



Sandwell
Children's Trust

V10

A GUIDE FOR CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

Your Local Offer

What you are entitled to by law,
and what other things Sandwell
can do to help you.

Moving into adulthood is a big
step, and we want to make sure
that you have all the information
you need, feel supported and most
importantly know where you can
go for help.

We hope that this information will
be useful to you.



Care Experienced
PORTAL

www.careleavers.sandwellvoice.co.uk

First things first!

At Sandwell we prefer the term 'Care Experienced Young Person' but you may find that some other people use the term 'Care Leavers'

It can be complicated to know what support you should be getting from Sandwell Children's Trust, so the first thing you should do is 'check your status' on the handy tool provided by **Coram Voice**.



You can visit their website at <https://coramvoice.org.uk>



An **eligible** care leaver means you are aged 16 or 17 and you are still in care.



A **relevant** care leaver means you are aged 16 or 17, but you left care on or after your 16th birthday.



A **former relevant** care leaver means that you are aged 18 up to age 25 and you were in care on or after your 16th birthday.



If you are a **qualifying** care leaver, you are aged 16-21 (up to age 25 if in education) and were in care for a short time on or after your 16th birthday.

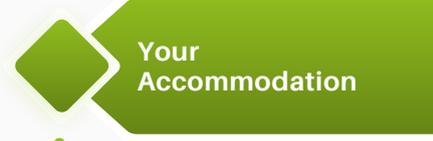
We have put these icons around some of the information to identify what help is available for you. You should always get some professional advice about your leaving care status and your rights. You can ask your personal advisor (PA) or social worker, an advice service, or Coram Voice.

If you have a disability

Children and young people with a disability have access to the **SEND Local Offer** which is tailored specifically to your needs.

Visit the Sandwell SEND Local Offer site at: <https://fis.sandwell.gov.uk/kb5/sandwell/directory/localoffer.page>

You can also contact them by email at: SEND_LocalOffer@sandwell.gov.uk



We want you to have a healthy and happy life where you keep active.

Your Health & Wellbeing

This section lists all the things we will do to make sure you are fighting fit!

FOR ALL AGES

- We will tell you about the places and organisations that can help you.
- A specialist nurse who works with care experienced young people is there for you when you need support and advice.
- We will tell you how you can access counselling services and mental health services, including specialist support from Barnardo's.
- You can use Kooth's online counselling service. It is a free, safe and anonymous way to ask for help: <https://www.kooth.com/>
- We will tell you where you can get help with childcare.
- You will be given a 'One Card' pass that gives you access to all leisure facilities operated by Sandwell Leisure Trust. This includes swimming pools, gyms and exercise classes. You can find out more on the Sandwell Leisure Trust website at <http://www.slt-leisure.co.uk>
- We will tell you where you can get sexual health advice including free contraceptives.
- If you are having your first baby, you will be able to access support for essential items up to the value of £70 – we call this a baby bundle. This is available to both mothers and fathers.



When you are 16-17 years old



- You will be offered an annual health assessment by our children we care for nurse.
- You will have access to DECCA who can support you if you think you have a problem with substance misuse: <https://www.ourguideto.co.uk>
- You will have access to Kaleidoscope, who can support you with any emotional health issues: <https://www.kaleidoscopeplus.org.uk>



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When you are 16-17 years old



- You will have access to DECCA who can support you if you think you have a problem with drug or alcohol misuse: <https://www.ourguideto.co.uk>
- You will have access to Kaleidoscope, who can support you with any emotional health issues. Your social worker will tell you about this.

