

Our local offer to young people who are care experienced



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Our local offer to you

You may be leaving care or have left the care of Portsmouth City Council. In either case we want you to feel safe and supported and to know that we care about you. As you prepare for independence, we want to make sure you receive the advice and support you need to be successful and to achieve your potential.

We have taken some advice from some of our care experienced young adults leaving care in Portsmouth. This is called our Local Offer.

If you were in care on or after your 16th birthday and have spent at least 13 weeks in care since your 14th birthday then this offer will help you. It tells you about the support on offer to you as someone between 16 and 25 who has been in care and have now left care.

You may also be a qualifying young person if:

you left care on or after your 16th Birthday and were looked after for less than 13 weeks after your 16th birthday and were looked after for less than 13 weeks after your 14th birthday

or

you had a Special Guardianship Order (known as an SGO) or had a SGO when you reached the age of 18 and were looked after immediately before the making of that Order

or

you were in care over 13 weeks but returned home for six months or more and ceased to be looked after prior to turning 18

If you are a qualifying young person you will not necessarily have an allocated personal advisor or be eligible for all the support outlined in this offer. However, we can offer advice and guidance and can work with you to assess and consider any additional needs you may have. We can also work with you to make a plan for how these needs will be met. We can also help with living expenses if you are in higher education up until the age of 25

Our relationship together

We at Portsmouth City Council are your corporate parent. The government introduced a set of parenting principles that require all departments within Portsmouth City Council to work together to support young people in their care. In Portsmouth we developed those principles a little further and with the Care Experience Voice group and other young people in our care we developed the Portsmouth Pledge. This is set out below and shows what you can expect of us, your corporate parent.

Portsmouth pledge

We promise to make sure that you have the love and affection that everyone needs.

We promise to always respect your individuality.

We promise to make sure your relationships are always at the heart of everything we do.

We promise to give you a stable and consistent experience in care.

We promise that your mental health and wellbeing will be looked after whilst you are in our care.

We promise that we will still be here for you, up to and beyond 25. You are as much a part of our lives as we are yours.

We promise that we will always respect your identity and we will promise to help you to connect with your heritage and history.

We promise that your voice will always be at the centre of our decisions.

We promise to make sure you know what your rights are and how to access them.

We promise to always respect and value your experiences as you are the only people that know what it is like accessing our services.

Relationships

Important people to you

We believe it is important to feel supported and have positive and healthy relationships which we want to achieve with you whether this be with your family, friends and or your local community.

We will work with you to promote your relationship with your family, we will give you support and advice to help you maintain or regain those important relationships who will be there when you no longer need our support.





Social worker support

Between the ages of 16 and 18 your social worker will continue to work with you. Your social worker will meet with you in your accommodation/placement at least every six weeks, or every three months if you have been living there for over a year and there are no concerns about this accommodation.

Around your 16th birthday your social worker will develop a 'Pathway Plan' with you. This will replace your care plan and will be based on an assessment of your needs.

Your plan will look at important things such as:

- getting ready to leave care
- where you live
- health issues
- employment, education and training opportunities
- developing independent living skills such as budgeting, cooking etc.



Personal advisor support

You will first meet your personal advisor when you turn 16 years old, this will help you to build a relationship with them before they become your allocated worker. Your personal advisor will keep in contact with you and arrange to see you at least every 8 weeks but more often if you need it once you are 18. The relationship between yourself and your personal advisor is important as they will support you to be the best that you can be. This means they will help you access the support services that you need in important areas such as housing, health, employment, training and education.

When you turn 18 years old, your social worker will say goodbye and the person who will continue to support and advise you will be your personal advisor. Personal advisors are not social workers and have many different backgrounds, but they are experienced in working with young adults and have knowledge on a lot of things that can be useful. Your personal advisor will become your main point of contact and continue supporting you at least until you turn 21, however, they can support you until you turn 25 if you need or want further support.

Your personal advisor will discuss with you how often to meet and how best to keep in contact. They should see you every two months, or more often



than that when required until you reach 21. In between visits you and your personal advisor can keep in contact by phone, text, email or WhatsApp.

Your personal advisor will review and agree your pathway plan with you at least every six months and will be able to talk to you about support services and mentoring schemes that are available to you.

If you had an independent visitor while you were in care you will be able to continue this contact, and you can ask for an independent advocate if you are not happy about the support you are receiving, and we will refer you to the advocacy service.

