

A young boy with light brown hair and blue eyes is wearing a black hat and large black headphones. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a gentle smile. He is wearing a blue and white striped shirt. The background is a white brick wall.

together for  
children  
SUNDERLAND

# Local Offer for Sunderland Care Leavers

## Introduction

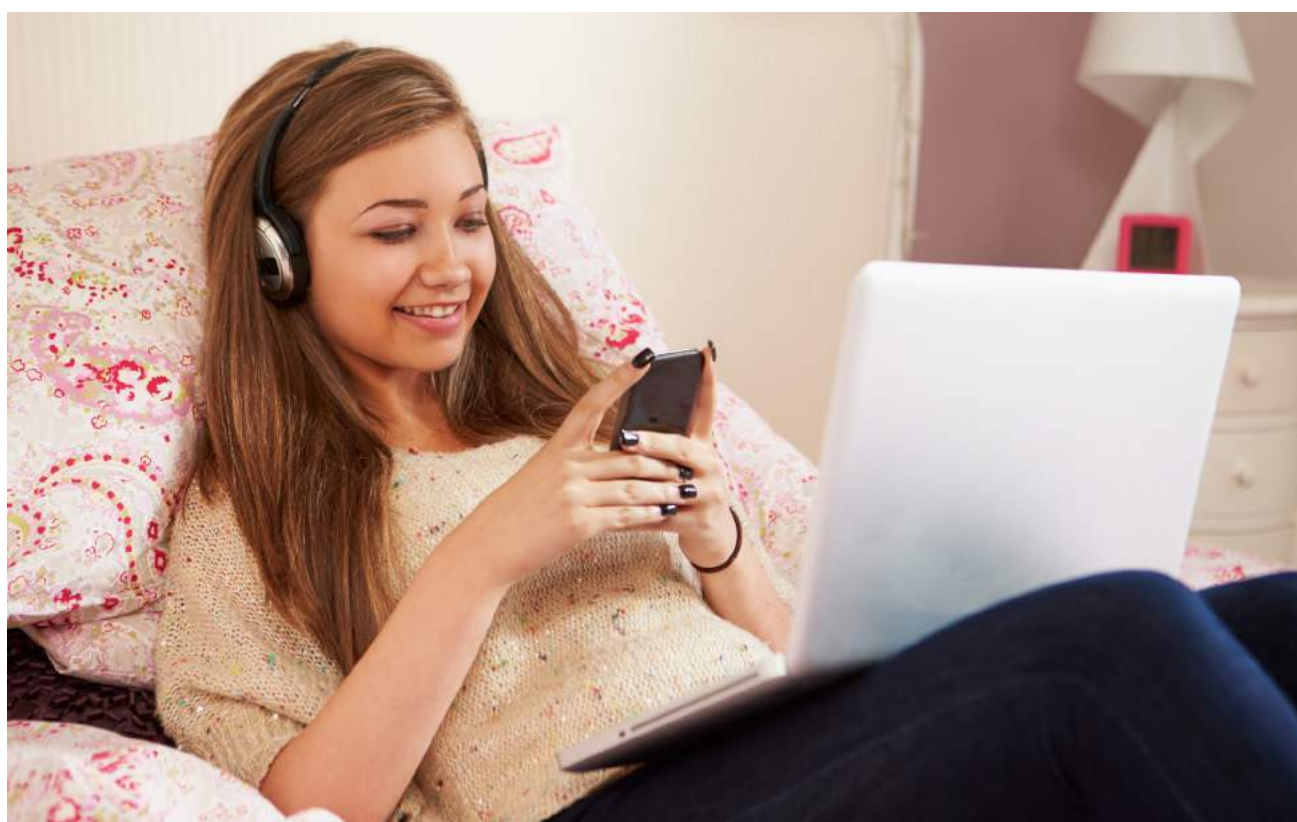
The aim of Together for Children's Local Offer is to tell you about all the support that we have in Sunderland for you as a care leaver. We know that it is a big step when you move out of care and start living on your own or with friends.

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.

Local care leavers have helped make this leaflet. We will continue to listen to your views to make sure the services we offer are what you need. We have written this leaflet with the care leavers' forum.

To be able to get the support set out in this leaflet, you must have been in care for at least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 16 (including your 16th birthday) or for 13 weeks after your 16th birthday. If you are not sure whether you qualify for support, then ask your personal adviser.