When you reach 18 years old



- You will be provided with a 'Health Passport' so you know and understand your health history This is also available as an app for your smartphone, computer or tablet.
- We will help you register with a GP, dentist and opticians if you haven't already done this.
- You will have access to alcohol and substance misuse services if you need them. You can access these services by visiting: www.cranstoun.org/service/cranstoun-sandwell
- We will help you get help to attend hospital or doctor's appointments.
- If you need additional services as you become an adult, we will support you alongside Sandwell's Adults Services where the need for continuity of care exists.
- You will be able to access psychological therapies, counselling and low level therapeutic services. You can speak to your doctor about this or go through the Sandwell Wellbeing Hub.
- You will be eligible (can get) free prescriptions, you just need to contact your personal advisor to fill in the forms and be registered with a GP.



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We have high aspirations for you, you can use this section to find out about the ways that you can stay in education or get into work.

Education,
Training and
Career

FOR ALL AGES

- We will give you information and support you to apply for apprenticeships and other employment opportunities through Think Sandwell: www.sandwell.gov.uk/thinksandwell
- We will help you write your CV and get ready for interviews. If you need clothes for interviews we can help you with that too.
- We guarantee an interview for any job in Sandwell Children's Trust providing you meet the person specification.
- We are working with our partners to develop a Sandwell pledge for Care Experienced Young People.
- We will provide work experience opportunities at Sandwell Children's Trust.
- You can receive a £3000 bursary if you become an apprentice (Bursary is the name given to a grant that you receive to help you study). There are more details on the GOV.uk website
- We will help you celebrate your achievements and successes, and host an annual event for you to share this success with people that are important to you.
- We will support you if you want to do voluntary work or gain work experience.
- The Care Leaver Covenant links with local businesses that can offer employment and work experience opportunities. See: <https://mycovenant.org.uk>

When you are 16-17 years old



- You will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and Sandwell's Virtual School will help you to succeed in your learning: <https://lace.sch.life>
- We can help with transport costs when travelling to school, college, apprenticeships and job interviews.
- If you are in education or employment you can access a 16-18 photocard that means you can buy bus, tram and train tickets at child prices.
- You will have access to a dedicated Connexions advisor who will help you with career information and advice.



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If you are in further education (16-19)



- You can apply for a discretionary learner bursary from the education provider.
- We can support you to buy tools, equipment and clothes.

If you are in higher education (18-25)



- We can pay for your UCAS application to university.
- If you go to university we will give you a £3000 bursary to help with the costs of books, materials and equipment. This will be split across the number of years that the course lasts for. For apprentices who start their apprenticeships up to and including 31 July 2023, the bursary is a single payment of £1,000. (See note below)
- We can pay you an incentive allowance based on your attendance at university
- We can visit University open days with you or help with your travel costs.
- We can support you to move your things to and from university
- We will support you to claim the maximum entitlement from Student Finance for tuition fees and a maintenance loan.
- We will help pay your rent when you are on holiday from University.
- If you choose, you can keep your personal advisor up to the age of 25.
- Universities also offer bursaries for Care Leavers. You can see which universities offer this by visiting www.propel.org.uk
- We will host online 'Chill & Chat' sessions that you can join virtually
- We can contribute to the cost of your cap and gown hire when you graduate
- You may be eligible for an Enhanced household support fund payment



For an apprentice to be eligible for the care leavers' bursary, they must:

- be aged under 25 at the time they start their apprenticeship
- not have received the care leavers' bursary before
- be either an eligible child, a relevant child or a former relevant child



We want you to be financially secure, and make sure that you can manage your money now and in the future.

Help with your Finances

FOR ALL AGES

We will provide financial advice and debt management support.

We can help you if times get difficult, for example:

- Emergency gas and electric top up cards
- Food and drink
- Clothing allowances
- Emergency crisis payments

Your PA will help you with these.



When you are 16-17 years old



- We will help you open a bank account.
- If you are living independently (not with a foster carer or in a children's home) you will receive independent living allowance (ILA) of £71.93 per week.
- If you are in hospital or custody we will give you £12 per week pocket money.
- We will work with you to make sure that you are ready to claim benefits when you reach 18 years old.
- We will give you a birthday present and a festival allowance. This could be for an occasion you want to celebrate, like Christmas or Eid.

