



Leaving Care Policy
Support for Young People Leaving Care

1 Introduction

1.1 If you are a young person in the care of the Redbridge Council then you will be entitled to leaving care services between the ages of 16 and 21 (up to 24 if you go on to higher education and anyone 21 years and older who wants to return to further education and training can now receive advice and assistance from a leaving care worker up to the age of 25). This means that you will receive some or all of the following services :

- The Council, has a duty to assess and meet the needs of young people aged 16 and 17 who are preparing to leave care.
- Young people aged 16 to 21 will have a pathway plan which sets out how their needs will be met.
- Young people aged 16 to 21 will have a member of staff to assist them (this could be a social worker, support worker or connexions worker depending on individual circumstances).
- The Council must keep in touch with all care leavers up to the age of 21.
- The Council remains responsible for its care leavers no matter where they are living up to the age of 21, or 24 for those in higher education.
- The Council has financial responsibility for care leavers aged 16 and 17, this includes accommodation and living costs.
- The Council MAY provide financial support for young people between the age of 18 and 21 (24 if in higher education) if they are not eligible for benefits or have specific needs.
- Where young people are in higher education, the Council also has responsibility to assist with accommodation out of term time and with the financial costs of education and to provide a higher education bursary as set out in the pathway plan.

1.2 The Council is required to provide care leavers with information about financial support, accommodation, local services, the complaints process, and where relevant the criminal injuries compensation scheme and any entitlement. This document together with any accompanying updates has been written for care leavers in Redbridge to provide that information – if you

do not think that the information provided is clear or that there are any gaps, please tell us (see below for contact details)

- 1.3 *Your exact entitlement to services will depend on your qualifying status under the leaving care act. If you are unsure about this your social worker can advise you. The service provided to you should be tailored to meet your individual needs.*

2 Who Gets a Leaving Care Service?

2.1 Eligible Young People (if you are 16 or 17 and still looked after)

You are an Eligible Young Person if you are aged 16 and 17, have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and are still looked after. If this applies, you are entitled to

- All the normal services provided to a looked after child.
- A needs assessment
- A pathway plan
- A personal advisor (in Redbridge this will be your allocated social worker)

2.2 Relevant Young People (if you are 16 or 17 but have left care)

This applies to young people aged 16 or 17 who have left care but who were previously looked after for at least 13 weeks from the age of 14. If this describes your circumstances you will be entitled to

- A Personal Advisor (In Redbridge this will be your allocated social worker)
- A needs assessment
- A pathway plan
- Unless you are living at home, you will be provided with somewhere to live, a personal allowance and other financial support according to your circumstances.
- The leaving care service must keep in touch with you.

2.3 Former Relevant Young People (if you are over 18 and have left care)

Former Relevant Young People are aged 18 to 21 (up to 24 if in higher education) who have previously been looked after by Redbridge Council and qualified as either eligible or relevant. If this describes your situation you will be entitled to the following

- A personal adviser (in Redbridge this will be your allocated Leaving Care worker)
- A needs assessment
- A pathway plan
- The local authority must keep in touch with you.
- Assistance to achieve the goals set out in the pathway plan concerning:
 - education
 - training
 - employment
 - general advice support and assistance

Vacation accommodation for higher education or residential further education if needed.

2.4 **Qualifying Young People (if you are over 16 when you became looked after).**

Qualifying young people are aged 16 to 21 (up to 24 if in full time education) who became looked after over the age of 16 and do not meet the criteria for eligible or relevant young people. If this describes your circumstances you will be entitled to the following:

- Advice and assistance, based on a needs assessment.
- The local authority must keep in touch with you.
- The local authority has the power to assist you with education and training up to age 24 and with vacation accommodation where young people are taking higher or further education courses.