Wherever possible you will remain with your personal advisor but if they have to leave you we will make sure they don't leave you without saying goodbye and introducing you to the new adult who will support you. Your personal advisor will be there to "walk beside you" on your journey to independence. They will be there for you if you make mistakes and will not judge you.

The service is provided by a team of personal advisors known as *Supporting your future*.

They can be contacted at

✉ **CareExperiencedDuty@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**

☎ **023 9283 4931**

Support if pregnant or a parent

Becoming a parent is both exciting and daunting as you will be responsible for someone else who needs you and relies on you for everything. Speak to your personal advisor as soon as you think you could be pregnant. They will not automatically refer you to social care just because you have been in care yourself, but they can help you with attending appointments and getting any grants or benefits you are entitled to. They can refer you to the Portsmouth Baby Bank who will give you a baby bundle of all the things you will need once your baby is born.

If you are a father and your child is living solely with you, your personal advisor can help you claim the benefits listed below and advice regarding a child support arrangement.

Help with childcare costs

The Department for Work and Pensions have released a **universal credit and childcare guide**¹ giving information on who can claim support with childcare costs and how much.

You can also visit the council's **help with childcare costs**² web page where you will find local information and details of free and low costs activities for children.

Child Benefit

Only one person can get Child Benefit for a child. You normally qualify for Child Benefit if you're responsible for a child under 16 and you live in the UK.

You can claim Child Benefit 48 hours after you've registered the birth of your child, or once a child comes to live with you. Child Benefit can be backdated for up to 3 months. You can claim online. You can only get Child Benefit for your first 2 children unless special circumstances such as twins apply.

1 www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-and-childcare/universal-credit-childcare-guide

2 www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/schools-learning-and-childcare/early-years-and-childcare/help-with-childcare-costs

Sure Start Maternity Grant

You could get a one-off payment of £500 to help towards the costs of having a child. This is known as a Sure Start Maternity Grant.

You usually qualify for the grant if both of the following apply:

- you're expecting your first child, or you're expecting a multiple birth (such as twins) and have children already
- you or your partner already get certain benefits

You must claim the grant within 11 weeks of the baby's due date or within 6 months after the baby's birth. You do not have to pay the grant back and it will not affect your other benefits or tax credits.

Family Nurse Partnership

When you first meet with a midwife as part of your pregnancy, if they think you might find Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) helpful, they'll let your local FNP team know. A specially trained family nurse will then get in touch with you to say hello and arrange an initial visit with you at home. During this visit, she/he will explain what the programme is and how it works. You'll have a chance to ask questions and decide if FNP is right for you. If you decide you would like to join the programme, you and your family nurse will meet regularly, at times that suit you. Your visits will start during pregnancy right through until your child is aged between one and two. Throughout this time, you and your family nurse will work on lots of different aspects of your pregnancy and becoming a parent together, including parent-child attachment, breastfeeding, immunising your baby, child development and school readiness. Your family nurse will fit the programme around you and your baby's needs, helping to improve your self-confidence as well as supporting you on other issues such as mental health, anxiety, housing and stopping smoking. If you feel like FNP might be helpful for you, you can also self-refer.

Family hubs

Family hubs are a 'one stop shop' within your community, they will provide you with information, signposting and a variety of free services including activities and support for families with children up until the age of 25 including support during your pregnancy. In Portsmouth, we have five family hubs in Buckland, Milton, Northern Parade, Somerstown and Paulsgrove.

For further information you can go to the website

 **portsmouthfamilyhubs.co.uk**

Being a parent is not easy so don't be afraid to say if you are finding it a struggle whether your child lives with you or you have regular contact. Your Personal Advisor can help you and refer you to parenting groups or some useful articles and videos online, whether you are Mum, Dad or a Step Parent.

Important documents

We will support you with an application for a 10-year passport if you have not already had one through the Building Your Future Team.

This will be your main source of identification. We will contribute the current cost of a passport towards your travel documents for former children seeking asylum with refugee status or with humanitarian protection status. We will pay for a provisional driving licence as a secondary form of identification.

This will be a one-off payment for both passport and travel documents. Do not lose this or you will have to apply and pay for a new one.

If you do lose this:

- You will not be allowed to leave the country or travel
- You may be at risk of identity theft

Keeping documents safe

We will keep copies of all your documents safe for you if you wish us to do so. At certain times you will need your original documents and copies of documents will not be accepted; for example, opening a bank account so you must keep this in a safe place.

