

Local
Offer for

Care Leavers



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Overview

This offer tells you about the support we have in Essex for you as a care leaver.

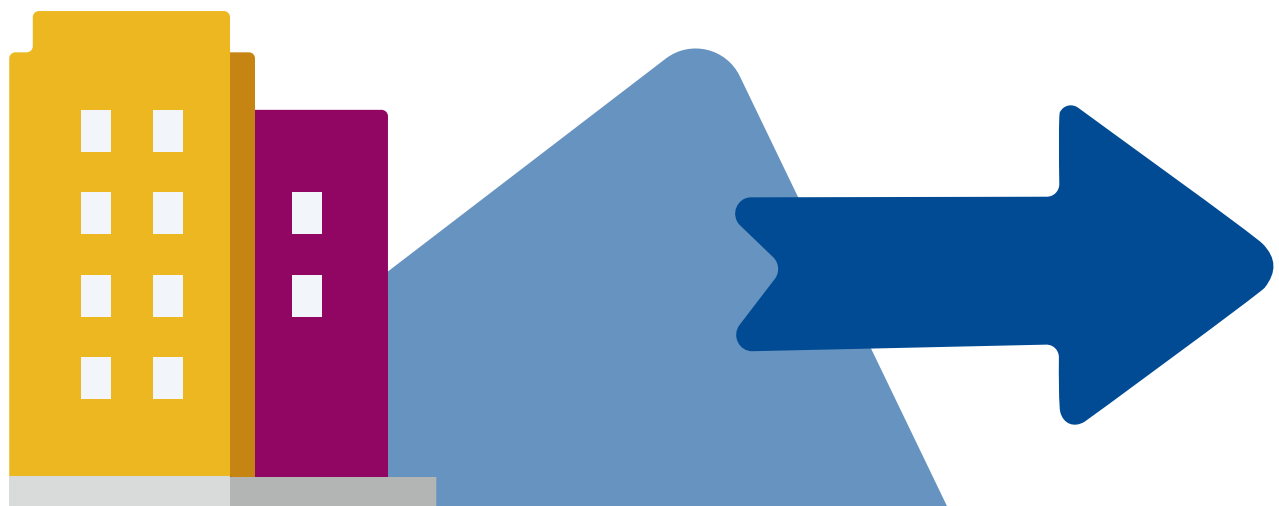
We care about you and want to ensure that you access the opportunities available in order to achieve the best outcomes you possibly can.

We want to make sure that you feel safe and supported during this time of moving on from care.

Some of the benefits included in the Essex local offer are:

- you won't have to pay council tax up to the age of 21, if you're an Essex care leaver living in one of the 12 Essex council areas
- a bursary for those care leavers going to higher education, subject to application and requirements
- a discretionary one-off rent and deposit payment to help secure private rented accommodation

- discretionary assistance as a guarantor in privately rented accommodation.
- a Setting Up Home grant of up to £2000
- weekly drop-ins providing different types of support from the Employability Officer, Targeted Youth Adviser and Looked after Nurse
- support with your emotional wellbeing from the Mental Health Coordinators within the teams
- support in accessing your social care records
- support in preparing for a job interview, and financial assistance with interview clothes and travel to work or training, if needed
- we will ensure that you are considered in apprenticeship schemes within Essex County Council
- we can pay for up to 10 hours driving lessons, if you are in education, training or employment
- we will provide you with financial support whilst you wait for your first benefit claim to be processed.



What it's about

Under the **Children and Social Work Act 2017** www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents/enacted we have a duty to:

- help care leavers until they're 25 years old, even if they're not in education
- produce a local offer, explaining what help is available

Essex supports the seven corporate parenting principles of the Children and Social Work Act 2017:

- to act in your best interest and promote your physical and mental health and wellbeing
- to encourage you to express your views, wishes and feelings
- to consider your views, wishes and feelings
- to help you gain access to and make the best use of services in the community
- to promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for you
- to ensure you are safe, and have stability in your home, life, relationships and education or work
- to prepare you for adulthood and independent living



Who the offer is for

To get the support set out in this offer, you must have been in care for a period of at least 13 weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks) which began after age 14 and included some time after your 16th birthday.

If you have been in care and have received a service from the Children with Disabilities team or the Young Person with Disabilities team you will continue to receive leaving and after care support from those teams. Visit the **SEND Local Offer** send.essex.gov.uk website for more information and contacts.

If you're not sure whether the offer applies to you, or if there is anything else that you don't understand, please speak to your social worker or personal adviser.

