



Qualifying Care Leaver Offer.

As Corporate Parents we are committed to doing everything we can to make sure you are set up for life. We strive to be ambitious for all our care leavers and we work in partnership with a range of organisations and alongside “Community” our care leaver participation group to keep our local offer under review so that we can be responsive to your changing needs. We know that preparing for and leaving care can be a difficult time and we want you to know that we are here when you need us.

This leaflet summarises the key messages for our Qualifying Care Leavers. For our full offer, you can scan the QR code to take you to our care leaver App or visit the website www.gcsw.co.uk.

Your entitlements and our offer will vary depending on your age and care leaver status. If you are aged 21 or over you may want to read our [21+ offer](#). There are lots of ways that you can [keep in touch](#) with us and stay up to date with what’s happening. For more information about your entitlements or for details of our social media pages you can check the App or speak to your personal adviser or a duty worker on 0800 6940168.



How do I know if I am a qualifying care leaver?

If you are not sure if you qualify for support please ring the Duty Team on the freephone number 0800 6940168. You may be a qualifying young person if any of the following criteria apply.

- You were a child in care for less than 13 weeks since your fourteenth birthday including some time after your 16th birthday.
- You were a child in care for more than 13 weeks including some time when you were 16 or 17 **and** you returned home to live with family for more than six months before you turned 18 **and** you were living at home when you turned 18 **and** there was no care order made or it was discharged by the Court.
- You were a child in care immediately before you were privately fostered or before you lived with carers as part of a special guardianship arrangement.

Please note: If you were a child in care for more than 13 weeks including some time when you were 16 or 17 **and** you returned home to live with family for more than six months before you turned 18 but you had to move out before you were 18 you would have become a former relevant young person when you turned 18.

Support and planning.

Qualifying care leavers are not always allocated a named personal adviser. We know that everyone’s circumstances are different, and you may already have lots of support in place and may not want or require this service. Qualifying care leavers are offered a service subject to an assessment of their needs. If you would like a service you can request that we undertake an assessment of need, and we will either complete a pathway plan or signpost you to partner

agencies and services if we think they would be better able to offer you the right support. The timeframe of the intervention offered will depend on your needs.

Your pathway plan will be created with you and for you. It will help outline the areas that you would like help with and the actions to help support you to address these. It can include things like

- Support to develop practical and independent skills.
- Support for physical, emotional, and mental health needs.
- Managing money and budgeting
- Getting into work or learning
- Staying in touch with people who are important to you.
- Advice about housing

Managing money and financial support:

We will try to help you financially and work with you while you are a care leaver to manage your money. This will include a range of practical and financial support and access to your savings. We can support you to:

- Apply for up to 100% relief from council tax until your 25th birthday if you remain living in Bristol. You still need to register for Council Tax but indicate the care leaver discount on the form.
- Open a bank account.
- Gain important identity documents such as a passport, birth certificate and driving license.
- Get your National Insurance number.
- Meet the designated care leaver job coach in your local DWP job centre.

Housing:

We want you to find housing and a home that best suits your needs, where you can feel safe and a sense of belonging. We can support with:

- Help to understand your housing options (e.g., supported accommodation or gaining your own tenancy through social or private housing).
- Priority banding (Band 1) on Home Choice (Bristol's social housing list) as soon as you have been assessed as being ready for independence in your pathway plan.
- Advice and support to prepare for semi or independent living. This can include advice about tenancies, how to avoid rent arrears, pay bills and budget. We can also help you claim your council tax exemption (if you live in Bristol), housing benefit or universal credit and support to apply for grants for essential items such as white goods.
- If you move to temporary accommodation we can provide a hamper which will include, pots, pans, crockery, bedding etc to help set you up in your accommodation.

Relationships:

We understand the importance of making and maintaining family and friendships links and connections and we may be able to offer help in the following ways:

- To reconnect with the people that are important to you.
- Link you to the befriender service to help you develop confidence in accessing community support, groups, or hobbies.
- Support to understand your journey into and through care. This can include life story conversations or [access to your records](#).
- Opportunities to connect with other care experienced young people through our [social events](#), groups, and activities.