Help to understand your history

It is important you understand your journey into care and know about your birth family and this helps you develop your own identity. Children's services have to keep written case records of your care history. These records must be kept for 75 years. You can request your records any time after you become 18 years old. You do not have to read through the information on your own. It can be upsetting or confusing to do this alone.

Personal advisors can support you to access your records. You can download the **[access to personal records form](https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Access-to-personal-records-form.pdf)**³ needed for this from the council's website.

When you access your records we have to work to the rules of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This is legislation that protects personal information and can mean that information on your file cannot be shared because it is about someone else that was close to you. This can mean information is taken out (known as redacted) if it is about other people who have not given permission for their information to be shared with you. It is worth talking to your personal advisor about what you would like to know from viewing your records before making a request, as we may be able to give this to you in a different way and make it more likely you will get what you are hoping for. It can be quite difficult reading your history and so it is best to plan to have someone such as your personal advisor or a trusted friend with you when you receive them to support you.

Your health story

You will receive your health story by the time you reach 17 years old, which will be updated as part of your final health assessment before you turn 18. It will tell you when you had your immunisations and any health conditions. With your consent this will be shared with your personal advisor, and we can hold on your file for safety.

3 <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Access-to-personal-records-form.pdf>

Your home

One of the first things that most people want to know is “where am I going to live when I turn 18?”. We want you to be safe and secure and also to gradually develop your skills to live independently as it can be tough living on your own at 18 and we want you to succeed.

Portsmouth has limited social housing with a high demand, as it is one of the most densely populated cities outside of London. We will support you to be assessed as to whether you are eligible for a social housing register in your area but not everyone will be eligible. Additionally, there are a number of options available to you:

Staying put

This is where you can continue to live with your foster carer until you are 21. You would need to pay them a rental contribution as you are now an adult, but this is a great way to gradually develop your independence skills whilst also attending work or college as there are still people you trust on hand to help you when needed.

Supported lodgings

This is when you live with someone in their home and pay rent, but you do far more for yourself than maybe you did with your foster carer. Things like cooking your own meals and doing your washing. Generally, you have more independence so you can come and go as you please.

Young peoples supported housing pathway

In Portsmouth we have All Saints Hostel (21 bedspaces) and the Portsmouth Foyer (45 bedspaces). These are for young people aged 16–25. All Saints has individual rooms, and you share kitchens and bathrooms and staff there give support 24 hours a day. At the Foyer you will have your own room with ensuite shower/toilet and share a kitchen with 6 other people, and it is also staffed 24 hours a day. You are allowed visitors and overnight guests. You will need to pay a service charge which is a contribution to the rent costs.

Shared houses

We have a number of shared houses known as the Aspiration Houses which charge an affordable rent so are fine if you are working. There are usually 4–5 people sharing the house, and staff pop in for a few hours each week to run a house meeting and offer support to residents.

We also use some private providers who offer shared houses, and they are like the Aspiration Houses however you can only stay there until you are 21.

Shared Lives

Your social worker may assess you are eligible for supported accommodation through the Shared Lives scheme. This would involve living in a carer's home where you would be provided with additional support to help you live independently depending on your needs.

Residential setting

These are usually small group homes with staff there 24/7. If you require additional support this might be the best option for you if you cannot manage on your own in the community. You may have an identified care or support need where we would work with adult services to look at your long-term options after the age of 21.

Resettlement flats

We have 12 flats that are leased to a voluntary organisation – Two Saints – who manage them and provide support to young people living there. These flats are for those young people who require social housing and need support to further develop their independence skills before taking on the tenancy themselves. It is expected you will be willing to accept the support provided and have the commitment and ability to develop your independence in order to manage your own tenancy within 6–12 months.

Portsmouth City Council lets

We have 10 flats per year that we can nominate care experienced young people for. To be nominated for one of these flats you will have shown that you can manage your finances, pay your rent and live independently and do not require support. Consideration is also given to those who have an additional need or might not be able to afford to buy their own home in the future.

There is no guarantee that because you want social housing, that you will be eligible or able to access this. Most young people in Portsmouth save for a deposit and use the private rental sector, so it is most likely you will also do this. We can help you through the Portsmouth care experienced young peoples deposit scheme.

The Portsmouth care experienced young people's deposit scheme

To help you access the private sector we will pay a deposit and the first month's rent for you. To get this you need to work with your personal advisor to complete the independence skills checklist, have a copy of the tenancy and landlord details, so we can make the payment. Please speak to your Personal Advisor for the full details. If you leave the property and have not caused any damage, you will be able to move the deposit to your next property.

