



North East Lincolnshire Council
**Our local offer for
care experienced
young people**



Our offer to you

We will always believe in you and be there for you.

This is our local offer to young people that have been in the care of North East Lincolnshire Council. The support that we offer is provided by the council and also by our partner agencies. We are your 'corporate parents'. It is important that we provide our young people with the same support and care that a good parent would. We are required by law to provide a written document that sets out clearly what support we will provide you. We will provide all care experienced young people with a copy of this document.

The most important thing that we would like to say is that we care about you. We want you to feel safe and cared for. We want to support you to reach your potential. We want to help.

Being care experienced might mean that you have been through a lot. You might have struggled with your family or struggled during your time in care. You might also have had brilliant experiences of being in care. Whatever has happened in the past, we believe that it is possible to turn adversity into strength. Care experienced adults can be resilient, empathic and happy. The things you might have been through are life experiences that can help you to understand how to cope when things get tough (as they do for everyone) and even to help others, if and when you'd like to.

Format

We can provide this document to you in a different format. You might prefer it in plain text, as an audio file, in braille or in an easy read format. We can also provide it in a different language. We can also sit down with you and explain this document to you, whenever you ask us to. Just let us know what you would like, and we will arrange it for you.



How we decided on the support we provide

We invited all of our care experienced young people aged 16-25 to contribute to the development of this 'local offer'. We held events, online and in-person, to talk to our care experienced young people about what should be in this offer. We followed the advice we were given. One young person even wrote a section of this report himself, so that people who had similar experiences to him will have a better time in future, because of the new support we will provide.

We thought carefully about what life is like in North East Lincolnshire for care experienced young people, and how we might help to make it easier. We also looked at feedback that we had been given about the support that we provide to young people. We considered academic research, too, about the experiences of care experienced young people, which made recommendations about how to help. We also talked to our staff who have worked with care experienced young people about what would help them to provide you with the best support.

After all of that, we asked a care experienced adult, who has worked with care experienced young people for many years, to write this document. It was then agreed at our Corporate Parenting Board, which is the forum where our partners, councillors and senior officials at the council, decide upon and monitor what help we are providing to care experienced people.

We will always listen to you if you think we should do things differently. We will review this local offer document regularly, and take into account what you say about how it could be better.

In most parts of this document, we use the term 'care experienced' to describe young people who have spent time in care during their childhood.

Central government guidance uses the term 'care leaver' and where we are referring to the law about care experienced people, we use this term. We understand that the language 'care experienced' feels more valuable to many people. If you're not comfortable with the language of being a 'care leaver' or 'care experienced', we understand. We will use whatever terms you prefer, as we work with you directly.



The support we provide

The most important thing for you to know is that, whatever your ‘care leaver status’ is, we care about you. You are important. We will respect you. We will listen to you and we will help.

The law about ‘who is a care leaver?’ can feel complicated when you are not used to it, but we don't want you to worry. If you are not sure which of the categories below, which come from central government guidance, applies to you: we will help you to understand.

There are four ‘categories’ of care experienced young people in central government guidance. We have also added a different ‘category’ of care experienced person below, because we help them, too. We say what these ‘categories’ are below, and what these means for the support that we will provide you.



	Is this you?	What does that mean for the support I will get?
NELC Eligible care leaver	If you are 16 or 17 and currently in care, and have been for longer than 13 weeks in total after the age of 14, you are an eligible care leaver.	You will have a social worker until you are 18 and, if you are disabled or have additional needs, for longer than that. We will introduce you to a personal adviser when you are 16 or 17, who will help you after the age of 18. This local offer document applies to you.
NELC Relevant care leaver	If you are 16 or 17 and are no longer in care but were looked after for more than 13 weeks since the age of 14, you are a relevant care leaver. This does not apply if you returned home to live with a parent after being in care, and stayed there, for more than six months.	You might still have a social worker, depending on how Children's Services support your family. We will introduce you to a personal adviser when you are 16 or 17 This local offer document applies to you.
NELC Qualifying care leaver	If you are 16-21 and were in care on your 16 th birthday, but had been in care for less than 14 weeks, you are a qualifying care leaver. You are also a qualifying care leaver if, after being in care, you lived with someone who went on to hold a 'special guardianship order' that was in place when you were 18.	Although this local offer document does not fully apply to you, because there are other sources of support available, we will still contact you between the ages of 18-25 to make sure you are okay. You can also reach out to us, anytime you would like. We will provide you with advice, guidance and support. If something difficult happens in your life, we will help you. That might also include a financial contribution.

