

North Somerset Council Children's Services

Local offer for care leavers

2025 to 2026



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1. Introduction

The local offer for care leavers tells you about the support we offer to care leavers to help your journey toward a healthy, happy, independent adulthood.

In North Somerset Council, we are committed Corporate Parents. This means we will give you the care, support, and opportunities that a parent would offer. We want you to do well now and in the future, and we will support you to achieve this.

We understand that leaving care can be a difficult time for many young people. It can be scary and feel like you are suddenly on your own. We want you to know you are not alone and you are important to us.

The offer will include services and support for:

- education, work and training - to achieve your goals in life and career, and help with expenses
- housing and living independently – supporting you to find a place to live, and help with bills and housing costs
- health and wellbeing – keeping physically healthy through GP and dental checks and looking after your mental health
- building relationships and getting involved – help to participate in decisions about your care, getting involved in community organisations and charities, and supporting your identity
- managing your money – financial support that we offer, and how to access support independently
- getting extra support – whether you are becoming a parent, have an additional need or disability, or are an unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person, there is a range of extra help you can get
- support after 21 – what our support for you looks like after your 21st birthday

This document contains lots of information so we can capture all that is available to you, but if you'd like to read something shorter, take a look at our Care Leavers Local Offer Booklet or visit our website. We will also explain this offer to you in person to help you understand the services and support that you can get.

In North Somerset, 'Care Leaver' is as a protected characteristic. This means that the people who support you must make sure that you are protected from discrimination across housing, health, education, relationships, and in the criminal justice system.

2. Am I a care leaver?

To get the support in our offer, you must have been in care for at least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 16 (including your 16th birthday) or for 13 weeks after your 16th birthday.

If you are between 21 and 25 years old, we will still work with you, but you have more freedom to choose how much support you want to get from us. Even if you choose not to be involved with us, you can still return to us before your 25th birthday to ask for more support.

Eligibility for a care leavers service can be explained by a social worker or personal advisor who can help you understand whether you qualify for support and what level of support you're entitled to. [You can also take the online quiz on the Coram Voice website to understand your care leaver status.](#)

3. Our support for you

For care leavers aged between 16 to 17 years old, we will give you accommodation and a social worker.

For care leavers aged between 18 to 20 years old, we will work with you to develop a pathway plan for your support.

For care leavers aged between 21 to 25, we will still offer you support and keep in touch with you, but you may decide you want to be more independent. Read our section on 'Support after you turn 21' for more information.

You have rights when you leave care. This includes:

- The right to a personal advisor
- The right to a suitable place to live
- The right to a good education
- The right to be heard and involved in all decisions about your care
- The right to see all information about you and your care
- The right to financial support
- The right to an independent advocate

Your pathway plan

Care leavers have told us that their pathway plan “helped me develop where I want to be at different times in my life”

Your pathway plan sets out your needs and future goals. It tells you exactly what support you will receive from us. Your first pathway plan will be created with you before you turn 16.

We review your pathway plan every six months with you so that it is kept up-to-date and gives you the support you want and need.

You will be involved in making your pathway plan, and your wishes and views will be recorded in the plan. Making your plan will also involve discussions with important people in your life.

A pathway plan will include:

- your living and accommodation needs
- your education, employment, and training needs
- any physical or emotional health needs you have
- your financial needs
- what you need to develop independence skills, healthy relationships, and a good support network

Your social worker or personal advisor will talk about what extra support you may need. You might, for example, need extra support because:

- you have special educational needs or a disability
- you are seeking asylum and your immigration status is unclear
- you are in or leaving custody or you have had contact with the criminal justice system
- you are a young parent
- you are going through a difficult time in your personal life

For more information, read our [‘Getting extra support’](#) section.

Your leaving care personal advisor

Care leavers have told us it is “good to have one person to support in a non-judgemental way” and “the advice and support allowed me to see what I was entitled to as a care leaver”

Your personal advisor will build a relationship with you and anybody you identify as important to you. They will advise, support, challenge and guide you to be the

best person that you can possibly be. They will look out for you and advocate for you. They will also step in if you are in trouble or difficulty. You may not always agree with them, but that is ok, because they will always work with you to ensure that you are safe and supported.

You will have a personal advisor who can support you until you are 25. When you turn 21, our support changes slightly because we start to find ways to help you live a little more independently. You can choose to opt out of our support when you turn 21, but you can opt back in at any time until you are 25. Read our section on 'Support after you turn 21' for more information.

Financial support

We will support you with money for a range of things like your:

- education
- housing and moving costs
- health
- pregnancy
- bills and council tax
- driving lessons
- I.D documents
- discounted travel

You can find information about this support in the relevant sections of the local offer. For example, if you need help with student loans, take a look at the 'Education, employment, and training' section.

Most of this support is available to you until you turn 21 years old. From there, we will help you with supporting yourself financially by accessing work, grants, benefits, and other financial support you are entitled to.

There is also support offered in the 21-25 years old range. We will talk about what your financial needs will be to help you achieve your goals and any financial support packages will be clearly laid out in your pathway plan.

4. Who to speak to for help and advice

Your personal advisor

Once you turn 18, in most cases, you'll no longer have a social worker. Instead, you will have a personal advisor.

Your personal advisor can help with everything in this offer. The main things they will do are:

- be involved in understanding your needs and preparing your pathway plan so that you can get a good idea of what you want to do with your life
- review your pathway plan at least every six months to help you to stay on track and achieve the things you want from life
- help you think about your future and independence skills
- help you find the right place to live
- talk about whether we can get help from our partners in housing, health, and other areas
- provide financial assistance towards and activity twice a year that you and your personal advisor can do together
- liaise with youth offending services and probation if needed

We have put together a list of useful contact details. If there is anything you do not understand or need further information about then please speak to your personal advisor.

Mentoring and advocacy

You also have the right to an independent advocate, which we will give you through our mentoring and advocacy service, Junction21. You can ask your personal advisor to put you in touch, or you can contact them by email: Junction21@n-somerset.gov.uk

National services and support

[Become](#) is the national charity for children in care and care leavers.

[The Care Leavers Association](#) is a charity for improving lives of care leavers.

[The Children's Commissioner](#) promotes and protects the rights of children.

[The Rees Foundation](#) provides small grants to care leavers aged 18 to 25.

The [Care Leavers Covenant](#) is national inclusion programme that supports care leavers aged 16 to 25 to live independently.

[Propel](#) provides information about the available support for care leavers at college and university.

[Shelter](#) provides advice and support with housing issues or homelessness.

[Citizens Advice](#) provides information about benefits, employment, and housing.

[Coram Voice](#) supports children and young people to hold to account the services that are responsible for their care.

[The National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum](#) is a forum of over 125 local authority leaving care teams working together to share good practice and improve services and support for care-experienced young people.

[The National Youth Advocacy Service \(NYAS\)](#) is the leading national provider of advocacy for young people in care.

[Childline](#) is a free, private and confidential service for anyone under 19 to talk to someone about any issues they are going through.