3 The Leaving Care Service

3.1 The aim of the Leaving Care service is to provide a level of care and support to young people leaving care which is equivalent to that which any reasonable parent would be expected to provide. You become a care leaver when you leave our care on your 18th birthday. The Leaving Care team sees its main goal as to help you to achieve successful independence, this may mean different things to different young people, but we would hope that when you stop being a care leaver you will be settled into your permanent accommodation, and would be able to support yourself. The Team is based at Station Rd, Barkingside. As a Care Leaver you will be allocated your own leaving Care worker, they will make regular contact with you, by phone, by text and will come to visit you at your home. We hope that you will feel able to contact your allocated worker when you feel the need, as well as having their phone number we will also give you details of the Leaving Care texting service. A list of useful contacts is attached to this document, see appendix 2.

3.2 **What can you expect?**

In Redbridge leaving care services are provided by our Leaving Care Team. Preparation for leaving care should be a gradual process. Your pathway plan which comes into effect when you are 16 is an important document. It is based upon an assessment of your needs and will be put together by your social worker and you; it will cover issues such as where you are going to live, your health, education or training and financial support. This work will be started with you by your social worker in the Children Living Away from Home Service (CLAFH) 13+ Teams. Your social worker will discuss with you and your carer the skills you already have and what you will need to know to become independent. Your pathway plan should cover how these skills will be developed and who will work with you on this e.g. your carer, social worker, support worker or connexions worker depending on your circumstances. Looked after children and care leavers can also receive support with education, health and emotional well being from our specialist teachers, health advisor, psychiatric nurse or counsellors. Your pathway plan should be regularly reviewed and updated and cover your support needs to the age of 21 (up to 24 if in higher education, or if you resume further education or training after the age of 21 and up to age 25). Your Pathway Plan is an important document, you should be involved in reviewing its content, and in making your views known about how you are getting on and what support you feel you need.

3.3 Financial Support

Financial support will be provided to cover your personal needs and accommodation costs to age 18. Assistance may also be provided with education and training costs to the age of 21 (24 if in higher education, or if you resume further education or training after the age of 21 and up to age 25); in some cases, this may include housing and day to day living expenses. A Leaving Care grant to assist with the costs of setting up home when you move into your own accommodation after 18 will be provided to all care leavers. In other circumstances (including all qualifying young people), it is expected that you will either claim benefits or be in receipt of a wage / allowance.

If you do not already have one we will help you to open a bank account; where ever possible your personal allowance will be paid weekly into your account, however, if you have difficulty in managing your allowance alternative arrangements may be made which will be discussed with you by your social worker or Leaving Care worker. The amount paid will depend on the limits published; see appendix1 attached, your circumstances and where you are living.

From January 2011, we will be making some changes to the payment arrangements for Care Leavers that will mean that you will need to pay for:

- Council Tax, if you are unable to claim benefits.
- Utilities, gas, electricity, water.
- Television Licence.

It will be your responsibility to pay these bills; your allocated worker will offer advice on how best to manage these responsibilities. Between February 2011 and April 2011 we will offer some support in managing these new changes, the details are described in The Schedule of Payments, attached as Appendix 1.

3.4 The allowance scheme is available to all care leavers and covers a range of needs, (listed in the Schedule of Payments, see appendix 1 attached.)

- Personal Allowance:
This is provided weekly and from 1st April is intended to cover
Food
Travel
Council Tax
Utilities
Television Licence
Any Housing Benefit top up
General Household expenses
- Leaving Care Grant
You will be entitled to a Leaving Care Grant; this is a sum of money that you should use to assist you in setting up your own permanent accommodation. Your Leaving Care worker will need to supervise your spending this money. The amount of Leaving Care Grant can be found in the Schedule of Payments see attached at Appendix 1.

- Passports, these should be provided to you while you are still looked after, your social worker will help with seeing that you have a passport, if you want one, before you leave care at 18.
- Travel expenses incurred attending further education courses.
- Education costs, this includes course fees and may include some support towards the costs of course materials and equipment; these requests will be considered on a case by case basis.
- Birthday Grants

3.5 The actual allowances payable under each of the above headings are reviewed annually – a copy of the current Schedule of Payments is attached see appendix 1.