When you are 16-17 years old



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When you reach 18 years old



Help with your Finances

- Your PA can support you to claim the benefits you are entitled to. If there are any problems with your benefits we can help you sort these out.
- We will support you to access your Junior ISA and any other savings you may have.
- If you are in full time college and your attendance is over 90%, we will give you of £15 per week. If you are at University this will rise to £20 per week.
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Coaches will be able to support you with benefits, accessing employment and training opportunities.
- You won't have to pay any council tax until you are 25 years old if you are living in Sandwell. We are working with councils across the West Midlands to see how we can support Care Leavers that live outside of Sandwell, your PA will be able to talk to you about what this means to you.



Help with you setting up home



We will provide a leaving care grant of up to £3000. Your PA will help you use this to furnish your new home. It can be used for things like:

- Furniture.
- Washing machine, fridge.
- Television and licence.
- Pots & pans and other kitchen things.

We will pay for your first year TV License.

We will tell you about the other people that can help, like local charities who sell used and reconditioned furniture at cheap prices.

You can get cheaper home and contents insurance through our partners at the council.

We may be able to help you when you move home, you can speak to your PA about this.



We know that if we work together, things will be better for all of us. This section tells you about the ways that you can get involved to make life better for you now and in the future.

Participation
in Society

FOR ALL AGES

We will tell you about clubs and groups that you can join to meet other care experienced young people.

We will ask you how you feel about the way we run Sandwell Children's Trust and see if we can work together to make things better.

We will help you get advice and guidance to secure British Citizenship if you need to apply.

You can join our 'Young Ambassadors' Programme which will reward you for helping us to make our service better. The things you could be doing may include:

- Helping us recruit staff by being a part of the interview panel
- Helping us deliver induction sessions to new staff
- Delivering training to staff and foster carers
- Helping us put on events throughout the year
- Checking our work to make sure it's good quality
- Inspecting children's homes
- Talking to other care experienced young people and children we care for about their experiences

We will involve you in planning and invite you to events that celebrate your achievements. These could be things like Voice Fest or the FIYA Awards Celebration.

We may be able to provide you with a laptop or Chromebook to help you access the internet.

You may be eligible for a **discounted or free bus travel** with Transport for West Midlands.

Please speak to your PA for more details



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www.careleavers.sandwellvoice.co.uk



We will tell you all about the [Care Leaver Covenant](#) and the opportunities that can help you.



Participation
in Society



You will have the chance to help with election processes that Sandwell Council run. This could be when new councillors or MPs are elected.

You will have the opportunity to sit in the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) to represent other care experienced young people. The CPB is a meeting between young people and the partners that are working to make things better, like the Children's Trust, the council and Health.

We will invite you to help organise and enjoy events where you can meet other care experienced young people.

You will have the opportunity to take part in the [National Take Over Challenge](#).



The Forum for Independent Young Adults

We will invite you to join the [Forum for Independent Young Adults \(FIYA\)](#) which is a group that works with us to make things better.

If you join, we give you a reward when you attend and help you with transport costs to get to the meetings.



www.careleavers.sandwellvoice.co.uk

We have a monthly 'Chill & Chat' session held at our building at Broadwell Road, Oldbury. These take place on the last Wednesday of every month.

You have the right to see the information that we keep about you, including the files and records written about you when you were in care. Your PA can help you access this information if you would like to.

You will have free access to any events that Sandwell Council normally charge entrance for. These include the fireworks display and Christmas events.

We will also help you celebrate Christmas with a gift and invite to a Christmas party for care experienced young people.