	Is this you?	What does that mean for the support I will get?
NELC Former Relevant Care Leaver	If you are over 18 and were previously a 'relevant' or 'eligible care leaver'.	<p>You will have a social worker until you are 18 and, in some cases, for longer than that.</p> <p>You will already have a personal adviser and this person will provide you with support until you are at least 21, and until you are 25 if you would like.</p> <p>This local offer document applies to you.</p>
A care leaver from another local authority	If you are aged 16-25 and live in North East Lincolnshire, but were in care in another local authority.	<p>Although this local offer document does not apply to you, because you already have a local authority that is responsible for helping you (and that will have their own 'local offer') we will still help you access local services and support, in partnership with the local authority that is responsible for providing you with support. We will also help you to access the local offer of your local authority and understand what support is available to you.</p> <p>We will communicate with your local authority and help them to understand what life is like in North East Lincolnshire, and what services might be able to help so, so that you can get everything you need.</p> <p>Even though we are not your home local authority, we will still pay your council tax as long as if you live independently and are not eligible for free council tax for some other reason.</p>

Your social worker and your personal adviser

Your social worker

You will have a social worker until you are 18. Some young people, especially if they are disabled or have additional needs, might have a social worker for longer.

Between 16-18, your social worker will visit you regularly and talk to you about what life might look like as you transition to adulthood. Your social worker will also take into account your wishes and feelings about what you want to happen next, when decisions are made. Decisions will be made in partnership with you. You can read more later on this document about the 'pathway plan' that your social worker will develop in partnership with you.

Your social worker will advocate for you, listen carefully to what you want and respect you. They will help you to understand what might be different about life as you become an adult.

Your personal adviser

Your PA will care about you. Their job to help you to make sense of the world as you transition to adulthood, to advocate for you and to listen to you carefully. They will support you when you are having a difficult time and celebrate with you when things are going well. You can contact your PA anytime.

Your PA will also be responsible for developing your pathway plan with you. They will help you access support including in relation to your health, relationships, employment, training, education, housing and with money.

You can have a PA until you are 25. If you decide you no longer want one after the age of 21, we will understand, but we will talk to you about what help you might need and how we can stay in touch with you.

We want you to have good relationships with your social worker and your personal adviser. It should feel like they really care for you. If this isn't happening for any reason, or if you are worried, please talk to us.

Your Pathway Plan

Your Pathway Plan is a written document that records your needs, views and aspirations. It specifies what support we will provide you with personally. This Pathway Plan is informed by what is in this local offer, but will also recognise you as a unique individual, with your particular skills, wishes for the future and needs. It will identify who is important to you in your life, and how we can help you to keep in contact with them safely. Your Pathway Plan will record where you are living, and whether that might change in the future and what needs to happen to enable this. It will capture any health needs you might have, so that we can help you to feel happy, healthy and strong. Your Pathway Plan will record how much money you receive, and from where, and identify if you need any more help to live a good life.

This is your plan. It will be written with you and include your thoughts and views. We will start your Pathway Plan when you are 16, and keep it up to date regularly until you are 21. Between the ages of 21-25, we will talk to you about how best to complete your Pathway Plan. It might be that we do not need a formal document any more after you or 21 or, for example, that we only need to complete certain sections of it because you are doing well. Or we might agree together that having a Pathway Plan is useful right up until you are 25.

We will also provide you with a copy of your Pathway Plan so that you can see exactly what support is being provided to you and what plans are in place to make sure you are okay. You can ask us for a copy, anytime.

Your rights.

