

Sandwell's Local Offer to Care Leavers

This local offer is currently being designed by young people. The content is always being added to, so please keep checking back.

What is the Local Offer?

The Local Offer tells you what you are entitled to by law, and what other things Sandwell can do to help you.

Why is this so important?

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.

Who is this information for?

Young people who have been in care in Sandwell and are now aged between 16-25.

Who has helped us put it together?

Care Leavers in Sandwell have worked with the Trust and our partners – including health, the police, DWP, Children's Society and education providers.

How should I use this information?

Your Personal Adviser will be able to help you understand our Local Offer. As you read through, remember this key:

- If it has a ○ next to it, we must provide it by law (we call these statutory support)
- If it has a 🖱 next to it, we are choosing to provide it (we call this additional support)

We have put the information into groups, so you can find what you need. To try and make things even easier we have told you what support is available for different age groups.

Before we start

There are some things that we wanted to explain before getting into the detail

- You will be given a **Personal Adviser (PA)** when you are 16. They will support you until you are 25 and should be the first person you ask for help or advice.
- You may have a **social worker** until you are 25, but only if you are vulnerable or need extra help.
- People that are important to you will help you write a **Pathway Plan** which sets out your needs, views and future goals. Your PA will keep checking this plan with you to make sure it's up to date.
- The **Leaving Care Team** will always be there to help you and give you more information. Along with your PA we are all here to help you get ready to live independently.
- Sandwell Children's Trust and all its partners are your **Corporate Parents**. This means that we will do everything we can do to give you the opportunities that other children and young people get. Our partners – like health services, education, the police and the voluntary sector – will keep working together to make this local offer better.
- There is a **Care Leaver's Charter** which we think is important. We promise:
 - To respect and honour your identity
 - To believe in you
 - To listen to you

- To make sure you have the information you need
- To always support you
- To find you a home
- To be your lifelong champion

Health & Wellbeing (Fighting fit!)

We want you to have a healthy and happy life where you keep active. 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. These include:
 - 👉 **Child Line** 0800 1111 which provides 24-hour support.
 - 👉 **Kooth** (www.kooth.com) which is an app that provides safe, anonymous counselling. This is mainly for young people up to the age of 19, but they will help you if you are up to 25 and have additional needs.
 - 👉 **Beam** (www.childrenssociety.org.uk/beam/sandwell) which is a wellbeing service.
 - A **specialist nurse** works with Care Leavers to give support and advice.
- We will tell you how you can access counselling services and mental health services.
- 👉 We will tell you where you can get help with childcare.
- 👉 We will give 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 at www.slt-leisure.co.uk
- 👉 We will tell you where you can get sexual health advice including free contraceptives.

When you are 16-17

- 👉 You will be offered an annual health assessment by our Looked After Children (LAC) nurse.
- You will have access to DECCA who can support you if you think you have a problem with substance misuse.

When you reach 18

- 👉 You will be provided with a 'Health Passport' so you know and understand your health history.
- 👉 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. These are called Swanswell (www.swanswell.org) and Aquarius (www.aquarius.org.uk).
- 👉 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.

Web: www.sandwellbeing.co.uk

Relationships and Keeping Safe (Stronger Together!)

This section is all about the support you can get. We know that it can be scary sometimes but there is always someone that can help you.

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 PA (from 18) 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
 - 👍 College staff
 - 👍 Connexions and career advisers
 - 👍 Foster carers
 - 👍 Housing workers
 - 👍 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.
- 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

- You will have a social worker who knows you and knows how you are feeling.
- You will 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.

Participation in Society (Getting involved!)

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 Care Leavers now and in the future.

For All Ages

- 👍 We will tell you about clubs and groups that you can join to meet other Care Leavers and 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.
- 👍 We will develop a Young Consultants 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
 - 👍 Delivering training to staff and foster carers
 - 👍 Checking our work to make sure it's good quality
 - 👍 Inspecting children's homes
 - 👍 Talking to other Care Leavers and looked after children about their experiences.
- 👍 We will involve you in planning and invite you to events that celebrate your achievements. These could be things like:
 - 👍 Care Leavers week
 - 👍 Care Leavers festival
 - 👍 The SHAPE annual event.
- We will tell you all about the Care Leaver's Covenant and the opportunities that can help you.
- We will invite you to join the Care Leaver's Forum which is a group of Care Leavers working with us to make things better. If you join, we give you a reward and help you with transport costs to get to the meetings.
- 👍 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 be rewarded for this.
- You will have the opportunity to sit in the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) to represent other Care Leavers. 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 Leavers.
- 👍 You will have the opportunity to take part in the National Take Over Challenge.
- 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.