[Money Helper](#) offers free and impartial help with money and pensions.

Benefits

Visit GOV.UK for information about benefits you might be eligible for including:

- [Child Benefit](#)
- [Job Seekers Allowance](#)
- [Universal Credit](#)

Call the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on [0800 169 0310](#) if you have an enquiry about existing benefits you receive.

Call HM Revenues & Customs (HMRC) on [0345 300 3900](#) if you have a question about taxes.

Emergencies

In an emergency call 999 if you need help from police or ambulance services. In life-threatening situations, you can also go to A&E at your nearest hospital.

In non-emergency situations, call the police on 101 and NHS on 111. [Urgent treatment centres](#) can help with many of the most common problems people go to A&E for.

Access to your social care records

When you are 18 you will be able to see all the records that North Somerset has kept about you and your care. You can talk to your personal advisor about how to do this and the support you will need to read and understand the information.

Making a complaint or compliment

You have a right to be involved in all decisions about your care, and the right to tell us how you feel about our services.

If you are not happy with something, you can talk to your personal advisor and they will try to help you. You can also use Mind of My Own to express your concerns. If you want to talk to a manager instead of your personal advisor, ask them to put you in touch with “a team manager for the Care Leavers Team”.

If this doesn't work, you can make a complaint about social services: [complaints about social services - North Somerset Council](#)

5. Managing your money and getting help

Care leavers have said "Don't be afraid to talk to your personal advisor about a bill you get that you don't understand."

When you leave care, we will support you by helping you get work and access benefits, grants, and loans. Your personal advisor can discuss your financial needs to help you achieve your goals and any financial support packages will be clearly explained in your pathway plan.

Your personal advisor will also offer support and give you advice around managing money. They will help you prioritise your wants and needs so that you are able to budget and not get into debt.

If you do get into debt, please let your personal advisor know as soon as possible. They will be able to support you and connect you with other professionals, if needed, to help you clear your debt.

We have explained some of the support you can get in this section. You can also find information about other financial support in relevant sections of the local offer. For example, if you need help with student loans, take a look at the ‘Education, employment, and training’ section.

Universal Credit

You will be eligible for Universal Credit or Employment Support Allowance (if you are Disabled) if you are:

- between 18 and 25 years old
- not in full-time education
- actively seeking or available for work or working less than 16 hours per week

You will be eligible to claim Universal Credit equivalent rates if you are:

- between 16 and 19 years old
- in full-time education (excluding university)
- and either a parent, not living with a parent or a refugee

Care leavers can continue to receive Universal Credit until they are 22 if the claim is made before they turn 21 and they are still in full-time education.

Housing Benefit

You can get help with your rent if you:

- live away from family
- have a low income
- less than £16,000 in savings

Care leavers eligible for Housing Benefit should be entitled to the single room rate up to the age of 22.

Discounted travel

If you're a care leaver aged 18-25 and live in the West of England, you can claim free bus: <https://travelwest.info/tickets-travelcards/free-bus-travel-for-care-leavers/>

If you live outside of this area, we'll help you find a similar scheme or offer you financial support to make sure you can get where you need to go.

Identification Documents (ID)

Once you turn 16, you will need formal documents to access things like benefits and employment. We will pay for and support you in getting identity documents:

- birth certificate
- passport
- provisional driving license

Savings

When you come into care, your social worker will have planned so that money can be saved for you.

You will be able to access these savings when you reach 18. Any savings you have built up will be discussed as part of the pathway planning process so that when you turn 18 you will have had time to think about how you might want to spend it.

Accommodation costs, moving costs, and setting up home

Whatever type of accommodation that you are living in, or move into at 18, you can claim benefits to help with accommodation costs. This includes if the plan is for you to 'stay put' in your foster family.

When you move into your long-term accommodation you may get a setting up home grant to help buy things you need.

Read more in the ['Finding a place to live'](#) section.

Council Tax

We will support you with your Council Tax bill until your 25th birthday.

If you live in North Somerset, you must register for Council Tax and then you will be supported to claim your exemption. Your personal advisor will work with you to do this.

If you live outside of North Somerset, you will have to register for Council Tax in the area that you live. Your personal advisor will then help you to claim any local exemptions that you may be entitled to. North Somerset Council will pay any difference left on your council tax bill.

If you live with someone who is not a care leaver, then exemptions will only apply to your part of the Council Tax bill, not theirs.

Birthday and special events

We will give you birthday money up until your 21st birthday.

- 16, 17 and 18 years - £60
- 19, 20, and 21 years - £50

We will support you to celebrate important festivals throughout the year such as Christmas, Eid, Diwali or Hanukah. You will receive £60 per year up until your 21st birthday to spend on celebrating religious events.

If you also have a celebration event like a wedding or graduation, we will also send you money as a gift.

We will also give you a home support voucher of £50 at Christmas from the age of 18 up until your 25th birthday.

Driving

We will support you by funding and helping you to apply for:

- a provisional driving license
- your theory test
- up to 10 driving lessons

Transitional payment for Universal Credit

When you apply for Universal Credit for the first time you may have to wait up to six weeks to receive your money. To make sure that you are not struggling financially, we will support you by giving you up to £70 a week for up to six weeks from the date of your claim.

Emergency financial assistance

Your personal advisor will support you if you find yourself in an emergency financial situation, and if this keeps happening, we will help you with budgeting.

You may be able to get additional support through the welfare provision scheme. You can apply twice in a 12-month period. This can help you with furniture, white goods, gas and electricity, food, clothing, footwear and travel.

You can check eligibility and apply through our [Welfare provision scheme webpage](#). Your personal advisor can also help you apply.

Funding from grants and other schemes

You could also apply for additional funding from grants and other schemes available.

[The Spark Foundation](#) provides grants for care leavers to get white goods, bikes and driving lessons.

[The Rees Foundation](#) provides financial help for care leavers such as crisis payments or to support with education:

[The Capstone Care Leavers Trust](#) provides grants for former relevant care leavers to get:

- household items
- training courses
- education equipment
- and driving lessons

[Healthy Start](#) - Young parents can apply for Healthy Start vouchers to help purchase milk and fresh/frozen fruit and vegetables

[Care to Learn](#) - Young parents under 20 and in full-time education can apply for the Care to Learn scheme to help with childcare costs while they study.

[Buttle](#) can provide packages of support for children and young people including:

- items and activities to support learning and development
- clothing and uniforms
- social and leisure activities
- and household items not available from other sources

For any further information, you can speak with your allocated social worker or personal advisor. Alternatively, you can access free advice from [Citizens Advice](#).

6. Education, employment, and training

Care leavers have said, "Having that financial support from the council and not having to worry about working alongside university gave me extra time to study."

It can be hard to know what education, employment, or training you would like to do. We will help you think about your journey, your interests, and aspirations.

Our education, employment, and training mentor can help you with one-to-one support for your CV, interviews, and careers advice. The mentor holds a drop in once a week. Find out more on our [Care leaver events page](#).

If you have an Education Health and Care Plan, your plan will continue when you leave care and throughout your education, employment, and training until you reach the goals in the plan, or until your 25th birthday.

