ONGOING SUPPORT FROM SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNCIL
This guide provides an introduction to the service that you will receive from South Gloucestershire’s Transition to Independence Team when you leave care. The process of leaving care can be a challenging as well as an exciting time. The aim of this guide is to describe the type of support that you are entitled to receive to enable you to make a successful transition to adulthood and independence.
South Gloucestershire Council wants all care leavers to have a happy, healthy and rewarding start to adulthood. This means we expect all care leavers to have a suitable place to live and to be in employment, education or training. We will always do our best to support you in achieving this and our Leaving Care Pledge sets out our promises to you.

South Gloucestershire Council promises to:

- provide young people with safe homes to live in
- provide young people with the support to do well in education
- support young people to find meaningful employment
- listen to what has happened in young people’s lives
- be honest about the things young people have been through and the care they have received
- help young people to develop good relationships with people they care for
- provide young people with support & opportunities to enjoy their lives
- provide the support needed for young people to become independent at the right time for them
- Resolve any difficulties young people may have when living independently.

The same promises apply to care leavers with additional needs and physical disabilities. We will help you to find a safe home, do well in education, find employment, develop good relationships and become independent.
As a care leaver you are entitled to be supported by either a Social Worker or a Personal Advisor (PA). Your worker will work with you to prepare for independence and in the preparation of your pathway plan.

If you are a young person who is supported by the 0-25 service your current social worker will continue to work with you as a care leaver until your transition to adult services.

Your PA will work with you to develop skills that will support you to live independently. A key role of your PA is to work with you to ensure you are provided with the support that you agree you need to live in your own accommodation.

This booklet aims to help you to explore and develop important skills that will help prepare you for the transition to living independently. At your request your PA will provide you with support and advice on a range of issues relating to leaving care including:

- Access to training and employment opportunities
- The development of independence skills
- Finding and managing suitable accommodation
- Managing your finances and claiming benefits
- Helping with issues in relation to your physical & emotional health.
Your PA can also assist you in accessing specialist support when you need it, including counselling and advice on issues such as drugs and alcohol, sexual health and benefits. Your PA will work with you to enable you to put into place the things you agree you need that will enable you to live independently.

**Contacting your PA**

Your PA will contact you at least every eight weeks, or more often if needed. This could be a face-to-face meeting, a telephone call, or an e-mail. If you do not know their number ring **01454 868418**.

PAs only work day time office hours between 8:30 and 5pm Monday to Friday. If you need to speak to someone urgently outside of these hours you should contact South Gloucestershire Emergency Duty Team on **01454 615165**.

If you would like to speak to a worker face to face there is a weekly drop in for Care Leavers which is held every Wednesday between 4pm-7pm at The Kingswood Centre, New Cheltenham Road, Kingswood, BS15 4FS. Speak to your PA for more details on this.
How long will I receive a Leaving Care Service for?

Young people leaving care are entitled to a leaving care service up to 25 years of age. We will discuss with you and work in partnership with you to provide the support you would find most useful between 21-25 years of age. We can provide you with support and guidance regarding all of the rights and entitlements and services outlined in this booklet but will agree with you what would be most useful and important to you. We will offer continuation of a full care leaving service unless you tell us this is not something you want or agree to.
What is a pathway plan?

All young people will be involved in developing a pathway plan which we will prepare with you. Your pathway plan will replace your care plan from the age of 16. Your pathway plan is about your needs and what we all need to do to ensure your successful transition to adult life.

How will I be involved?

For your pathway plan to be effective it will be based on an up to date needs assessment; detailing the support that will be offered to you to achieve your aspirations through setting short term and long term goals. It is your plan and we want you to have a big influence on what it says.

Who else will be involved?

With your agreement, we will seek the views of other people involved in your journey to independence at the time of completing your pathway plan. This may include Housing, Education, Training and Employment providers, Benefits, Health Services, The Youth Offending Service, Probation and the Youth Service. The reason we do this is to ensure we are all working together to provide you with clear and consistent advice and support.
What will be covered in my pathway plan?

- Health and Self Care Skills
- Emotional wellbeing
- Accommodation
- Finance
- Education, Employment and Training
- Identity
- Family and social relationships

When will my pathway plan be completed?