3.6 **Higher Education (University)**

If you want to study at University, qualify for Leaving Care Service and are able to apply for a student loan, then we will provide you with support and financial assistance, for the duration of your 3 year degree course. These allowances are reviewed annually a copy of the Schedule of Payments is attached, see appendix 1. The University may also provide additional support, your allocated leaving care worker will help you to find out what is available to you and will help you access this support if you want help.

Higher Education Bursary

Care leavers studying at University will be entitled to additional support (known as a bursary) to help you manage the costs of your study, this is generally provided in instalments paid at the beginning of each academic year. More information is available from your social worker or leaving care worker. Care leavers attending University will need to be involved in their Pathway Plan reviews so that you can be clear about what help you will receive and when it will be provided.

3.7 **Post Graduate Courses**

The Local Authority may consider making a contribution towards any post graduate courses and assisting you to identify support and resources to help you to undertake post graduate study. Your leaving care worker will help with these requests and will need to carry out an assessment of your needs.

3.8 **Accommodation**

Redbridge offers a range of accommodation options, depending on your age and assessed need.

- Many young people will remain in the same care placement (e.g. with foster carers) from the age of 15 until shortly before they leave care; others may decide to move onto supported lodgings or semi-independence.

- Supported Lodgings is the term used to describe one type of semi-independent living accommodation, it is most suitable to a young person who can manage their own independence but sometimes need additional help and guidance that is easily available to you when you need it. There are two types of supportive lodgings, the first is offered to those 18+ care leavers who would benefit from the additional support, these placements are arranged for you with a new supportive lodgings carer, you would move into their accommodation, You would be provided with your own bedroom and would share communal facilities such as kitchen and bathroom with the supportive lodgings carer and their family if they have any living with them.
- The second type of supportive lodgings placement is offered to young people aged 17, still looked after in a foster placement, and the carer agrees to continue to offer a place in their home to you after you become 18. This type of supportive lodgings placement has many advantages in that it would allow you to remain with your existing foster carer, but on a more independent basis, suitable to someone of your age and responsibility.
- Semi independent accommodation: this is a flat or bed-sit where you will have your own room and will share other facilities with other young people. Outreach support is provided, were someone comes to visit you to see how you are managing in the accommodation and to help you with practical help and support in solving problems the amount of support that you receive will be based on an understanding of your needs, which will change as you progress towards becoming more independent. An individual programme of support is worked out for each young person the details will be found recorded in your current pathway plan.
- Outreach is the term we use to describe the support we offer you in your semi-independent accommodation. Managing the new responsibilities of your own accommodation can sometimes be difficult, knowing what to do and where to get help in an emergency is an important part of making a success of your semi-independence. Outreach workers are there to help you with the practical tasks and problems, they will offer help and encouragement, but where ever possible will try to help you solve a problem rather than fix the problem for you. Outreach workers are there to help and to keep the leaving care team informed of how you are getting on, they write regular brief reports that are sent to the team that describe how you are doing and what help you might need. This information is shared with your allocated worker so that they can work together to help you get the most from your semi-independent accommodation and to know how best to help you.
- Independent accommodation: this is not available until you are over 18 and legally able to hold a tenancy and, importantly are considered capable of managing your independence. Housing may be provided through the council, a housing association or in the private sector. If you chose to live outside of Redbridge the provision may differ according to the area but we will remain responsible for providing you with support or arranging for another local authority to do so on our behalf.

- *Holding a tenancy is a big responsibility and we will support you to manage this both financially and emotionally, in some circumstances, for example if you are finding it difficult to manage, we can enlist the help of a local housing support service (supporting people). We can also refer you to local agencies such as mentoring or M-Power.*

3.9 Healthy Living

As a care leaver and a young adult you are now responsible for your own health, previously, your carer and social worker will have made arrangements for important regular health visits and checkups such as medical checks with your GP and dental checkups. Your allocated leaving care worker will assist you if you need help locating a GP and dentist if you do not have one and they will encourage you to monitor your health and to do all you can to keep fit and healthy. If you are concerned for your health and would like advice on where to go to get the best help available, you can contact our health advisor (for looked after children and care leavers), details are available from your allocated worker. If you would prefer you can contact us via our dedicated text messaging service, details are available from the leaving care team and are sent to you as info text messages.