Young peoples housing panel

You are encouraged to work with your personal advisor, key worker or foster carer to develop and demonstrate your independent living skills as this will ensure you will be able to stay in the accommodation you choose in the future. Wherever you live you will have to pay rent or a personal service charge towards your rent. If you don't make regular payments, you risk being evicted as it is your responsibility to pay this money to your landlord.



If you are evicted from your accommodation your personal advisor will work with you to secure somewhere else to live but it may not be what you would like. Most young people can return to the supported housing pathway even if they have been evicted but a short break or a different service may be necessary.

If you run into difficulties, or face eviction, your case will be discussed at the weekly housing panel to see what further support we can offer you and we will work with housing providers to try and make sure you don't become intentionally homeless.

Health and wellbeing needs

Your physical and mental health is important, and we want to support you to be a successful and happy adult. In your pathway plan there will always be a section on your health and wellbeing. Your personal assistant can complete a keeping well plan with you to help you manage your own wellbeing.

Pharmacies can offer advice on a wide range of issues from minor ailments to advice on medication, stopping smoking and sexual health. Often if you have a non-serious ailment, these are good places to go for some advice before booking a doctor's appointment, which may have a long waiting time. Most pharmacies have a private room where the pharmacist can discuss any private issues with you.

There is a treatment centre at St Mary's Hospital for minor injuries. You do not need an appointment as it is a walk-in service, but it does mean you will have to wait to be seen. The centre can offer help with lots of different illnesses/injuries, and you should attend here if your illness/injury cannot wait until you can see your GP.

We can support you in the following ways:

- Ensure that you are registered with a GP and a dentist so that your medical needs can be met.
- Refer you to a range of different services to support your mental wellbeing such as:
 - Appointment with a SMaRT therapist.
 - Kooth Counselling Service.
 - You Trust Counselling Service.
 - Talking Change – up to 6 sessions with a counsellor.
- Support you to access sexual health clinics for check ups or contraceptive advice, or if you prefer you can go online to the **Let's talk about it website**⁴. A full range of all the **sexual health services**⁵ are available on the council's website. You can also get emergency contraception and condoms from a pharmacy.

⁴ www.letstalkaboutit.nhs.uk

⁵ www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/health-and-care/health/sexual-health

- Signpost you to sports groups and facilities so you can join teams and clubs and undertake different positive activities. We will encourage you to come to our Connect events to try different activities.
- You will also be entitled to the Portsmouth Leisure Card – ask your personal advisor how you get this.
- We will visit you if you need to stay in hospital and ensure that you have the things that you need for your stay.
- We will pay for any prescriptions that you need if you are not exempt from paying for these until you are 21 years old. If you have no recourse to public funds due to your immigration status, then this will be up to the age of 25.
- Provide financial and if necessary physical support to help you travel to health appointments if you need it.

If you are concerned about a non-urgent problem, but need help and advice, you can call the NHS helpline on 111.

999 should only be called for emergencies requiring an ambulance. The A&E department in Portsmouth is based at Queen Alexandra Hospital. If you have to call an ambulance or have a serious accident or ailment, you will go there.

Drug and Alcohol Support Service

Portsmouth Drug and Alcohol Service (DASS) is a free and confidential service which offers 1-1 interventions to young people under 25.

The service is person centred and we offer tailored care plans to individuals, focusing on harm reduction, educational advice, and safety planning. You can visit the council's website.

 [**portsmouth.gov.uk/dass**](https://portsmouth.gov.uk/dass)

Other organisations

Other organisations that your personal advisor can help you access or you can contact yourself are:

PARCS

PARCS offers confidential counselling for anyone aged 13–24 who has experienced sexual abuse.

 parcs.org.uk

 **Women's line: 023 9266 9511**

 **Men's line: 023 9266 9516**

Barnardos

Barnardos offers confidential 1:1 support for anyone experiencing, or at significant risk of sexual exploitation

 **01489 796684**

Talk to Frank

Talk to Frank offers confidential advice about drugs.

 talktofrank.com

Beat

Talk to BEAT for advice regarding disordered eating:

 **Youthline 0808 801 0711, 4–10pm daily.**

Portsmouth City Council

For further information on a variety of health needs visit the council's website.

 portsmouth.gov.uk/services/health-and-care/health



Neurodiversity and additional needs

You may have had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) when you were in school or you may feel that you don't understand the world in the same way as other people, or the world does not understand you. We have a service for young people up to age 19 who are neurodivergent, your personal advisor can refer you and assist you with getting an assessment.