When you are 18, we hope that you will have an income from work or be studying and receiving student finance. We can help you look for work or applying for student finances if you choose to keep studying.

If you are not in education, employment, or training, we will make sure you have a plan to move forward and find the right option for you.

When you do start work, we will make sure you have enough money to pay your bills and travel costs until you get your first salary. We will also help you if your job ends as you might need some support while waiting for your next job or your universal credit claim to start.

Employment

Preparing for employment and starting a new job is a big achievement. We want to make sure that you have everything you need for this.

We will support you with your first move to employment with help for:

- suitable clothes for interviews up to £100
- transport costs to interviews and school/college/university
- support to buy specific equipment or uniform like books or health and safety clothing
- transitional payments when there is a gap between your benefits and your first wage
- guaranteeing you an interview for our jobs and apprenticeships

Job opportunities

[Graduating Care South West \(GCSW\) website](#)

[Care Leaver Covenant website](#)

[North Somerset Council website](#)

Additional support

Welfare provision scheme

You may be able to get additional support through the welfare provision scheme. You can apply twice in a 12-month period to help with clothing, footwear, and travel. You can check eligibility and apply on our [welfare provision scheme webpage](#). Your personal advisor can also help you apply.

Opportunity North Somerset

We can connect you with [Opportunity North Somerset](#) who offer employment support, apprenticeship and work experience opportunities, and career development and progression.

Education

Further education

If you study an accredited course in further education, we will support you financially to help pay for:

- registration and examination fees
- textbooks and essential equipment related to the course and specified as essential up to the value of £500

- bus or train costs to open days and college interviews if they are outside of your local area

Your personal advisor will also support you to apply for the course and any bursaries or grants you can get.

Bursaries

All care leavers attending local colleges in England should be entitled to the standard amount of £1,200 up until the age of 19. The arrangements vary depending on circumstances. For example, those with a current education, health, and care plan should continue to receive the bursary up to age 25. You may be able to access a discretionary bursary after age 19.

[You can find information about eligibility for bursaries on the government website.](#)

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships mean you gain practical experience while earning a wage and getting a qualification.

They are open to anyone aged 16 and over. They can take one to five years to complete depending on the level. The levels range from GCSE level to a bachelor's or master's degree level.

They can take place either in the workplace or at college on a day or block release. You will receive mentorship, coaching, and the full range of employee benefits. There is also support for transitioning into work or further training after the apprenticeship.

[Apprenticeships and opportunities - GOV.UK website](#)

[Search for local apprenticeships - North Somerset Council jobs portal](#)

[Information and resources about apprenticeships - Amazing Apprenticeships website](#)

[Alternatives to university, including apprenticeships - Not Going To Uni website](#)

Training programmes

If you are on a training programme and not eligible for a bursary we will support you with incentive payments:

- 24 hours - £25 incentive payment (weekly)
- 16 hours - £20 incentive payment (weekly)
- 8 hours - £10 incentive payment (weekly)
- 4 hours - £5 incentive payment (weekly)

You will get your payments in arrears when your attendance has been agreed with your personal advisor.

University (undergraduate course)

Course fees and maintenance

You will need to apply for a full student loan as an independent student and care leaver to cover course fees. You will also need to apply for a full maintenance grant to help with living expenses.

We pay for your UCAS fee when you apply, and will provide you with financial support of £3000 per year for a maximum of four years during your undergraduate course. This will be paid in three £1000 instalments, at the start of each term.

Accommodation

If you need to leave home to go to university in the UK, most universities will offer free accommodation to care leavers.

If you are attending a university that does charge you for accommodation, we will fund your accommodation for you. This could be 40 weeks at university and 12 weeks elsewhere, or the full 52 weeks at university.

You can discuss your accommodation in advance with your personal advisor so that you know where you will live when you're studying and during the summer break. We will make sure you have financial help so that you have somewhere consistent to live during the year.

You can use your care leaver grant to buy items for your new accommodation and your personal advisor can help you with this.

We will also support you with travel costs to and from university at the start and end of each term.

Course support

You can get up to £500 for things that you want or need for your course including:

- books
- equipment
- special clothing
- field trips
- exam fees
- laptop and software
- internet access

For some courses, there may be more expenses than others. We'll work with you to make sure you have what you want or need.

When you turn 21

If you are studying an undergraduate course, your personal advisor will continue to support you after you turn 21.

When you turn 25

Although you will not have a pathway plan when you turn 25, if you have started a university course we will check in with you twice a year to see how you are doing. You can contact us as much as you would like to. We can offer advice if needed.

Additional financial support and bursaries

Different universities have different packages of support for care leavers. [Your personal advisor can go through Propel with you](#) to find the right support for you.

The Unite Foundation offers scholarships in partnership with 28 universities which include free university accommodation for three years of undergraduate study. [You can find out which universities offer the scholarship on their website.](#)

More links

[UCAS undergraduate care experienced students - UCAS website](#)

[student finance - GOV.UK](#)

[grants search for funding you may be eligible for - Turn2us website](#)

[grants for young people - Buttle UK website](#)

[small grants for care leavers - The Care Leavers Foundation website](#)

Postgraduate course

If you go on to study at postgraduate level, you can get funding for study through loans, studentships, bursaries, and grants. If you are in employment, you might also be able to get help from your employer.

Postgraduate master's loan

You may be able to get a [postgraduate master's loan](#) of up to £11,222 to help with course fees and living costs. This must be repaid and you will earn interest on it from the day that you get the loan.

How we can help

We can provide you with financial support to assist with the cost of postgraduate studies. This will be through a one-off payment of £2000 and will be paid within

the first term of the postgraduate course. To be eligible, you must start your postgraduate master's degree course before your 25th birthday.

Unpaid work experience and volunteering

Care leavers have said, "Volunteering gave me the experience I needed that I wasn't able to get through education."

We will support you to try a range of activities that will increase your future employment options.

If you take part in unpaid opportunities, you could receive £10 per full day up to a maximum of £30 per week.

Where to find volunteering and work experience opportunities

[Graduating Care South West website](#)

[North Somerset Council volunteering webpage](#)

[Voluntary Action North Somerset website](#)

7. Finding a place to live

One of the biggest decisions we will support you with is choosing where you are going to live. You have the right to accommodation that meets your needs. As you get closer to 18, we will talk to you about the different types of housing and accommodation that are available.

Part of living independently also means gaining skills that help you support yourself, like budgeting, cooking, cleaning, and understanding bills and rent. As always, your personal advisor can answer your questions and help you make the right decisions in this important stage of your life.

Helping you to find a place to live

16 to 18 years old

If you are under 18 years old, you will be living:

- at home with a foster family
- in a residential home
- or semi-independent living with staffing always on-site

Your accommodation won't change as soon as you turn 16 years old, unless there is a good reason.

18 to 21 years old

Any decisions about your accommodation options will be made with you based on your support needs and wishes.

Wherever you live it is your responsibility to make sure you keep the place tidy, help with chores, and make a financial contribution or pay bills if needed.