Personal adviser

You will be allocated a personal adviser, who will work alongside your social worker to help you make the transition to independent living.

Your personal adviser will continue working with you until you turn 21, or up to the age of 25 if you wish.

▶ Pathway Plans

A pathway plan is a document that you will complete with your social worker or personal adviser.

The areas it covers is accommodation, education, training and employment, your safety, finance, health, identity, and family/social networks. It will set out your needs, your views, any future goals and what support you'll receive.

We'll consider with you what extra support you may need depending on your personal circumstances, if for example you are:

- at university
- on an apprenticeship
- a young parent
- leaving custody
- separated migrant young person
- have special educational needs

Although your looked after child reviews will end when you turn 18, we will still offer you a pathway plan review by your Independent Reviewing Officer after your 18th birthday to support your transition into independence.

▶ Have your say

You have a right to be involved in all decisions about your plans for leaving care.

You have a right to have your say if you are not happy about something. We will listen to you, and tell you what you can do.

Tell someone who works closely with you, such as:

- social worker, personal adviser or their team manager
- foster carer or supervising social worker
- teacher or someone at school
- residential care worker

You have a right to be supported by an independent advocate if you want to challenge decisions about the support we give you. Independent advocates can inform you about your rights and help you to be heard. You can access advocacy at **Rethink Essex** www.rethinkessexadvocacy.org or call them on **0808 800 5792**.

If you feel you can't talk to someone who works with you, or would like to make a complaint please contact:
ECC.CustomerServices@essex.gov.uk

Accommodation

▶ 16-18 year olds

If you remain looked after, we will make sure that you have a suitable place to live such as foster care, supported lodgings or semi-independent accommodation. If you are no longer looked after, we will make sure you have the most appropriate accommodation.



Foster care

If you are fostered you do not always have to leave at 16 or 17, especially if you can learn the skills you need, helped by your carer, you may be able to stay on after 18. This is called a Staying Put arrangement (explained below).

Supported lodgings

This is like foster care, where you live in a family home. You have more opportunity to develop your independence skills with support from the supported lodgings carer such as cooking, managing money and household chores.

Semi-independent accommodation

This is accommodation which you would share with other young people, but you would have your own bedroom. Staff at the accommodation are available to support you to develop your independence skills.

We can access semi-independent accommodation for you if you are aged 16-18 through our in-house placement team if this is identified in your Pathway Plan.

Your social worker will support you to register with your local housing authority in preparation for when you become 18 years of age.



Options for post 18

We have a duty to ensure that you live in suitable accommodation.

What is suitable accommodation?

Suitable accommodation is somewhere that is safe and right for you, that helps provide an environment where you can develop the skills you need to live independently. You should talk to your social worker or personal adviser about where you want to live.

Staying Put

This is for young people who reach 18 years old while in foster care. You can remain living there under a Staying Put arrangement if that is what you and your carers choose. This arrangement can continue up until the age of 21.

Post 18 supported lodgings

If you have been in a supported lodgings placement before you reach 18 years of age, you can remain there if that is what you and your carers want. You can stay until the age of 21.

Supported accommodation

We'll assist you in accessing supported accommodation, based on assessed need, when you approach 18.

We'll help you apply to the Nacro Employment Support & Transition (NEST), who provide a range of supported housing options for care leavers who are over 18.

Shared Lives

Shared Lives is for those with greater support needs or a disability and would enable young people who cannot live alone without support, to remain with their previous carer. This option is available to young people who have eligible needs under the Care Act 2014.

Supported Living

Supported Living is housing for people with disabilities who want to live independently but may need some help and support. We will support you in this pathway if it is assessed as the option that best meets your needs. For more information, see Supported Living on the **Essex Local Offer website** send.essex.gov.uk/search-support-groups-and-activities/supported-living

Privately rented accommodation

Privately rented accommodation can be self-contained or shared. Rents can be expensive and landlords can be choosy about who they let their properties to.

You will need to sign a tenancy agreement. This is a legally binding document and it's important that you understand it before you sign it. Your personal adviser will be able to support you with this.

We can help with a one-off rent and deposit payment to secure private rented accommodation. This is a discretionary payment and will be considered by the local care and resource panel.

We'll support you to explore what is your best option and to register with the appropriate housing service.

Lodgings or sharing

Living in someone else's house may be cheaper and less lonely than living in a place of your own.

It's a good idea to have a written agreement with the people who you are living with about your rent, bills and responsibilities.

