspiration and narrow the gap between children looked after and their peers. Improving life chances and raising awareness of corporate parenting responsibilities is another key aspect of this work. There is absolute commitment from the Virtual School to support children looked after and care leavers through determined advocacy and collaborative engagement. The Virtual School champions the educational needs of children looked after and care leavers to improve their life chances and raises awareness of corporate parenting responsibilities. It has a statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of all children looked after and children previously looked after.

The Virtual School maintains a school roll of all Reading’s children looked after, from pre-school to Post 16, including those placed out of authority. It monitors Personal Education Plans, admissions, attendance and exclusions. Training, support and guidance is offered by the Virtual School to social workers, foster carers and, designated teachers. There are a range of support services for children looked after which include 1 to 1 tuition, in class support, emotional health and well-being, advice and training, advocacy, transition work and placement support. Raising attainment levels, measuring progress and creating bespoke support packages in order to offer life changing opportunities for all children looked after and care leavers is at the centre of this work.

The Virtual School works with leaving care advisors to support care leavers to achieve their educational goals, enabling them to have fulfilling careers, higher incomes, greater self-confidence and ultimately a better quality of life through attaining good qualifications and positive educational experiences. Support is offered to schools, colleges and universities who work in collaboration with the Virtual School, social workers and leaving care advisors to ensure there is a team of professionals putting the child or young person and their needs, at the centre of decision making and planning. The Virtual School promotes the educational achievement of care leavers and supports them to be aspirational and assists them to secure routes into further education, university or quality training and pathways into employment. Advice and guidance are also available regarding career planning, further education options, CV’s, applications and job interviews as part of young person’s transition to “Leaving Care”

All young people aged 16 – 19 who are looked after and study full time are entitled to a bursary which they can access through their college, sixth form or training centre. Further information about the bursary can be accessed via the weblink: [www.gov.uk/guidance/advicefor](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/advicefor-young-people-16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide) young people 16 to 19 bursary fund guide. Advice is also available for young people who continue to study at college from 19 about Student Finance options to meet the cost of some courses which are no longer offered free after 19. Care Leavers can request information on University provision, receive support with



University applications and access information on financing their studies from their leaving care advisor and the Virtual School.

The Headteacher of the Virtual School reports to the Corporate Parenting Board, the Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee and is a member of the National Association of Virtual School Headteachers. The Virtual School liaises with other networks such as the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL).

Appendix eight - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

A UASC is defined as an individual who is under 18, who has arrived in the UK without a responsible adult, is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so, is separated from both parents and has applied for asylum in the United Kingdom in his/her own right.

The local authority has a duty to assess such children under section 17, and then, almost always, to accommodate them under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

Support will be provided to UASC to access legal representation in support of their initial asylum claim to remain in the United Kingdom. Care Leaver status as detailed above applies to all UASC who achieve Eligible Care Leaver status having been accommodated for 13 weeks from the age of 14 including 1 day since the age of 16.

Statutory guidance for local authorities can be found in 'Care of unaccompanied migrant children and child victims of modern slavery' - Department for Education, March 2017.

Appendix nine - Useful Information

Protecting adults

<https://www.reading.gov.uk/adult-care/protecting-adults/>

Who to contact?

Telephone:

- 0118 937 3747 (Adult Care Team)
- 01344 786 543 (Emergency Duty Team - out of hours)

E-mail safeguarding.adults@reading.gov.uk

Kooth

Online app to help with mental health support and wellbeing

<https://www.kooth.com/>

Listening works

Phone, text or web chat support for care leavers every evening from 6pm to midnight.

<https://www.family-action.org.uk/listening-works/>



Childline

Get help and advice about a wide range of issues, talk to a counsellor online or give them a call: Tel: 0800 1111

Web: www.childline.org.uk

Youth Advocacy Service

Information can be found by using the links:

- <https://www.reconstruct.co.uk/children-and-young-peoples-pages/>
- <https://www.coram.org.uk/about-us>

The Care Leavers Association

The Care Leavers Association provides advice and information and a range of useful information about leaving care and your rights and entitlements.

Local Government Ombudsman PO Box 4771 Coventry CV4 0EH

Tel: 01904 380 200 Email: enquiries.york@lgo.org.uk Web: www.careleavers.com/leavingcare

Coram

Coram Children's Legal Centre (CCLC) specialises in law and policy affecting children and young people. CCLC provides free legal information, advice and representation to children, young people, their families, carers and professionals. Coram are also an international consultancy on child law and children's rights.

Further information can be found by clicking this link: [Coram](#)