



# Croydon's Local Offer for our Care-Experienced Young People

2025-26



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# Welcome to the Local Offer for Care-Experienced Young People in Croydon

In Croydon, we want to ensure we offer the right support to you, our care-experienced young people, so that you can thrive as adults and lead successful lives.

It is our responsibility, as your corporate parent, to make sure you know what services are available to you, and what help you can expect to receive from us when you leave care. As a care-experienced member of the Croydon community, you should have access to every opportunity available to achieve your goals and aspirations. This document outlines what support is available to you. However, if there is support you require that you do not see listed here, then please reach out to us and we will do our best to help you.

Croydon's Local Offer is an important document to read and understand, as it outlines how we can help you in relation to:

- ✓ Understanding your rights and entitlements as a care-experienced young person
- ✓ Resources local to Croydon
- ✓ Money
- ✓ Education, employment and training
- ✓ Health and wellbeing
- ✓ Advocacy
- ✓ Keeping safe

We have worked in partnership with care-experienced young people to create the Local Offer, and will continue to listen to your views to make sure the services we provide are what you need.

# What is a Corporate Parent?

When you came into our care, Croydon Council became your corporate parent. Put simply, the term 'corporate parent' describes the collective responsibility of all council departments, elected members, and partner agencies (for example, health and education providers) to offer the best possible care for the children and young people cared for by the local authority (Croydon Council).

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced seven corporate parenting principles, which we must follow to support you. Those principles are as follows:

1. To act in your best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of all care leavers.
2. To take into account and encourage you to express your views, wishes and feelings.
3. To help care leavers gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority (Croydon Council) and its relevant partners (for example, health and education providers).
4. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for care leavers.
5. For care leavers to be safe, with stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
6. To prepare care leavers for independent living and adulthood.

# 16+ Young People's Service

Croydon Council's 16+ Young People's Service is made up of a number of individual teams. Each team has Social Workers (SW) and Personal Advisers (PA) supported by a Team Manager. If you are in care and under 18 years of age, you will be supported by a Social Worker. A Personal Adviser will be responsible for supporting you after you turn 18, unless it has been agreed that your Social Worker will continue to support you.



Your Personal Adviser will be introduced to you when you are 17 years old, so that you can get to know them before you turn 18. Your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will support you and provide you with assistance until you are at least 21 years old. If you want to continue to receive support after this age, or are in education, a Personal Adviser will potentially be able to support you up to the age of 25.

If you are between the ages of 21 and 25 our service may look a little different. Section 3 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 enables you to ask for support from us up until you turn 25, whether or not you are in education, employment or training.

If you decide you're happy for to say goodbye when you're 21, this does not mean that you are no longer eligible for support under the local offer, you can come back to us at any time before your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. All you have to do is contact us via our duty number (see 'Contact' section for details) and request a needs assessment.

Attempts will be made to contact you via telephone, email and letter each year until you turn 25, to remind you that we're still here to support you if you need it and to process a payment of £50.00 for your birthday. We will talk about your current circumstances, such as, but not limited to: education, employment, finance, health and accommodation. **It is important that you keep the 16+ Young People's Service updated with your contact details. You can do this using the contact details below.**

Once you turn 25, you will be closed to the 16+ service however; if you still have support needs a discussion will be had with you around what services are available.

# Contact

To reach the 16+ Young People's Service, keep a note of our contact details, as below:

1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Turnaround Centre

51-55 South End

Croydon CR0 1BF

020 8760 5519

[CEYPduty@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:CEYPduty@croydon.gov.uk)

Our duty hours are Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. If you require support in an emergency and it is outside of our duty hours, then please call the Emergency Duty Service via our Contact Centre on 020 8726 6400 and ask for the 'Out of Hours Social Work Team'.

## **CIC Participation Team – Care Leavers Forum**

Text "I'm Interested!" to: 07926084741

Or Email us at [CICC@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:CICC@croydon.gov.uk)

# Staying Close

Another avenue of support is the Staying Close initiative, a programme established by the UK's Department for Education (DfE) aimed at supporting young people leaving residential care to transition smoothly into independent living. It offers a package of accommodation and tailored support, including practical and emotional assistance, from trusted staff members, to help care-experienced young people up to the age of 25.

Should you be eligible for support from the Staying Close programme you will be referred by your Social Worker/Personal Adviser, and they can help in the following ways:

## Housing and Welfare Benefits

- ✓ Applying for social housing and sorting out home maintenance issues.
- ✓ Submitting benefit claims (such as applying for the Personal Independence Payment (PIP)) and challenging incorrect benefit decisions.
- ✓ Supporting you if you face eviction or have built up rent arrears.
- ✓ Sustaining a tenancy agreement and setting up utility bills in a new home.
- ✓ Linking in with benefit, homelessness and procurement teams in Croydon.
- ✓ Drop-in sessions to help with housing and benefit issues



## Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

- ✓ Helping you access support from Adult Social Care and local mental health services.
- ✓ Supporting you to access community mental health resources and services.
- ✓ Providing short-term direct work to help with some emotional wellbeing needs.
- ✓ Offering support to your Personal Adviser or Social Worker, so that they can better support you.
- ✓ Linking in with teams in Croydon such as adult safeguarding and mental health, as well as external organisations like South London and Maudsley (SLaM).

## **Independent Living Skills**

- ✓ Supporting you with budgeting, cooking, keeping a clean home, and staying safe in the community.
- ✓ Helping you apply for personal ID or setting up a bank account.

## **Music Production**

- ✓ Weekly 1:1 sessions are available to Learn about professional music studio, record your own tracks, level up your music production and be mentored by an actual music producer.

Contact the CIC – Participation Team (details below) to book

# Our Promise to You

In the 16+ Young People's Service, we take our responsibilities to you seriously. Consequently, we developed our Good Practice Promises with children in care and care-experienced young people by which you can hold us accountable. These promises are as follows:

We will demonstrate that we <b>hear</b> you by...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Listening to your views</li> <li>✓ Exploring ways to achieve what you want</li> </ul>
We will demonstrate that we <b>see</b> you by...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Visiting you when I say I will</li> <li>✓ Noticing how you are feeling</li> </ul>
We will demonstrate that we <b>care</b> about you by...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Thinking about your safety</li> <li>✓ Remembering important events for you, such as your birthday</li> </ul>
We will <b>support</b> you by...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Providing you with an allocated worker (unless you are Qualifying) and making sure you know who you can contact if they are not available. They will keep in touch and visit regularly</li> <li>✓ Talk to you about when you and your family can see or contact each other and support travel arrangements – if this is not possible, we will explain why</li> <li>✓ Keep siblings together, wherever possible</li> <li>✓ Review how well we keep our promises to you and ensure your Pathway Plan is regularly updated</li> <li>✓ Make sure that carers and allocated workers get the right training to understand the issues that affect children in care and care-experienced young people, so that you get the best care possible</li> <li>✓ Make sure you know how to complain and help to resolve complaints as quickly as possible</li> </ul>

# Social Workers and Personal Advisers

The most important role for your Social Worker and Personal Adviser is to be a trusted adult and a source of information, support and guidance.

Social Workers have legal responsibilities for children in care up to the age of 18 and they may continue working with you after you turn 18 where that is the right decision. Your Social Worker will develop your first Pathway Plan, complete assessments, and liaise with other services on your behalf.

Personal Advisers support young people from 17 through to 25, when care-experienced young people no longer need a Social Worker.

Your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will visit you regularly and provide you with their contact details. Together, you will review your Pathway Plan at least once every six months, or when a significant change has occurred in your life.