Once you are 18 you will be asked to pay rent in all supported accommodation places, and you might be asked to contribute to the family home if you are 'Staying Put'.

Paying your rent is important. Not paying rent can lead to debt or losing your home and we do not want that to happen. If you are worried about paying your rent or have missed payments, speak to your personal advisor as soon as possible and they can help you set up a manageable repayment plan.

What we can do

- Explain your accommodation options to you so you can think about your future
- Discuss housing options in North Somerset
- Provide practical support when moving into and out of your home, like helping furnish your home and build life skills like self-care, cooking, shopping and laundry
- Storage of your belongings for up to a month (sometimes longer) if needed
- Support you to apply for housing
- Support you through housing concerns, including providing support if you lose a tenancy
- Offer you a new home parcel when you move
- Help you as a guarantor for your property

Our rent guarantor scheme

We have a rent guarantor scheme for care leavers aged 18+.

When you want to rent from a private landlord, they will ask you for a guarantor if you don't earn a lot more than the rent costs each month. The guarantor is a person who will pay for your arrears if you get into debt and get evicted.

If there is no other family member or carer who can be a guarantor for your property, then North Somerset Council will be a guarantor for you. You can apply for this scheme by speaking with your personal advisor.

Acceptance is not automatic. You must show that you can manage your money, have made a budget, and can afford the place you want to rent. You will need to complete the ASDAN programme to help with this. You don't want to get into arrears and if you do you may still get evicted.

The guarantee will cover rent only (it will not cover utility bills) and damage to property. North Somerset Council will limit the amount it will agree to guarantee. The current rental limit is £800 per calendar month.

North Somerset Council will guarantee a tenancy agreement for a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 12 months.

If you want to stay in the property for more than 12 months, you will need to reapply to the scheme

If you are applying for a property with other tenants, you may not be eligible. Speak to your personal advisor for more information.

Rent and deposits

We may also help with a deposit if the landlords asks for one. This would be paid directly to a landlord or letting agent as a one-off payment. We can only help if your rent is affordable to you. We will do this once.

There are different options which could be available to you. If you are claiming benefits, you can claim the [one-bedroom local housing allowance \(LHA\) rate](#) to help you with your rent.

Your options

Staying put

Care leavers have said, "Staying put is really good if you want to work full-time as you can save money and have less outgoings" and, "You still feel that you are part of a family."

'Staying put' means just that - staying in your foster home after you turn 18. It can provide a gentle transition from care to independence, with people who care about you and in an environment that feels like home.

Why choose staying put?

- **Stability:** You'll continue living in a familiar, supportive environment as you gain your independence
- **Continued support:** Your foster family will continue to support you practically and emotionally

- Ease into independence: It balances having a safety net and learning to manage adult responsibilities at your own pace, without the pressure of moving out

How we support you

- Agreement and planning: We will work with you and your foster family to agree arrangements that respect everyone's needs and preferences
- Financial guidance: We'll help figure out the financial side of things, ensuring arrangements are clear and fair
- Ongoing support: Just because you've turned 18, it doesn't mean our support stops. Your personal advisor can still guide you

If you are in foster care, we will work with you and your foster carers before you turn 18 to plan whether you should stay put.

Semi-independent and supported accommodation

In supported accommodation, you will have your own lockable room or studio which will have some shared spaces like a kitchen or lounge. This kind of accommodation is for people who are 16+.

In these homes there are support staff who will spend time with you helping you prepare to live independently and work towards achieving your own tenancy in the future.

Your social worker and leaving care personal advisor will help you to understand the different options available for supported accommodation. They will work with you and the provider so that you understand the house rules. They will then plan the time that you are in supported accommodation if this is the right housing option for you.

Informally living with family or friends

Staying with people you know may be right for you, and it's an option you can discuss with your personal advisor.

You'll be able to seek advice from us and council housing services if later on you need to move.

University

We will help you to find accommodation while studying and during university breaks.

Usually you can choose between:

- accommodation provided by the university
- renting from a private landlord

There are funding options available. Your personal advisor can explain this in your pathway plan.

Find out more about [living in university accommodation on the Citizens Advice website](#).

Independent living, social housing, and private tenancies

You can rent a whole property or share one with other people. It's usually more affordable to share.

Rents can be expensive, and landlords can be choosy about who they let their properties to. We'll help you to explore what is your best option.

We can support you by:

- helping you understand your tenancy agreement
- helping you register with the appropriate housing service
- supporting you with the ASDAN workbook to help you become tenancy ready
- when you have your own tenancy, we will help you keep it

Find out more about [renting privately on the Citizen's Advice website](#).

Having your own tenancy can be complicated, and we do not advise you to have one until we both think you're ready to hold one. This is because losing one can have a long term impact on your housing options. Your personal advisor will help you with paying bills on time, agreeing to and living by the rules of landlords, budgeting, and keeping your home safe from people who may want to exploit you.

We can help you register for North Somerset Home Choice if you want to use social housing. Like with private housing, you don't automatically get a tenancy, but we'll support you through the whole process.

Returning to family

When you're 18 you can choose to return to family, even if this is something that we couldn't agree was the right plan for you before you turned 18. This will be your choice as a young adult.

If you decide to do this, we will work with you and your family to make this as positive as possible. Our job is to advise you and do our best to help you be safe and secure. If you return to family and things do not work out, then we will help you look for other options.

Emergency accommodation for care leavers

Care Leavers have said, "Work closely with your personal advisor at this time as it is an unsettling period of time in your life."

If you have nowhere to stay, we will work with our housing partners to get you a bed to sleep in and a roof over your head while we plan the next steps to getting you accommodation.

You can get support from a duty personal advisor in the leaving care team if your personal advisor is not available.

You can visit the leaving care office between 12pm to 4pm Monday to Friday or visit our housing drop in between 2pm to 4pm every Wednesday.

Leaving care team

01934 421 900

careleaver@n-somerset.gov.uk

Open Monday to Thursday 9am to 5pm and Friday 9am to 4.30pm.

If you become homeless outside of these times, you can call the emergency duty team after 6pm on weekdays and any time during the weekend on 01454 615 165.

Find out more about [how to get help if you are homeless or in need of support on our dedicated webpage](#).

You can contact the Homeless prevention team on 01934 426 330 or email them HP.Triage@n-somerset.gov.uk.

Somewhere to go project

Somewhere to go project provides a drop-in service for people experiencing homelessness, including people who are sleeping rough and those at risk of homelessness. They can provide breakfast and lunch, tea and coffee, showers, and they have a clothing store.

Every Friday, Citizens Advice Bureau hold advice sessions at the Somewhere to go project. They can also sign post to specialist services. Outreach by other related services is also provided at the centre.

Somewhere to go project

St Johns Church Hall, 4a Boulevard, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1NA

01934 641 880

info@somewheretogo.org

[Somewhere to go website](#)

Shelter's emergency helpline

You can contact Shelter's emergency helpline if you:

- are homeless
- have nowhere to stay tonight
- are worried about losing your home in the next two months
- are at risk of harm or abuse

Shelter also use an interpreter service. When you call, tell your adviser if you want to use an interpreter.