Arrangements to complete your first pathway plan will start after your 15th birthday, it will need to be informed by an assessment of your needs and it will be completed with you within 3 months of your 16th birthday. If you are over 16 years old when you first come into care then this will be within 3 months of the date of you being accommodated.

Your pathway plan will then be updated with you and reviewed every 6 months or earlier if there has been a significant change to your circumstances.
There are a range of accommodation options that are available to meet the individual needs of care leavers. The leaving care service works in close partnership with Housing Associations and providers to find the option that best fits your individual circumstances. The level of support that you require and the accommodation options available will be discussed and agreed with you by your P.A. Together you will agree which provision will best meet your needs. Below are some of the options that will be available to you.

**Staying Put Placements**

Once you have reached the age of 18 years you will not be in care but in some cases it may be possible for you to remain with your foster carer after the age of 18. Many young people leave care too early and would like to be able to remain with their foster carers until they feel ready to move. We will discuss this with you and your foster carer if you are both in agreement we will always seek to promote this as the preferred option for you.

If you do stay with your foster carer after the age of 18 it will change from a foster placement to a Staying Put arrangement. This means that you will become an adult living as a lodger with the people who used to be your foster carers. You will need to pay rent if you are working or eligible for benefits but will be able to remain living with your former foster family.
Supported housing

Some young people in the early stages of leaving care require additional support to live independently through the help of support staff who visit and work with them on a regular basis and who are based on the same site as the care leaver tenant. These places offer you somewhere to develop skills for independence with some extra support. You can live within a supported housing project for a maximum of two years. However most young people move on sooner when they feel confident in their ability to live independently. South Gloucestershire currently have supported housing projects in Kingswood, Patchway, Filton and Yate.

Supported Lodgings

Some young people live in Supported Lodgings placements. In supported lodgings you would live in someone’s home and the home owner would provide you with individual support that is agreed with you. When you move in you will discuss and complete a signed written agreement detailing the support you agree you need to develop independent skills and any requirements the home owner has regarding the supported lodgings arrangement.

Short-term accommodation

If you are at college or university away from home, or you cannot use your term time home in the holidays, your PA can help you to find a place to live in South Gloucestershire during the holidays.
Step down accommodation

When you and your PA agree that you are ready to and you want to live independently your PA will support you in completing your HomeChoice activation to obtain your own accommodation and tenancy.

We also offer ‘trainer flats where young people thinking about moving towards independence can stay for a few weeks to experience what living independently is like. Your PA or social worker will discuss this with you if this option is thought to be helpful to you.

Accommodation to meet specific needs

You may have more specific accommodation needs to help you live independently because you have a disability or you are pregnant or a single parent or need more support than the other options offer. Your PA can help you find the right place for you and ensure that the accommodation provided for you gives you the support you need.

Living independently

When you and your PA feel you are ready for your own place, they will activate your HomeChoice registration. This is the social housing register (waiting list) and choice based lettings system for South Gloucestershire. As a Care Leaver you would be given Band A status which puts you in the highest category. Your PA will support you to bid for suitable properties.
Working, getting qualifications and training to work are an important part of both becoming an adult and living successfully in your own home. Working or training to work not only gives you more money in your pocket but also more experience and opportunities. Your Personal Advisor together with the Transition to Independence Service’s work experience and employment co-ordinator can support you into education, employment and training and offer a range of options to assist you with this. This may include helping you find the right course or letting you know what financial support is available to you.

Going to college

If you are aged between 16 and 19 and at college, you will get financial help to the value of £1,200 each year. This is called a bursary. This money is used to pay for support which is tailored to your needs. It means each care leaver’s bursary will be spent on different things which you can agree with your PA or staff at the college.

Going to university

If you want to go to university, your PA at your request can support you to decide which course you want to take, which university you want to go to, attend open days and interviews with you and give you advice on paying your tuition fees and getting money for your living expenses. If you go to university the council will give you:
£35 a week for each of the three terms. This will also be paid through Christmas and Easter holidays but not the summer holiday.

- Money for rent during the summer holiday if you need it.
- A one off grant of £2,000 for the whole course.
- A computer, if you need one.
- Up to £300 for books and course materials.
- Money for travel each term so you can keep in touch with the people who are important to you.