They will also:

- ✓ Help you to understand what support is available, so that you can make informed choices.
- ✓ Help you to develop links in the community where you live.
- ✓ Support you to develop the necessary skills to live independently.
- ✓ Support you to gain work experience, employment and/or training.
- ✓ Support you to understand your identity and background and help you develop positive and lasting relationships with family and friends.
- ✓ Encourage you to develop confidence and self-esteem, and the ability to voice your opinions and thoughts on key issues that affect you.

# What is a Pathway Plan?

At 15 ¾, your Social Worker will meet with you to start your Pathway Plan so that it is in place by your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. Your initial Pathway Plan will be reviewed by your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) at your Child Looked After (CLA) review.

Your first Pathway Plan will be based on – and will include – your care plan, which you had before turning 16, and your Personal Education Plan (PEP). It will be written with you by your Social Worker, and a Personal Adviser may support.

Every young person between the ages of 16 and 21 in care or leaving care has a Pathway Plan – this will also be relevant up to the age of 25, if you still want support and/or you are in education. It is important for you to engage with your Pathway Plan, as it is about you, your future and what needs to happen or what support you need to ensure you can reach your full potential.

Your Pathway Plan contains information on the best way to support you towards full independence and adulthood. It will talk about your:

- ✓ Education, employment and training
- ✓ Health
- ✓ Home
- ✓ Money
- ✓ Social Needs
- ✓ Relationships,
- ✓ Independent living skills
- ✓ Safety

Your plan will be written in a way that should meet your individual needs. It will capture your hopes for the future and include your views. It will be regularly reviewed with you, at least once every six months, or when a major change occurs in your life. The updates will ensure that we are on track in working together to achieve your goals.

We recognise that a 21-to-25-year-old is likely to be a lot more independent than someone younger. So, as you approach your 21st birthday, your Personal Adviser will sit down with you and work out the following:

- ✓ Whether you still need our support.
- ✓ If you do need support, what tasks you need support with.
- ✓ How we will keep in touch.
- ✓ How you can get back in touch with us if your circumstances change and you would like our support, even if you said no to it previously.

After this has been discussed, your Pathway Plan will be updated. If you would like support with a lot of things, you may require a full Pathway Plan. If you only want support with a couple of things – such as finding a job or accessing an activity or club – then a Pathway Plan focusing on specific areas can be completed.

# Your Care-Experienced Status

The term 'care experienced' describes young people who have lived in any form of care provided by a local authority, including residential care, foster care, or kinship care. This status acknowledges any length of time spent in a care setting, whether it was in the past or present. The term, is a legal status as set by the Government is used to identify individuals who may require additional support and understanding, especially in fields like education and employment. The level of support you receive will depend on your care-experienced status as set out below:

Care Experience Status	What this means for you?
<b>Eligible Young Person</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 16-17 years old</li> <li>✓ In care, such as foster care, a children's home, semi-independent accommodation, being held on remand, or even living at home</li> <li>✓ Have been in care for at least 13 weeks since your 14th birthday (this does not have to be all at the same time)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Listen to your wishes and feelings</li> <li>✓ Appoint you a Personal Adviser</li> <li>✓ Make an assessment of your needs</li> <li>✓ Prepare a Care Plan/Pathway Plan</li> <li>✓ Review your Care Plan/Pathway Plan</li> <li>✓ Pay for your accommodation</li> <li>✓ Pay for your subsistence</li> <li>✓ Visit you regularly</li> <li>✓ Support outlined age-appropriately in the <i>Local Offer for Care-Experienced Young People</i></li> </ul>
<b>Relevant Young Person</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 16-17 years old</li> <li>✓ Left care on or after your 16th birthday or are in the first six months of a planned return home</li> <li>✓ Have been in care for at least 13 weeks since your 14th birthday (this does not have to be all at the same time)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Listen to your wishes and feelings</li> <li>✓ Appoint you a Personal Adviser (PA)</li> <li>✓ Make an assessment of your needs</li> <li>✓ Prepare a Care Plan/Pathway Plan</li> <li>✓ Review your Care Plan/Pathway Plan</li> <li>✓ Find somewhere for you to live</li> <li>✓ Pay for your accommodation</li> <li>✓ Pay for your subsistence</li> <li>✓ Visit you regularly</li> <li>✓ Keep in touch</li> <li>✓ Support outlined age-appropriately in the <i>Local Offer for Care-Experienced Young People</i></li> </ul>
<b>Former Relevant Young Adult (18-21)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 18-21 years old and have previously been</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Listen to your wishes and feelings</li> <li>✓ Keep in touch</li> </ul>

a relevant or an eligible child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Appoint you a Personal Adviser (PA)</li> <li>✓ Make an assessment of your needs</li> <li>✓ Review your Pathway Plan every six months</li> <li>✓ Provide or pay for accommodation during college or university holidays</li> <li>✓ Find you accommodation</li> <li>✓ Provide financial support if welfare or educational needs require it</li> <li>✓ Provide Higher Education Bursary (HEB) if you are in higher education</li> <li>✓ Discuss future support post-21</li> <li>✓ Provide information of rights and entitlements up to the age of 25</li> <li>✓ Support outlined age-appropriately in the <i>Local Offer for Care-Experienced Young People</i></li> </ul>
<b>Former Relevant Young Adult (21+)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 21-25 years old, have previously been a relevant or eligible child, and have requested support from children's service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Keep in touch once a year</li> <li>✓ Provide information of rights and entitlements up to the age of 25</li> <li>✓ Complete a post-21 assessment to identify needs</li> <li>✓ Provide a Personal Adviser for as long as you require support for assessed needs</li> <li>✓ Prepare a full or partial Pathway Plan</li> <li>✓ Review Pathway Plan, if appropriate</li> <li>✓ Support up to 25th birthday if assessed needs can be supported by our service</li> <li>✓ Support outlined age-appropriately in the <i>Local Offer for Care-Experienced Young People</i></li> </ul>
<b>Qualifying Young Adult</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Aged 18-21 (or 25 if still in full-time education) and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ were in care for less than 13 weeks since your 14th birthday (including</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Though you are not entitled to a Personal Adviser or Pathway Plan, you can request advice and assistance from the local authority as well as a needs assessment to look at your circumstances to identify what</li> </ul>

<p>time on or after your 16th birthday), or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ left care aged 16-17 and returned to your family home in a planned move for six months or more before turning 18, or</li><li>○ were in care before being cared for under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO)</li></ul>	<p>support you require</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ You may not be entitled to support from the full Local Offer for Care-Experienced Young People, but this will be established during the needs assessment completed by a Social Worker/Personal Adviser</li></ul>
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# Getting Involved

We want all our care-experienced young people to be active members of society. As your corporate parent, we are here to offer you advice and support in achieving this goal. An important part of staying mentally and physically healthy is by enjoying your hobbies and interests. Some of the services available to help you stay active and engaged include:

## Free Gym Membership

As a care-experienced young person with Eligible, Relevant or Former Relevant status, we offer you access to a free Pure Gym membership. Your initial membership will be for six months which can be extended for a further six months if you evidence that you have accessed this the gym a minimum of twice a week for the first six months. If this is something you are interested in, please speak with your Social Worker or Personal Adviser and ensure it is included in your Pathway Plan.



If you are no longer supported by the 16+ Young People's Service but have not yet turned 25, you will still be entitled to this offer. You will be provided with a gym membership for one year with the option to extend it for a further year if you provide evidence that your gym membership is being actively used – again, at least twice a week. You will be contacted close to your birthday to explore this offer.

We can make an agreement through your Pathway Plan about how we support you to get involved in sporting activities or other leisure activities near where you live. Your Personal Adviser will have details of clubs, community groups and activities, which may interest you.

