



Dartford Borough Council

Care Leavers Policy

May 2024

Introduction

All Local Authorities have a legal obligation to support young people transitioning from care to independence. This policy has been written to outline our commitment at Dartford Borough Council to support young people on their journey from care to independence.

Dartford Borough Council recognises the obstacles and hurdles that Care Leavers encounter, acknowledging our significant role in aiding a successful transition. Whilst we do not deliver direct services to Care Leavers, it is important to us as an authority to secure our obligation to enhance the Kent Offer.

The Council has therefore identified opportunities under its authority to empower Care Leavers to realise their potential and make constructive choices that will in turn help shape their future. This policy details these opportunities.

It is the responsibility of Kent County Council (KCC) as the Corporate Parent to ensure Care Leavers are aware of what services are available to them and what to expect.

It is important to read this policy in conjunction with [Kent County Council Care Leavers Local Offer](#) and [Kent Cares Town](#).

Pathway

Every young person between 16 and 25 years of age that is in care or is a Care Leaver, will be provided with a Pathway Plan by Kent County Council.

The Pathway Plan (this will set out needs, views, future goals, and what support will be received) and will be started by the Social Worker when the Care Leaver turns 16 years of age;

The first Pathway Plan meeting will be chaired by the Independent Reviewing Officer and evaluated with the Care Plan and Personal Education Plan.

The Pathway Plan has information on how the best way for the Care Leaver 18+ Service will support the Care Leavers transition to independence and adulthood.

The Pathway Plan is written in such a way to ensure it meets the individuals' needs and will capture the views of the young person. Therefore, Care Leavers are encouraged to lead as much as possible. The plan will be regularly reviewed (minimum every 6 months) and will ensure goals and milestones are still correct and being met.

If the Care Leavers feels they could benefit from involvement in a Mentoring programme, The Young Lives Foundation can offer support to Care Leavers in Kent with a volunteer mentor who can support for a period of six months to meet the young person's goals. This is a referral based service, please visit [YLF](#) to make a referral.

Commitment to Care Leavers

Kent County Council will offer support to access the following in fulfilment of their responsibility as Corporate Parent;

- Accommodation
- Education, employment and training
- Finances
- Health
- Participation in society

The broader community shares a joint responsibility to aid vulnerable individuals. In line with Kent County Councils commitment, Dartford Borough Council will extend support as detailed below to those who reside in the borough of Dartford;

We will ensure that Care Leavers will always be listened to, treated with respect and kept informed of progress and decisions when contacting the council for support.

We will look to provide opportunities to support care leavers to become 'work ready' by encouraging and supporting applications for work experience, apprenticeships and, where appropriate, we will provide guaranteed interviews.

We will ensure any information provided to Care Leavers by the Council is clear and easy to understand.

We will provide translation or interpreter support, if required, when language is a barrier.

We will support Care Leavers to speak with the appropriate organisations, agencies or community groups for ongoing support such as budgeting advice, foodbank provision, health and wellbeing support.

Our Offer of support to Care Leavers

Health:

We will provide the Care Leaver with a Care Leaver Saver card for use at Fairfield Leisure Centre, which has a mission to create active places and healthy people for communities to thrive. With the saver card, Care Leavers can receive discounted rates to activities such as;

- Swimming
- Group workout classes
- Badminton
- Table tennis

For information, please visit <https://www.placesleisure.org/centres/fairfield-leisure> or contact Fairfield Leisure Centre on **01322 421166**

It is important to register with a GP, the Personal Adviser at Kent County Council can help support Care Leavers with the registration.

A General Practitioner (GP) treats common medical conditions and can refer young people to other services if required.

Housing:

We will provide Care Leavers with the opportunity to apply to join the housing register at the age of 18 years old.

Care leavers (within the meaning of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000) that are currently accommodated by their Local Authority in the Dartford area, will be entitled to apply to join the Housing Register, at age 18. This is regardless of the young person's previous local connection to the area and where the individual has been identified as being ready to move on the Pathway Plan with the Personal Advisor. Care leavers will automatically be placed in priority Band B (for households with a high priority to move).

To apply, please visit the link to the [Register for social housing](#) page.

There are different kinds of housing with support and Care Leavers will have a say on where they wish to live once they have left care. The social worker and personal adviser will visit and where the young person chooses to live will be agreed in the Pathway Plan.

If the young person is at university and requires help with the cost of accommodation during holiday time, the Care Leavers 18+ Service will support with this.

Staying on with foster carers is referred to as staying put and Care Leavers are able to stay with the foster carer until the age of 21, if agreed. This will not affect the young person's ability to obtain a permanent tenancy and there are a range of different kinds of supported housing options that are available depending on the need of the young person.

For more information, please visit the link to the [Kent Housing group advice](#).

Financial Support:

We will provide 100% Council Tax concession through discretionary grant funding for Care Leavers until 25 years of age.

Kent County Council cover the council tax up to the age of 21 years old.

Definition of a Care Leaver for the purposes of Council Tax concession- A Care Leaver is aged at least 18 years but not yet 25, was looked after by a Local Authority, or at any subsequent time after their 16th birthday.

To apply, please email revenues@dartford.gov.uk

Kent County Council may provide the young person with additional financial assistance, although the amount of money provided will depend on age and the accommodation where the young person resides.

The Personal Adviser will support the Care Leaver to understand any information if this remains unclear. If the young person is assessed as not having the capacity to manage their money (after a Mental Capacity Assessment), the 18+ Care Leavers Service will identify who should look after finances on behalf of the young person and support them make financial decisions.

For more information, please visit [Kent Cares Town](#)

Communication:

We will ensure that Care Leavers receive and understand any information provided to them by Dartford Borough Council. The Council can provide information translated into a preferred language if required and in alternative formats including large print, Braille and audio tape.

To apply, please contact the Customer Services Team on **01322 343434**. Calls are welcome via NGT Relay.

Having a voice and knowing individual rights is important when you are a Care Leaver. Support workers at Kent County Council have a duty to listen to young people and involve them in decisions that are made.

For more information, please visit [Kent Cares Town](#).

Employment:

We will offer an interview to Care Leavers if they meet the minimum criteria for the roles being recruited to by Dartford Borough Council. Care Leavers must advise Dartford Borough Council of their Care Leavers status at the time of application.

A Care Leaver will have been looked after by children services for:

- At least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 to 16 years old;
- Or, has spent 13 weeks cumulatively after their 16th birthday under the care of a Local Authority;
- Have been subject to a Special Guardianship Order and was in care before the order was made

In cases where the minimum criteria for securing an interview are not met, we will consider offering a work experience placement instead.

Kent Cares Town can provide a one-time offer of £50 to purchase clothes for an interview if the young person is aged between 18 and 21 years old.

The Personal Adviser or Support Worker can be contacted to support the young person with applying for a job or preparing for an interview. Care Leavers will be supported with interview practise, assisting with applying for jobs, creating a CV and/or personal statement.

A DWP Work Coach from Job Centre Plus will also be able to support the young person to look and apply for work if the young person is in education or employment.

If the young person is claiming Universal Credit, a DWP Work Coach will similarly support with finding a job.

Kent County Council now also guarantees Care Leavers the opportunity to be interviewed for any jobs applied for where the minimum entry requirements have been met.

For more information, please visit [Kent Cares Town](#)

Point of Contact:

We will ensure staff in key service areas have an understanding of the challenges and barriers Care Leavers may face. These officers will be known as 'Care Leaver Champions' who will support with any queries relating to Dartford Borough Council's offer of support.

Please email careleaversupport@dartford.gov.uk