Informally living with family or friends

Staying with others may be right for you, and you'll be able to seek advice from us and the council housing services if later on you need to move or are in danger of becoming homeless.

Council or housing association accommodation

This is where the council or a housing association is the landlord and usually the tenant has more security.

University

We'll help you to find accommodation whilst studying and during university breaks if you need it. Usually you will have the option of living in accommodation provided by the university or renting from a private landlord. Funding can be explored and your personal adviser can outline this in your pathway plan.



What you need to know

Many young people feel like they must be given their own flat by law when they are 18, but this is not the case, and having the responsibility of a flat might not be right for you now.

Tenancy

A tenancy (or licence) is a legal document which entitles the person (tenant) to live in a property and outlines the responsibilities that go with this.

There are different types of tenancy agreements, which give you legal rights.

Whatever type of agreement you have, make sure that you are given a copy at the time it is signed.

Rent and Bills

You will need to use your own income to pay your own rent and bills through employment, benefits or a combination of both.

We have a benefits adviser in the Leaving and After Care service who can help and give you advice, alongside your social worker or personal adviser. The benefits adviser can be contacted via the Leaving and After Care Team.

Having found somewhere suitable to live it is very important to talk to your social worker or personal adviser if you have problems with understanding and paying your bills, such as rent, electricity or water.

Do not ignore official looking letters, they could be very important.

Council Tax

Once you reach 18 years old, you must register for Council Tax if you have your own tenancy or are the main householder in a property. You will need to inform the borough, district or city council that you are a care leaver and

claim any council tax discounts that you are entitled to, such as Council Tax Reduction, Single Person Discount, or Student Exemption. If you are living in someone else's household, it could also affect the discounts or benefits of the person you are living with.

If you live in one of the following areas, you will be exempt from paying council tax. Exempt means you do not have to pay. Your personal adviser will need to confirm your care leaver status with the Council Tax department, in order for the exemption to be processed.

This applies in:

- **Basildon**
- **Braintree**
- **Brentwood**
- **Castle Point**
- **Chelmsford**
- **Colchester**
- **Epping Forest**
- **Harlow**
- **Maldon**
- **Rochford**
- **Tendring**
- **Uttlesford**

In addition, if you are living in someone else's household, your presence will not result in the householder having to pay more Council Tax.

Care Leavers living outside of Essex

After you turn 16 your social worker will begin to talk to you about accommodation for you when you turn 18, including whether it is possible to remain in the area you may be currently living. Different housing authorities have different local connection rules and this can be complicated to understand so having conversations with your social worker or personal adviser is important.

You can also still keep your local connection with the Essex area where you came into care and you can be placed on this housing register from your 16th birthday.



Homelessness

We have a designated personal adviser to support you if you are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) have a duty to give help and advice to prevent homelessness and to people who are homeless.

As a care leaver you're considered as a 'priority need' under the law, but other things need to be looked at too, such as if you're homeless because of something that you have or haven't done.

The LHA may also check that you have a local connection to the area you are making an application in. While they investigate your situation you may be placed in temporary accommodation.

Presenting as homeless does not provide a guarantee of being offered social housing as the LHA can discharge a housing duty by supporting access to private accommodation that is available to you for 6 months or more.



If you are in danger of becoming homeless (in an emergency), contact the Shelter Advice Line on 0808 800 444, and/or call your local leaving and after care team if you are under 25.

Your finances

Essex Leaving and After Care Service have a benefits adviser who can offer advice and support and produces a Finance Handbook which is updated annually.

Included in this Handbook is information about the financial support that the Leaving and After Care service may provide to you in specific circumstances, including:

- separated migrant young people
- young people in further education (College)
- young people in higher education (University)
- post-graduate study
- training and apprenticeships
- young people seeking work
- young people who are sick or disabled
- young parents and pregnant women
- rent deposits/rent in advance/rent guarantee
- setting up home grant
- Christmas/festival/birthday gifts
- clothing allowance
- travel documents
- transition payments
- payments and emergencies
- driving lessons

The Handbook also provides information about additional financial support that is offered to care leavers by other agencies, including:

- council tax exemption offered by local councils
- student loans and bursaries offered by Universities and Student Finance England
- benefit entitlements for care leavers, such as Universal Credit and Housing Costs
- NHS health costs
- free meals in further education
- Healthy Start Vouchers, Child Benefit and Maternity Grant for care leavers who are pregnant and / or parents



You can download a copy of the Finance Handbook at the Local Offer for Care Leavers website at www.essex.gov.uk/leaving-care/your-finances

▶ Support with finances

We will support you to:

- make a budget plan
- open a bank account and give you advice on savings
- give you information on how to access your Junior ISA, if you have one (a fund of money set aside by the government and the council)
- provide a setting up home leaving care grant of £2000
- provide money management advice

We can also help you with making a claim for benefits. There are dedicated advisers within the Jobcentre Plus who work with care leavers (these are called Single Points of Contact or SPOCs).

