



# Local Offer for Care Leavers

Answers to questions you may have about leaving care



SCAN ME



# Welcome

Leaving care can be a scary as well as an exciting time; it's important that you get the help and support necessary to make sure you know what happens next, to know who will help you and exactly what you are entitled to.

This handbook has been developed by Slough Children First (SCF) to help you navigate your way through the big transitions in your life as you move into adulthood.

We hope that it will help you to deal with any worries you may have about leaving care by providing you with information on the practical help you will get with accommodation, education, training and employment, money matters, health and other life skills needed as you prepare for independence. It will also point you in the right direction for advice and support outside of SCF, as well as how you can make sure you are listened to and have a say in what happens.

More information can be found on our website, [www.sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk](http://www.sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk) under the 'children and young people' section.



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## Introduction to the local offer

We understand that becoming an adult is a big change in your life and is a crucial time. We therefore want to ensure you are supported on this journey to independence.

The support provided by Slough Children First (SCF) and other agencies is collectively known as corporate parenting and we are your corporate parents.

Corporate parenting is our collective responsibility to make sure that you are provided with every opportunity to lead a fulfilling life, in the same way that any good parent would do for their child. We are also responsible for helping and supporting you after you have left our care.

This offer includes details about the support and services that is available to you before, during and after you become a care leaver under the local authority of Slough.

This offer will provide you with information about services that are available to you and what you can expect to receive whilst you are in care and when you leave care.



## The legal bit

All local authorities have a legal obligation to support children in care and those leaving care, and therefore must ensure that you know what services you can expect to receive.

The law sets out four categories to define a care leaver/ care experienced young person. The following are what the terms mean for you.

1. You are an **ELIGIBLE** care experienced young person if:

- You are aged 16 or 17, and
- You are currently a young person in care, and
- You have been a cared for young person for a period of 13 weeks which began after you reached 14 and must include at least 1 day after you were 16 or 17.

Please note: If you were a child looked after and are subject to a Care Order, but return home to a parent or someone with parental responsibility, you remain looked after and eligible.

2. You are a **RELEVANT** care experienced young person if:

- You are no longer being cared for by the Local Authority but
- You have been ELIGIBLE, and
- You are currently aged 16 or 17.

3. You are a **FORMER RELEVANT** care experienced young person if:

- You are between 18 and 21, and
- Before reaching 18 you were a RELEVANT young person, or
- Immediately before you stopped being cared for you were an ELIGIBLE young person
- If at the age of 21 or before reaching 25 you continue to be in education or training, or
- If at the age of 21 or before you are 25 you wish to start a course of education or training, or
- If at the age of 21 or before reaching 25 you wish to have continued support.

Please note: If you are not subject to a Care Order and return home to a parent or a person with parental responsibility for a period of six months or more you will lose your relevant status. If this arrangement breaks down before you are 18 and you stop living with your parent, then you will be treated as a relevant child.

## The legal bit

4. You are a **QUALIFYING** care experienced young person if:
- You are at least 16 but under 21 and
  - You were a cared for young person prior to the making of a Special Guardianship Order which was in force when you reached 18 or
  - If at any time (but less than 13 weeks in all) after you reached 16 you were still a cared for young person but are no longer in care or
  - You were privately fostered and assessed to be in need.

As a QUALIFYING young person, you can access advice and assistance based on a discussion with your social worker if you are under 18, or a Young Person's Advisor with the 18+ Care Leavers Service.

The law has also placed a duty on all local authorities to extend support in relation to former relevant young people who inform the Local Authority of their wish to receive a service after the age of 21 and under the age of 25.

Your rights and entitlements will depend on your legal status, so it is important to understand this.

Your Social Worker or Young Person's Advisor can explain all of this to you and will help you to understand what help and support you can get.

### Care Leavers Charter

We will help you to be proud of yourself and celebrate your individual beliefs.

We will support you to discover and to be who you are and honour your unique identity. We will help you develop your own personal beliefs and values and accept your heritage and culture.

To find out more about our Care Leavers Charter, please visit <https://www.sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk/care-leaver-local-offer/care-leavers-charter/>

## Your team

SCF's Children Looked After and Care Leavers Team are here to support you as you learn to live more independently.

We are based at:

Slough Children First

Observatory House

25 Windsor Road

Slough

SL1 2EL

You can contact us on the Duty Telephone Number: 01753 476729.

If you need help after 5pm or on the weekends or bank holidays, you can call our Emergency Duty Number (EDT) on: 01344 351999.

Working with our partners, our Care Leavers Team together with other agencies can help you:

- Make plans for the future
- Have somewhere safe and secure to live
- Keep yourself fit and healthy, and feel good about yourself
- Make sure that you have enough money to live on
- Stay in education
- Find the training course or career that you really want
- Staying in touch with people who are important to you
- Deal with difficulties and negotiate solutions to problems
- Find out about your rights

### **Young Person's Advisor**

When you reach 16, you will be allocated a Young Person's Advisor (YPA) to prepare you to leave care and to build a relationship with you.