You have a right to say what support you want. You should be involved in all plans for your future, every step of the way. You have a right to complain if you are not happy with the support that you are being provided. Remember you can talk to us at any time. If you would like, we will put you in touch with people who can help you to make representations to the council about what you would like to be different, or better. We promise to listen to you carefully.



Relationships

We all need people! Making and sustaining safe friendships and relationships is important. We understand that we need to do all we can to help you stay in contact with the people that matter to you. Please tell us, anytime, if there's anything else we can do.

We will help you stay in touch with the people you care about. Whether family members, friends or professionals, we understand that it is important that you feel supported to make and keep up relationships that matter to you. We will make sure that you have enough money to travel to see the people that are important to you. We will pay for travel costs, if you need it, to help you stay in contact. We will make sure that you have a mobile phone, a laptop and access to the internet so that you can keep in contact with the people you care about.

We will help you get in touch with your previous carers or independent visitors if you would like to. If you would like us to, we will be with you when you meet them again.

We will give you support to get in touch with people that you might not have seen for a while, including family members. We might have some thoughts about that, depending on the reason you are no longer in contact with them. Our first job is always to keep you safe. But we will listen to you carefully, and work with you to help you get what you want, where we can. We will give you advice and support about your personal relationships with partners and friends. If you are having a difficult time in any of your relationships, we will encourage you to reach out to us so that we can help you.

If you become a parent, we will support you so that your baby has the best possible start in life. This applies to both Mums and Dads. We will help you to gain parenting skills by supporting you directly or offering you the opportunity to attending parenting classes, if you would like. Your personal adviser will visit you more often if they know you are about to become a parent. We will help the baby's mother access maternity services and work with other professionals to help develop a birth plan, if you would like us to.

If we feel that you or your child might need support, we will contact the right agencies that provide help, or complete assessments. We will come and visit you after the birth of your baby and ensure that the baby has a safe place to live in that meets their needs. If your child has a social worker, we will help you to work with them and attend any meetings that you would like us to. We will work with you to make sure you have enough money to manage when you are looking after your baby. As they grow older, we will help you to access nursery and with school applications.

We will help you to apply for the national funding of £500 available to new parents who are claiming universal credit, if this applies to you, and pay £300 more to help you get all that you need for your new baby. If you cannot access the national funding, we will pay £800. We will help you celebrate your child's birthday each year until you are 21, by paying you £50 on their birthday.



Accommodation for 16-17 year olds

We will support you to live somewhere that makes you feel comfortable, that is suitable for your needs and where you feel safe.

We will help you with budgeting, cooking, understanding home insurance and other independent living skills, so that you can work towards living in your own place, happily and safely.

You may still live with foster carers or in your children's home. If this is the case, we will make sure that you get pocket money, a clothing allowance, enough money to be able to get around on public transport and to celebrate your birthday and Christmas. We will help you gradually start to manage some finances to get you ready for when you will live in your own place. We will make sure that your social worker and, when they get to know you, your personal advisor helps you get the right support with your independence skills as you get older and this will be reviewed by your Independent Reviewing Officer. All of this will help you and the people around you decide what the right steps are as you approach 18.

You may live in supported accommodation. This is an environment where you will receive support and advice from staff who spend some time in the place you will live in. Sometimes, you will manage your own finances for food or travel when you live in supported accommodation. If this is the case, we will pay you an amount that is the same as universal credit, which you be will entitled to once you reach the age of 18. You will not have to pay any rent. We will make sure that your social worker and, when they get to know you, your personal advisor supports you with your independence skills as you get older and this will be reviewed by your Independent Reviewing Officer. All of this will help you and the people around you decide what the right steps are as you approach 18.



Accommodation for 18-25 year olds

You may live with your foster carers, after the age of 18, if they agree. We will pay your foster carers an allowance, as we did when you were under 18, so that they can provide everything that you will need. We will make sure that your foster family are not required to pay any more council tax because you are now an adult. Your foster family, in partnership with your personal advisor, will support you to gain independence skills and, where appropriate, this will include managing some of your own money for clothing, food, travel and other expenses. This will help you to feel ready to manage independently when you feel ready to.