A claim for Universal Credit can be made up to 21 days in advance of your 18th birthday if you are a care leaver. Your personal adviser will help you with this.

Watch a video about Universal Credit claims on YouTube:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0gAb92C_WM

▶ Contacts

You can find out more about **student finance** at www.gov.uk/student-finance-register-login

You can also learn about and **apply for benefits** at www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-to-claim



Studying and finding work

We want every young person leaving care to have the support they need to fulfil their goals in life.



How we can help

Whether you're thinking about repeating some of the school work you may have missed so that you can re-take your GCSEs or A Levels, doing an apprenticeship or training course, going to college or university, we're here to help guide you along the way.

If you're thinking about higher education, you may need qualifications in certain subjects. You may have an idea of the sort of career you want and prefer the idea of on the job training plus some college time.

We have targeted youth advisers, employment advisers, and benefits advisers who can help you.

We can also help you with the application process including advice on completing your CV, form filling, letter writing and making the most of interviews.

If you continue to learn and develop your skills, you could receive some financial support to help you out with things like books, travel and equipment.

You'll find more about financial support in the finances section and in the Finance Handbook which can be downloaded at www.essex.gov.uk/leaving-care/your-finances.

Finding an apprenticeship

We can help you access an apprenticeship within the local business community as well as with Essex County Council. These are often available to young people who are care leavers (sometimes before they are offered to anyone else).

This can be a great way of training if you don't want to be in a classroom on a full-time basis and it does give you a real insight into what the job you're doing is really like. You'll also end up with a great qualification and some good experience.

You can find lots of **apprenticeship vacancies** at:

www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/apprentices

Going to college or university

Going to college or university will increase your chances or choice of employment and help develop your confidence and friendships. If you're thinking about going to college or university, look out for open days where you can get a feel for the courses available and what it is really like.

We'll support you in your planning to go to university as well as continue to support you while you are completing your course of education while it is agreed in your pathway plan.

We're happy to attend open days and graduations (with your permission) to celebrate your achievement with you.

If you decide to go to University there is a range of financial support available to you. Full details of this can be found in the Finance Handbook
www.essex.gov.uk/leaving-care/your-finances

Finding work

The targeted youth adviser and employment advisers work alongside your social worker or personal adviser and have links to local employers.

Each of the Leaving and After Care teams in Essex hold job clubs or drop ins where you can get advice and support on all areas of job-seeking or study to give you the best chance of sustaining your employment or training.

You can also get information and advice from your local Jobcentre Plus
find-your-nearest-jobcentre.dwp.gov.uk/search.php

Further support

If you decide to return to study between the ages of 21 and 25 a personal adviser will be available to advise you if needed.

The Prince's Trust www.princes-trust.org.uk/help-for-young-people has lots of opportunities for young people.

Staying healthy

Your personal adviser will help you **register with a GP** and attend appointments with you as appropriate to access the National Health Service (NHS).

Each Leaving and After Care Team has a mental health coordinator who can support you with your **emotional wellbeing** and help you access local services if needed. Your personal adviser can introduce you to them.

A **Health Passport** containing your key health information is given to you by the NHS looked after children's nurse as you reach 18. If you misplace this document, you can ask your personal adviser to support you in requesting a copy.

We can also:

- support and offer advice and guidance on who can help you with sexual health, healthy teeth, drugs and alcohol and generally looking after yourself
- help you with information on how to access prescriptions

- support you when you are changing from children's mental health services to adults
- putting you in touch with health services for young people (this is the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service run by HCRG Care Group)

Visit the **Looked After Children Service** www.essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk/service/looked-children-service for mental health information and advice for young people.



We can provide you with information on healthy living.

The Leaving and After Care service has a good relationship with Active Essex.