The relationship between you and them is important. The better the relationship, the more you will benefit from having a YPA and it's important to keep in touch and agree how much contact you would like.



## Your team

As a minimum, they will visit you at least every 3 months before you are 18. These visits will be arranged and agreed with you.

We can keep in touch in other ways too – all advisors have an email address and phone number. If you cannot get in contact with your advisor, please call the duty number. Once you turn 18, you will no longer have a Social Worker, so your YPA will become your main support worker until you reach 25.

Your YPA will:

- Listen to your views and ideas about your life and help you use these to inform your Pathway Plan
- Work with you and your carers and others to put your Pathway Plan into practice
- Attend your looked after review meeting every six months for the last year you are in care
- Organise a Pathway Plan review every six months after you have left care
- Support you in looking after your health
- Encourage and support you to go as far as you can with your education
- Make sure you receive advice and guidance with jobs, careers and training
- Help you develop the skills and knowledge that you need to live independently
- Help you stay in touch with your family
- Support you to find somewhere suitable to live

Your Pathway Plan will set out your plans for the future. This is your document and your views and aspirations must be at the centre of it!

As you approach 16, your Social Worker will work with you to complete a needs assessment report setting out your abilities, your achievements and your needs now and in the future. You will then work together to create your Pathway Plan.





# Your Pathway Plan

Your Pathway Plan will set out how you will be supported to achieve the things that you want for yourself in your life, and who is going to provide the help you need.

It is important that your Pathway Plan accurately sets out what is important to you, and what you want to achieve in the future. In order to do this your Social Worker/Young Person's Advisor will also talk with your parents or carers and other important people in your life – and you should tell them who the important people are.

Your Pathway Plan is a 'live' document, and you will continue to have reviews every 6 months to add to or revise the Plan as your aspirations develop and change.

Your Social Worker or YPA will continue to meet with you and review the Pathway Plan.

When you stay in care after you reach 16, you will continue to have looked after reviews chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).

The Pathway Plan will replace the Care Plan, and this will be reviewed at your Statutory Child Looked After Review.

If there are parts of your Pathway Plan that you do not want shared at a review, you can agree with your Social Worker what doesn't need to be discussed.

If you are one of the small number of 16 and 17 year olds who choose not to remain looked after then the Social Worker will continue to visit you regularly and will review the Pathway Plan with you every six months, provided that you have been in care for 13 weeks or more. If you have been in care for less than 13 weeks, you would be a Qualifying Care Experienced Young Person eligible for an assessment and support plan.

The Pathway Plan will grow and change as you approach adulthood and as your situation changes.

When you reach 18 you will no longer be looked after but your YPA will continue to meet with you and work on your Pathway Plan. This will ensure plans are put in place to support you even when you are a young adult.

At the age of 21, we will review your Pathway Plan to determine if you continue to require support.

If you don't, we will continue to keep in touch with you at least once a year. If you do, we will continue to support you with the things that you require support with until your 25th birthday.

# Money matters

- **Financial support for 16-17 year olds**

## ***Subsistence allowance and savings***

As you are not able to claim Universal Credit at this age, SCF will support you with accommodation and living costs.

If you are in a foster placement or residential children's home, an agreement about your pocket money would be agreed as part of your pathway planning. Your pathway plan will be reviewed every 6 months.

Your foster carer or residential children's home will also save £10 per week in a savings account known as a Junior ISA or Child Trust Fund, which would be transferred to your Shared Foundation account after one year of been in care. You would be able to access this when you are 18 years old.

If you are living in a semi-independent provision, SCF would pay a weekly subsistence allowance equivalent to rate of Universal Credit.

You would be encouraged to set an amount aside as savings, which can be deposited into your Junior ISA or Child Trust Fund or Shared Foundation account.

If you are a young person serving a sentence or in detention, engaging in positive activities whilst in prison i.e., training and education, you would get an allowance of £10 per week from SCF.

## ***Education and training***

You could get a bursary from your college to help with education-related costs if you're aged 16 to 19 and:

- Studying at a publicly funded school or college in England - not a university

- On a training course, including unpaid work experience

A bursary is money that you, or your education or training provider, can use to pay for things like:

- Clothing, books, and other equipment for your course
- Transport and lunch on days you study or train

You could get a bursary from your college worth up to £1,200, depending on your circumstances and benefits.

Our Education Champions can help navigate the bursary offer for you and will be there to support you through your continuing education.

## ***Birthday money allowance***

If you are in a foster placement or children's home, your birthday money or gift is given to you by the carer or the children's home.