Food parcels in an emergency.

If, for whatever reason, you find it difficult to provide for your basic health needs one option available to you in an emergency, is to ask your allocated worker for help, they will be able to give you a small supply of basic food items and toiletries, sufficient to last a few days, these supplies are intended for use in emergencies and are therefore quite basic.

Sexual Health.

Your sexual health needs are also very important, both in terms of you knowing how best to monitor your health and in knowing where you can access the best information.

Some useful contacts are:

- your GP who will have detailed information of your personal medical history.
- NHSRedbridge a website with lots of information on local health services,
- The telephone helpline NHS Direct 0845 4647 who will put you in touch with a qualified nurse who will offer you advice over the phone.
- Remember that we also have the texting service that will be answered by the leaving care team and can easily be sent on to our health advisor, if you prefer to use texting to get advice.

Mental Health. If you are concerned for you own mental health, your own thoughts and feelings, you can get help from a range of services:

- By going to see your GP, who can refer you to other services if necessary.
- The Leaving Care Team can also put you in touch with our Mental Health advisor (for looked after children and care leavers).
- Loxford Hall,

- The Hear and Now Project, a locally based community project that offers support to people with mental health problems.

3.10 **Being safe in your home**

As a care leaver it is important to us to know that you are safe, safe in your home and safe in your community. Remember that you have your own allocated leaving care worker, who will offer advice and support and will be able to suggest where you can get help if they are not the best person to assist you. You can always ring your worker, but if you would prefer you can send a text, using the Leaving Care Texting Service.

You can check the safety of your home by asking your local community police officer to visit, they will be able to provide free advice about home security such as, how safe are your locks and windows. The local fire service, based at your nearest fire station, often provide free advice about smoke detectors, and how to keep your home safe by reducing the risks of fires in your home.

A list of useful contacts is available, including telephone numbers and addresses

3.11 **Achieving Successful Independence**

The aim of our service is to help you to become successfully independent. For us successful independence means that you learn how to manage your home, your finances and your relationships to the best of your ability. For most care leavers this means getting and keeping a job, and being able to make choices that give you control over your life, including the choices you make for entertainment and fun.

Because we are keen to see you achieve the best that you can for yourself, we hold events for looked after children and care leavers where we celebrate their successes and encourage young people to showcase their talents, details of these events are published in the newsletters which are sent out to looked after children and care leavers.

One important part of your being 'successfully independent' is that you are able to gain and maintain regular employment. To help you to compete for your preferred employment, we offer support to you with college courses and training. For those attending further education courses we will assist you with course fees and some support with the travel costs of getting to and from your college or training venue. As a care leaver you will have your own allocated worker who will keep in touch with you, and will be available to assist with advice and support in sorting out any financial problems that sometimes occur to do with benefits and Council Tax, if you are uncertain how to resolve this kind of problem, or are worried that you do not know how best to fix it, your allocated worker will try to work through the issues with you.

As a previously looked after young person you should already have been helped to set up your own bank account, if this has not been resolved and you would like help opening an account your allocated worker will assist you.

3.12 **Mentoring**

As a Redbridge care leaver, you will have a great deal of knowledge and experience, about the ups and downs of being in care, if you feel able to share your experiences and would be interested in supporting other young people who might be having similar experiences you should discuss the

possibility of becoming a mentor, with your allocated worker who will provide you with more information about what is expected and what you should do to apply to become a mentor.