When you are 16-17 years old



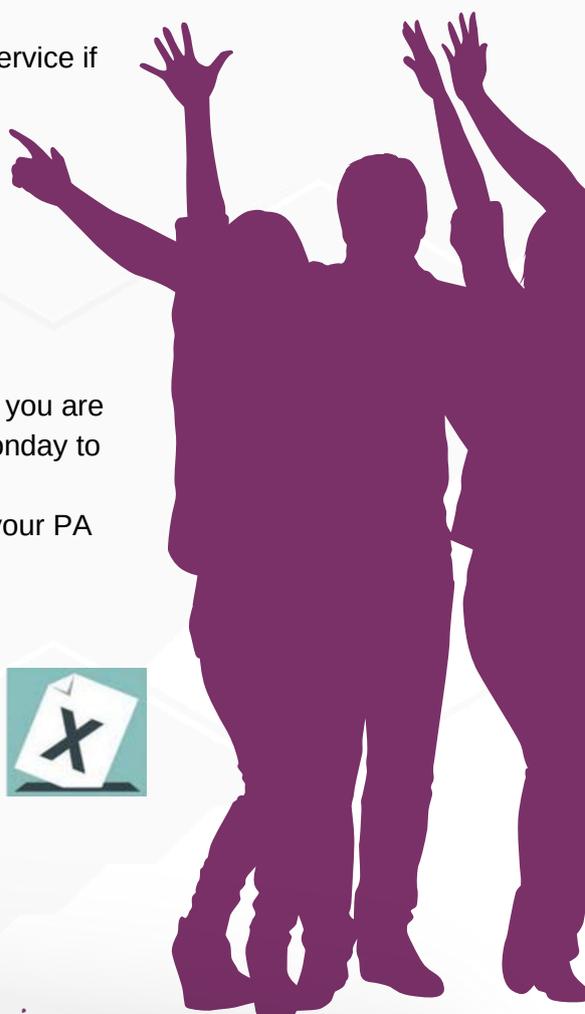
- We will help you apply for important documents before your 18th birthday, such as your passport, provisional driving licence, birth certificate and national insurance number
- We will help you access programmes run by the National Citizen Service if you need them

When you reach 18 years old



- We will help you to [register to vote](#)
- You could be entitled to an English National Concessionary Pass if you are registered disabled. This gives you free off-peak travel between Monday to Friday available at: <https://www.tfwm.org.uk>
- We will support you with a laptop and help to get online. Speak to your PA about this

YOUR VOTE MATTERS
MAKE SURE YOU'RE IN



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We know that it can be scary sometimes but there is always someone that can help you.

Relationships & keeping safe

FOR ALL AGES

We will help you keep in touch with people that are special to you or used to care for you in the past. You will have a Personal Advisor that replaces your social worker. They will be able to help with most things and should be the first person you talk to. You will be supported by lots of other people. There are too many to list, but they include:

- Staff at the virtual school
- Youth workers and College staff
- Connexions and career advisers
- Foster carers
- Housing and Health workers



You will receive a regular newsletter designed by Care Leavers for Care Leavers. It will have lots of information, advice and useful tips.

We can also help find and bring together people that care about you. These can be people you know well, people you have not seen for a while (like a former teacher or foster carer) and even relatives who you may have not met yet. This is called Lifelong Links, you can ask your Personal Advisor about this and get more info at www.careleavers.sandwellvoice.co.uk/relationships-and-keeping-safe

You can contact the Emergency Duty Team if you need to talk to somebody out of hours. They can be called on 0121 569 2355. If you tell them that you are a care leaver they will help you. You can receive support from a mentor. Your PA will be able to tell you about this.

When you are 16-17 years old



You will have a social worker who knows you and knows how you are feeling. You can have an independent visitor. They will be provided by an organisation called Sova. If you need to keep in touch with this person when you reach 18, we can help you do this

When you are 21 years old



When you turn 21 years old you have the choice of whether you would like to keep with your PA or step back from the service. If you chose to step back, we will continue to keep in touch annually. If you change your mind or need support, advice and guidance, you can contact us at any point up until your 25th Birthday.