## Travel for London (TfL) Care Leaver's Oyster Card



As a care-experienced young person, you are entitled to a TfL Care Leaver's Oyster Card which will provide you with a 50% discount on buses and trams. To access this your Social Worker or Personal Adviser needs to provide your information to TfL, so please discuss this with them.

## Your Right to Vote in Elections

All democratic countries have rules about who has the right to vote in elections. Rules are usually based on nationality, age and residence. When you turn 18 years old, if you are eligible to vote, you must register to do so. The electoral register (sometimes called the 'electoral roll') lists the names and addresses of everyone who's registered to vote in local and general elections. You will need photo ID such as a passport or driving license to be able to vote in elections. Your Personal Adviser can assist you to enrol on the electoral register, if you would like support.

## CIC Participation Team – Care Leavers' Forum

We want to hear your views so we can improve the lives of care-experienced young people. The Children in Care Council is a collective of young people who are all cared for by Croydon. The purpose of the forum is to empower children in care and care-experienced young people with the confidence to influence policy change, shape the service and have their voice heard. The forum provides young people with the chance to identify common issues with the care they receive or have received and make proposals for improvements. All proposals are presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel at Croydon Council, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

Please find their contact details under the 'contact' section.

## Legacy Youth Zone

Legacy Youth Zone is open seven days a week and offers over 20 activities to discover and enjoy. If you're aged between 8-19 (or even up to 25 if you have an additional need) then you can access the centre for just £5 per year, and only 50p per visit. We will pay for all children in care and care-experienced young people to attend.



Address: Legacy Youth Zone, 125

Whitehorse Rd, Croydon, CR0 2LG

Contact: 020 3976 9990 / [reception@legacyyouthzone.org](mailto:reception@legacyyouthzone.org)

## Esther Outreach

We're proud to run a support group that brings children in care and care-experienced young people together in a warm, friendly, safe environment where they can develop independent skills. Esther Outreach is a voluntarily run initiative working in partnership with Croydon Council that provides practical support, advice and advocacy to you. The practical support covers everything from assistance in finding work all the way through to preparing meals. Past workshops have covered money management, drug awareness, mental health, cooking on a budget and knowing your rights. The workshops are provided for all young people aged 16-25. Every third Wednesday of the month, doors open at 6:30pm and the workshop commences at 7pm sharp – a meal is also provided.



Address: Cherryhub, St James Road, (Entrance on Sydenham Rd) Croydon, CR0 2BY

Contact: 07847844269/07925642945 / [Estheroutreach@wwmf.org](mailto:Estheroutreach@wwmf.org) or [Cheryl.gregory1@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:Cheryl.gregory1@croydon.gov.uk)

## Department for Education (DfE) Support Hub

While we know there are many brilliant support programmes and opportunities in place nationally, we understand that you can have difficulty navigating and understanding the options open to you and this can significantly hinder your journey into independence. Consequently, the Department for Education (DfE) created a website bringing together the relevant information for you, your carers and the professionals working with you, to make you aware of, and help you understand, the services and support available. Explore this exciting new resource at <https://www.support-for-care-leavers.education.gov.uk/en/home>.

## The King's Trust

The King's Trust offers a number of opportunities for care-experienced young people with support available for those aged 16-30. Support includes a 'Step Into Adulthood' programme which offers help around managing money and bills, cooking, networking with professionals, CV writing, accessing community support groups and training and employment opportunities. Speak to your personal advisor who can support you to access the service or search for them yourself online.

Remember: we can help you to get involved with the Children in Care Council, Legacy Youth Zone, Esther Outreach, The King's Trust or any other local groups which you might be interested in attending, so please don't be shy about asking!

# Croydon Cares App

The Croydon Cares app is a dedicated digital platform designed to support care-experienced young people in Croydon, like you, as you transition to independent living. Co-designed with care-experienced individuals, the app offers a range of features tailored to meet your needs:

Key Features include:

- ✓ Comprehensive Information: Access vital advice on money management, housing options, health, wellbeing, education, training, and employment opportunities
- ✓ Smart Budgeting Tools: Utilise tools to manage finances effectively, aiding in the development of financial independence
- ✓ Employment Connections: Find links to local job opportunities and professional networks to support career development
- ✓ Community Engagement: Stay informed about local events, discounts, and offers, and connect with the community through messaging, surveys, and posts
- ✓ User-Friendly Design: Enjoy an intuitive interface that makes navigation and access to resources straightforward



The app is available for free download on both the App Store and Google Play. Scan this QR code to get it on your phone:



Watch this video to hear directly from our young people on what the app means to them:

<https://youtu.be/vrqmXoNlfrk?feature=shared>.

# The Care Leaver Covenant



The Care Leaver Covenant is a government initiative established in 2018 to support young people leaving care with exclusive opportunities in education, work, wellbeing, money and your home. Organisations across the private, public and voluntary sectors join the Care Leaver Covenant network by making 'offers' to support care leavers aged 16-25, helping you to take your next steps.

Offers might include:

- ✓ One-to-one mentoring
- ✓ Work experience placements, internships, apprenticeships and jobs
- ✓ Access to sport, leisure and cultural activities and discounted retail offers
- ✓ Financial guidance
- ✓ And much more...

To explore the available offers, you can go to <https://mycovenant.org.uk/> and start browsing. If you don't feel confident accessing any of the offers independently, then please approach your Personal Adviser or Social Worker for some support. You can also keep up to date with opportunities by signing up to Connects – any care-experienced young person who does will also be automatically entered into the Covenant's giveaways!

Contact: 0800 077 3557 / [info@mycovenant.org.uk](mailto:info@mycovenant.org.uk)

# Money Matters, Official Documents and Birthdays

Your Personal Adviser will help you to manage your money and understand any benefits you may be entitled to. In addition, your Personal Adviser will make sure that there is someone to support you in the event of a crisis or when things do not go according to plan. Although you may still receive some financial support once you are 18, you will be expected to find your own income through work, education grants and, if eligible, benefits. Before we consider what support you will receive and what your entitlements are, let's look at something that we expect *you* to do:



## The Money House

The Money House is a training course offered by an organisation called MyBNK that will provide you with all the information you could ever need about your money. When you turn 16, you will be booked on the course by your Social Worker. If – for whatever reason – you don't attend the course prior to your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, then your Personal Adviser will book you. We wouldn't want you to miss out! Please note, however,

that there will be an expectation that you attend the course, to help you live independently and evidence that you can do so successfully.

## Citizen Advice Bureau

The Citizen Advice Bureau offers free, impartial, and confidential advice on a wide range of issues including debt, housing, employment, consumer rights, benefits, and immigration, helping people understand their rights and find solutions to their problems. They provide information, guidance, and support to help individuals manage their problems effectively.

## Step Change

StepChange is a leading UK debt advice charity that provides free, impartial, and confidential help for people struggling with debt. They offer various debt solutions and personalized advice to help you create a budget, find the right solution for your situation, and get your finances back on track. You can access their services online or by contacting them for free advice over the phone.

## Turn2us

Turn2us provide online resources on benefits and finances, support with applying for grants, and advice on where to get help if you are experiencing a financial crisis. You can use the Turn2us benefit calculator and the Turn2us grant search on the Family Fund website.