Shelter's emergency helpline

[08088 004 444](tel:08088004444)

Open Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm (closed bank holidays).

If you are currently sleeping rough, you can [make an alert with StreetLink on their website](#). Your alert will be given to your local outreach team who will try to find you at the location you give. An outreach team will help as soon as they can but please don't wait and if you are in immediate danger or need medical help call 999.

Council or housing association flat or bed-sit

This is where the council or a housing association is the landlord.

Usually the tenant has more security than when renting private accommodation.

Find out more about [Council housing and housing associations on GOV.UK](#).

Shared Lives

If you have a disability that would make it difficult for you to live on your own, you may be able to stay with your foster carers under a shared lives arrangement. Your social worker, personal advisor, and adult services will see if this is the right option for you before you are 18. You may be able to move to new carers under a shared lives arrangement if you are unable to stay with your current carers.

Moving costs

We will work with you to explore any moving costs you have and will contribute to the costs of your house move. Speak to your personal advisor to see how we can support you with this.

Setting up home allowance

You will get a £3,000 setting up home allowance when you move (£2000 if you turned 18 before 1 April 2023). You can spend this on things for your home like a fridge, cooker, sofa, wardrobe, and so on.

As part of your setting up home allowance, we can also contribute towards:

- Removals or van hire to transport your belongings to your new home
- Taxis or transport costs if you have limited belongings or require help on moving day
- Connection and installation costs for white goods such as cookers, fridges, washing machines, and other essential appliances
- Flooring and window coverings if these are not already provided in your new home
- One year of home contents insurance to protect your belongings.

You can access your allowance by contacting your personal advisor. Your personal advisor can work with you to figure out what you will need and check the costs of items to ensure that you get all the essentials to set up your new home. Your personal advisor will then order the items for you.

Your personal advisor can take you on your first shop for your new home to make sure you have all the essentials you need.

Additional support

You can get additional support through the welfare provision scheme. You can apply twice in a 12-month period to help with furniture and white goods (like an oven, fridge, washing machine). Your personal advisor can help you apply.

[check your eligibility and apply for the welfare provision scheme](#)

Wi-Fi and mobile data for care leavers

We will support you with Wi-Fi or mobile data payments of £15 per month until your 21st birthday. You can claim this as an annual payment of £180.

You will not get this payment if you are living in supported accommodation (unless Wi-Fi is not included) or in accommodation where your Wi-Fi is included in your rent.

Water bills for care leavers

If you are under 21 and live independently, you can get support from the care leavers water assist scheme. This is an agreement between councils and Bristol Water and Wessex Water to apply a discount of 95% to your water and sewerage bill until your 21st birthday. Your leaving care personal advisor (personal advisor) can help you apply for this water bill discount.

[You can also apply for the scheme online.](#)

Different places in the South West like Devon, Wiltshire, and Dorset have agreed different approaches to this, so if you decide to live elsewhere you can find out what regional offers are available through the [Graduating Care South West app](#).

What happens when you turn 21

When you are approaching your 21st birthday, your water company will call you to let you know that you are due to be removed from the assist scheme. During this call, they will tell you about other support available.

If you cannot be contacted, you will be removed from the care leavers assist scheme and put back on normal charges. However, you will be sent a letter promoting help schemes available to you.

More information

[Help to pay your bill - Wessex Water website](#)

[Get help with paying your water bill - Bristol Water website](#)

Independent living skills

Supporting you with your independence is very important to us and we want to make sure that you have all the skills you need as you move into adulthood.

We have a life skills coach who holds a drop-in once a week to support with independent living skills. They can also provide one to one support in:

- building a home
- being healthy
- starting your career
- managing money
- relating to people

You can find more details about these drop-in sessions on our events calendar or by emailing the care leaver team.

Care Leaver Covenant

The Care Leaver Covenant is a national inclusion programme that supports care leavers aged 16 to 25 to live independently and access opportunities in education, employment and training.

8. Building relationships and getting involved

Care leavers have said, "It was really good experience attending a recruitment panel and thinking about asking questions from a young person's point of view."

Participation

Participation is about you being actively involved in opportunities and decisions about your life and the things that affect you. This goes much further than just capturing your views; it is about acting on them to continue to develop and improve services for children and young people. You can participate through:

- [Mind Of My Own website](#) and app – to share your thoughts and wishes about your care
- Children In Care Council - a group of care experienced children and young people aiming to ensure that all looked after children and care leavers can give their views on the services they receive
- Care Leavers Forum
- Young People Interview panels - the opportunity to be part of an interview panel when we recruit new social care staff
- Care leavers Facebook group
- Care leavers celebration event - an annual care leavers' celebration event which all young people are invited to attend. This is a celebration of individuals for achievements they've made throughout the year.
- North Somerset Youth Parliament – an opportunity to get involved in council decision making
- focus groups
- registering to vote
- surveys, questionnaires, and polls

You will receive £30 a day to cover attendance at some participation events. If you are asked to support an interview panel, rates will be agreed beforehand.

If you would like to get involved with any of these, or if you would like to feedback on our local offer, you can share your views with your personal advisor or emailing our team at engagement.participation@n-somerset.gov.uk or careleavers@n-somerset.gov.uk.

Neurodiversity

If you are neurodivergent and want to build connections, [Bridging The Gap Together](#) in North Somerset offers inclusive activities designed for you. They offer chat and craft family group, Minecraft group, Photography sessions, and a Dungeons and Dragons group. They will help you develop valuable skills and help you express your creativity.

Learning disabilities

If you have a learning disability, [North Somerset People First](#) offer support, events and activities for you.

LGBT+

If you would like support or advice around LGBT+ issues, [North Somerset LGBT+ Forum](#) can help you. They offer advice, support, activities and drop-in sessions alongside social media information for young people within North Somerset.

If you live outside of North Somerset, your personal advisor can help you access services in other areas.

Mentoring and advocacy

Care leavers have said, "It's nice to have an external person fighting your corner."

You can ask for a volunteer mentor to meet you regularly to offer ongoing help, support and advice. You have the right to have an independent advocate who can offer confidential advice and help you understand your rights.

You can ask your personal advisor for a referral or you can self-refer to Junction 21 mentoring and advocacy. They can support you up until your 21st Birthday.

junction21@n-somerset.gov.uk

Relationships

You may have questions about your history and life story. You may want to access your records or get help managing relationships in your life. Your personal advisor is there to help you access this information and can offer you advice and support.

Visiting family and people who are important to you

Care leavers have said, "It was really important to me to see my extended family a few times a year."

We want to make sure that you stay connected with your family and people that are important to you in the UK. We will support you to visit them up to four times a year up until your 21st birthday.

Advice and support

You can access support from other organisations in North Somerset who offer advice and guidance.

[Reclaim](#) offers 10 free counselling sessions to people across North Somerset who have been affected by domestic abuse.

[Woman's Aid](#) offers support for women experiencing domestic abuse.