If you are in a semi-independent provision, you would be eligible to receive £50 on your 16th and 17th birthday.

## ***Clothing allowance***

Your foster carer or the children's home should provide you with a clothing allowance.

You would receive an allowance of a total of £150 per year for clothing allowance, if you are living in a semi-independent provision. These payments will be split and paid to you in summer and winter.

## ***Festival allowance***

If you are living in semi-independent provision from the age of 16, we will provide you with an allowance of £50 per year to celebrate a cultural festival of your choice.

# Money matters

- **Financial support for 18-25 year olds**

## ***Subsistence allowance and savings***

When you turn 18, and if you not earning a certain amount of money; you may be entitled to Universal Credit.

Your YPA will assist you in making an application for benefits 4 weeks before your 18th birthday if you live in Slough. If you live outside of Slough, an application for benefits can only be made on your 18th birthday.

SCF will assist you with a subsistence allowance equivalent to Universal Credit for a period of up to 6 weeks whilst you are waiting for your Universal Credit application to be process and paid.

You would be expected to use this payment for your living costs and pay for essentials, such as food and bills first.

## ***Benefit options***

As a care experienced young person, there are many benefits that are available to you and here you will find a selection of these.

## ***Council tax discount***

Slough Borough Council has offered full council tax discount to its care experienced young people aged 18 to 25 where they are the named tenant for a property.

In these instances, it is important for you and your YPA to notify Slough Borough Council of you being a care experienced young person so that you can access the full discount.

It is also important you let the council tax team know if you are moving and the address you are moving to.

Our Care Leavers Team supports all Slough care experienced young people in this manner even if you do not live in the borough. You and your YPA need to make sure you fill out and sign the application so our council tax team can work with

the borough in which you live to make sure your discount is applied.

## ***Universal Credit Claims***

The amount of Universal Credit you can claim will depend on your circumstances and it can be complicated.

There are two sections to Universal Credit:

**Section 1** – personal allowance, this is something you may be entitled to if you are not in employment or are in college.

**Section 2** – housing element, if you are living independently then you may be entitled to apply for the financial support to help pay your rent. You can apply for this if you are not in employment, you are in college, you have low-income employment or you are in supported living accommodation.

If you are in supported living accommodation, your key worker will support with this as it is to help cover the rent aspect in support living accommodation.

Your YPA will help you with your initial claim application for Universal Credit.

You will need identification documents and a bank account for the benefits to be paid into.

Your Social Worker or YPA will help you get these in place before your 18th birthday and support you to apply for Universal Credit before your birthday so that everything is set up to reduce any delays in payments.

We will assist you in obtaining your first passport and/or driver's license for identification purposes.

Slough Jobcentre Plus will make it easier to claim Universal Credit; however, you will need to inform them that you are a care experienced young person so that they can provide extra support and address any potential issues at an early stage.

You will be asked to attend appointments at the Job Centre with your work coach to help support you in finding employment.



# Money matters

If you do not attend these appointments, you may be sanctioned, and money can be deducted or stopped all together.

The Citizens Advice Bureau has a website that can help [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk) and full benefit details can be found there.

- **What if you don't make a claim?**

If you fail to make a Universal Credit claim and/or refuse to take our support in helping you to do so, our Care Leavers Team will review its commitment to providing you with financial support.

Our Care Leavers Team may decide that we have done what we can to support you access benefit and may end any ongoing commitment to providing financial support.

If there is any sanction applied to the claim, our Care Leavers Team will do what it can to support you make an immediate claim to Hardship via the Jobcentre, if your rent is paid as part of your Universal Credit payment, we will support you in contacting the Jobcentre to resolve the issue.

- **Maternity Grant**

If you are expecting your first baby or having a multiple birth, and you are in receipt of Universal Credit, you can apply to the Job Centre for a Maternity Grant.

This would be available for up to 11 weeks before your baby is due until three months after the birth.

The grant is worth £500 for buying essential items for your baby. Essential items are:

- Cot
- Sets of bedding
- Sets of clothing
- Sterilisers and bottles
- Buggy, rain cover and cosy toes
- Baby bath
- Baby wipes and baby toiletries
- Nappies (disposables or re-usables)

- **Savings**

If you have been in care for over a year, you will have a savings account and you would be able to access it once you turn 18.

You can obtain further information about the savings scheme on The Share Foundation website:

<https://www.sharefound.org>

If you have been in care for a long time, this could be a substantial amount of money and you would be advised to use this money you help you in the future.

- **Young people in custody**

If you are in prison or a young offenders' institution your welfare benefits will stop. We will ensure that you are visited regularly and help you to plan for when you leave prison or the institution.

While you are in custody, we can support you to store your belongings, although we would not be liable for any loss or damage during this period.