**Jobs and Apprenticeships**

Whether it is a part time job to give you some extra money while at college, an apprenticeship or the first step on your career ladder; we can support you in a number of ways by helping you get work experience to try out different areas of employment. We can help you to find people doing the job that you want to do to act as a ‘mentor’ to you. We can also provide practical help with CVs, job applications and practice interviews. If you need special work clothes or boots we can fund these at your request.

**Unemployed or not in education**

If you are not in education, employment or training you are entitled to a higher level of support. We understand that accessing the right opportunities is not always easy, and we want to support you to have the best possible start to living your independent adult life. With your agreement we will provide you with additional intensive support to help you access the training, education and employment that is right for you.
Under 18 years old and living independently

You are entitled to and will receive a personal weekly allowance for your living expenses. You will also receive extra money if you are in work, or studying at college or for an apprenticeship. We can also help with buying clothes and one off payments to get you started on a college course or in work.

Incentive & Bonus Scheme for 16 & 17 year olds

As an incentive to go in to education, training or employment, we will give you extra money on top of your personal allowance.

- If you work or study for up to 9 hours per week, you will receive an extra £10
- If you work or study for 10-15 hours per week, you will receive an extra £20
- If you study for over 16 hours per week, you will receive an extra £42.10 - taking your living allowance up to £100.

These payments will be given to you if your attendance is good.

Driving lessons

We will pay for a provisional driving licence, and we may assist with the cost of driving lessons if you need to drive because of your work or education. If you have bought a motorbike we could help to pay for CBT motorcycle training.
Age 16 to 19 and in education or training
You are entitled to extra help to the value of £1,200 a year, called a bursary. This funding will be tailored to your needs, for example it could pay for:

- Course costs (such as equipment and materials)
- Travel costs (such as a travel pass)
- Meals in college
- Regular cash payments that are linked to your attendance.

Going to university
Refer to Going to University (section 6) for information.

Benefits
Care leavers may be able to apply for a range of state benefits and allowances. Some benefits, but not all of them, will be taken into account when calculating the level of financial support you receive from the Transition to Independence Service. Your PA will help you to claim any benefits and allowances that you are entitled to receive.
Council Tax

If you are living independently and between the ages of 18-21, the Council will pay your council tax for you. Please contact your PA or the Transition to Independence Service for more information.

Birthday and Christmas presents

You are entitled to additional money on your birthday and at Christmas. This is paid on top of any other money that you get.

- Birthday Allowance age 18 to 21 = £20
- Christmas Allowance = £20.

Setting up home

You will get an allowance of £2,000 towards furnishing your own home, in some cases this can be increased to £2,500 where this is needed. You could also get a one off discretionary payment, for example for a housing deposit, to help with your first month’s rent or removal costs.
Budgeting

Making ends meet on a limited budget is a challenging task. Budget plans can be a useful way of managing your money. If you are in agreement your PA will work with you to produce a budget plan which can be used to balance your incoming funds with your outgoing costs. Making a budget plan can help you ensure that you have enough money left over to pay fuel bills and food costs. Completing your budget plan with your PA is a useful way of discussing and planning how you will budget and how to save money.

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If you are unwell you should visit your GP. If you do not have a GP, you can find out how to re-register with one by going to www.nhs.uk Your Personal Advisor can help you do this.

If you do not want to see a GP, but have a health concern you can meet the Looked After Nurse Liz by ringing 01454 866422, or email Elizabeth.dando@southglos.gov.uk She can advise you on any health issue and how to get the right treatment.

Your health passport

When you leave care you will be given a copy of your health passport. This will include all the available information regarding your health history from your birth to leaving care. This is your record of your health.

Sexual Health

You can access free support and advice from Unity Sexual Health. Unity provide free STI testing and treatment, contraception and pregnancy advice as well as other services and information which can be found on their website. All Unity services are free, confidential (incl. for those under 16), non-judgmental and for people of all ages, genders and orientations. Please visit www.unitysexualhealth.co.uk or call 0117 342 6900.
Condoms are the only method of contraception that protect against both pregnancy and STIs.

Men should put a condom on before there is any contact between their genitals and their partner’s.

The emergency pill and IUD can prevent pregnancy for up to 5 days after unprotected sex. Visit your GP, pharmacy or clinic to get this.

For pregnancy advice appointments, ring 0117 9276362.

For help after sexual assault or rape, The Bridge gives confidential support and advice to women and men. Call 0117 3426999.