Have a look at

 [**portsmouthlocaloffer.org/information/neurodiversity**](https://portsmouthlocaloffer.org/information/neurodiversity)

We also have services for adults that your personal advisor can support you to access.

 [**portsmouth.gov.uk/services/health-and-care/adult-social-care/autistic-and-neurodivergent-adults**](https://portsmouth.gov.uk/services/health-and-care/adult-social-care/autistic-and-neurodivergent-adults)

Education, employment and training

We want you to achieve the most from life, and education and work are important in helping you to become independent.

Your personal advisor will support you with searching for college courses, jobs and university, completing applications, giving funding, budget advice and taking you to interviews.

Your personal advisor can also refer you to our specialist careers advisor and the youth hub for support with different training schemes, apprenticeships, voluntary work and taster placement. They can also help with making a CV, job applications, interview skills, carers advice and guidance, education, employment and training (EET) opportunities.

The youth hub is running the following workshops which will help you on your path to employment:

Skills planning and self	Preparing for employment
Windmills – goal planning	Finances and budgeting
CV writing	Behaviour in the workplace
Progression and options	Interview skills & VR

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) can help with employment opportunities and training such as Security Industry Authority (SIA), Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) cards and other training.

We want you to have the best chance of getting and keeping employment so we will support you to access through the DWP the following:

- Interview clothes.
- Travel for interviews.
- Potentially the first month of travel for new employment.
- Travel to SIA/CSCS courses if arranged by them.
- Mobile phones if young people have none/unable to access Universal Credit (UC) claim online.
- Specialist clothing, e.g. security uniform.

The DWP commitment to our young people is called the **Department for Work and Pensions: Care Leaver Covenant offer**⁶

If you apply for a job within Portsmouth City Council as a care experienced person you will automatically be given an interview.

Remember when you start a new job it may feel tough and hard to change your routines or meet new people. Don't give up, we will be there to support you!

Talk to your personal advisor or your employer for support.

Here are some useful links:

National careers service

 nationalcareers.service.gov.uk

Find an apprenticeship

 gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship

Care Leaver Covenant

 mycovenant.org.uk

The Virtual School and College

The Virtual School provides personalised support and guidance to young people as they transition to further education, employment or training. The team ensures there is consistent high-quality support so that young people can achieve their goals. There is a drop-in advice service including telephone consultation every Tuesday morning from 9am to 11am. If you have any queries or questions or would like advice and guidance on any aspect of post-18 education you can contact Tina Henley, who is the Virtual School and College Headteacher.

 **023 9268 8076**

 **tina.henley@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**

⁶ www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-work-and-pensions-care-leaver-covenant-offer/department-for-work-and-pensions-care-leaver-covenant-offer

Higher education

If you are studying in higher education, we will support you to apply for a student loan and grant, just like any other young person. Some courses may also have special grants to help you pay for your expenses. Some universities may also have grants for care experienced young people, so it is important to research this when choosing which universities to apply for. Your personal advisor can help you draw up a budget and cost plan to ensure you get all the money you are entitled to and understand how you can best reduce your costs. Virtual School will offer support to university which is discussed throughout Year 12 and Year 13 Personal Opportunity Plan targets including UCAS applications and Personal statements, visits to universities, open days etc.

You should seek information from your university and get your personal advisor to give you some help. Visit the Propel website at [**propel.org.uk/UK**](https://propel.org.uk/UK)

Make sure you tick the box saying you are care experienced on your UCAS form.

You can get free accommodation through the Unite Foundation bursary. If you choose a university where they provide accommodation you can stay there. Check out [**Unite Foundation Scholarship**](https://thisisusatuni.org/unite-foundation-scholarship/#where-you-can-study)⁷.

We will pay your UCAS registration fee and your transport costs to attend open days for your top three universities.

We will pay for the cost of your accommodation during the holidays including living with your former foster carers if this is an option for you.

We will also pay you a Higher Education Bursary of £1000 per year up to a maximum of £4000 provided over 4 years of study.