When you are 16-17

- We will help you apply for important documents before your 18th birthday, such as your passport, provisional driving license, birth certificate and national insurance number.
- 👍 We will help you access programmes run by the National Citizen Service if you need them.
- 👍 If you wish to learn to drive, we will tell you about the funding you can access to take driving lessons. You will need your provisional driving license and to have passed a driving theory test. Your PA will tell you how we can help you to do this.

When you reach 18

- 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. www.networkwestmidlands.com/tickets-and-passes
- 👍 You will get a birthday card from the Chief Executive of the Children's Trust every year until you are 25.

Education, Employment & Training (Keeping Busy!)

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.

For all ages

- You will have a dedicated Connexions adviser who will help you with careers information and advice.
- We will give you information and support you to apply for apprenticeships and other employment opportunities through Think Sandwell and Connexions.
- 👍 We will help you 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 Leavers.
- 👍 We will provide work experience opportunities at Sandwell Children's Trust.
- You can receive a £1000 per year bursary if you become an apprentice. (Bursary is the name given to a grant that you receive to help you study).
- 👍 We will help you celebrate your achievements and successes.
- 👍 We will support you if you want to do voluntary work or gain work experience.

When you are 16-17

- You will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and Sandwell's Virtual School will help you to succeed in your learning.
- 👍 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.

If you are in Further Education (16-19)

- 👍 You can apply for a discretionary learner bursary from the education provider.
- 👍 If you are not able to get the discretionary bursary we can give you a bursary of up to £1200 per year. You must be doing at least 16 hours per week.
- 👍 We can support you to buy tools, equipment, clothes or a laptop.

If you are in Higher Education (18-25)

- If you go to university we will give you a £2000 bursary to help with the costs of books, materials and equipment.
- 👍 We can visit University open days with you or help with your travel costs.
- 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.
- 👍 Universities also offer bursaries for Care Leavers. You can see which universities offer this by visiting www.propel.org.uk

Accommodation (Where you live!)

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.

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.
- 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.

When you are 16-17

- 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.

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 staying put, we will help you claim benefits to pay your rent.

Supported Lodgings or Semi-Independent Living (16+)

- There are a small number of supported living and semi-independent flats in Sandwell. These can be suitable for Care Leavers that have left care and are not ready to live independently.
- Your PA will talk to you about these options.

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

* For the financial help we will give you when setting up your new home including help with council tax, please see the page called **Finance (Money Matters!)**

Finance (Money Matters!)

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

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

- 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 a rent allowance.
- If you are in hospital or custody we will give you £10 per week pocket money.
- We will support you to put your benefit claim in 6 weeks before your 18th birthday to make sure it is ready in time to start when you turn 18.
- 👍 We will give you a birthday present and a festival allowance.

When you reach 18

- 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.
- 👍 We will give you an educational incentive if you are in full time college 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 21 years old. When you reach 21, you will need to pay half (50%) of your council tax 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 setting up home

- We will provide a leaving care grant of up to £2000. 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 tell you about the other people that can help, like local charities who sell used and reconditioned furniture at cheap prices.
- 👍 We can help you with transport when moving home.

Other useful things, places and people

- Your PA is part of The **Leaving Care Team**. You can visit them at:
Unity Walk, Tipton, DY4 8QL or by calling 0121 569 2201
- The **Mind of My Own** App helps you to express your views, get involved in meetings and make better decisions with the people that are supporting you.

Web: www.mindofmyown.org

- Join the Sandy Wells **Facebook** group to get to know a wider group of Care Leavers
Search for Sandy Wells on Facebook.
- The Rees Foundation provides support to Care Leavers, it doesn't matter if you are older than 25. Your PA can tell you about them and the help they can give you.

Web: www.reesfoundation.org

- **Children's Society** provide an **Advocacy Service**. They are impartial, and not connected to the Children's Trust.

Web: www.childrensociety.org.uk

Tel: 01902 877 563 or Freephone 0800 652 3839

Your PA can give you a leaflet

- You can call **Child Line** for free any time on 0800 1111
- You can make a **complaint, comment or compliment** about the Children's Trust by calling 0121 569 7867. Your PA can give you a complaints leaflet if you would prefer.
- You can call the **Emergency Duty Team** 'out of hours' (this is between 6pm and 8am) on 0121 569 2355
- **The Participation Team** are always happy to talk to you. They run the Care Leaver's Forum and other exciting events. You can call them on 0121 569 5922 or send an email to participation_team@sandwellchildrenstrust.org

These other websites might be useful, but your PA will always be able to help you.

- Job Centre Plus www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus for advice on employment
- Citizens Advice www.citizensadvice.org.uk
- Frank for advice on substance misuse www.talktofrank.com or 0300 123 6600
- National Youth Advisory Service (NYAS) www.nyas.net