LGBTQ

If you are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Questioning (LGBTQ) you can get support from Off The Record. The charity runs a LGBTQ service for young people aged 14 to 25 called ‘Freedom.’ It’s a fun, safe, inclusive and supportive project where you can meet other people experiencing similar feelings to help you understand who you are and feel part of a community.

The Freedom project is open to anyone questioning their sexuality or gender. For more information or an informal chat, contact lgbtq@otrbristol.org.uk or ring 07814 250751.

You can also go to the LGBTQ Youth Café in Yate on the last Sunday of every month. For more details ring 01454 869 441.
Mental Health

Life always has ups and downs and things can sometimes get stressful. Knowing how to bounce back from those challenges is really important for your health and happiness.

Off The Record offer free and fun workshops to teach young people how to take care of themselves properly. The good mental health sessions cover skills and ideas for how to cope with stress and deal with life’s challenges. This includes knowing when to rest, how to relax and recognising strengths. To find out more about these Off The Record sessions, call free on 0808 808 9120 email charlotte@otrbristol.org.uk text on 07896 880 011 or go to www.otrbristol.org.uk

www.mindyou.org.uk is the mental health and emotional wellbeing website for children and young people in South Gloucestershire. It includes advice and information on where you can find support, videos of local young people sharing their mental health experiences and tips on how to look after your emotional wellbeing.

Drug and Alcohol Services

If you are using substances, have a think about the following:

- Is it affecting how you get on at college or work?
- Is it causing problems at home or with relationships?
- Do you feel that your general mood or character has changed?
- Do you find it difficult if you don’t have alcohol or drugs for a while?
Drug and Alcohol Services

- Do you or other people worry about your drinking or drug use?
- Have you lost interest in things/activities that you used to enjoy?
- Are you taking risks that you or others around you are concerned about e.g. unsafe or unwanted sex or making yourself vulnerable to becoming a victim of crime?

If you are concerned about substance use, call the Young People’s Drug and Alcohol Service helpline on 01454 866000 (weekdays 9am-5pm) to find out how they can help you.

yps service@southglos.gov.uk
www.talktofrank.com
Experienced Panel In Care

The Experienced Panel in Care represent the views of all young people in care and care leavers from the age of 15. Anyone is welcome to join us. We meet once a month in Yate. We work for you to try and improve things for young people in care and leaving care.

Here are some of the things we do:

- We get to meet other young people leaving care, make friends, have food, listen to music and have a laugh.
- We try to make things better for all young people in care.
- We go on trips places like Weston, The Gower and London.
- We meet important people and decision makers like councillors and social workers.
- We have events like Halloween parties and cinema nights.
- We speak up for other young people in care, have a say and make decisions.

You can keep up to date with the work we are doing by following our twitter account: www.twitter.com/southglosCIC or ring Blanche Duffy, 01454 862349 / 07824 081087 or email blanche.duffy@southglos.gov.uk
Earn Money working with us

Young Recruiters

We value your opinions and would love you to help us choose the best people to work at South Gloucestershire Council. Become one of our ‘Young Recruiters’ and help us conduct interviews for social workers and managers. We’ll then ask you to have a say in who will get the job.

We will provide training and help you every step of the way. We pay for your time in High Street vouchers. You’ll get vouchers worth:

- £10 for half a day
- £15 – £20 for a full day
- £15 for an evening session.

Training Staff

We need your help to run training courses for South Gloucestershire Council staff, such as social workers and teachers and we pay you in cash for your time. You’ll be helping to run Total Respect, which is a two day training course (with an extra half day six months later) which teaches workers what it’s like to be in care. You’ll be working alongside a professional trainer and we’ll teach you everything you need to know along the way. We also have opportunities to speak with foster carers at recruitment events. Sound like a good idea? Ask your social worker or foster carer to ring Blanche Duffy, 01454 862349 / 07824 081087.
Why do we keep records about you?

Your Social Worker needs to keep a record of your health, education, family members, foster carers etc so that in the future they can look back and see what has happened to you and have a record of your time in care. If there is a change in workers your new social worker or PA can look on your file to find out about you. The social worker also keeps notes of visits with you and meetings about you.