⁷ <https://thisisusatuni.org/unite-foundation-scholarship/#where-you-can-study>



Useful links

The national network for the education of care leavers

The national network for the education of care leavers has lots of information and guidance on college and university opportunities and funding sources for care leavers.

 nnecl.org

The Unite Foundation

A charitable organisation that helps fund accommodation and utility bill expenses for care leavers pursuing higher education studies in university for up to three years.

 unitefoundation.co.uk

UCAS

Provides a list of post-16 higher education university providers and the application process. Visit their special section of their website dedicated to supporting care leavers.

 ucas.com

Apprenticeships and traineeships

Portsmouth has a dedicated Employability Academy to look at employment and training, they are working in partnership with local employers to offer you opportunities to train in a wide variety of industries. Portsmouth also offers apprenticeship opportunities within the council. The Academy will offer and advice and training with essential workplace skills so that you can get ready for work.

Care experienced young people who choose to start an apprenticeship can now also access additional support from the government with a grant between £1000 to £3000 bursary depending on when you start your apprenticeship.

You can find out more on the government's **Apprenticeship care leavers' bursary guidance**⁸ web page.

The government have introduced a new scheme, which primarily is to offer additional employment support to all care leavers during the move from being looked after to independence. More information is available at **Care Leaver Covenant**⁹.

The covenant is a 'promise' that employers and other professionals in the community will make offers of employment and apprenticeships, amongst other offers yet to be published. It is a very new, and exciting development. Keep an eye out for further developments in the very near future.

8 www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-bursary-for-care-leavers/apprenticeships-care-leavers-bursary-policy-summary#payment-of-the-bursary

9 <https://mycovenant.org.uk>

The support you will get if you are in prison

If you are in prison your personal advisor will still visit you every 8 weeks or more often if you wish. They will continue to do a pathway plan with you. They will ensure you have the things you need to manage, such as providing books or clothing. This will be up to £75 when you first go into prison if required. For the rest of the time you will receive £40 per month to pay for things you might need such as your TV or a phone card. Your personal advisor will also keep in touch via post, phone calls and the 'email a prisoner service'. When you are due for release your personal advisor will write a pathway plan with you (usually 8 weeks prior to your release date) that will cover:

- who is collecting you, or plans for travel
- where you will be living
- the reporting arrangements with probation or other services
- arrangements for education or employment
- arrangements for meeting your health needs
- arrangements for financial support
- the roles and responsibilities of support services – including probation, children's services through your personal advisor, housing, education and employment, health, and Universal Credit.

You can also have up to £75 for clothing on your release if needed.

If you are due for release after the age of 25 we can refer you to the Rees Foundation who can offer advice when you are released. We will also pay you the remainder of your setting up home allowance/care leavers grant.

If you need immigration support

We will support you with any claims you need to make in relation to your immigration status and wherever possible will ensure that your status has been secured in the UK before you turn 18 (where it is in our power to do so). As you turn 18 you will receive the same services at 18 from *Supporting your futures* as all care experienced young adults. You will have a personal advisor instead of a social worker. We will support you to remain in contact with family members and ensure you are linked with community networks and have the opportunity to meet people from your country and culture.

If you still have an ongoing claim we will continue to liaise with your solicitors and the Home Office to try and help progress these claims.

If you receive 5 years leave to remain and then after 5 years you can apply to settle in the UK, you will need to save money for this application as this is not something that we will pay for. Speak to your personal advisor for advice and information.

If you are without a decision, whether you have never had a decision from the Home Office or you have an outstanding legal challenge which your solicitor has lodged with the Home Office by your 21st birthday, Portsmouth will continue to pay for your accommodation and your weekly payment up until the age of 21 or when you finish your current course of education whichever is the latest. To remain eligible for the support over the age of 21, your education course must be accredited and be a minimum of 12 hours a week.

If your asylum application is refused, there is an appeal process you will want to consider which your personal advisor will support you with. If your appeal rights are exhausted, we can continue to financially support you for up to a further 21 days and support you emotionally and practically to consider your options. The important thing to remember is we won't abandon you.

More immigration support and advice

Refugee Council

Offers information and advice to asylum seekers and refugees. Opening hours: Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays 9.30am – 1pm and 2pm – 4.30pm. Wednesdays 2–5pm only.

 [refugeecouncil.org.uk](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

Migrant Children's Project

Immigration & settlement A free service by Coram Legal providing information, legal advice and representation around immigration and settlement issues.