- **Setting up home allowance or leaving care grant**

From 1 April 2023, for all young people leaving care who turn 18; we will provide you with up to £3000 when you have secured accommodation to live independently.

This money is to buy essential items for your new home.

You can buy these items and provide the receipt for payment to be made or we can assist by ordering your items online which will help to ensure that the money is used to purchase essential items you require for your home.

Essential items include:

- Bed and mattress
- Storage for clothing e.g. wardrobe, chest of drawers

# Money matters

- Sofa or armchair
- Table and chairs
- Fridge and cooker
- Carpets or rugs
- Curtains
- Beddings and towels
- Lamp and lampshades
- TV
- Cutlery, crockery, cooling utensils and kettle
- Iron and ironing board
- Mop, broom, dustpan and brush, vacuum cleaner (if you have carpets) and a bin
- Washing bowl and dish drainer

Before you buy anything, you should talk to your Social Worker or YPA and you will need to produce receipts for each item that you buy. SCF can order furniture and household items on your behalf to help you get the best deals.

You can also access the local welfare provision via Slough Borough Council and use this support to pay for essential items such as fridge, cooker and bed.

If your plans include moving into independent accommodation outside of Slough, the Council's Housing department can help with organising a move into private sector accommodation, subject to an incentive payment by us. You can discuss this with your Social Worker or YPA as you develop your Pathway Plan.

- **Birthday money allowance**

You will receive a birthday allowance of £100 on your 18th and 21st birthday.

You will receive a birthday allowance of £50 on your 19th and 20th birthday.

- **Clothing allowance**

You would receive an allowance of a total of £150 per year for clothing allowance if you are between the age of 18 and 21, and in receipt of benefits or on low income. These payments will be split and paid to you in summer and winter.

To receive the clothing allowance, you will need to be claiming all eligible benefits and engaging with the service.

If you are aged 21-25 years, the clothing allowance will only be paid in exceptional circumstances, at times of extreme hardship.

- **Festival allowance**

If you are living in semi-independent provision, we will provide you with an allowance of £50 per year to celebrate a cultural festival of your choice.

This also applies to those up to the age of 21, in EET (Education, employment and training) or NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training).

- **Help with WiFi**

If you are in receipt of Universal Credit, you can ask a broadband provider for a social tariff. You can obtain further information about social tariffs here:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/costs-and-billing/social-tariffs>

If you are in education and training, we will assist you with the cost of WiFi up to £20 per month.

- **Exceptional circumstances**

We understand that everyone has their own individual and exceptional circumstances. We will always consider financial support for you at challenging times.

# Your home

## Where will you live?

One of the most important decisions we have to agree with you as a care experienced young person is where you are going to live.

It is very important that wherever you live, it is suitable for your needs and that we plan ahead to make sure we find the right place for you.

Your Social Worker or YPA are there to help you with this, working through the options available to you and helping you to decide on what will be best for you at that time. All plans for your accommodation will need to be included in your Pathway Plan and agreed at your reviews.

Moving to live independently requires a lot of planning and there are many items that you would require.

Your YPA can help you think about the essential items you require to move into your new home. We will provide you with a moving in hamper which has the basic items you require in the first week of moving house.

## Accommodation options for 16 and 17 year olds

While you are 16 or 17 there will be no expectation or pressure for you to move from a foster placement or residential care.

At this stage, you have the following accommodation options:

- Your family
- Foster care
- Residential care
- Supported accommodation (perhaps a shared house or flat, where you have your own room but share some facilities with other young people and receive support from a Housing Support Officer)
- Specialist accommodation (e.g. a residential school)

## Accommodation options for 18 year olds

It is important that we plan for where you will live when you are 18 and ensure we work with you and your carers to prepare for this.

Your accommodation options include:

- Staying put (if you are in a foster placement and want to stay there after you turn 18, as long as both you and your foster carer agree, and you are engaged in education, employment or training, then we will support you to remain there)
- Semi-independent accommodation (perhaps a shared house or flat, where you have your own room but share some facilities with other young people and receive support from a housing support



## Your home

officer)

- Specialist accommodation – the Home Improvement Agency can organise aids and adaptations to accommodation where the household has disability needs
- Your family
- Independent accommodation (e.g. council flat or private rented) – this would require additional agreement from SCF to help with a deposit and rent in advance which, if agreed, would come from your setting up home allowance.

Slough Borough Council gives additional preference to housing for those preparing to leave care. SCF will ensure that you are added to the housing register once you turn 16, with the ambition that when you turn 18, and if you are ready to manage an independent tenancy, you will be offered appropriate independent accommodation.

As a care experienced young person, you will be exempt from paying council tax up to the age of 25.

If you are working, you will need to pay all or some of your rent, depending on how much you earn. If you are not earning much money, your Social Worker or YPA can help you to apply for Universal Credit to help with your rent.