This includes:

- Established discounted memberships for Care Leavers across Essex for leisure and gym facilities.
- Providing funding for personal bursaries for care leavers to spend how they like to support them into activity.
- Providing care leavers with better links and opportunities into community sport and physical activity.
- Signposting to free and low-cost opportunities across the county.
- Supporting care leaver groups which include physical activity.
- Providing introductions and links to Sport and Physical activity sector for work experience, volunteering, and paid work opportunities.

▶ Other support

Other support that Essex Care Leavers can access to keep active:

- Advice and guidance on how to be active through the **Find Your Active (FYA) Campaign** - www.activeessex.org/find-your-active
- Support through the Find Your Active Community Connectors, support to find activities. **FYA Community Connectors** can also meet participants at their first session if required: www.activeessex.org/find-your-active/with-me
- Free activity finder: findyouractive.activityfinder.net
- **How to get active:** www.activeessex.org/how-do-i-get-started
- **Green Space activity and free apps:** www.activeessex.org/find-your-active/ways-to-keep-active/keep-active-outdoors
- **List of outdoor gyms:** www.activeessex.org/health-wellbeing/active-environments/outdoor-gyms



Your personal adviser will be able to support you to access Active Essex.

Supporting your relationships

Having strong and supportive relationships is crucially important for everyone. The support from your personal adviser will help you to understand how to establish and maintain healthy relationships.

Wherever possible we will offer you additional practical and emotional support such as:

- help to maintain or regain contact with people who are special to you, including those who have cared for you in the past
- providing support from our Mental Health Co-ordinator, such as counselling and advice around relationship issues
- re-connecting with family in a safe and planned way, including arranging and supporting time to help build relationships
- support you to access your social care records, to support your identity.
- support you in making relationships in the community
- explore your identity by offering advice and support around your religion, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality, disability or immigration status
- provide you with information on local groups, activities, and clubs you may wish to join. (Please see 'Useful Contacts' page for further details)

We are here to support you and are always here to listen. You shouldn't feel pressured into having a relationship with anyone that you don't want to. If you ever feel like this, please speak with your personal adviser or social worker.





Participation in society

We want you to feel part of your community, to achieve your full potential and feel valued. We will support you to take up opportunities and make the most of the advice, information and support available.

We can help you with courses that teach you about independent living, which can be accessed through your personal adviser and the targeted youth adviser based in the Leaving and After Care teams.

The **Children in Care Council (CICC)** cicc.essex.gov.uk offers volunteering and social opportunities and gives you a platform to have your say. The CICC is for young people who have experience of being in the care of Essex. Young people will meet throughout the year to talk about how children are cared for by Essex, to make suggestions to make services better and get involved in making changes and improvements.

Meet other young people

We embrace diversity and will work with you to make sure that you feel safe. There is a regular meet up called 'Proud to be Me' for young people in care and care leavers aged 12 to 17.

It's a place for young people from diverse backgrounds to get together. You can explore identity, have fun and explore different cuisine and culture. The group meets to cook and chat and share ideas.

These events are organised by the Children in Care Council. Sessions take place at Parkside Youth Centre, Witham.

You must get in touch to book a space.

To book, email natalie.vince@essex.gov.uk or phone 07584262934.

Find upcoming Proud to be Me events on the CICC website cicc.essex.gov.uk/events

Travelling

We will support you in attending a specific place of worship, or special occasion in your community relating to your identity, by funding your travel costs up to 4 times a year.

Voting

Once you are 18 you will be able to vote. This means you can have your say on local and national issues. We will ensure that you have identification and support you in registering to vote:- Register to vote - GOV.UK www.gov.uk

Learning to Drive

We can support you with the costs of learning to drive from the age of 17 years old, if you have been in education, training, or employment for at least 6 months at the time of the request.

We will fund your provisional driving licence and one theory test, and if you pass we will fund:

- Up to 10 hours of driving lessons
- One practical driving test



Keeping in touch

You are not alone. We can support you to feel confident and in control of your life.

There are clubs run in each area by Leaving and After Care teams where you can access support for your health, employment and wellbeing. Please ask your personal adviser for details.

This includes a 'Keep in Touch' group, a place for young people to catch up, enjoy good food and relax in the company of others in similar situations.

To book, email natalie.vince@essex.gov.uk or phone 07584262934.

Find upcoming Keep in Touch groups on the CICC website

Your personal adviser can help you to access resources and clubs. Please tell us what we can explore with you, and we will be happy to look into this with you.

LGBTQ+ support

There is support, advice and guidance for you around exploring your identity, coming out and family relationships.