You may live in semi-independent accommodation. This is an environment where you are supported to transition between having a carer or carers present full time, to living completely independently without carers. You will still receive support, which will be focused on helping you develop skills to live independently. We will support you to claim universal credit, if you are entitled to it, and make sure you have enough money to pay rent (either from benefits or from another source). There are different types of semi-independent accommodation and, as part of your Pathway Planning, we will work with you to identify the right place that can provide you with the best support. We will make sure, whichever place you live in, that you have enough money to pay any rent and for your food, any bills, food, travel and expenses.

You may live in independent accommodation. When you are ready, we will help you to find a place of your own. This does not happen automatically but, when the time is right, we will ensure you have a safe and stable place to live. The decision about whether to move into your own place will be shared decision between you and your personal adviser, considered as part of your Pathway Plan reviews. It is important that both you and your personal adviser feel you are ready to live independently because we want to make sure that your arrangements are stable and you are not at risk of losing a tenancy.

We will help you to apply for social housing, where you will be treated as a priority as you are care-experienced, and support you to look at properties you are offered. We will also support you, if you prefer, to access private rented accommodation but we will encourage you to think carefully about this as there are some reasons why social housing might be better for you, in the long-term. If you live outside of North East Lincolnshire Council, we will work with you and the council where you live to identify the best place for you to live independently.

When you move into your own place, we will pay up to £3,000 to help you set up your home with all that you might need. This amount consists of two parts: £2,500 for your furniture and £500 for your first year of home contents insurance, TV licence and any decorating that your home might need. We will decide, as part of your

Pathway Planning, whether these amounts will be paid directly or through supported purchasing. After the first year, we will support you with budgeting to make sure that you keep on top of securing home contents insurance, a TV licence and the decorating of your home.

If you are working, or not eligible for free council tax for any other reason, we will make sure you do not have to pay council tax until your 25th birthday. This applies whether you live in or outside of North East Lincolnshire Council's boundaries.

We will also pay the council tax of care experienced people from a UK local authority, until they are 25, and who live within North East Lincolnshire's boundaries but are originally from another local authority area. If you live with a friend or partner, who is not eligible for free council tax, we will pay 50% of the property's council tax liability.



Your health

Your rights.

**Keeping healthy is not just about your body, but also your emotions.
We want to help you to be fit and well in all parts of your life.**

We will make sure you have health assessments every year until you are 18. These health assessments will identify any specific health needs that you have, not just while you are under 18, but that apply into your adulthood, too. Your health will be explicitly considered in your pathway plan every time it is reviewed and, if any health needs are identified, we will provide support.

The children looked after and care leavers health team, based at Diana Princess of Wales Hospital, is a resource that you can access until you are 25. They will help you to navigate health services and make sure you are provided with good care. Your PA will help you to contact them and work in partnership with them if you need support.

We will make sure that you have access to your health history, so that you can refer back to this after you are 18.

We will help you register with a GP and a dentist and support you to access appointments if you would like us to. We will also support you to check if you are eligible for free prescriptions, optical care and dental care. If you are struggling financially to meet your health needs, we will provide financial support to ensure that your health is a priority.

We will support you to access mental health support, including access to therapy. The type of support you will be provided with depends upon your needs. All young people, until the age of 25, can access the online counselling service, Kooth, without any need for a referral. Some young people will need more help than this, and if that applies to you we will ensure that you have access to the support you need.

We will help you work on goals that you have to improve your health. You might want to give up smoking, exercise more or work on something else related to your health and wellbeing. The support might come from your PA, or from the council's wellbeing team that provide specialist support and advice.

All care leavers are entitled to a card from Lincs Inspire that gives free access to swimming pools, gyms and other health facilities. This includes access to Cleethopes Leisure Centre, Grimsby Leisure Centre and Immingham Swimming Pool. Your PA can arrange for you to access a card.