We also collect information about how we work with you so we can see where we need to improve. In South Gloucestershire all of your records are kept on an electronic case file. Access to these records is restricted to a limited number of professionals. Only professionals who have been given a secure password can access your files and this means that your records are kept confidential and secure. If we are unable to get permission, their name and details will be removed as we can only share information we have on you.

Can I see my file?

Yes, the law says you have a right to see personal information held about you unless we think it could be emotionally harmful to you or the law states we can’t. If we decide you cannot see your records your Social Worker or Personal Advisor will explain why this is. When you are 18 you will be able to see all of the records kept on you, and your Personal Advisor will talk to you about what support you will need to read and understand the papers.
How can I see my file?

If you would like to see your social care file records you must submit a written and signed request saying you are requesting access to your records under the Data Protection Act 1998. Your PA can help you if you would like help with this. Your request will go to South Gloucestershire Council Compliments, Complaints and FOI Team who can be contacted by:

Telephone: 01454 865924 Email: CAHFeedback@southglos.gov.uk

Your social worker, PA, foster carer or key worker can support you to complete this written request. You should be given access to your file within 40 working days. If it takes longer we will contact you and keep you updated about what is causing the delay. If people other than your social worker have written things about you then we have to ask their permission to show these documents to you. If they say no, we will tell you and explain to you what to do if you want to complain about this. If there is information on your file about other people for example members of your family then we must ask their permission to tell you. We will ask you if you want us to do this.

Can I see my file after I have left care?

Yes if you have been looked after by us we have to keep our records about you until you are 75 years old. You have the right to see your records even if you are no longer under a Care Order or if you are no longer receiving a service from the Transition to Independence Team. If you would like more information on how to do so contact: CAHFeedback@southglos.gov.uk
If you have a complaint or things go wrong we want to hear about it! To make a complaint you can phone, write to or email the manager of your allocated Social Worker or Personal Advisor and explain why you want to make a complaint. Your allocated worker will provide you with the contact details of the relevant manager. If you are not satisfied with the response you receive or you want the complaint to be investigated by an independent person you can get in touch with the Council’s complaints team below.

Telephone: 01454 865924 Email: CAHFeedback@southglos.gov.uk

If you need help to make a complaint you can contact Reconstruct who will put you in touch with an independent advocate to support you with your complaint. Telephone: 0800 389 1571 (Freephone) Email: yourvoice@reconstruct.co.uk

We are committed to listening to you and will always try to help solve any problems.

Ofsted

Ofsted regulates social care services in England, such as children’s homes, residential family centres and fostering and adoption services. If you feel that you want to make a complaint directly to Ofsted then the details of how to contact them are provided below:

Telephone: 0300 123 1231 Email: Enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
The list below provides the contact details of organisations that you might want to contact for support or advice.

**The Children’s Commissioner for England**

Anne Longfield is currently the Children’s Commissioner for England. She has a legal duty to promote and protect the rights of all children in England with a focus on children and young people with difficulties or challenges in their lives, and in particular those living away from home, in or leaving care, or receiving social care services. If you are a child or young person who lives away from home or who receives social care and who needs advice and assistance you can contact the Children’s Commissioner’s office by:

Phone: **0800 528 0731**
Email: [advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)

**Childline**

is the free national 24 hour telephone and online service where you can get help and advice on a range of issues.

Telephone: **0800 1111**
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
**USEFUL CONTACTS, RESOURCES AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT**

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**Become**

Become is the charity for Children in Care and young Care Leavers, for help, advice and support:

Telephone: 020 7251 3117  
[www.becomecharity.org.uk](http://www.becomecharity.org.uk)

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**1625 Independent People**

For housing advice and support:

Telephone: 0117 969 5763  
Email: s.glos@1625ip.co.uk

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**Experienced Panel in Care**

(EPIC – Children in Care Council)  
If you want to get involved, have an idea or want to raise an issue, contact Blanche Duffy:

Telephone: 01454 862349 / 07824 081087  
Email: Blanche.Duffy@southglos.gov.uk  
[www.twitter.com/southgloscic](http://www.twitter.com/southgloscic)
Domestic Abuse Service: Next Link

If you are experiencing physical or emotional abuse from a partner contact Next Link:

Telephone: 0117 925 0680
www.nextlinkhousing.co.uk

Transition to Independence Team

Duty Phone number: 01454 868418