If you are struggling to pay your rent it is important you talk to your Social Worker, YPA or housing officer as soon as possible so they can work to help you stay in your home.

Moving to live on your own is a massive step, and it's not just about paying bills and cooking your own food; it's also about staying healthy and getting on with your neighbours.

[Slough Borough Council's Young People's Service](#) will work with you to learn the skills you need to succeed in your new accommodation and prepare for independence. Slough Borough Council Neighbourhood Services can also provide advice through their tenancy sustainability officers to ensure that you are able to manage any council tenancy you might hold.

### **How is your council tenancy renewed?**

When you are offered a property from Slough Borough Council you only get an offer of one property. You will start with an introductory 12 month tenancy.

During the 12 months you will have 3 monthly visits from your housing officer to ensure you are managing your tenancy well. After 12 months your tenancy will be reviewed, and a new tenancy will be put in place.

There are times when tenancy's will be offered through local housing associations. This happens when Slough Borough Council do not have a property to offer. The rules of the tenancy will be similar if not the same, as above.

When signing a tenancy, your housing officer will go through everything that is in it to make sure you understand what it is you are signing. Your YPA will always be present at a tenancy signing.

## Your home

If the tenancy is broken, the council has a right to withdraw the tenancy and take back the property.

If this was to happen, you will be considered making yourself intentionally homeless. If it did come to this, you would have to explore your options at the time with your YPA.

### **What you need to do if you want to buy the property you rent from the council?**

If you are interested in buying the property you are offered, then this is something we can discuss with the local council however not every property will be available to buy.

### **University accommodation during holiday periods**

If you are at university, you will need to apply to Student Finance England to receive a student loan to cover the cost of university rent.

You may require a guarantor and as your corporate parent, SCF will be your guarantor to secure you accommodation through the university.

Whilst you are at university up to the age of 21, we can pay your holiday accommodation rent if there is a need. You are responsible for your rent during term-time.

You need to discuss your accommodation options and plans in good time with your YPA so that arrangements can be made.

If you are living in a staying put arrangement, we will also continue to support these whilst you are at university.



# Your health

## Your Care Leaver Health Passport

This is provided to all young people who are/will be 18 on their next birthday and leaving care. It documents your health history, your health needs and its aim is to make sure that you have the information you need to manage your own health and wellbeing.

The summary is based on information available at the time of your last health appointment with either the paediatrician or a nurse.

Every care experienced young person is offered the opportunity to receive a copy of their health summary which will include basic details about your NHS number, medical history and immunisations. There are also useful links to websites to access additional information that you may find useful.

The information in it, is private and confidential. You might need this information in the future if you have any medical treatment or when you access health services that may ask for your history.

Don't forget, you can access <https://www.nhs.uk> for a range of support and advice about your health and wellbeing, including where to find local health services.

Your health summary can be translated into your first spoken language and delivered either electronically or by post.

The Children Looked After team has also developed the following website that contains links to useful general health advice – including how to access your own GP records: <https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/other-services/children-and-young-people-in-care/>

## General health advice

### NHS services

The NHS website provides trustworthy information and guidance on all aspects of health and health care.

There is advice on health conditions, medicines and healthy living. You can also find your local services as well.

### Know where to go when feeling unwell

If you are feeling unwell, but it is not an emergency or urgent, you should make an appointment with your GP.

You can also ask your local pharmacist for advice for many common minor illnesses such as diarrhoea, minor infections, headache, travel advice or sore throats.

111 is the NHS number to dial for urgent (non-emergency) medical concerns. NHS 111 is much more than a helpline – if you are worried about an urgent medical concern, you can call 111 to speak to a fully trained adviser.



# Your health

Depending on the situation, the NHS 111 team can connect you to a nurse, emergency dentist or even a GP, and can arrange face-to-face appointments if they think you need one; they can also assess if you need an ambulance and send one immediately, if necessary.

You should call 999 if you or someone else is seriously ill or injured, and their life is at risk.

## Doctors (GP)

A General Practitioner (GP) is a local doctor who treats common medical conditions and is qualified in general practice (also known as family medicine).

GPs also provide advice (including on diet and how to stop smoking, diet, can give vaccinations and more).

If you are not registered with a GP, your YPA can support you with finding one. If you move, you will need to inform your GP and sign up with a different local GP, if necessary. Your YPA can also help with this. You can find information on finding a GP and registering with one here: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp>

## Accessing your GP records

You can access your GP records through your GP. Your records include information about your health such as previous illnesses, allergies, vaccinations and medication you may have been prescribed.

## Patient companions

If you are admitted to Frimley Park Hospital or Wexham Park Hospital, there are volunteers in the hospital who can support you. You can ask a member of ward staff to contact the volunteer service for you.

## Prescriptions

The NHS is able to offer free prescription cards for (eligible) care leavers.