Education, Employment and Training

Most young people need help and support to make decisions about what to do after they leave school. We want you to do something you enjoy and that can help you to be as successful as possible in the future. We will help you and support you.

Further Education

You might decide to go to college after school. We will help you find a place in a college that works for you, undertaking a course of study that interests you.

We will make sure that you have a laptop to enable you to study, a college bag and stationery. We will make sure that you have access to the internet to ensure you can study and access college systems. If you do not have these things, we will buy them for you.

We will make sure that you have enough money to travel to college and any field trips that will help your studies.

For each term that your attendance is 95% or above, we will pay you £100 to recognise that achievement, until you are 21.

Employment

You might decide to take up employment. We will help you look for jobs, prepare a CV and with interview skills. We will work with your job coach at the Job Centre, if you would like us to. We also can provide you with specialist careers advice and support.

We will make sure you have a smart outfit to wear for any interview you have, and provide funding to buy this if you need it. We will also pay the costs for you to travel to interviews.

We will work with you to ensure you have enough money to travel to work and live from your wages, and access any additional benefits that you might be entitled to.



Apprenticeships and training

The council and our partner agencies provide apprenticeships for care experienced people, working across a range of services. We will help you participate in these apprenticeships so that you can gain skills and experience. We will make sure you have a reference if you take part in these apprenticeships, that reflects your contribution.

If you are accessing Universal Credit, you are entitled to volunteer or take part in work experience for up to eight weeks, without this affecting your payments. We will support you to identify opportunities that work for you and, to reward you, we will pay you £100 per week on top of your Universal Credit payments, for each full week that you volunteer or engage with work experience. We will also make sure you have enough money to travel to volunteering or work experience.

We will support you to access other suitable apprenticeships and training programmes by working in partnership with the local community and advocating for opportunities for our care experienced young people.

A specific example of this commitment being the Care Leavers Employability Programme provided by the Health and Care Partnership in NEL. This is a bespoke programme set up for care experienced young people in our Borough which provides training, learning and employment opportunities, alongside support to develop essential life skills, directly within the HCP. Your PA will be able to help you to access this programme.



Higher Education

If you decide to go to university, we will support you. We believe that more care experienced people, who want to study at higher education level, should be helped to do so. We will help you access and participate in higher education at any time until you are aged 25. We have high aspirations for you!

The support that we will provide you with applies if you are engaged in any course of study at higher education level or at a UK higher education institution, including postgraduate study. We have been influenced, when developing this offer, by the research project 'The Care-Experienced Graduates': Decision-Making, Choices and Destinations Project' by Dr Zoe Baker who made recommendations about how local authorities should best support care experienced people engaging in university study.

If you are thinking about going to university, we will support you to undertake qualifications that will enable you to apply for courses. We will work with your college or education provider to ensure you have support to make UCAS applications.

We will pay the costs of your visits to open days or interviews at up to five universities. If you would like, we will come with you when you visit.

We will help you apply for a student loan for your living expenses and tuition fees. We will also help you to understand what support your university provides by way of additional bursaries or scholarships and help you access this funding.

We will contact the university support team that is responsible for helping care experienced young people at university and put you in touch with them so that you can access support. We will make sure you have the details of your student union, too, so that you get peer support from other students.

We will pay the costs of moving your belongings to university, or your PA will help you to move. When your course completes, we will pay for the costs for you to move again.

We will pay your rent for 52 weeks a year while you are at university and for a further eight weeks after your course completes. The type of accommodation you will live in depends upon your university and what is available there, and will be agreed with

you in your Pathway Plan. Most students will live in halls of residence for the first year and we will pay for you to live in the basic grade of accommodation provided by your university. In subsequent years, you might live in a shared student house or some other type of suitable accommodation and we will help you, in partnership with university support staff, to identify the right place to live.

We will pay you £35 per week directly, on top of your student loan, for all the time that you are engaged in any course of study at any higher education level or UK higher education institution, including during the summer holidays, and for eight weeks after your course completes. These additional payments are to assist with your daily living expenses, over and above your student loan and any wages you get from part time work during your study. These payments reflect the bursary that the local authority is required to pay to care experienced people, but are additional, so to ensure that you have enough money to travel while you are at university, to access the internet, to buy any books or subscriptions you need to study or participate in any field trips. These payments will also help you to travel from your university to home, or to visit the people you care about while you are studying.