## Social Worker/Personal Adviser Support Offer

Of course, with an allocated Social Worker and/or Personal Adviser, you will also be able to access a range of support, as follows:

- ✓ Help you to open your own bank account and show you how to manage your money, so that you avoid getting into debt.
- ✓ Help you to get identification documents (important information about you) such as a passport, birth certificate and provisional driving license.
- ✓ Help you to get your National Insurance (NI) number, which you will need for employment. Your worker might write a letter or help you fill in a form to apply for it before you leave care. Please note that you must have the right to work in the UK to obtain an NI number.
- ✓ Help you to approach the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) for advice relating to employment, benefits and more.
- ✓ Support in making an application for benefits. For example, you are allowed to claim Universal Credit (UC) up to one month before you turn 18. However, in the event that you are unable to claim prior to your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, you will be supported with financial assistance for up to five weeks after your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- ✓ Help you if you are unable to claim benefits by supporting you financially for a longer period of time while your entitlements are being established, as set out in your Pathway Plan. Typically, this form of support is reserved for you if you have no recourse to public funds (NRPF).
- ✓ Help you to purchase furniture and white goods, such as washing machines and fridges, when you are setting up your home through a Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA)
- ✓ Support you to apply for a 'medical exemption certificate' which entitles you to free or partially financed prescriptions, dental work and vision tests.

## Council Tax

Council Tax is a payment made to your local authority to help pay for local services, such as waste collection, maintaining green areas and funding community services. Croydon Council offers exemption from paying Council Tax for care-experienced young people up to the age of 25. Care-experienced young people who are living *outside* of Croydon remain responsible for all, or part of their Council Tax bill, though the 16+ Young People's Service will pay the bill on your behalf.

## **Birthdays**

Birthdays are an important milestone. If you are actively engaged with the 16+ Young People's Service, you will receive either a gift or equivalent payment to the value of:

- ✓ £100.00 on your 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> birthday
- ✓ £50.00 on your 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> birthday

If you are aged between 21-25 and do not have an allocated Personal Adviser, you will be contacted by the 16+ Young People's Service around the time of your birthday, each year, as part of our 'checking in', and your birthday payment will be processed. It is important you keep us up to date with your contact number, email address and bank details, to ensure this can happen without delay.

## Financial support available to you

For ease of reference, the table below clearly sets out the financial support available to you if your care experience status is Eligible, Relevant or Former Relevant. The financial support within this offer is effective from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025.

Allowance	Value	Eligibility
<b>Living Costs (Subsistence)</b>	£71.70 per week reduced to £49.18 for those who do not have status in the UK (Appeal Rights Exhausted (ARE))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Former Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 18 – 25<sup>th</sup> birthday</li> <li>✓ Subject to employment, education and training (EET) and immigration status</li> <li>✓ Must be engaged with Pathway Plan process, with details of financial need appropriately recorded</li> <li>✓ Paid while waiting for initial Universal Credit (UC) payment (if necessary)</li> </ul>
<b>Home</b>	<p>Costs of where you live met in full up to the age of 18</p> <p>Deposit and rent in advance value up to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate</p> <p>Rent Guarantor Scheme for university accommodation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 18 – 25<sup>th</sup> birthday</li> <li>✓ Deposit and rent in advance will only be paid once, and is based on an assessment of need</li> </ul>
<b>Council Tax</b>	Full cost met – balance paid after any local exemptions applied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Former Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 18 – 25<sup>th</sup> birthday</li> </ul>
<b>Wi-Fi</b>	£5.75 contribution per week for 52 weeks a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 18 – 25<sup>th</sup> birthday</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ This is not available if Wi-Fi is provided where you live at no cost to yourself</li> <li>✓ Costs must be evidenced on a bill</li> <li>✓ Must be engaged with Pathway Plan process, with details of financial need appropriately recorded</li> </ul>
<b>Health</b>	£100.00 towards dental or optometry costs including frames for glasses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Former Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 18 – 25<sup>th</sup> birthday</li> <li>✓ Must be engaged with Pathway Plan process, with details of financial need appropriately recorded</li> </ul>
<b>Birthday</b>	<p>£100.00 on your 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> birthday</p> <p>£50.00 on your 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> birthday</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 18 – 25<sup>th</sup> birthday</li> <li>✓ You will be contacted by the duty team on/around your birthday each year if you are no longer open to the 16+ service, to receive this payment you must engage with this conversation</li> </ul>
<b>Festivals</b>	£100.00 per year towards the celebration of a festival of your choice (e.g. Christmas, Eid, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Eligible or Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 16 – 18<sup>th</sup> birthday</li> </ul>
<b>Clothing</b>	£200.00 initial allowance after coming into care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Eligible or Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 16 – 18<sup>th</sup> birthday</li> </ul>

	£10.00 per week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Weekly allowance to be paid in two annual payments of £240.00 – one in summer and one in winter</li> <li>✓ Paid directly to you unless you are leaving a foster home within six months</li> </ul>
<b>Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA)</b>	<p>The full SUHA amount is: £3000 for those who turned 18 after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and £2000 for those who turned 18 before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and is broken down as follows:</p> <p>£1700 or £2700 to purchase items</p> <p>£100.00 towards insurance/extended warranties for white goods (e.g. washing machine, tumble dryer, etc.) and larger items, if you wish</p> <p>£100.00 towards removal costs</p> <p>£100.00 towards the fitting of appliances in permanent/social housing</p> <p>TV license covered for first year in permanent/social housing</p> <p>Contents insurance for first</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Former Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 18 – 25<sup>th</sup> birthday</li> <li>✓ Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA) can be requested as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 40% while living in temporary accommodation (£720.00 or £1,120.00, depending on when you turned 18)</li> <li>○ 60% once you move into permanent/social housing</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ Removal costs will only be funded for moving to first temporary accommodation and then from temporary accommodation to permanent/social housing</li> <li>✓ Must be engaged with Pathway Plan process,</li> </ul>

	year in permanent/social housing	with details of financial need appropriately recorded
<b>Identity Documents</b>	Birth certificate x1  Passport application x1 and/or one renewal  Required immigration document x1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Eligible, Relevant, Former Relevant and Qualifying</li> <li>✓ Aged 16 – 21<sup>st</sup> birthday</li> <li>✓ Passport renewal only available until your 21st birthday</li> <li>✓ Must be engaged with Pathway Plan process, with details of financial need appropriately recorded</li> <li>✓ Qualifying young people will only be eligible for this support if it is identified in a needs assessment</li> </ul>
<b>Driving</b>	Provisional license x1  Theory test attempt x1  Practical test attempt x1  Driving lessons (upon evidence that you have paid for an initial 10 lessons) x10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 17 – 21<sup>st</sup> birthday</li> <li>✓ Must be in education or work, or require a driving licence to secure either education or a job</li> <li>✓ Must be engaged with Pathway Plan process, with details of financial need appropriately recorded</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b>	£100.00 for clothes ahead of your first interview or starting your first job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 16 – 25<sup>th</sup> birthday</li> <li>✓ Clothing support is a</li> </ul>

	<p>Four weeks' travel up to a value of £25.00 per week for your first month of work when ending a Universal Credit (UC) claim</p>	<p>one-time offer and cannot be paid for multiple interviews or jobs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Must be engaged with Pathway Plan process, with details of financial need appropriately recorded</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<p>Up to £25.00 per week towards the cost of travelling to attend education provision</p> <p>£2,400.00 Higher Education Bursary (HEB) for those attending higher education (broken down as £800 per year for a three-year course and £600.00 per year for a four-year course). Paid between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> term upon evidence that you have completed term 1 and remain engaged with the course.</p> <p>Graduation grant of up to £500.00 to help cover the costs of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Robe/gown hire</li> <li>✓ Tickets for up to four people to attend your graduation ceremony</li> <li>✓ Photo package</li> </ul> <p>Relocation grant of up to £500.00 upon graduation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 16 – 25<sup>th</sup> birthday</li> <li>✓ Must be engaged with Pathway Plan process, with details of financial need appropriately recorded</li> <li>✓ 90%+ attendance on course must be evidenced</li> <li>✓ Stationery, travel, laptop and graduation support available only if there is no associated support available from your education provider</li> </ul>