NHS Frimley are committed to supporting care leavers with their health and wellbeing and are providing financial support to pay for prescriptions. Please speak to your YPA or Care Leavers Team for further information.

## Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS)

If you're referred to a hospital or other NHS premises for specialist NHS treatment or diagnostic tests by a doctor, dentist or another primary care health professional, you may be able to claim a refund of reasonable travel costs under the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS). This is subject to certain conditions.

This link: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/help-with-health-costs/healthcare-travel-costs-scheme-htcs> explains who is eligible and how to claim.

## Pregnancy

# Your health

The NHS website has all the information you need if you are trying for a baby, are pregnant as well as information on labour and birth. Visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy>

## Care experienced young people who are parents

Becoming a parent will be an exciting but challenging time, however, your YPA will help to support you in planning for the arrival of your child and accessing post birth support.

Your YPA will be able to link in with pre and ante natal care services, housing and benefit agencies to ensure that you are provided with the care and support you need. Some of the services available to new and expecting parents include:

- <https://www.sloughfamilyservices.org.uk/kb5/sloughcst/directory/advice.page?id=BVrUSc8jKXg>
- <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/how-to-apply/> ('Healthy Start' vouchers if you are eligible as a pregnant woman or lone parent of a child aged less than 4 years)
- Baby banks
- Help paying for childcare: <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs>
- <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-low-income-scheme/hc2-certificates-full-help-health-costs> (support if you qualify for exempt from medical expenses)

## Dental health

Regular dental check-ups allow your dentist to see if you have any dental problems and helps keep your mouth healthy. Leaving problems untreated could make them more difficult to treat in the future, so it's best to deal with problems early, or, if possible, prevent them altogether. After your check up your dentist will recommend a date for your next visit. This could be between 3 months and 2 years.

You can find out more about dental checks here: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-teeth-and-gums/dental-check-ups> as well as find information on how to find an NHS dentist at: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>.

## Eye health

Children and young people under 16 and young people aged 16- 19 and in full time education are entitled to free eye tests. It is recommended that you should have an eye test every two years, however your optician may recommend more frequent tests.

You can visit the NHS website to find a local optician. The Children and Young People in Care Nurse can also support you in finding and registering with an optician.

## Immunisations

Throughout your life you will be offered a range of immunisations / vaccinations.

These are really important to help protect you from life-threatening illnesses. For further information, visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/NHS-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them>

# Your health

## Mental health

If you are having a tough time, it's important that you seek help from someone such as your GP, teacher, parent, carer, Social Worker or YPA.

There are a lot of services that are there to help young people and families with mental health problems. If you are experiencing anxiety, depression, stress, phobias or other mental health problems, it is important that you talk to someone as soon as possible.

## Where to go for help?

The NHS: Visit the NHS website to access NHS mental health services and find out where to get help at <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services>

**Talking Therapies:** Talking therapies, or psychological therapies, are effective and confidential treatments delivered by fully trained and accredited NHS practitioners. If you live in Berkshire and are 17 or over, you can access support through your GP or self-refer for support.

Up to the age of 18, the NHS also provides specialist mental health services if you are experiencing significant, severe, and complex difficulties with your mental health. There are also a range of other support services that you can turn to. This includes:

**Kooth:** An anonymous, confidential online counselling and emotional wellbeing support service, and can provide a safe and secure means of accessing support from a professional team of qualified counsellors.



Their doors are open to everyone in need of help, especially young people between 12 and 25 and they can be contacted on 01753 842 444.

**Samaritans:** A registered charity aimed at providing emotional support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope or at risk of suicide throughout the UK and Ireland.

The **Berkshire Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)** works with young people who are experiencing difficulties ranging from feeling low a lot of the time and worrying about lots of things, to hearing voices, having significant difficulties around eating, self-harming and even considering killing themselves. Your YPA or GP can also help you with how to refer.

Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust have created a transition pack to help young adults with their next steps after CAMHS. To access this, please click [here](#).

## Your education, employment and training

We would encourage you to make education a top priority as perhaps the most important thing to opening opportunities in adulthood.

We will encourage you to stay in education for as long as you need or want to, but this not necessarily mean staying in school as there are a number of different options whether that is going to college, starting an apprenticeship or going to university; or finding a job if that is your preference.



We have specialist workers in SCF's Virtual School and in Slough Borough Council's Young People's Service who can help you explore your options, help you to make applications and support you once you start education, training or work.

Your Pathway Plan will include any plans relating to your further education, training or employment ambitions.

The Slough Joint Parenting Panel endorsed the Slough Education, Employment and Training Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2017-2020.

### **Virtual School**

[The Virtual School](#) is a free and friendly service which supports care experienced young people up to the age of 25. They will support with any aspect of education, and funds reasonable education requests e.g., textbooks, equipment (such as safety boots for a construction site), to do study for a job such as transport to education interviews.