When you are 18 years old



You will have a Personal Adviser who knows you and knows how you are feeling



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Being safe and secure where you live is important, this section tells you about the help and support you can get to make your own happy home.

Your
Accommodation

FOR ALL AGES

Your PA will give you information about the types of accommodation that may be available for you

- Supported lodgings
- Semi-Independent
- Independent Living
- Staying put

Helping you settle in

- We will pay for your first year TV License.
- We will provide you with a Leaving Care Grant fund to help you in setting up your home and buying furnishings.
- We will tell you who the link person is between the Children's Trust and the Housing Department at the council.
- We will support you if you have a housing crisis or think you are at risk of becoming homeless.
- We will give you £30 to help buy luggage if you need it to move your things and can assist your move practically.

**When you are
16-17 years old**



- We will make sure you have a safe home that meets your needs.
- We will work with you to make sure that you understand what your rights are and what you are entitled to.
- We can help you register with Sandwell council for your own tenancy, although you won't be able to have your own tenancy until you are at least 18 years old.
- You may be able to join our House Project or H.O.M.E Programme which supports young people to live independently. Speak to your Social Worker or Personal Advisor about this and they can introduce you to one of our Accommodation Hub Team workers also to explain more in depth depending on which route you are most interested in.



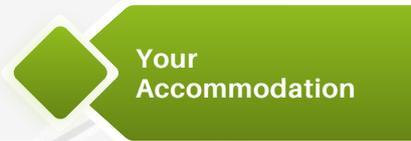
THE
HOUSE
PROJECT
SANDWELL



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Supported lodgings or semi-independent (16+)



There are a small number of supported living and semi-independent flats in Sandwell. These can be suitable for you if you are demonstrating that you are ready to live on your own. This can either be achieved through House Project under 18 or H.O.M.E programme over 18.

Your Social Worker or PA will talk to you about these options and the processes.

We have a small number of supported lodgings hosts available for young people who wish to develop independence in a household setting, you'd have your own bedroom within the home setting and someone who can support you to prepare for living independently as a young adult if you are not ready to live in supported accommodation or independent living yet.

Staying put 18-21



If you are living with foster carers, you may have the option to stay there after you turn 18. This can sometimes be until you reach 21.

If you and your foster carer choose for you to stay put, your PA will help you get ready for the time you do move out.

If you are going to university and are in foster care, we also support staying put arrangements for you to return home during breaks.

Independent living



This could be a council, housing association, or private landlord property. If you want to live on your own your PA will help, support and tell you where you can get other advice from.

We will work with Sandwell's housing department to support you in securing a tenancy. You will be treated as a 'band 1' priority which is the highest priority for bidding on properties.

If you are leaving custody, we will help you to find a suitable place to live.



Your Personal Adviser will be able to provide advice and guidance around your accommodation.



Becoming a parent is a life-changing experience – full of love, hope, and new beginnings.

Support for
Young Parents

It can also bring a wave of emotions and questions, especially if you're navigating this journey as a care leaver.

You might be wondering:

- “Am I doing this right?”
- “Who can I turn to for advice?”
- “Will I be judged or misunderstood?”
- “How do I balance everything on my own?”

These thoughts are completely normal. Being a young parent comes with unique challenges, and when you've grown up in care, it can feel like you're facing them without a safety net. But you're not alone – there are people who understand your journey – people who care, who listen without judgment, and who are ready to help you build the future you and your child deserve. Whether you need practical support, emotional reassurance, or just someone to talk to, we're here for you.

You've already shown incredible strength. Now, let's make sure you have the support to thrive.