Newsletters

We regularly prepare and send out a care leavers newsletter, which contains information on local events and items of interest to young people leaving care, the magazine is put together by our staff but we always welcome contributions from care leavers, if you would like to offer an item for inclusion in the next newsletter please feel encouraged to send your contribution to your allocated worker who will pass it on to the person who is compiling the next edition. If you would like to try being the editor of one of the newsletters then again let your worker know and we will discuss what is involved with you and what help you would have in putting the newsletter together.

3.13 **Young Parents**

As a parent you would be eligible for some additional services, the Leaving Care Grant includes an additional element, for your first child to pay for some of the extra items that you would need.

If, for your first child, you have not been able to apply for a Benefits Agency Maternity Grant and are not working, we will provide you with a maternity allowance, the details and amount payable is included in the Schedule of Payments attached, see appendix 1.

The Young Parents Project, based in Ilford, offers a range of support services to young parents, with crèche facilities, including opportunities to take courses and gain qualifications.

3.14 **Young People detained in Prison and YOI's**

Care Leavers that are detained in prison or young offenders Institutions will continue to receive a service from the Leaving Care Team, your allocated worker will maintain contact with you, by letter and will visit you, if it is practical. Your allocated worker will want to keep in touch with you and will want to continue your Pathway plan and hold regular reviews of the Pathway Plan. Depending on the institution, we will provide you with a regular small allowance, most Institutions require that money is posted in the form of a postal order. For details of the amounts payable as a prison allowance, please see the Schedule of Payments attached, appendix 1. Before you are due to be released we will assist with making arrangements with you and the prison, that clarifies what happens on your release, where you are to live and what assistance we will offer you.

3.15 **Disabled Care Leavers**

If you are a disabled young person receiving support from the Children with Disabilities Team, your allocated worker from the team will complete a Transition Plan with you. This will help you to think about the support that you need as you become an adult, and can be completed when you are 14. It should include the views and advice of other professionals that are working with you as well. It may be that as a disabled care leaver you can be supported through the Leaving Care Service, however many disabled young people access specialist services from an adult social care team.

To receive support from an adult social care service you must be eligible under Fair Access to Care Service. This means that your needs must cause a substantial or critical impact on your life. Your allocated worker from the Children with Disabilities Team will be able to advise you whether or not you will be eligible, and which adult team will be supporting you.

Some disabled young people may be supported by the Children Living Away from Home Service. If this is the case then they will continue to support you, but they may carry out a Transition Plan with you, and receive advice from the Children with Disabilities Team, if they feel that you may need additional support when you turn 18.

Disabled care leavers will be supported to identify appropriate accommodation, usually either in supported living, or through the Shared Lives Scheme. Some young people may move into residential care provisions where this best meets their needs.

Adult services have a charging policy, and young people may be expected to contribute from their income (including benefits) towards the cost of their care.

4 The Redbridge Pledge

- 4.1 The Council has made a number of pledges (promises) for Looked After Children and those leaving care, which set out what services we will provide for you.

Redbridge promises for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2011-2014 with annual reviews

1.	We promise that we will help you to safely stay in contact with your family when ever possible, so long as it is what you and your family want.
2.	We promise that information about you will only be shared with people who really need to know it. We will make sure that there is a way for you to tell us if you are unhappy about anything or want to complain.
3.	We promise to make sure you feel safe where you're living and are happy there. We promise that you will meet with your social worker on your own to talk to them about what is happening in our life.
4.	We promise to make your care plans and pathway plans clear about the support you will receive from Redbridge. Together, we will talk about what this will be (for example where you live, what school or college you go to) and who will be responsible for making sure your plan is working for you.
5.	Sometimes thinking about the future is scary, you maybe thinking about getting older or even leaving care. We promise to work with you through this and when you leave care you will have a personal advisor to support you.
6.	We promise to involve you in the recruitment, training and reviews of the staff and foster carers that are working with children in care so you have the best people working with you.
7.	We promise to help you know what your rights are which mean what you are entitled to as a child in care in Redbridge. We promise to tell you what plans we are making for you and we will always listen to what you feel is important. If you are unhappy with the plans we make for you, we can put you in touch with the Children's Rights Officer. She can speak up for you or help you to speak up yourself. We have a 'children in care council' who have been set up to hear your views and influence decisions on your behalf about being in care in Redbridge.
8.	We promise to support you through your education. We will draw up a regular Personal Education Plan (PEP) with you to encourage you to achieve your ambitions and help you get the best results you can. We will celebrate and promote your achievements with you.
9.	We promise to make sure that your doctors, dentists and other health professionals are dedicated to your well-being. We want you to learn how to take care of yourself. We will provide you with a leisure pass to access leisure facilities in the borough. We will make sure that there is always someone you can talk to about your emotional and physical health and well-being if you live outside of Redbridge.
10.	We promise that your social worker will get to know you well, stay in touch between visits, keep you informed and will do what they say they will do. We promise to not change your social worker unless it is absolutely necessary and that you know why if we do.