	<p>Return travel fares x3 per year for you to travel from a UK university to family members and/or former foster carers who also live within the UK</p> <p>Stationery grant of up to £300.00 for your first year of study and up to £100.00 per subsequent year of study</p> <p>£300.00 one-off payment towards a laptop</p>	
<b>Family and Friends</b>	<p>Off-peak return travel tickets x3 per year to allow you to visit family and/or previous foster carers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 16 – 19<sup>th</sup> birthday</li> <li>✓ Must be engaged with Pathway Plan process, with details of financial need appropriately recorded</li> </ul>
<b>Young People who are Parents</b>	<p>Additional Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA) of £300.00 for those who are parents and have primary care of their child.</p> <p>£300 payment for those with no recourse to public funds which can be claimed up to 11 weeks before your babies due date and up to 6 months after birth.</p> <p>Post-birth payment of £200.00 for second child only.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 16 – 25<sup>th</sup> birthday</li> <li>✓ Must be engaged with Pathway Plan process, with details of financial need appropriately recorded</li> <li>✓ Upon receipt of permanent social housing post June 2025</li> <li>✓ To be used on furnishings for a child and/or child's bedroom</li> </ul>

<b>Savings</b>	<p>£15.00 per week</p> <p>You will be encouraged to use your savings wisely when you receive them – it would be a really good idea to use them to start your journey to driving, or putting away towards your British Citizenship if this is relevant to you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Eligible or Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 16 – 18<sup>th</sup> birthday</li> <li>✓ Please speak with your Social Worker about the terms of the separate savings policy for more information</li> </ul> <p>✓</p>
<b>Young People in Custody</b>	<p>£10.00 per week pocket money and £5.00 per week clothing allowance for those under 18</p> <p>£5.00 per week subsistence money for those aged 18 or over</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 16 – 21<sup>st</sup> birthday</li> <li>✓ To be paid by your Social Worker or Personal Adviser via postal order to HM Prison Service</li> <li>✓ Must be engaged with Pathway Plan process, with details of financial need appropriately recorded</li> </ul>
<b>Emergency Support</b>	<p>Referral to a local food bank in the first instance</p> <p>Access to food parcels x2 every six months from the Turnaround Centre to the value of £15.00 per parcel, on completion of a financial assessment</p> <p>Access to utility support payments x2 every six months to the value of £15.00, on completion of a financial</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Former Relevant</li> <li>✓ Aged 16 – 25<sup>th</sup> birthday</li> <li>✓ Subject to full financial assessment</li> </ul>

	<p><b>assessment</b></p> <p>Additional food parcel/utility payment to the value of £10.00 added to the above for those young people who have children</p>	
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# Moving Home or Accommodation

When you turn 16, your Social Worker will begin discussions with you about your housing options for after you turn 18, as part of your Pathway Plan. There will be reviews of your housing options until an offer of accommodation is made for when you reach adulthood.

Your Social Worker and Personal Adviser will visit you at home, as they have a duty to do so as your corporate parent. Discussion and decisions about the plan for where you live shall all be agreed in your Pathway Plan.

In the 16+ Young People's Service, we will work in conjunction with housing services to assess your needs and agree the most suitable type of accommodation and support for you. Sometimes you may disagree with your Social Worker or Personal Adviser about where it is best for you to live, but it is important to remember that, as your corporate parent, we want to take decisions that are in your best interest. If there are any worries that you may struggle to manage independent living, individual packages of support can be provided to help you, including:

- ✓ Living in supported accommodation after you turn 18 until you are more able to manage the demands of living on your own.
- ✓ Outreach support packages focusing on supporting you with needs around your health, education, work and self-care skills.
- ✓ Floating support provided by CAYSH (Croydon Association for Young Single Homeless), which is a dedicated service to help young people to achieve and sustain independent living in safe and secure accommodation. You will set goals and then construct a manageable plan of support, which feeds into your Pathway Plan.
- ✓ Communicating with Adult Social Care and other departments within Croydon Council where your needs might be better met to provide appropriate adult accommodation and support services.
- ✓ If you wish to live in a borough other than Croydon, we try to work in conjunction with other local authority housing departments to advocate on your behalf.



Some of the types of accommodation available to care-experienced young people in Croydon include:

Home/Accommodation	Description	Details
<b>Foster Care</b>	<p>Foster Carers can provide care for up to three children/young people in their own home. They will be paid and supported by Croydon Council or an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA).</p>	<p>Most care-experienced young people in Croydon will have lived with foster carers. Because foster carers are only approved to support you until you turn 18, the arrangements for staying with your foster carers <i>after</i> this age needs to be managed through a 'Staying Put' arrangement (see below).</p>
<b>Staying Put</b>	<p>Foster carers who continue to support care-experienced young people aged 18 or over.</p>	<p>Staying Put arrangements are funded through an agreement for housing allowances to be paid to your Staying Put foster carer.</p> <p>You can stay with your foster carer until you are 21 years old, or beyond, to enable you to complete an existing further education course.</p> <p>You can remain on a staying put arrangements if you are attending university, only until you are 21 years old when alternative accommodation needs to be sought.</p> <p>Should you wish, you can access vacant holiday allowance to return to your staying put provider post 21 during the holidays of university.</p>

		<p>A private arrangement can be made between you and your staying put provider post 21 but this will not be funded by the Local Authority.</p> <p>This will not affect your long-term plans for finding permanent/social housing.</p>
<b>Shared Lives</b>	<p>A national scheme that allows people in the UK to become carers to adults with learning disabilities, physical disabilities or mental health needs.</p>	<p>The scheme can support children and young people from the age of 16 onwards. Whatever a young person's support needs, Shared Lives provides an ideal way to maintain independence while enjoying support.</p>
<b>Supported Accommodation</b>	<p>This may be a flat, shared house or a private house with additional support provided to help you manage day-to-day arrangements.</p>	<p>Your Personal Adviser or Social Worker will discuss what additional support is available and help to tailor this to your needs. These arrangements provide less direct care and offer you practical support towards independent living.</p>
<b>Supported Lodgings</b>	<p>This is when you live with a single person, a couple, and/or with other young people or children.</p>	<p>This form of support helps you develop independence through support from those you are living with, but you will be expected to make a financial contribution.</p>
<b>The National House Project</b>	<p>By working with other young people leaving care, you make friends, get a house to call your home, and take ownership and control over your life. You have joint ownership of your Local</p>	<p>You will meet as a group every week and work out between you how you want your project to run. You will do new things, learn how to look after a home get ready for moving in. You</p>

	<p>House Project (LHP) with staff.</p>	<p>will be involved in making decisions about leaving care, where you will live and what you want your home to be like.</p> <p>You will be with other young people who are getting ready to leave care. There will be about 10 of you and you will become a team. You will be supported by three members of staff and young people who are already part of your LHP.</p> <p>This project is not yet live, information on how you can access it will be available in due course – please speak with your social worker and/or personal advisor if you are interested.</p>
<p><b>Private-rented Accommodation</b></p>	<p>This may be a flat or room in a larger house, where the accommodation is owned by a landlord. You will be responsible for managing your own tenancy.</p>	<p>Your Personal Adviser will be able to discuss with Croydon Council's housing team if private-rented accommodation is the best option for you.</p>
<p><b>Permanent/Social Housing</b></p>	<p>This is your offer of permanent social housing through a local authority or housing association (HA).</p>	<p>Your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will support you to be added to the local authority Housing Register, so long as you meet the criteria, by the time you turn 18. The wait for permanent housing will take years; however, this form</p>

of accommodation is the most stable on offer.