How we will help you

- If you are having your first baby, you will be able to access support for essential items up to the value of £70 – we call this a baby bundle. This is available to both mothers and fathers.
- A specialist nurse who works with care experienced young people is there for you when you need support and advice. They also come along to our “Chill & Chat” drop in's
- We will tell you where you can get help with childcare.
- We will tell you where you can get sexual health advice including free contraceptives.
- You can come along to one of our “Chill & Chat” drop in's where you can access the peer support programme run by the Citizens Advice Bureau
- We will help you apply for Sandwell's household support fund



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When you come into the care of Sandwell Children's Trust you will be allocated a Social Worker from our specialist team. Your social worker will be your main contact of support and will oversee your care whilst you are cared for by us.

- We will always provide access to an interpreter for any meetings or appointment
- We will support you to access legal advice so that you can progress your application to remain in the UK.

Your Social Worker will introduce themselves to you and if possible, meet you the day you arrive in your new home with us, or within 3 days. You will be provided with contact details for your Social Worker and any other professionals who may be supporting you.

Your Social Worker will lead on assessing your needs and securing resources to ensure that you are well looked after.

We're here to support you

- We will look to support you into education so that you can build on your English skills and begin to think about your longer-term plans in the UK.
- We will arrange an Initial Health Assessment for you to ensure that all your vaccinations are up to date and see if there is any more support you need for your health. We will also book you initial dental and optical checks.
- We will make a Referral to Barnardo's to support you with your emotional health.
- We will support you to learn more about life in the UK and prepare for adulthood and living independently. This will include learning about budgeting, self-care, accessing services and maintaining a home.
- We would like to get to know your talents and interests and promote these. We would also like to get you involved in local events, clubs and activities.
- We understand how important it is to remain in contact with your family, we will encourage this if safe to do so and refer you on to [British Red Cross Family Tracing Services](#).

More information can be found in the care experienced portal by visiting:

<https://careleavers.sandwellvoice.co.uk/support-for-separated-migrant-young-people>



FORUM FOR INDEPENDENT YOUNG ADULTS



As a group we:

- Listen to what young people have to say about being in the care of Sandwell Children's Trust
- Tell decision makers at Sandwell Children's Trust about what works or doesn't work in our lives
- Involve young people in **events**, groups and meetings to **improve services** in the future
- Provide young people with the chance to have **their voices heard** by different professionals
- Have the opportunity to **make a difference** and change how services are run for the better
- Raise our concerns at Corporate Parenting Board
- Have a lot of **fun** too!

COME JOIN US

We meet every other Wednesday between 5pm and 7pm
at our building at Broadwell Road, Oldbury, B69 4HE



HAVE YOUR SAY!



VOICE_TEAM@SANDWELLCHILDRENSTRUST.ORG



07805 816 215 (TEXT OR CALL)



SPEAK TO YOUR PA



Useful Websites

Know Your Rights!

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

<https://careleavers.sandwellvoice.co.uk/know-your-rights/>

Care Leaver Covenant

National inclusion programme that supports care leavers aged 16-25 to live independently : <https://mycovenant.org.uk>

Propel

A guide to higher and further education for care leavers:

<https://becomecharity.org.uk/get-support/propel>

Connexions Sandwell

Careers guidance to young people who live or are educated in the Sandwell area: www.connexionssandwell.co.uk

Forum for Independent Young Adults

<https://careleavers.sandwellvoice.co.uk/get-involved/>

Virtual school for looked after children

Information and resources to help you with your wellbeing and work :

<https://lace.sch.life>

Help at Hand

Advice and assistance service for children living away from home and care leavers: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/help-at-hand/

Useful Contacts

Voice Team:

0121 569 5922

Childline – 24 hour advice

0800 1111

Coram Voice Advocacy Service

0808 800 5792

Independent Reviewing Officers

0121 569 4770

Sandwell Children's Trust

0121 569 3100

Care Experienced Team

0121 569 8565

Children we care for

0121 569 5922

Emergency Duty Service

0121 569 3100



Sandwell

Children's Trust

Sandwell Children's Trust HQ

Wellman Building, Dudley Road, Oldbury, B69 3DL

Tel: 0121 569 3100 | Web: www.sandwellchildrenstrust.org



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