Essex has a flourishing gay and trans community. Linking up with other LGBTQ+ individuals in the local community can help you feel included, respected, and comfortable. For example, every year we celebrate Essex Pride. www.essexpride.org

You can find support:

- in the local events and groups in the contacts section of this guide
- by speaking to your personal adviser or mental health coordinators. They can help you find opportunities to explore your identity



Care leavers who are parents

We can help you and your child get off to the best possible start in your parenting journey.

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
- healthy relationships
- family planning advice

You can also find information on the Essex Sexual Health website.

essexsexualhealthservice.org.uk

Your leaving and after care nurse will make sure that you have access to family planning advice and contraception.

Your personal adviser can help you access your local family centre, where you can learn about caring for babies and children.

The mental health coordinator can support you with feelings about any parenting that you experienced.



When you're expecting a child or becoming a parent

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

Find out more about health support during pregnancy:

www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/your-pregnancy-care/your-antenatal-care

Your leaving and after care team are committed to supporting your wellbeing and understand that all individual needs and circumstances are different.

We will make sure you have a suitable home, income and essential items.

You could receive a one-off payment of £500 to help with the costs of having a child. This is called a Sure Start Maternity Grant.

Find out more about Sure Start Maternity Grants on GOV.UK:

www.gov.uk/sure-start-maternity-grant

If you're more than 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under 4, you may receive help to buy healthy food and milk.

Apply on the Healthy Start website:

www.healthystart.nhs.uk/how-to-apply

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. We'll suggest ways you can support your partner during pregnancy.

Support with parenting

Your personal adviser, along with the family centre team can help you with the basics such as:

- how to change a nappy
- how to bath a baby
- when to seek medical advice
- how to register for a school place, a dentist or an optician

If you are not comfortable in groups, your personal adviser will explore setting up 1 to 1 parenting support until you are.

Find your local family hub

The Essex Child and Family Wellbeing service has centres called 'family hubs' - [essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk](https://www.essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk). You can access a range of support including parenting classes.

Care Leaver Parent Group

This is a safe place to meet with a community of care leavers with children. They happen in Witham and Colchester. We can provide you with transport to help you get there.

To book, email: natalie.vince@essex.gov.uk or phone 07584262934.

Find upcoming Care Leaver Parent Group events on the Children in Care Council website.



Healthcare

Your personal adviser and a Leaving and After Care nurse can help you access health services such as:

- GPs
- Midwives
- health visitors
- dentists

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

You may be eligible to receive free prescriptions, dental treatment, and other health costs. Your personal adviser can tell you about this. You can also check if you can receive free prescriptions on the NHS website.

Everyday costs

We can support you to consider important costs that come with being a parent.

There are local 'baby banks' which can help with clothing and other essential items. Your personal adviser can help you access these.

For further information on how to access additional financial support please see the [Leaving and After Care Finance Handbook 2022 to 2023](#) (PDF, 372.67kB)

Childcare

There is a range of support available to help pay for childcare. Once your child reaches 2 years old, we can help you to look into childcare options.

The support you receive will depend on your circumstances. Find out more about help with childcare on GOV.UK.

Support we can offer

The children's social care process

Referrals are only made to Children's Social Care when there is evidence of risk, not because you are a care leaver. If your child is known to children's social care, your personal adviser can support you in meetings.

If an assessment is needed, we will make sure you receive fair treatment, and that your rights are respected.

Your personal adviser will make sure that:

- your opinions are heard
- you understand what is happening
- you understand what plans are in place

Whatever the situation, we will support you in building and maintaining a relationship with your child.

Planning for the future

One care leaver shared this quote with us: "you are still a person, not just a parent." With this in mind we want to help you plan for your future.

This support can include:

- continuing your education
- accessing training or employment
- careers advice and guidance
- transport



Contact with the criminal justice system

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.

Essex Youth Offending Service (YOS)

The youth offending service can help you if you're involved in offending. They want to support you and to reduce youth crime.

They can work with you until the age of 18. If they've worked with you in the past, they can continue to provide you with advice and support beyond 18.

They're made up of police, the national probation service, health authorities and other local organisations. They work with people who support you, like the Leaving and After Care team or Children in Care Service.

Find out more about the youth offending service www.essex.gov.uk/youth-offending-service

If you have any questions, email: yot.essexHQ@essex.gov.uk or phone: 03330138926

Court

Your personal adviser can support you by attending court hearings.