**Your personal adviser will talk with you about the information in this leaflet.**



# Corporate Parenting Principles

The Corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people as follows:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well being of those children and young people
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- to take into account the views , wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- to help those children and young people gain access to and make the best use of, services provided by the TfC and its relevant partners
- to promote high aspirations and to seek to secure the best outcomes for those children and young people
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives relationships and education or work, and
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

“ My leaving care worker is very important to me, my mam and my dad, all the family. They’re the best leaving care worker I’ve ever had and I hope after I turn 21 I will stay in touch with them. ”

Young person leaving care.

# Health and Wellbeing

Below are some of the ways our Next Steps team can support you to stay healthy and look after your physical and mental health. We can:

- Give information on healthy living
- Give information on getting help to pay for prescriptions
- Support you to register with a GP
- Support you to move from CAMHS/ CYPs to adult services
- Signpost you additional support for both mental wellbeing and physical health



- Give information about counselling services that are available locally
- Give you help with transports costs when attending health appointments
- If you are a young parent, take an interest in your children and 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
- Work with you to make a ‘health passport’ containing key information from your childhood (for example, when and if you have had immunisations) and your current health needs.

# Relationships

## A Personal Adviser

Following changes introduced through the Children & Social Work Act 2017, you will be able to ask to have support from your personal adviser up to the age of 25 whether you are in education or training or not. This is to try to make sure care leavers receive similar support to young adults who live with their families.

Your personal adviser is there to help you to prepare to live independently and to offer advice and support after you leave care. Personal advisers get involved in discussions about your needs and your pathway plan.

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

We will try to let you keep the same personal adviser, though this will not always be possible. The amount of support that you receive from your Personal Adviser will depend on what you want and your circumstances.

The Next Steps Team 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.

## Advocacy

- Your right to be heard and taken seriously
- You have a right to be involved in all decisions about your plans for leaving care. You have a right to support from an independent advocate if you are thinking about challenging decisions about the care we give you.
- Independent advocates can inform you about your rights and help you to be heard in meetings. They are separate from social services.
- As well as support from a Personal Adviser, we may be able to offer you additional practical and emotional support, such as through:
- Where appropriate, continuing to support contact with the 'Independent Visitor' you had while you were in care;
- Help to maintain or regain contact with people special to you or who cared for you in the past, like former foster carers or social workers.



# Education and Training

**We want to make sure every young person leaving care has the support to achieve their goals in life.**

The law says we must provide you with assistance with expenses linked with employment, education and training. In particular:

Choices Together Years 10 and 11 is the perfect opportunity to find out all about being a university student and what Higher Education could offer you in the future. It doesn't matter if you haven't thought about college or university – everyone is welcome!

You will get the chance to explore Newcastle University, Northumbria University, the University of Sunderland, Durham University and Teesside University and take part in some great (free!) activities. Our current university students will be with you every step of the way to help you out, answer questions and make sure you are having a good time.

**Choices Together** – Years 8 and 9 is a new series of events as part of our Choices Together programme for Looked After Young People. We are offering students, their teachers and carers to join us on a university campus to find out what university is all about. This will be an interactive, informal day- feel free to attend one or all three!

Pathway planning process will cover educational options, if at any point during this process Higher Education is identified as a potential route a joint visit to young person should take place with Social Worker / PA and Re-engagement worker where appropriate. During visit Re-engagement worker will provide young person, carers etc. more detail around the support that will be available which includes –

**Next Steps Higher Education bursary** – This amounts to £6000 per academic year for a maximum of 4 years more info can be found in the Next Steps finance policy

**Post 16 Peps** – Regular reviewing of current education will take to ensure young people or gaining the support they require to achieve their education goals supporting the transition from Further Education to Higher Education.

**UCAS application** – Social worker / PA will monitor the progress of applications and ensure the appropriate support with this task is identified, young people should be introduced to tools such as Propel website which provides details of support offered from

Higher Education establishments for care leavers, young people should be encouraged to tick the care leaver box on application to make establishments aware of care leaver status to ensure extra support is offered. Next Steps will cover the cost of UCAS application.

**University Open days / Interviews** – Young people will be offered support from Social Worker / PA should they wish to attend Open days to Higher Education establishments they have expressed an interest for, where young people do not wish to attend with Social Worker / PA Next steps will provide finance to cover travel costs. During these visits young people should be encouraged and supported to introduce themselves to welfare services and care leaver support teams if available within the establishment. The same process will take place for attending interviews.

**Accommodation** – Social Worker / PA will discuss accommodation options during pathway planning process and support young person in securing accommodation at this point staying put should be discussed for young people in foster care who wish to return to carers during holiday periods and be incorporated within the pathway plan. Many Higher Education Establishments will offer Care leavers guaranteed halls of residence and 52 week a year contracts.