 [childrenslegalcentre.com](https://www.childrenslegalcentre.com)

Migrant Help

Migrant Help support those seeking asylum in the UK, they can support applying for accommodation and financial support including support during the post-decision period, whether the decision has been positive or negative

 [migranthelpuk.org](https://www.migranthelpuk.org)

LGBTQ+

LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bi, transgender and queer or questioning. The '+' is the symbol used to shorten the acronym but be inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities as terms are always evolving.

If you identify with any of these groups, your personal advisor can support you to access appropriate health services and support groups as needed. We also have a group for LGBTQ+ adolescents and young adults aged 18–25 called 4Me. Your personal advisor can refer you or you can contact them at:

✉ [**lgbtyoungpeople@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**](mailto:lgbtyoungpeople@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)



Your money

We have consulted with our Care Experienced Voice group in developing the financial part of our offer.

Although you may still receive some financial support, you will be expected to find your income from work, education grants and, if eligible, benefits. In most instances we will not be responsible for your daily living costs. However, Portsmouth will make sure you have been issued with your National Insurance number, make sure you have a bank account and can access money that you may have saved whilst in care.

This section will provide you with information on what financial assistance may be available to you. The amount of money that you will be provided with depends on your age and the accommodation that you stay in and your assessment of need.

If you are not certain about anything you will need to ask your Social Worker or Personal Advisor. If, following a Mental Capacity Assessment, you do not have capacity to manage your money, we will support you to identify who should look after it for you and support you to make the decisions you can.

Benefits and financial support

Our offer to you

Your social worker or personal advisor will help you to start the application for benefits to which you may be entitled to a month before you turn 18. Claims for Universal Credit can be started one month before your 18th birthday. If you have applied for benefits and are waiting to be paid, we will support you with a personal allowance payment for up to four weeks or until your benefit comes through.

This payment is the same amount as you would receive from Universal Credit. There are two parts to Universal Credit – a payment to you for your expenses and a payment to help you pay your rent. The rent part must be paid to your landlord. The payment is made monthly into your bank account. You can ask to have it paid fortnightly. You can also request that the rent element is paid directly to your landlord – that way you know your housing is safe.

If you have a disability, you may be eligible for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) as it is more commonly called.

We will help you with your claim for benefits.

If you are not entitled to claim benefits, for example you are awaiting the outcome of a claim for asylum then we will support you with a personal allowance which is the equivalent of the Universal Credit amount for a single adult aged 18–25, you will be expected to use this for your living costs, including rent and household bills.

We will also support you to open a bank account and obtain your National Insurance number if necessary.

Your responsibilities and our advice

You need to help us to help you make your claim for benefits. You must attend all your appointments at the Jobcentre and engage with your work coach. Failure to do so could lead to problems with your claim and benefits not being paid. If you are sanctioned, we may only be able to help you with accessing food banks or providing food vouchers.

You will need to provide your personal advisor with proof that you have applied for benefits. Your personal advisor will be able to advise and support you with applying for benefits and for the duration of the claim.

You will be expected to budget your money and ensure your rent or service charge is paid from your money. Your personal advisor can help you work out your budget. We also run regular money advice sessions and attending can help you stay in control of your finances better.

Setting up home allowance (SUHA)

Our offer to you

We will offer you a setting up home allowance up to the value of £3,000 (£2,000 if you were 18 before 1 April 2023) to help you buy essential things when moving into your home. It is not to be used for everyday expenses such as clothing or rent.

Your responsibilities and our advice

Your personal advisor will help you identify the things you need as your independence increases – you can take amounts of money at different times e.g. to buy a tv and your personal advisor will purchase the items for you.

The money cannot be paid directly to you unless you have your permanent home, and your personal advisor has completed the budgeting tool with you and believes you will use the money responsibly.

Support with Council Tax

Our offer to you

If you live in Portsmouth you will be exempt from paying council tax until your 25th birthday.

We will also pay your council tax if you live in independent accommodation outside of Portsmouth – speak to your personal advisor.

Your responsibilities and our advice

If you receive a council tax bill please tell your personal advisor straight away so they can help – don't leave it so it becomes a debt.

Getting Around

Our offer to you

Portsmouth is a densely populated city with a Clean Air Zone (CAZ), and it has an *Air Quality Local Plan* due to the high level of nitrogen dioxide in the city.

This means that the council policies are to encourage people to use public transport or walk or cycle around the city.

We therefore encourage all our young people to use these methods when travelling around the city. Owning a car is very expensive and it is difficult to

park in Portsmouth too, so whilst we want to support you in your journey to independence, we would encourage you to think carefully about getting a car.