[Men's advice line](#) offers support for men experiencing domestic abuse.

[ManKind Initiative](#) offers advice and support for male victims of domestic abuse and their families.

[Galop](#) supports LGBT+ people who have experienced abuse and violence.

[Lifelong Links](#) supports you to find out more information and reconnect with people in your life that you have lost contact with or in some cases have never met.

Worried about a relationship?

Relationships can be difficult but everyone has the right to be treated fairly and with respect. Your personal advisor is trained to support you in relationships and can help you to access services to support you if you experience domestic abuse. This link provides you with information about [Domestic Abuse](#) and where you can get help. It is really important that you speak to someone and your personal advisor or another member of the team will always be there to listen.

9. Staying healthy

Care leavers have said, "Don't be afraid to speak up, you are not the only one experiencing this."

Leaving care can be a difficult time. You may be moving home, living alone for the first time, or starting a new college, training course or job. It is important to look after your wellbeing.

Your personal advisor will be there to support you during this time. They can offer advice and help you with:

- healthy eating and living
- access to gyms and exercise
- mental health
- accessing local counselling services
- getting prescriptions

- dental health and eye tests
- intimacy and healthy relationships
- registering with a doctor (GP) or dentist
- moving from Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services to adult services
- if you are a young parent, supporting you with accessing services and doing what is best for you and your child
- support with drugs and alcohol
- understanding your strengths and difficulties to help plan your support

Mental health

[Kooth](#) - You can access support with counselling or complete their mini-activities online to boost your wellbeing.

Ask Jan - Your personal advisor can help you access support from Ask Jan. They have a 24/7 chatline, provide up to eight sessions of counselling, and offer life coaching and legal and financial advice. This service is available for young people until their 21st birthday.

[VitaMinds](#) has a range of talking therapies that you can access through their website.

OTR North Somerset

[OTR North Somerset](#) are a mental health social movement created by and for young people aged 11 to 25.

[Chat health - Sirona](#) If you are aged 19 or under you can access a confidential text messaging service that allows you to ask questions about a range of issues including:

- emotional health and wellbeing
- relationships
- smoking
- stress and anxiety
- self-esteem
- bullying
- drugs and alcohol
- sexual health

Dealing with grief

If someone you know has died, you can [get help from Cruse Bereavement Care](#)

Care leaver drop-in sessions

You can also come along to one of our drop-in sessions at the Young People's hub in Weston-super-Mare Town Hall. You can find details of these on our [Care leaver events webpage](#) or you can ask your personal advisor for more information.

Local groups and activities

You can find information about local activities and groups on our [Better Health North Somerset website](#).

Exercise

Your personal advisor can signpost you to activities.

They can support you with accessing a leisure pass that you can use in leisure centres within North Somerset. You can use the leisure pass until you are 21.

If you live outside of North Somerset, your personal advisor can help you access a gym run by a Local Authority in the area where you are living. You will be able to use this until you are 21.

You can also get 50% off a Pure Gym membership through the [Care Leaver Covenant website](#).

You can find information about local activities and groups on our [Better Health North Somerset website](#).

Sexual health

Your personal advisor can talk to you about contraception, sexual health, and healthy relationships. They can support and signpost you to specific services if needed.

Yuno is a free and confidential sexual health service for Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. There are local clinics at:

WISH at Weston General Hospital

young people's clinic: Unity at Clevedon Medical Centre

You can find more information on the [Better Health North Somerset](#) and [Yuno](#) websites.

Drugs and alcohol services

[We Are With You](#) is a service in North Somerset that can support you with drug and alcohol use. Your personal advisor can help you access these services or signpost you to services in other Local Authority areas.

You can also access the below websites for advice and guidance:

[Alcohol support - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Drug addiction: getting help - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Helping someone with drug and alcohol problems - Mind](#)

[PROPS - Family Recovery Service](#)

[Honest information about drugs | FRANK \(talktofrank.com\)](#)

Want to stop smoking?

Studies show that you're four times more likely to quit with help. Your local [Stop Smoking Service](#) offers free one to one support along with smoking medicines, which are available at the cost of a prescription. If you want any help with stopping smoking, speak to your GP, or your PA and they can help you access support.

Health passport

Your health history is important to you. When you have your final health assessment as you become a care leaver, the health team will put all your health history into a health passport. It will also contain information about services that can offer you support for your health.

This will contain a summary of your:

- health assessments
- health history
- how you can access relevant health services
- your health records

We will have a follow-up conversation about your health and emotional wellbeing one year after your final assessment.

- offer support to find local NHS services
- help you access adult mental health services, attend hospital and community clinic appointments, including sexual health services

- help you maintain a healthy lifestyle through advice and support on various topics

If you have not received a health passport, ask your personal advisor to support you to get one.

NHS doctors

If you are not already registered at a doctors (GP) surgery, your personal advisor can help you register with one.

Appointments

Your personal advisor can go with you to appointments if you want support.

[You may also want to download the NHS app to help with managing appointments and your NHS account.](#)

Prescriptions

You are eligible for free prescriptions as a care leaver up until your 25th birthday. To access this, you must not already be eligible for free prescriptions for another reason.

You are eligible for free prescriptions if you are:

- Aged 16 to 18 and in full time education
- Receiving Income Support, Income Based Employment and Support, or Job Seekers Allowance
- Pregnant or have had a baby in the last 12 months (you will need an exemption certificate from your GP)
- Receiving treatment in hospital

You will need a prescription prepayment certificate to show your eligibility. To apply for the certificate you will need an email address and to be registered with a GP surgery. Your personal advisor can help you apply for this certificate.

Help with NHS costs

Almost all NHS treatments are free. Where there may be a charge, you may be able to get help with these costs. [Check what help you could get to pay for NHS costs.](#)

Dental care

You may be eligible for financial support towards dental checks/treatment if you are:

- Aged 16 to 18 years old in full time education
- Pregnant or have had a baby in the last 12 months
- Having treatment as an in-patient or out-patient at an NHS hospital
- Receiving Income Support, Income Based Employment and Support, or Job Seekers Allowance
- On a low income and have a Health Credit Certificate (known as HC2 or HC3 certificate)

If you are not eligible for financial support, we can get you help from health colleagues who will fund dental treatment for you. Please speak to your personal advisor.

Eye care

You may also be eligible for free eye tests and vouchers towards glasses/contact lenses if you are:

- Aged 16 to 18 and in full time education.
- Receiving Income Support, Income Based Employment and Support, or Job Seekers Allowance
- On a low income and have a Health Credit Certificate (known as HC2 or HC3 certificate)

Support for people on a low income

If you are on a low income you can apply for a Health Credit Certificate known as HC2 or HC3. This will give you reduced cost or free dental and eye checks/treatment as well as prescription charges. This is dependent on your income and needs at the time you apply for support. A certificate can last from 6 months to 5 years depending on your circumstances.

To find out more, ask your GP, dentist or optician, or ask your social worker to help you apply.