**Support during university** – PA will continue to support young person in all dimensions of their pathway planning process and continue to maintain support visits, the visit pattern should remain at least one home visit every 8 weeks. However it is recognised that not all young people will be comfortable with PA visits at student accommodations and where this is identified by the young person alternative arrangements will be made and agreed within the pathway planning process. Young people should be encouraged to sign information sharing agreements with their Higher Education establishment to support communication between support services however as an adult this will remain the choice of the care leaver. If struggles are identified during studies PA should encourage and support young people to access support services within the educational establishment.

**Graduation** – Upon graduation young people will be provided a one off graduation grant of £1000 to support the transition from education. PA should establish who will be attending the graduation and where no one is identified offer to attend. PA should ensure a plan around accommodation is in place following graduation.

# Employment

## Apprenticeships for Care Leavers

Together for Children are developing an apprenticeship offer in consultation with our Care Leavers which will ensure priority is given to them in a variety of service areas. Together for Children's will offer expertise advice and guidance to care leavers, when completing application forms and attending interviews.

A copy of the jobs portal vacancy list will be circulated to care leavers to ensure that whenever an apprentice opportunity is created they will receive the information in the first instance.



# Accommodation

## Leaving care before turning 18

We will encourage you to stay in care until you are 18. Most young people still live at home with their families at this age.

If you choose to leave care before age 18, the law says we must provide you with suitable accommodation.

Supported Lodgings is a scheme which provides accommodation for 16-21 year old Care Leaver's within a home environment. The aim is to offer a supportive, safe environment to help young people develop their self-confidence and independent living skills and prepare for their future.

Each household is different and for this reason we carry out introductory home visits and a matching process takes place to allow the young person and the householder to get to know one another and so both are clear about the expectations within the placement. We would always cover the 'house rules' and ongoing support would be offered through the Supported Lodgings Scheme and the young person's Next Steps worker.

<https://togetherforchildren.org.uk/children-and-young-people/supported-lodgings>

If you are aged over 18, your personal adviser will help you to find suitable accommodation).

This might involve:

- Working with Housing Services to come up with suitable housing options for you, including supported accommodation if you are not ready or don't want to have your own tenancy.
- If this is what you and your foster carers want, supporting you to remain with your foster carers under what's called a 'Staying Put' arrangement. This can last until you are 21
- Support to access different housing options including social housing (this is accommodation managed by us or a housing association)
- Advice 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. We will do whatever we can to ease the pressures on you
- Care Leavers are exempt from paying council tax in Sunderland.
- Helping you to claim housing benefit/universal credit.
- Practical support with moving into and furnishing your new home.
- Supporting you if you have a housing crisis, including helping if you are threatened with or lose a tenancy [NB: care leavers aged 18-20 are treated as a priority need group in homelessness legislation].
- Storage of furniture will be considered on an individual needs basis.

## 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
- Offering work experience within TFC, Sunderland City Council and Partners
- 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.

## Finances

**We will try to help you financially, in a similar way to how parents would support their own children.**

Our help includes:

- Providing a leaving care (setting up home allowance) grant to help you buy essential things when moving into your own home
- Giving you exemptions to or discounts on paying Council Tax
- Providing or telling you about relevant money management courses
- Information on how to access your Junior ISA
- Support to open a bank account
- Support to gain important identification documents, such as a passport and/or provisional driving licence, before your 18th birthday
- Support to get your National Insurance number.
- Exceptional financial support in emergencies
- Providing a financial gift at birthdays and Christmas or other celebrations in line with finance policy.

## Additional Support

### Key contact numbers for:

- Next Steps Team: 0191 561 7109 (duty)
- TFC leadership e.g the director of children's services, lead member: 0191 520 5555
- Change Council 0191 561 7430 or email: [loren.nergaard@togetherforchildren.org.uk](mailto:loren.nergaard@togetherforchildren.org.uk)

### Relevant universal services:

- YDAP
- Information about further or higher education
- Relevant youth clubs/groups/activities
- Parenting support groups
- Youth Offending Service
- Citizenship Advice Bureau.



**Address:** Together for Children, Civic Centre, Sunderland SR2 7DN

**Telephone:** 0191 520 5555

**Email:** [enquiries@togetherforchildren.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@togetherforchildren.org.uk)

**Web:** [www.togetherforchildren.org.uk](http://www.togetherforchildren.org.uk)

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