The Virtual School provides support that is tailored to your individual learning needs.



# Your education, employment and training

For some it might be about getting a first qualification in English or Maths; for others it might be about higher levels of education qualifications such as university, level 3 BTEC or A-levels, gaining a college place or finding out about apprenticeships at all levels and in all industries, or vocational learning e.g. catering.

The Virtual School offers drop-in evening sessions once a week during term time, staffed by friendly tutors who can advise you on study options (food and drink is also provided).

The Virtual School is available to talk about all things education. You can phone them on 01753 875920.

## Ready for Higher Education

There are a range of resources and opportunities to help you prepare for higher education, if that is what you would like to do:

- University visits – Brunel and Oxford (Virtual School)
- Information on Universities who provide free 'all year round' accommodation
- [Apprenticeships at levels 4-6](#)
- [The Times guide to higher and degree apprenticeships](#)
- [UCAS](#)
- [Unite Foundation Scholarships Scheme](#)
- [Buttle Trust support for higher education funding](#)
- [Helena Kennedy Foundation](#)
- [Social Mobility Foundation](#)
- [UKCISA \(International Student Advice and Guidance\)](#)

If you have a learning difficulty, health problems or a disability, you may be able to get help with the cost of Higher Education with the government's Disabled Students Allowance.

To find out more or to apply, go to: <https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa>

## Employment and training

If your preference is to move into work rather than continue with your education, there are lots of opportunities available and we will support you in accessing these.

We and the council (Slough Borough Council) have apprenticeships schemes which might fit with your plans for the future, and they might even lead to a permanent position.

The range of apprenticeships has broadened in the last two years with opportunities from business administration to youth work and customer services.

# Your education, employment and training

The council's website has more information on finding work locally including job clubs, individual guidance, even starting your own business.

There are a wide range of services available providing additional information on education, employment and training opportunities. These include:

- [National Careers Service](#) – 0800 100 900
- Job Clubs at venues across Slough
- Heathrow Careers Fair and taster visits
- [Morrisby!](#) Matching your skills to a career
- [Learning to Work](#) – range of activities including work experience, work ready activities, business insight days, careers and apprenticeship events, enterprise activities, information/advice/guidance.
- [Slough Young People's Service](#) Employment Day
- [Founders4Schools](#)
- [Adviza](#)
- [Slough Family Information Service](#)
- [Elevate Me](#)
- [Propel](#) – general information on higher education for care leavers
- [Prince's Trust](#)
- [Duke of Edinburgh Award](#)
- [ASDAN](#)
- Morgan Sindall Construction taster days – speak to the Virtual School to find out more
- [Cirdan Sailing Trust](#)
- [Path Hill Outdoors](#)
- [Adventure Plus](#)
- [JAC \(Just Around The Corner\)](#)
- [Youth Engagement Slough \(YES\)](#)
- [Together As One](#)
- [The Light](#)
- [Creative Academy](#)
- [Wilderness Foundation UK](#)
- [Catch 22](#)
- [Readipop](#)
- [Wycombe Wanderers Foundation](#)
- [Reading FC Community Trust](#)
- [National Citizen Service](#) – open to all 16 and 17 year olds to help build skills for work and life
- [The Challenger Trust](#) – character development activities helping young people to fulfil their potential

## Volunteering opportunities

- [UK Community Foundations](#)
- [Slough Council for Voluntary Service](#)
- [Braywick Heath Nurseries](#)



## Important documents

We all need important documents because without them we are unable to do simple things such as prove who we are, apply for a course, claim benefits or open a bank account.

We will help you get the important documents you need, giving you the original copies (if they are available) and keeping a copy in our records. It will be your responsibility to keep these documents safe.



### **National Insurance (N.I) Number**

When you are 15 years and 9 months old, your Social Worker will apply for a National Insurance Number.

You should ask your Social Worker if you do not receive this. You will need to keep this number safe as you will need it when applying for job or benefits.

### **Passport**

For those of you aged 18-25 years, we will support you with an application for a 10-year passport if you have not already received one through your Children Looked After Team.

Your passport will be your main form of identification and may be needed when you apply for a job, open a bank account or move home among other things and is required for travelling abroad.

It is very important that you keep your passport safe and if you do lose it or it gets stolen, you will not be able to leave the country and may be at risk of identity theft. You will also have to pay for a new one yourself if it needs replacing.

Our Care Leavers Team will fund the application for a travel document for any of our care experienced young people seeking asylum.

We will also contribute £75 towards the travel documents for former unaccompanied asylum seeking young people with refugee status or with Humanitarian Protection Status.

# Important documents

## Birth certificate

If you do not have a birth certificate, we will support you with applying for one.