# Education, Employment and Training

Although education is essential for you to gain the qualifications you need when looking for employment, college and university are not the only options. Apprenticeships and training schemes can be a good way to learn practical work skills and earn as well. Volunteering is another excellent option to help you gain work skills and ensure you have that all-important work experience that employers want. We will support your education and training needs, and detail these in your Pathway Plan. Planning will build upon information that is already included in your Personal Education Plan (PEP). Some young people will not be able to access formal education or training for a range of reasons, but may be working towards these opportunities in other ways. For example, if English isn't your first language, you may undertake English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes or perhaps volunteer.

Whatever your situation, there are opportunities and support available, including:

## Croydon Works

Croydon Works is Croydon Council's employment and training hub. The service is specifically designed to support Croydon residents and offer dedicated support towards obtaining sustainable employment. They work closely with a number of partners to provide a wide range of pathways into employment, including:



- ✓ Access to vacancies across a vast number of organisations in Croydon and surrounding areas
- ✓ Sector-specific training
- ✓ Apprenticeships
- ✓ Work experience placements
- ✓ Careers advice, CV advice and interview preparation
- ✓ Access to a wide range of employability services in Croydon

Address: Croydon Clocktower, Katharine Street, Croydon, CR9 1ET

Contact: 0208 604 7471 / [croydon-works@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:croydon-works@croydon.gov.uk)

## Steps to Success

Steps to Success is a small team based within the 16+ Young People's Service that offers advice and practical support to you with accessing education, employment and training. The team works, primarily, with those who are not in education, employment and training who are aged between 16 and 21, though support is available for you up to your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday as well. Help includes, but is not limited to: writing or updating a CV; applying for jobs and apprenticeships; and support with interview preparation. Steps to Success offers a drop-in service every Wednesday afternoon from 2-4pm at the Turnaround Centre where the 16+ Young People's Service is based.

We are excited to announce that Steps to Success will also be posting regular work and training opportunities to the Croydon Cares app.

## Care Leaver Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are a combination of learning/study and employment, often with a focus of four days in a workplace and one day in college. At the end of an apprenticeship, you might receive a qualification (e.g. NVQ in Project Management) and even a formal offer of employment.

As a care-experienced apprentice, you could be entitled to extra support during your apprenticeship. If you started your apprenticeship before 1 August 2023, you could be eligible for a £1,000 bursary. If you started your apprenticeship on or after 1 August 2023, you could be eligible for a £3,000 bursary. To receive the care leavers' bursary, you must be: under 25 when you started your apprenticeship, and either an eligible child, a relevant child or a former relevant child.

There are different levels of apprenticeship with different requirements for existing qualifications, but to become an apprentice you have to be:

- ✓ 16 or over
- ✓ Living in England
- ✓ Not in full-time education

## Jobcentre Plus

If you are in receipt of work-related benefits such as Universal Credit (UC) you will be supported to find work and, if relevant, specific training through your local Jobcentre Plus. You must ensure that you attend regular meetings with your Work Coach and advise them of any changes in your circumstances. Your Personal Adviser can support you with some elements of this too.

# University

Attending university is a massive achievement and we will continue to support you through higher education. Support will include:

- ✓ Your Personal Adviser helping you to move to your university accommodation
- ✓ Linking you with specialist support services at the university for care-experienced students
- ✓ Helping with applications for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), where appropriate
- ✓ Your Personal Adviser will continue to visit and support you at university
- ✓ Your Personal Adviser will proudly attend your graduation ceremony to celebrate your achievement



## Money Matters

You will receive a financial support package from us as well, which we have discussed in the 'Money Matters, Official Documents and Birthdays' section of this Local Offer. However, to briefly recap, you can expect:

- ✓ Up to £25.00 per week towards the cost of travelling to attend education provision
- ✓ £2,400.00 Higher Education Bursary (HEB) (broken down as £750.00 per year for a three-year course and £600.00 per year for a four-year course)
- ✓ Graduation grant of up to £500.00 to help cover the costs of:
  - Robe/gown hire
  - Tickets for up to four people to attend your graduation ceremony
  - Photo package
- ✓ Relocation grant of up to £500.00 upon graduation
- ✓ Return travel fares x3 per year for you to travel from a UK university to family members and/or former foster carers who also live within the UK
- ✓ Stationery grant of up to £300.00 for your first year of study and up to £100.00 per subsequent year of study
- ✓ £300.00 one-off payment towards a laptop

## Accommodation

It is becoming increasingly common for universities to offer student halls accommodation for 52 weeks a year throughout the entire course for care-experienced students. However, as your corporate parent, we have a duty to provide vacation accommodation for you during longer holiday breaks, such as during the summer and at Christmas – if you require it. If you do require this support, our offer is detailed as follows:

- ✓ Financial support towards the cost of vacation accommodation for up to 22 weeks per year (up to the level of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) in the area of your choice in the UK).
- ✓ Accommodation can also be made available to those who do not have an alternative arrangement during vacation periods, but evidence of financial responsibility – such as a tenancy agreement – is required.

We understand that everyone going to university will have their own unique accommodation needs and, where possible, if a Staying Put arrangement with your foster carer can be made, the 16+ Young People's Service will fully explore this possibility.

Care-experienced young people applying to and undertaking higher education courses will be required to apply for all available universal student funding (i.e. maintenance loans, tuition fee loans, university bursaries). These loans, grants and bursaries should be used by as your main source of income throughout your course of study to finance tuition fees, accommodation and living expenses.

# Health and Relationships

Being healthy is as much about your emotional wellbeing as it is about your physical health. It's important to regularly exercise, eat a balanced diet and maintain your hygiene. It's equally important to talk to people if you're struggling with anything or feeling down so that we can identify the right support for you. For example, being part of a social group through sport, music or study can help

your mental health. Your Pathway Plan will also detail any health needs that you may have, but remember to keep your Personal Adviser updated about your health if anything changes – especially if you need their support.



There are lots of services and support options for you to access and we will also do our very best to keep you safe. We will support and encourage you to be healthy by:

- ✓ Encouraging you to speak up if you are struggling with anything so we can get you the support you need
- ✓ Providing a Health Passport as you reach the age of 18 years – this is a summary of all your health information
- ✓ Helping you to register at a doctor's surgery, dentist and optician
- ✓ Providing advice on healthy living, which will include everything from safe sex through to eating a balanced diet
- ✓ Offering free gym membership
- ✓ Offering free prescriptions to those who are not already exempt
- ✓ Providing £100.00 towards dental or optometry costs including frames for glasses

## Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

Seeking help is the first step towards improving your mental health and wellbeing, but it can be daunting. Do not try to handle things on your own if you are struggling to cope – it is always okay to ask for help.

Common concerns about wellbeing can often include the following:

- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Low mood
- ✓ Stress
- ✓ General difficulties with eating
- ✓ Thoughts of not wanting to live
- ✓ Difficulties associated with neurodivergent conditions (e.g. ADHD/ASD)
- ✓ Avoidant behaviors
- ✓ Social, emotional and behavioral difficulties

These are just some of the signs that might tell you something about your emotional health. However, it's important to note that this is not an exhaustive list, and your experience needs to be understood within its proper context. Just remember: we are here to support you!

If you do have concerns about your emotional wellbeing, then we encourage you to speak to your Social Worker and/or Personal Adviser and GP about supporting you to access the right service to support you. Your allocated worker might suggest a referral to an Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health (EWMH) practitioner within the Staying Close team, that we spoke about earlier in this Local Offer. EWMH practitioners can offer the following:

- ✓ Consultations with your allocated worker to explore different avenues of support for you
- ✓ Up to eight sessions with you and/or significant others focusing on aspects of your relationships and emotional wellbeing that are important to you
- ✓ Support you and your allocated worker with referrals to other relevant services as needed, (e.g. CAMHS, adult mental health services, Croydon Talking Therapies, and counselling services (Off the Record/Croydon Drop-in), etc.)