Work and learning:

We hold high aspirations for you and want you to succeed. We will support you to find a work or learning opportunity that's right for you and will be ready to celebrate your achievements with you. We can support you with:

- Information about opportunities for work experience, traineeships, apprenticeships, pre-engagement courses, voluntary opportunities, and employment.
- Career's information such as help to develop your CV, advice about job interviews, including what you might wear.
- Priority access to [work experience](#) opportunities within Bristol City Council.
- Guaranteed interview for a [Bristol City Council job](#) if you meet the essential criteria and tick on the application form that you are a care leaver.
- If you undertake an apprenticeship with Bristol City Council, you will receive the £3,000 care leaver bursary from the government. We will also give you £25 per week and top up your salary to the National Minimum Wage.
- If you are aged 16-19 and in full time education you may be entitled to a £1,200 [bursary](#) from your school, college, or training provider.
- We will provide you with support to apply to university (deciding where to apply, help with your personal statement, attending interviews and applicant days, and applying to student finance for tuition fees and maintenance loans.
- You will be offered a personal adviser throughout your time at university.
- We will support you with accommodation costs during holidays if your accommodation is term time only. Please discuss with your personal adviser in advance.
- Where possible we will connect you with your university's Welfare Officer before you start university, and we can also provide support if you have any problems whilst you're at university.
- We will help you get references and support you with your next steps. If things don't work out, we will support you to try again.
- We can help you access support with travel expenses through the [Wheels to Work Scheme](#) if you are starting a new job, attending a training course, attending a work placement, or attending a job interview.

You can contact The HOPE Virtual School directly for more information and guidance on education: The HOPE: www.bristol.gov.uk/web/the-hope/home For information on employment, work experience, traineeships, volunteering, training, and pre-engagement courses you can contact the Post 16 Participation Team: Post16Participation@bristol.gov.uk. Phone number 0117 352 5750

Travel:

- If you are aged between 18-26 and live in the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority or North Somerset Council region you can apply for a [WESTpass](#). This entitles you to free bus travel until the end of March 2026, or until your 26th birthday (whichever comes first).

Health and wellbeing:

We want you to be as healthy as possible and know that this can be challenging when you're living independently. Below are some of the ways that we can support you to stay healthy and look after yourself:

- You will be given a [summary](#) of your health history when you turn 18 which is known as a 'health passport'.
- The Integrated Care Board (ICB) offers [free prescriptions](#) to eligible care leavers aged 18 until their 25th birthday. You can find details of eligibility and the application form on the care leaver app.
- Free membership to Bristol City Council [Everyone Active gyms](#).
- You can also get [50% off a Pure Gym](#) membership through the Care Leaver Covenant.
- Support you to register with a GP and give you information about counselling and mental health services that are available locally and support you to move from children's services to adult services if you need to as well as information about health drop-in centres such as sexual health clinics.

Using your voice:

We want to hear from you to help shape the service we offer. If you help us with consultation, interviews, or other engagement activities you will be paid in the form of vouchers at a rate of **£10 p/hr**. Ways to get involved and have your voice heard include:

- Opportunity to join [Community](#) Participation group
- You have a right to an independent advocate if you want to challenge decisions about the support we give you, information can be found at [Reconstruct Advocacy Service](#).
- You have the right to request [access to the records](#) that we hold about you.

Preparing for or being a parent:

If you are a parent or if you are expecting a baby, we will support you to do the best for them. Support can include:

- Your GP and midwife can talk to you about the health services available to you.
- We can give you information about financial support and schemes in place to support you.
- Introducing you to universal support e.g., family hubs, children's centre. We can make a referral for specialist parenting support to prepare you for having a baby and for advice and support once your baby arrives.
- Attend our monthly nurture group for parents and expecting parents called "Time for You".
- Referral to family nurse partnership* for support.
- Advice about applying for a Sure Start maternity grant or Healthy Start scheme.

** For first time Mums up to the age of 21.*

Young people seeking asylum:

Bristol is a City of Sanctuary and as a council we will do our best to support you as a qualifying care leaver through your asylum claim.

Support can include:

- Where applicable* writing a letter to the Home Office to support your application for asylum support under section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- You can attend our social events, drop-in session and workshops at our HUB.

Published July 2025.