10. Getting extra support

Being a parent

Being a parent can be challenging and is a huge learning curve. We will make sure you have all the support and guidance you need when pregnant and during your child's first year of life.

We will review your pathway plan with you and make a plan for the next steps. If you have any worries, we can discuss these with you.

Your personal advisor can support you with:

- discussions about pre- and post-natal appointments
- discussions about birthing partner
- travel costs to attend appointments
- purchasing essential items or one big item up to the value of £500 to help you prepare for when your baby is born
- support with family network meetings and building your support network
- attending parenting classes
- paying for one of your scan photographs, if there is a cost
- registering your baby's birth
- finding local groups and activities that you can attend to meet other parents and get advice

Before you become a parent

We can help you start a family at a time that is right for you and can prepare you for being a parent.

To support with this, we can discuss:

- sexual health
- contraception advice
- healthy relationships
- family planning advice
- access to local support groups

When you're expecting

If you are becoming a parent, we would like to support you, and you can get in touch and ask for an allocated personal advisor to provide help and advice.

We will make sure that you have all the support you need at this important stage and to help you prepare for your new baby. If we become aware that you are becoming a parent we will reach out and offer support to you.

We can arrange a family meeting during pregnancy to identify support within your friends and family network.

If you are pregnant, you can get support from health professionals. This is called antenatal care.

[Find out more about health support during pregnancy](#)

Your personal advisor can help you access health services such as:

- GPs
- midwives
- health visitors
- dentists

A member of the leaving care team can go with you to your appointments if you want extra support.

You may be eligible to receive:

- free prescriptions
- dental treatment
- other health costs

Your personal advisor can tell you about this. You can also check if you can receive free prescriptions on the NHS website.

When you have your baby

We will help you get the support you need when your baby is born. To welcome your newborn, we'll give you a baby box that has essentials like:

- Collapsible toy box
- Baby quilt
- Teddy plush comforter
- Cotton wool balls
- Sudocrem
- Baby shampoo
- Baby wipes
- Hand gel

Support for non-birthing parents

If you are the non-birthing parent, we will offer you opportunities to access support during the pregnancy as the birth will affect you too. This includes the financial support like the Sure Start Grant. We'll suggest ways you can support your partner during pregnancy. If both you and your partner are care leavers, you will both be entitled to the support in our offer.

Support groups and apps

[Advanced parenting groups](#) - The family wellbeing team run a range of parenting programs including a coffee morning in North Somerset.

[Home start](#) run two groups:

Baby Start group in Pill - drop-in to meet other parents

Mums In Mind in Weston-super-Mare - an eight week course for mums and their babies under one years old

You can also attend children's centres and baby hubs in your local area to find activities such as infant massage and parenting groups.

[Baby Buddy](#) - Whether you're a mum, dad, co-parent or caregiver, Baby Buddy can empower you to feel confident by giving you the knowledge and practical skills to look after yourself and give your child the best start.

[DadPad](#) - The essential guide for new dads.

If your baby needs a social worker

If it's agreed that your baby should have a social worker, we'll support you to speak to them and meet with them. We will:

- make sure that you understand what's happening
- attend any meetings with safeguarding teams with you
- support you with family network meetings
- support with assessments, plans, and meeting notes before or after meetings
- support with carrying out the safeguarding plan that is agreed

Our role is to be there to support you and ensure you have everything you need and that your wishes and feelings are heard and taken into consideration.

We can also show you how to use support from other agencies such as Family Rights Group: [Family Rights Group website](#)

Living apart from your baby or children

If you are living apart from your baby or children, we will continue to support you in maintaining a connection with your children. This could be through the letterbox service or through direct family time.

If you have had or are at risk of having more than one child removed from your care, [Pause](#) can help you so that you do not have to go through this more than once. You can contact them directly by email at nssg@pause.org.uk.

If your children have been adopted, [Birth Links](#) can support with advice, information and guidance.

Financial support

Sure Start Grant

You could get a one-off payment of £500 to help towards the costs of having a child. This is known as a [Sure Start Maternity Grant](#). You usually qualify for the grant if both of the following apply:

- you're expecting your first child or you're expecting a multiple birth such as twins and have children already
- you or your partner already get certain benefits

You must claim the grant within 11 weeks of the baby's due date or within six months after the baby's birth. You do not have to pay the grant back and it will not affect your other benefits.

Child Benefit

You get [child benefit](#) if you're responsible for bringing up a child who is:

- under 16
- under 20 if they stay in approved education or training

There is no limit to how many children you can claim for.

Additional support and advice

[Healthy pregnancy - Better Health North Somerset](#)

[Healthy baby - Better Health North Somerset](#)

[Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting \(MECSH\) information leaflet PDF - Sirona website](#)

[Find out more about help with childcare on GOV.UK.](#)

[Children and young person services - Sirona website](#)

[Groups and online sessions for parents - Rees Foundation website](#)

<https://www.reesfoundation.org/startforlife.html>

Prison and probation

Care leavers have said "It was nice that my leaving care PA visited me every eight weeks and didn't forget about me. It was something to look forward to" and, "It was nice to see my leaving care PA and for her to buy me somethings from the canteen for my birthday."

We can work with you in a supportive, non-judgemental way to give you the best chance to avoid offending. We'll do everything we can to help you change direction.

We can support you if you:

- have a history of or current offending behaviour
- are at risk of falling into offending behaviour
- are at risk of criminal exploitation

It's important for you to know that if you decide to share information with us about a serious crime, we must ask you to declare it to the police yourself. If you do not, we must legally tell them ourselves.

If you need to find a lawyer, you can [search on the law society website](#).

If you want to speak to the police, and it's not an emergency, you can phone them on 101.

Before entering custody

If you are going to enter custody, then your personal advisor will help you prepare for this. They will work with you to check that you have everything you can take with you. This will include all the contact details of key people that you may need. Your personal advisor can support you by attending court hearings.

In custody

Your personal advisor will aim to visit you within one week of entering custody. We will then visit you frequently to advocate for you, and we will make sure you have friends and family visits. We will still offer you a pathway plan and a regular review of this. They will discuss how you stay in touch with friends and family that are important to you. They will make sure that your care leaver status is known and that you are supported as a care leaver. Where there are specific faith and cultural needs your personal advisor will work with the prison to make sure that these are being met.

If you are under 21, then following this initial visit your personal advisor will visit you at least every eight weeks. They would like to visit more, if you want this.

If you are over 21, we will stay in touch and can visit you whilst you are in custody if you want us to.

You will receive an allowance via your personal advisor of £20 a week to help with essential items and phone calls.

We know that employment, education, and training can help prevent a return to custody. We will work with you and the prison to help you with education or learning a trade and discuss what you could do when you leave custody.

Leaving custody

Around three months before your release from custody, we will meet with you to talk about a transition plan to help you exit custody successfully.

We will arrange transition meetings which will include relevant people who will support your planning:

- housing colleagues – to make sure you have a place to live
- your personal advisor – to build your pathway plan
- probation
- the prison

We will discuss the first day when you leave custody so that you know where you are going and who will be meeting and supporting you. On the day you leave custody, your personal advisor will meet you at the prison. They will support you to get to any initial appointment that you need to attend and then make sure you get to your accommodation.