Some other services and resources that you may find helpful include:

- ✓ CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably) – available at: [www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)
- ✓ Centre of Change – available at: <https://centreofchange.org.uk/>
- ✓ Croydon BME Forum – available at: <https://www.cbmeforum.org/>
- ✓ Croydon Talking Therapies – available at: <https://croydontalkingtherapies.nhs.uk/>
- ✓ Croydon Drop In – available at: <https://croydondropin.org.uk/>
- ✓ Kooth – available at: <https://www.kooth.com/>
- ✓ Mind in Croydon – available at: <https://www.mindincroydon.org.uk/>

- ✓ National Autistic Society – available at: <https://www.autism.org.uk/>

### Off the Record - Counselling

Off the Record provides free, independent and professional counselling for 14-25 year-olds in Croydon, Merton and Sutton, and offers tailored refugee support as well. To discuss the possibility of making a referral for support from them, speak to your Social Worker or Personal Adviser.



Address: 72 Queens Road, Croydon CR0 2PR

Contact: 020 8251 0251 / [croydon@talkoffthercord.org](mailto:croydon@talkoffthercord.org)

### Prescriptions, Eye Tests and Dental Appointments

If you are in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) or other benefits you will be entitled to free prescriptions, eye tests and dental check-ups. If you are not eligible for benefits due to your immigration status, your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will support you to access free prescriptions until your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. Additionally, you can claim £100.00 towards dental or optometry costs including frames for glasses.

### Sexual Health Services

As with any other health matter, your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will be happy to offer their support to you accessing sexual health services. To seek support around sexual health you can book an appointment online at [www.croydonsexualhealth.nhs.uk](http://www.croydonsexualhealth.nhs.uk) or arrange to have sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing kits delivered discreetly to your home address. Sexual health support is available from the Croydon Sexual Health Centre, which also runs its own Condom Distribution Scheme called the C Card, allowing you to pick up free condoms from a number of locations in the borough. Simply head on over to [www.gettingiton.org.uk](http://www.gettingiton.org.uk) for further information.

Address: Croydon Sexual Health Centre, Croydon University Hospital, 530 London Road, Croydon CR7 7YE

Contact: 020 8401 3766

### Change Grow Live (CGL) - Drug and Alcohol Support

If you need support around drug or alcohol use, you can discuss it with your Personal Adviser who

will support you, non-judgementally. Change Grow Live (CGL) is a national charity that offers support with substance misuse with many of its staff having previously used its services. CGL has a centre in Croydon that offers support specifically tailored to young people under the age of 25. Their support package includes:

- ✓ Personalised support based on your needs and what you'd like to achieve
- ✓ One-to-one and group sessions
- ✓ Advice and support from people who share similar life experiences
- ✓ Advice on staying safe and reducing potential harm
- ✓ Referrals to residential and community detoxes and residential rehab
- ✓ Counselling
- ✓ A dedicated Young Person's team

Contact them directly yourself or request your Social Worker or Personal Adviser refer you, should you have need of their services. Learn more at <https://www.changegrowlive.org/service/croydon-drug-alcohol/info>.

Address: Lantern Hall, 190 Church Road, Croydon CR0 1SH

Contact: 0300 123 9288 / [croydon.info@cgl.org.uk](mailto:croydon.info@cgl.org.uk)



### Live Well Croydon

Live Well Croydon is a one-to-one service, delivered by qualified advisers over a 12-week period. They work with Croydon residents aged 18 or over who need that little bit of extra support to make healthy changes in their lives. Support revolves around being happy, active, alcohol aware, smoke free, sexually safe and food smart. Your Personal Adviser can help you access the service. Alternatively, you can ring 0800 019 8570 or email [livewell@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:livewell@croydon.gov.uk) to begin your journey.

## Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse can be defined as a single event or pattern of events that include elements of controlling, forceful and threatening behaviour; it can also define violence or abuse between people aged 16 or over who have a relationship (e.g. family, friends, partners, etc.) regardless of gender or sexuality. Abuse can include psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional aspects.



If you have experienced – or are experiencing – domestic abuse and need support, please speak to your Social Worker or Personal Adviser who can help you to find the right support. Services that may be able to help you include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ FJC (formerly the Family Justice Centre), which is the dedicated domestic abuse service in Croydon, offering independent, confidential, and non-judgemental support to individuals of all genders, including:
  - emotional and personal support
  - advocacy and assistance in accessing additional services, including housing and children and adult services
  - risk assessment and safety planning
  - guidance on benefits eligibility
  - referrals to mental health services
  - assistance with applying for non-molestation or occupation orders
  - help in obtaining legal advice and support

To access support, call 020 8688 0100 between Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, or email [fjc@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:fjc@croydon.gov.uk)

- ✓ 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline can give support, help and information over the telephone, wherever the caller might be in the country. Call them on 0808 2000 247 at any time on any day of the week.
- ✓ Rape Crisis South London provides specialist support to female survivors of sexual violence living anywhere south of the River Thames. Their services include:

- Face-to-face therapy of up to 12 months with qualified, sexual violence specialist therapists
- National Rape Crisis Helpline open every day of the year
- Independent Sexual Violence Advocates (ISVAs) for survivors going through or thinking about going through the criminal justice system

To access support, call 0208 683 3311 or email [Info@rasasc.org.uk](mailto:Info@rasasc.org.uk).

## **LGBTQ+ Support**

If you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or questioning (LGBTQ), or you are questioning your sexuality, then there are a number of services, sources of support and activities for you as a Croydon resident, as follows:

- ✓ LGBT Croydon provides information, resources and social activities for LGBTQ+ residents – head over to [www.lgbt-croydon.org.uk](http://www.lgbt-croydon.org.uk) for full details
- ✓ Croydon Pride is London's second largest Pride Festival which, now in its third year, has firmly become marked in south London's LGBTQ+ calendar of events – for more information visit <https://www.croydonpride.org.uk/about-croydon-pride/>
- ✓ The Bridge is a service provided by METRO and is open to all LGBTQ+ young people in Croydon, offering advice and support sessions and running two youth groups every Monday: one for 11-16 year-olds and one for 17-25 year-olds – contact them via 020 8305 5004 or email them at [youth@metrocharity.org.uk](mailto:youth@metrocharity.org.uk)

There are plenty of other services available as well, so please do ask your Social Worker or Personal Adviser for details and any support you need to get involved.

# Keeping Safe and Overcoming Hardship

We will do our best to support and encourage you to be and *feel* safe. We are here for you during hardships or crises and you can speak to us about difficulties. But if you are ever worried about your immediate safety, or you find yourself in an emergency situation, there are key people you can call when the need is urgent, as follows:

- ✓ 999 – the emergency service number for police, fire or ambulance services
- ✓ 101 – for police non-emergencies
- ✓ 111 – for NHS non-emergencies
- ✓ 116 123 – the Samaritans' 24-hour helpline open 365 days a year, offering a safe space for you to talk any time you like, in your own way – about whatever's getting to you
- ✓ 0800 111 999 – to report a gas or carbon monoxide emergency, call the National Gas Emergency Service on this 24-hour helpline

There are a range of external services that are also available to support you in times of need, with many offering bursaries and grants. A few organisations include:

- ✓ Turn2us
- ✓ The Rees Foundation
- ✓ The Spark Foundation
- ✓ Capstone Care Leavers Trust
- ✓ Charis Grants
- ✓ Buttle UK
- ✓ Trussell Trust

# Care-Experienced Parents

Being a parent for the first time can be challenging. We want to make sure that you get the support you need when you are pregnant and during your child's early years. We will help you in the following ways:

- ✓ Ensure that you have essential items for your baby by helping you to access the correct benefits, grants and charity provision
- ✓ Attend ante natal appointments with you, should you wish
- ✓ Additional Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA) payment of £300.00 for those who are parents and have primary care of their child.
- ✓ Post-birth payment of £200.00 for second child only, or first child if you have no recourse to public funds (NRPF)
- ✓ For your first child, you will be entitled to apply for the Sure Start Maternity Grant, which your Social Worker and Personal Adviser can help you with



All parents resident in Croydon have access to Early Help support, including:

- ✓ Best Start is a universal service that can give you access to early intervention support from pregnancy until your child turns
- ✓ The Croydon Support and Interventions team offer parenting programmes for parents and carers of children of all ages from 0 to 18 years
- ✓ Children's centres located around the borough

Full details of Early Help services can be looked at on <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/early-help-support>.