We will pay for the costs associated with your graduation, including travel costs, gown hire and photography. We will be proud of you and we want to help you celebrate, and remember your success!

When your course is over, we will continue to provide support to enable you to decide what you want to do next, whatever your age. We will also help you to source suitable accommodation that fits in with your goals when your course is over. If you have moved away from North East Lincolnshire to study at university, and decide to return back, we will ensure that you are not disadvantaged in accessing social housing.



Getting around

We know that it is important for you to be able to travel around in a way that works for you, to see the people you care about but also to access employment, education and training opportunities.

We will make sure that any young people aged 16-18 and still living in foster care or a children's home have enough money to travel on public transport, by bicycle or by getting lifts to important appointments.

From the age of 18-21, we will work with you as part of your Pathway Planning to make sure you have access to funding to help you with getting around.

We provide all young people aged 18-21 with funding to support with travel, whatever their circumstances. How this money is spent will be agreed with you as part of your Pathway Planning. We can provide you with up to 15 driving lessons, and the cost of theory and practical tests. We can also provide you with funding to access bus passes that will support you to travel around the local area. Some young people might prefer support to purchase a bicycle and helmet.

Some young people might want a combination of this support, and that's fine too.



Support for young people in custody

We don't want any of our young people to be in custody. We will do all we can, should you find yourself involved with the criminal justice system, to advocate for you and support you to access community-based support to avoid custody. If that is not possible, and a court decides that you should be in custody, we will do all we can to support you to reintegrate into community. While you are in custody, we will do all we can to support you as a family member would, to give you the best possible chance to live a happy life after custody.

This section of our local offer has been written by Carl. Carl* is a young person that was in custody for a short period of time and felt strongly about what type of support young people in that situation should be offered. We spoke to him, took his advice about what to include here and agreed with him what our offer should look like.

If you are in custody, we will do all we can to help you to adjust back into the community on your release

We will work alongside your probation officer and your prison key worker to ensure that they are aware of your needs and support in is place to make sure that your needs are met

We will pay £10 per week to your account while you are in custody so that you can buy items from the canteen

We will ensure that you have access to a clothing allowance

We will visit you while you are in custody and listen to your concerns. This can be a professional or social visit, whichever you would prefer.

We will ensure that you have contact with your friends and family and support them to visit you and stay in touch with you

We will ensure you have access to a professional call via your Offender Manager Unit, upon your request, to speak to your PA outside of any planned visits

We will ensure if you transition to another prison that there is a meeting held to ensure your support continues at the new establishment

*Carl's name has been changed

Other types of support

If there's something that you need that is not listed in this local offer, please talk to us. We will always do our best to help you.

We will make sure, when you leave care, that you have a passport, a copy of your birth certificate and a provisional driving licence. If this has not happened for any reason, we will pay for you to apply for these important pieces of identification. If you lose these items or they are stolen, we will pay for up to one replacement of each.

We will help you open a bank account if you do not have one.

We will support you to enrol on the Electoral Register so that you can vote in elections.

We will give you access to the council's staff discount scheme so that you have the same discounts and benefits that the people that work for the council have. You can get discounts on supermarket vouchers, shops and services.

We will provide for a clothing allowance of £150 per year between the ages of 18-21. We will agree with you as part of your pathway planning how best to spend this money.

If you are in an emergency situation, we will help. We will provide you with funding to meet your immediate needs.

If you access universal credit and there is a delay in setting up your payments, or you experience a sanction for some reason, we will advocate for you within the Job Centre to resolve the problem. We will provide you with financial help until the situation is resolved.

We will pay you £50 on your birthday, to help you celebrate, between the ages of 18-21. We will increase this to £100 when you have the special birthdays of 18 and 21. We will also pay you £50 at Christmas, or once a year at any other festival you celebrate.