You can use this alongside photo ID to open a bank account and it can also be used to obtain other forms of ID such as a passport.

If you lose it, you will need to pay for a new one.

## British Citizenship

If you are entitled to apply for British Citizenship before the age of 18, then we will support you to do this. You just need to tell us you want to apply.

## Access to your files

You can apply for access to your social care file from the age of 18.

If you would like to see your file, please make a request to your YPA who will make the appropriate arrangements. You can also visit our website here <https://www.sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk/who-we-are/information-requests> for more information or to fill out a form electronically.

Our Care Leavers Team encourages you to think about this decision very carefully as you may find your file difficult to read, however, they will offer you full support if you choose to do so.

## Provisional driving licence

This will provide you with a form of photo ID.

We will contribute up to a maximum of £300 towards your driving lessons following an assessment of your affordability to continue with the lessons and tests.

If you lose your provisional licence you will have to pay for a new one and if you do not turn up for driving lessons, we will discontinue our contribution.



Once you have passed your test, you must ensure you are insured to drive and your car is road worthy, should you choose to buy a car.

Please update DVLA if you move address, whether you have a provisional or full driving licence.



## Leisure opportunities

In partnership with Everyone Active, SCF offers free gym membership to you up to the age of 25.



Your Social Worker or YPA will need to complete the secure online referral form if you are under 16 and following this, you will receive an email detailing the next steps.

[Refer a care experienced young person \(16-25 years\)](#)



[What's included in your membership?](#)



If you do not live near an Everyone Active gym, we will provide you with a contribution of £20 a month towards the cost of a gym membership.

## Your voice, rights and participation

As a care experienced young person your experiences are the best to help us shape the services that you and future care leavers need.

We want to hear from you about your experiences and to help us understand what we can do, as corporate parents, to continually develop services.

You have a right to let us know how you feel about the services you are receiving or about progress with your pathway plan, for example. By sharing your lived experiences, you can help to shape care leavers services now and for the future.

There are also other opportunities for you to take part in and share your views such as helping us to recruit new Social Workers and Young Person Advisors or helping us update the Local Offer in the future.

If you'd like to get involved in your Care Council or any participation related activities, please contact us at: [YourVoice@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk](mailto:YourVoice@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk). To find out more about the groups and how you can get involved, visit <https://www.sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk/get-involved>

### Your individual views

You have a right to be involved in all decisions about your plans for leaving care and to see all information about you; this includes your files from when you were in care.

Your YPA is there for you to talk about how you are feeling and what services and support you need. You will receive a copy of each of your Pathway Plans so remember to always make sure that the views, feelings, support and plans you discuss with your YPA are in your plan.

You have a right to an independent advocate if you want to challenge decisions about the support we give you, information is available here: <https://www.sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk/children-and-young-people/about-advocacy>

We want you to feel part of society, and to ensure that as care experienced young people, you have opportunities to ensure that your voice is heard. We want you to be active members of society. We will encourage and help you to enrol on the Electoral Register so that you can vote in elections.

### Making a complaint or giving a compliment

Please let us know if you're happy, or if you want to complain about something. The Let Us Know page on our website will help you with what to do.

Please visit <https://www.sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk/who-we-are/complaints-and-compliments> to find out more. You can also email [complaints@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk](mailto:complaints@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk) or speak to the Complaints Manager on 01753 875825.

Did you know you can join our care experienced young persons information list to receive updates directly to your email or via WhatsApp? Talk to your YPA to find out more.

If you are aged 16 or 17 visit <https://www.sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk/children-and-young-people/having-my-say> to find out other ways you can have your say.

# GET INVOLVED



**A vision for you to be  
Happy, Safe & Loved,  
Thriving.**



Care Council for  
care experienced  
children and  
young people in  
Slough.





# GET INVOLVED



**For care experienced children and young people. Lots to participate in including:**

- **Activities and events**
- **Care Council meetings**
- **Co-design work**
- **Different projects – driven by you**

**Contact our Participation Officer Zainab for more info at:  
[yourvoice@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk](mailto:yourvoice@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk)**





## Useful contacts

### SCF Emergency Duty Number (EDT)

01344 241 999

### Finance

Benefits: <https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits>

### Legal and immigration matters

Solicitors: <https://solicitors.lawsociety.org.uk>

Refugee Council: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk>

### Further support for you

Care Leavers Association: <https://www.careleavers.com>

Care Leavers Foundation: <https://www.careleavers.com/care-leavers-foundation>

Care Leavers Covenant: <https://mycovenant.org.uk>

Become: <https://becomecharity.org.uk>

National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum: <https://members.leavingcare.org/landing>

Housing: <https://www.shelter.org.uk>

Coram Voice: <https://coramvoice.org.uk>

If you would like to request this guide in another language or format, please get in touch with us.





**SCAN ME**