"... I just want to thank you ... for being there for me in such a hard time of my life ... for turning up to court with me, having someone to speak to when times got hard" – Care leaver

If you're in custody

When in custody, whether it's Youth Offending Institution or prison, your personal adviser will visit you to support you.

They will support your aspirations and make a Pathway Plan with you. The focus will be on how you can make the best of your time in custody, keep yourself safe and develop some skills.

Before your release, the Leaving and After Care team, YOS, Probation as well as other agencies will meet to discuss how best to support you once you are released and complete a risk assessment. This will include your personal adviser supporting you to find suitable accommodation ahead of your release.



Support when leaving custody

The Leaving and After Care team can help you to access:

- education and employment
- health services
- support with accommodation
- support with emotional wellbeing
- support to set up your benefits when leaving custody if needed
- discretionary financial support until you receive your benefits

Our mental health coordinator can help you develop a positive sense of who you are, where you came from and where you go from here. We can also support you in exploring important relationships in your life.

What probation is

If you are over 18 you may be known to Probation. This means you're serving your sentence but you're not in prison.

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

www.gov.uk/government/collections/probation-finder#east-of-england



Separated migrant young people

Also known as
Unaccompanied
Asylum Seeking
Children (UASC).

Main types of status

When you are under 18, you'll have the same entitlements as any other child in need in Essex.

When you reach 18 years old you will be entitled to a level of care and support from us, but this is subject to your immigration status.

We will plan with you for three possible outcomes (also known as Triple Planning), which means:

- helping you plan for a future in the UK if you are given some form of leave to remain
- ongoing support while you wait for a decision
- helping you make a back-up plan if you have been refused leave to remain in the UK and have exhausted all appeals

Refugee status

Refugee status is awarded to someone the Home Office recognises as a refugee, as described in the Refugee Convention. A person given refugee status is normally granted leave to remain in the UK for 5 years, and at the end of that period can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain.

Indefinite leave to remain

A form of immigration status given by the Home Office. Indefinite leave to remain is also called 'permanent residence' or 'settled status' as it gives permission to stay in the UK on a permanent basis.

Discretionary leave

A form of immigration status granted to a person who the Home Office has decided does not qualify for refugee status or humanitarian protection, but where there are other strong reasons why the person needs to stay in the UK temporarily.

If you've used up all your immigration appeal rights, we'll carry out an assessment to decide whether removing your leaving care support would breach your human rights.



Support we can offer

Studying and finding work

We will provide you with appropriate education, training and employment opportunities. This includes developing your written and spoken English, cooking, budgeting (where appropriate). This may change depending on your immigration status.



Accommodation

We'll make sure you have somewhere suitable and safe to stay.

If you have status, you will be able to access the housing needs register in Essex. If you move into local authority or housing association accommodation at 18, then receive an adverse decision on your status, you will lose access to public funds and housing services. Your personal advisor will then support you in the next steps.



Health and wellbeing

We'll make sure you get the health care and emotional support you need.

We will make sure that an interpreter is made available where required, and dietary, cultural and religious needs are considered for you.

If you're a child in care or under 21 years old and are in education, you'll be entitled to medical treatment on the NHS. If you do not have status and have exhausted all of your appeal rights, you will not be able access medical treatment.

If you're under 18, we'll support you to take part in leisure activities and get involved in the community.

We'll help you trace family members who might be living in the UK. If you want to trace family members in another country, we'll help you get support from specialist tracing organisations.



Refugee Council

Refugee Council are a UK charity working with refugees, supporting them to rebuild their lives and get their voices heard. Find support at www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/get-support/services

Read what our Care Leavers have to say



“Thinking about budgeting and finding out how much things cost really helped me manage the money I had to spend.”

“Now I’ve got my own place I am really enjoying having my independence.”

“My advocate helped put my thoughts across in words.”

“Thank you so much for all this it’s like all my dreams come true in 1 day.”

“Without The Prince’s Trust I’d be stuck. I’m determined to make a better life for myself.”

“It’s important to see your doctor and dentist regularly – it’s a great way to MOT your body.”

“Thanks for all your help and service throughout my time with you, I really appreciate all your advice and the opportunity you showed me which landed me where I am today with work. I am truly thankful.”

“My Personal Adviser has helped me set up a bank account, so my benefits can be processed and paid in on time.”

“It’s great to chat to people who are interested in the same things I am.”