We will support you with £70 a week as a transitional payment for up to six weeks when you first leave custody. If you are paid from work or receive Universal Credit within the first six weeks your transitional payment will stop. We will also ensure you can access any other financial support you need before you leave custody.

You could be put on probation because:

- you're serving a community sentence
- you have been released from prison on licence or on parole

While on probation, you may have to:

- do unpaid work

- complete an education or training course
- get treatment for addictions, like drugs or alcohol
- have regular meetings with an 'offender manager'

[Find your local probation office on gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person

If you arrived in the UK as an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child and are under 18, we will look after and support you. Your personal advisor will help you understand your immigration status before you turn 18. You will have support to help you settle in, get to know the local area, make friends, integrate in the community and help you go to activities.

We will use interpretation services to help with communication and help you access information in your own language. You can communicate in your own language using Mind Of My Own with your personal advisor.

[Graduating Care South West website – this website is available in many different languages](#)

If you need any help understanding or accessing information in your own language, ask your personal advisor for support.

We can only provide a service to you if you have an active application for asylum. If you are appealing this decision made not to grant you status. We cannot provide a service to you if you are in breach of immigration law.

We will plan with you for three possible outcomes. This means:

- helping you plan for a future in the UK if you receive some form of leave to remain
- supporting you while you wait for a decision
- helping you make a backup plan if you do not receive leave to remain in the UK and have tried all appeals

What we can help you with

We can help you with:

- applying for an eVisa (issued by the Home Office) to individuals who want to claim asylum
- finding a solicitor to work on your immigration and asylum claim

- speaking to your Refugee Council Advocate or referring you to one if this is needed
- going to English Classes (ESOL) at a local college
- accessing education, training and employment when you are ready
- a contribution of £1000 towards citizenship costs
- [tracing your family via British Red Cross](#) if this is something you need
- contacting [Refugees Welcome North Somerset](#) who offer friendship and support to refugees, asylum seekers and other displaced people across North Somerset
- making sure you have a place to stay

When you turn 16

We will create a pathway plan with you. This will help us identify and understand your future goals and needs.

We will make sure your pathway plan considers different possible immigration outcomes:

- supporting you whilst your claim progresses or through an appeal process (when no final decision has yet been made)
- supporting you if you are awarded 'leave to remain' in the UK
- supporting you to return to your country or origin if your 'appeal rights are exhausted' and solicitors say there are no further grounds for a new claim

This is called triple pathway planning.

When you are 18

When you are 18, you will be responsible for paying a service charge. A service charge is a fee that you have to pay when living in supported accommodation. It contributes towards maintenance and repairs, utilities and cleaning of shared places.

When you have 'leave to remain' you will be responsible for paying for rent and bills either by using your wages or through Universal Credit or Housing Benefit.

We can support you with:

- applying for Universal Credit
- finding housing options available to you

Religious or cultural needs

We will help you to meet your cultural or religious needs or practices. This could be showing you where your nearest mosque or church is. We can also fund your travel to a mosque or church, or provide funding for a Bible or Quran and prayer mat if needed.

We will provide you with a festival grant for the religious cultural celebration of your choice or split it between more than one festival.

Appeal rights exhausted (ARE)

If your appeal rights are exhausted, we will complete a human rights assessment with you and help you plan for your safe return home.

Mental health

If you are experiencing mental health difficulties, we will help you and those around you to understand how you are feeling and get you the support that you need.

If you are under 18 this will be from the [Asylum and Refugee Clinic in Bristol](#).

If you are over 18 this will be from [The Haven in Bristol](#).

[The Hope Service](#) supports asylum seekers, refugees and victims of trafficking who have experienced trauma. Their website is available in different languages.

[Weston College also provides mental health support](#) through:

- Togetherall - 24/7 online support
- Mind Matters - a weekly informal session to support you to look after yourself

The [Home Office](#) make decisions about your immigration status, but we can support you through this process.

Types of immigration status

Refugee status

You can receive Refugee status if the Home Office recognises you as a refugee. This definition is in the [Refugee Convention](#).

A person given refugee status is usually granted leave to remain in the UK for 5 years. At the end of this 5 years, you can apply for indefinite leave to remain.

Indefinite leave to remain

Indefinite leave to remain is how you settle in the UK. It's also called 'settlement'.

It gives you the right to:

- live, work and study here for as long as you like
- apply for benefits if you're eligible
- apply for British citizenship

You can [check if you can get indefinite leave to remain on GOV.UK](#).

Discretionary leave

This means the Home Office has decided you cannot receive refugee status or humanitarian protection. But, there are other strong reasons why you need to temporarily stay in the UK.

If all your immigration appeal rights have been used

We'll do an assessment to decide whether removing your leaving care support would breach your human rights.

Find out more about [human rights on the Citizen's Advice website](#).

We will help you trace family members who might be living in the UK.

To trace family members in another country, we'll help you get support from organisations such as the [British Red Cross](#).

Special educational needs and disabilities

If you have a special educational need or disability, we will help to ensure that you have the right support and services. This may include help with access to benefits and/or support from services in North Somerset Council or regional and national services. You will be supported by either the SEND or Children with Disabilities Team until 25, and if you have an education, health, and care plan you will still get the support it provides.

Our SEND Hub (Local Offer) has a section on preparing for adulthood. This can help you with things like supported employment and internships

It may have been identified that you have a Special Educational Need which explains what help and support you may need to help you learn, train or be employed. We will use this information to ensure that you have the right equipment and support in place and keep this under review in case your needs change.

11. Support after 21

Once you turn 21, the offer for care leavers changes slightly. This is because from 21 onwards, we support you to live more independently. This doesn't mean that you can no longer get help, all you have to do is ask, if you need something. We will talk to you about this transition before it happens and nothing will change without you knowing.

If you still need or want support after 21, we will happily review and update your pathway plan to reflect this.

Many parts of our offer are still available to you up to your 25th birthday.

We will keep in touch with you at least three times a year, including on your birthday, but you can contact us whenever you need or want us.

When you turn 21

If you are studying an undergraduate course, your personal advisor will continue to support you after you turn 21.

When you turn 25

Although you will not have a pathway plan when you turn 25, if you have started a university course we will check in with you twice a year to see how you are doing. We can offer advice if needed.

If you feel you do not need regular support

If you are managing well and are not meeting your personal advisor regularly we may agree with you to step down support. We will still be there in the background for those times when you may need us. You can call your personal advisor or the duty number to let us know what support you may need when you need it.

You can also opt out of support after turning 21 by telling us you do not want any support from the care leaver team. You can change your mind at any time and opt back in.

25+ offer

In North Somerset, we understand that parents do not stop being parents when their child turns 25, so our relationship with you will not stop either. We would love to hear about how you are getting on. Please call us and share your news or just call for a catch up. We won't chase you, but we will be here to offer advice if you need us. There will be no more pathway plans but we can talk about your life.