5 Children in Care Council / Participation

- 5.1 The Council wants young people looked after and those leaving care to be actively involved in helping to decide what services they receive. We have established a children in care council and have a participation officer for looked after children and care leavers.
- 5.2 The Children in Care Council is a group of young people in care who meet regularly to look at the services given to children in care
- 5.3 Participation Officer - Redbridge has a participation officer for looked after children and care leavers. The participation officer supports the children in care council, and facilitates meetings of looked after children and care leavers as well as publishing a number of age related newsletters for looked after children and for care leavers. The participation officer also regularly visits young people with their social worker or support worker and will ask young people and care leavers what they think about the services they receive and how it can be improved. He will then work with young people to set up projects or look at different ways in which they can make sure that their voice is heard.
- 5.4 Participation Officer – Contact Details
Tim Williams
Tel: 020-8708 8299
Email: kuburat.tijani@redbridge.gov.uk

6 Children's Rights Officer

- 6.1 Redbridge also has children's rights and advocacy officer who will assist individual young people who wish to make suggestions about how services can be improved or who are unhappy with the service that they have received and wish to make a complaint
- 6.2 To contact the Children's Rights Officer:
Jan Edwards
Tel: 020-8708 5811
Email: janet.edwards@redbridge.gov.uk

7 Contacting the Leaving Care Services

- 7.1 Office address
The Leaving Care Team
Station Road Centre
Station Road
Barkingside
Essex
IG61NB
- 7.2 Telephone number
You can contact the team during office hours (8.30am-5.00pm)
on 020 8708 8203
- 7.3 Email: martin.halsey@redbridge.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Schedule of Payments to Care Leavers for 2012

Living Allowance £56.25 per week

Further Education and Training, we will assist with the cost of:

Course Fees, within reasonable limits

Travel costs to attend Education or Training, within reasonable limits

Course related materials, (for example Health and Safety clothing/ equipment)

Leaving Care Grant
includes removal costs £1,000

Additional grant for
dependant children £500 for the first child only

Birthday Grant age 18 £30
age 19 £10
age 20 £10
age 21 £50

Prison allowance £5 per week (paid in postal orders)
Remand allowance £10 per week (paid in postal orders)

University Students

Travel Allowance up to £35 per week
Internet access up to £20 per week for 10 months per year
Clothing allowance up to £150 annually
Book allowance up to £150 annually
Television Licence £145.50 annually
Laptop up to £400 one off payment
Student accommodation (on a
shared basis) London Area up to £120 per week
All other areas up to £90 per week

Students in permanent accommodation will receive support with their rental costs.

University students are entitled to financial support in the form of a bursary of £2,000 this can be paid in a lump sum or in three instalments of £666.66p, your allocated leaving care worker will discuss these arrangements with you.

Utility Bills and Council Tax

With effect from 1st April 2011 care leavers in semi-independent accommodation will become responsible for paying all of their own bills from the following list:

Gas

Electricity

Water

Council Tax

Any Housing Benefit Top up

Television Licence

General household expenses