Useful contacts

General

- **Become Charity** becomecharity.org.uk - the charity for children in care and young care leavers
- **ChildLine** www.childline.org.uk - a free and confidential counselling service for anyone aged under 19 in the UK
- **Children in Care Council** cicc.essex.gov.uk - brings care leavers together and gets their views about the service
- **Citizens' Advice** www.citizensadvice.org.uk - provides free confidential advice about personal and consumer issues
- **Essex Police** www.essex.police.uk - non-emergency line - 101
- **Knife Crimes** www.knifecrimes.org - the first and most complete resource on knife crime in the UK
- **LGBT Foundation** lgbt.foundation - provides support to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans
- **Rees Foundation** www.reesfoundation.org - offers help and advice to care experienced individuals
- **Rethink Essex Advocacy** www.rethinkessexadvocacy.org - helps people when decisions are being made about their health and social care
- **The Care Leavers Foundation** www.thecareleaversfoundation.org - can provide modest grants to care leavers aged 18 to 29
- **The Mix** www.themix.org.uk - a support service for young people in the UK
- **Essex Youth Service** youth.essex.gov.uk - helps young people in Essex get the most out of school, work and life

Education, training and employment

- **Adult Community Learning (ACL)** aclessex.com - day time and evening adult learning courses
- **Apprenticeships** www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/apprentices - learn more about apprenticeships including current opportunities
- **Find a job** www.gov.uk/find-a-job - find full or part-time jobs in England, Scotland and Wales
- **Indeed** uk.indeed.com - search for jobs, post resumes, and research companies
- **Jobcentre Plus** www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus - contact details for benefit claims and National Insurance Number queries
- **Princes Trust** www.princes-trust.org.uk - helps 11 to 30 year olds to try free courses and start careers

Legal

- **Children's Legal Centre** www.childrenslegalcentre.com - provides free legal advice and representation
- **Refugee Council** www.refugeecouncil.org.uk - supports refugees seeking protection in the UK
- **Shelter** england.shelter.org.uk - an advice and support service for housing issues and homelessness
- **UK Visas and Immigration** www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration - the UK Home Office website for visas and immigration issues



Health

- **Action for Children** www.actionforchildren.org.uk - practical and emotional care and support for children and young people
- **Brook** www.brook.org.uk - a free and confidential sexual health and wellbeing service
- **Cruse Bereavement Care** www.cruse.org.uk - help people with support after someone has died
- **Drinkaware** www.drinkaware.co.uk - information and support about the impacts of alcohol on health and wellbeing
- **Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service** www.essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk/service/looked-children-service - access to free local health services in the community
- **Essex Sexual Health Service** essexsexualhealthservice.org.uk - NHS funded sexual health services for Essex
- **Essex Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service** www.nhs.uk/services/service-directory/young-people-s-drug-and-alcohol-service-essex/N10876447 - support for under 25s
- **FPA** - the sexual health company www.fpa.org.uk - information on relationships, sexual health and postnatal health and wellbeing
- **FRANK** www.talktofrank.com - honest information about drugs
- **Healthline** www.healthline.com - information about all facets of physical and mental health
- **Kooth** www.kooth.com - an online mental wellbeing community
- **NHS Stop Smoking service** www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking - help and support to quit smoking
- **NHS** www.nhs.uk - the main website for the National Health Service
- **Samaritans** www.samaritans.org - a 24 hour support service for anyone who needs someone to talk to
- **Young Minds** www.youngminds.org.uk - mental health support for young people and their parents and carers
- **Youth Access** www.youthaccess.org.uk - an advice and counselling network for young people



Leaving and After Care Teams

West - Harlow, Brentwood, Saffron Walden

Goodman House, Station Approach, Harlow CM20 2ET

leavingcare.west@essex.gov.uk

0333 013 9932/0333 013 9939

South - Basildon, Canvey Island, Rayleigh

Ely House, Basildon SS14 2BQ

leavingcare.south@essex.gov.uk

0333 013 8935

North - Colchester, Clacton-on-Sea

Stanwell House, Stanwell Street, Colchester CO2 7DL

leavingandaftercare@essex.gov.uk

0333 013 9980

Mid - Chelmsford, Maldon, Braintree

E3, Zone 2, County Hall, Market Road, Chelmsford CM1 1QH

leavingaftercaremid@essex.gov.uk

0333 013 8935

If you are confused about which Leaving and After Care team is the nearest to you, please contact the hub on 0345 603 7627.

This information is issued by:
Essex County Council
Children and Families

Contact us:

www.essex.gov.uk
0345 603 7627



Essex_CC



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The information contained in
this document can be translated,
and/or made available in
alternative formats, on request.

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