# Family Hubs



## What is a Family Hub?

A **Family Hub** is a local, integrated centre that brings together a wide range of services to support children, young people, and their families. It is designed to make it easier for families to access help with:

- Parenting
- Health and wellbeing
- Financial support
- Education and learning

Support is available from **pregnancy through to young adulthood**, ensuring continuity and accessibility at every stage of a child or young person's development. Family Hubs aim to provide a welcoming, inclusive space where families can find the help they need, when they need it, all in one place.

Contact [familyhubs@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:familyhubs@croydon.gov.uk) to find out about family support and services and how you can get involved.

To help you access the right services, you will be asked to register your family's details, including all of the children you have. It's simple and easy to do.

You can find information on family hubs here: <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/family-hubs>

# Care-Experienced Young People in Custody

We will continue to support care-experienced young people who are in custody, whether that be in a Young Offender Institution (YOI) or in an adult prison up until your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. This will include:

- ✓ Keeping in touch by visiting or writing to you, depending on your wishes
- ✓ Supporting you to make arrangements so that you have somewhere to live when you are released from custody
- ✓ Supporting you on release to make sure you have the support you need
- ✓ If you are engaging with your Social Worker or Personal Adviser, we will support you with subsistence, as follows:
  - £10.00 per week pocket money and £5.00 per week clothing allowance for those under 18
  - £5.00 per week subsistence money for those over 18 up until your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday
- ✓ Assist you with keeping in touch with friends and family, if you wish to do so
- ✓ We can arrange to keep your important documents such as your passport safe until you are released from custody

If you are being released from custody before your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, whether in a prison or a young offender institution (YOI), it is crucial to inform us of your release date and provide consent for the Prison Service to share information with us. If you no longer have an allocated Personal Adviser/Social Worker, one will be allocated to come and meet you to complete a needs assessment.

We will collaborate with departments including housing, Probation Service, or Youth Justice Service and department for work and pensions to assist with arrangements upon your release such as accommodation and finances, this may look different depending on your age.

# Care-Experienced Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People

We are here to support our care-experienced unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and there are organisations in Croydon that can provide additional help. Please speak to your Social Worker or Personal Adviser who will help you to access these groups. Examples include:

- ✓ Da'aro Youth Club in South London for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people aged 14-21 from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia (and their friends). Young people are invited to socialise with others, play games, pool, table tennis, football and to enjoy a home-cooked traditional meal. They also run workshops and outings and can be contacted via [info@daaroyouth.org.uk](mailto:info@daaroyouth.org.uk).
- ✓ Young Roots is a London-based charity working with young refugees and asylum seekers aged 11-25, most of whom are alone in the UK without their families. They offer support to young people to improve their wellbeing and fulfil their potential, through intensive one-to-one casework, youth and sporting activities, English language mentoring, youth leadership and access to specialist therapeutic and legal advice. They can be contacted by emailing [london@youngroots.org.uk](mailto:london@youngroots.org.uk) or calling 020 8684 9140.
- ✓ The Refugee Council works directly with unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people providing independent advice and guidance. They can be contacted on 0808 175 3499 or [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/get-support/services/childrens-advice](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/get-support/services/childrens-advice).

If you are an unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will ensure that you have applied to extend your leave to remain, and the application is submitted to the Home Office before your leave status expires. This will enable you to be eligible to claim means-tested benefits on your 18th birthday. When developing your Pathway Plan, your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will help you to think about your possible status options when you turn 18, including:

- ✓ A transitional plan during the period of uncertainty when living in the United Kingdom without permanent immigration status
- ✓ Longer-term plan in the United Kingdom should you be granted long-term permission to stay (for example, through the grant of Refugee Status)
- ✓ A plan for a return to your country of origin at any appropriate point or at the end of the immigration consideration process, should that be necessary because you decide to leave the UK or are required to do so

# Care-Experienced Young People Aged 21+ and Over 25s

We can continue to offer support to you as a care-experienced young person aged over 21 until you turn 25, if you would like support. If at any point you no longer require a service from us but later need support, you can ask to have a service reinstated up until you turn 25 by contacting the 16+ Young People's Service and requesting a needs assessment.



From the age of 25 onwards, there will be no more Pathway Plans, but you can still contact the service for information, advice and guidance.

# Advocacy, Independent Visitors (IVs) and Complaints Procedure

Using your voice and knowing your rights are both important and this Local Offer will hopefully help you to understand what support and advice is available to you.

We really want to hear your views, wishes and feelings so you can help us to improve your experience of being in care and the support you receive as a care-experienced young person. We have a duty to listen to you and will treat you fairly and with respect, which is what is expected of you too. We encourage you to speak to your Social Worker or Personal Adviser if there is something you are unhappy about.



## Advocacy

It is important for you to know what to do if you feel you are *not* being listened to. Children's services are here to protect you from harm and provide you with support and services that meet your needs. To this end, you can

contact Coram Voice to access their advocacy service, if you wish to talk to someone about your issue. To learn more, visit [www.coramvoice.org.uk](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk). You can also contact them on 0808 800 5792 or email them at [help@coramvoice.org.uk](mailto:help@coramvoice.org.uk).

## Independent Visitor (IV)

You, your Social Worker or your Personal Adviser can request an Independent Visitor (IV). An IV is a volunteer who will spend time with you once a month, doing activities that you enjoy. They will see you for a minimum of a year or longer – if you want the relationship to continue and they are able to maintain it. The idea is for you to have an adult you can trust who is not supporting you in a professional capacity. They are only there to see you and spend time with you.

## Complaints Procedure

Sometimes, problems do occur and when they do we try to resolve them as quickly as possible. If you feel you have been treated unfairly or discriminated against in any way, or if you are unhappy about the support or service you have received, you can speak to Croydon Council and register a complaint with the Croydon Council Complaints Resolution Team.

The easiest way to register a complaint is to email the complaints teams at [complaints@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@croydon.gov.uk) or you can write to:

Complaint Resolution Team  
5th Floor, Zone D Bernard Weatherill House  
8 Mint Walk  
Croydon CR0 1EA

### **Access to your Social Care Files**

Should you wish to have access to the files that the London Borough of Croydon have for you, you can request this via a Subject Access Request free or charge.

We are mindful that obtaining this information, although it could bring you a lot of knowledge and comfort about your journey through childhood and/or your time spent in care it could also be a difficult and distressing read. If you are considering accessing your files, please discuss this with your social worker/personal advisor so you can be supported appropriately to do so at a time that is right for you and your emotional well being.

[www.croydon.gov.uk/council-and-elections/privacy-and-data-protection/make-information-request/make-subject-access-request](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/council-and-elections/privacy-and-data-protection/make-information-request/make-subject-access-request)

At the point of printing the information within the Local Offer for Care Experienced Young People 2025/2026 is correct to the best of our knowledge, the most up to date version can be found on [www.croydon.gov.uk](http://www.croydon.gov.uk)