Public transport

If you need a bus or train pass in order to access education, employment or training we will help you with your travel costs (based on an assessment of need). This could support you if your college does not supply bus passes, or to cover the holiday period when college bus passes are not valid.

Bikes

If you need a bike to access education, employment or training and have not received one when you were in our care we will look to help you, we may also help you if you need to move around your local area.

Driving

We purchase everyone a provisional driving licence as it is a useful second form of ID. If you want to drive, we will work with you to map out a finance plan to achieve this. This could include support with your theory test and driving lessons, if you need to drive for employment reasons based on an assessment of need.

Our care experienced young people can **download the theory test app**¹⁰ for free if they sign up to the care leaver covenant.

Your responsibilities and our advice

To get the funding you'll be assessed on your ability to learn how to drive safely such as being able to pass the theory and practical tests. We will also take into account if you have any other income that could assist you with driving lessons such as Personal Independence Payments or savings

You'll have to show that you have a history of looking for and staying in education, training or employment and be able to show your personal advisor a budget plan of how you will manage to buy a car and pay for the tax, MOT and insurance.

¹⁰ <https://mycovenant.org.uk/opportunities/aa-charitable-trust-theory-test-app>

Clothing

Our offer to you

We will help with clothing if your personal advisor assesses that you are in financial hardship. This will be a maximum of £150 in any one year. This is in addition to clothing to support employment and job interviews.

Your responsibilities and our advice

You will need to work out your budget with your personal advisor and they will need to buy the clothes with you, or for you as it will need to be made on their purchase card.

Birthday and celebration allowance

Our offer to you

Every care experienced young adult who retains active involvement with us will receive a birthday allowance of £50 and a celebration allowance of £50 each year until their 21st birthday. On your 21st birthday you will receive £150.

Your responsibilities and our advice

You need to meet regularly with your personal advisor and engage with your pathway plan to receive these payments

Discretionary payments

Our offer to you

This is when we might consider helping you to pay for things that improve your life experience.

Our expectation will be that as you enter the adult world you will be focusing on the things that will help you to become fully independent, such as

undertaking work or training, if you are not in full time education. We expect you to be open and share information which will help us to help you. Things that we could consider payments/contributions for if they are in your pathway plan are:

- Accessing education, training or employment
- Maintaining contact with important people
- Making use of leisure facilities
- Buying specialist services such as counselling
- Specialist equipment for employment or training
- A basic smartphone so you can manage your Universal Credit claim, apply for jobs and keep in touch with your personal advisor

If there are other things that you would like us to help with, discuss this with your personal advisor and put together a case for the service leader to consider. We want to help you wherever possible, but we also have to help you to be responsible and do the best for yourself.

Your responsibilities and our advice

We want to help you but we need to see you to do this generally, and we need you to be open and honest and share information which will help us to help you.

Your personal advisor will need to make a case for you, so make sure you are meeting them regularly and you are involved in your pathway plan.

Participation

We love to hear from you as what you think about our service helps us to make it better. We run an annual survey called *Feedback February* which rather surprisingly is carried out every February! Your personal advisor will send you the survey via WhatsApp and/or a paper copy through the post. Please take the time to fill it in as it really helps us to change things each year.

We have a monthly Care experienced voice group where you can meet the managers who run *Supporting your futures* and the director of children, families and education and put your views directly to them. You can also meet managers if you go along to our Connect activities if you don't fancy a formal meeting.

If you would be interested in getting involved in making services better for children and young people we care for please contact Adam Murphy to have a discussion about how to get involved.

✉ **adam.murphy@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**

☎ **07710 199915**



Compliments and complaints

If you are not happy with the service you have received from *Supporting your futures* or feel we could have done better, then you have the right to make a complaint. We would encourage you to talk to your personal advisor in the first instance and if you feel that you cannot do this then ask to speak to their team leader. If you are still not satisfied and wish to make a formal complaint please **download the complaints leaflet and form**.¹¹

Don't forget you can also use this form to tell us if you are really pleased with the support you have had from us – we all love a compliment!

You can also find a copy of our **complaints policy**¹² on our website.

11 www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Comment-compliment-or-complaint-leaflet-for-children-supported-by-social-care-1.pdf

12 www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/council-and-democracy/your-say/complaints/corporate-complaints-policy-2021



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL



You can request this information in large print, Braille, audio or in another language by calling 023 9283 9111

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