



Our Local Offer to Care Leavers 2017 – 2020



Version	Version 1
Guardian	Rebecca Wilshire Head of Children's Social Care
Date Produced	July 2017
Next Review Date	April 2020

1. Introduction
2. Legislation
3. Current Position in Rutland
4. Status of Care Leavers
5. Our Local Offer
6. Our Pledges to our Care Leavers
7. Our Care Leavers' voice
8. Conclusions
9. Recommendations
10. Appendices

1. Introduction:

The term “Care Leavers” is used to describe those children and young people who fall within scope of local authority duties set out in sections 23A and 24D of the Children Act 1989.

The new **Children and Social Worker Act 2017** places a duty on the local authority to publish a **Local Offer for Care Leavers** providing information about services which the local authority offers that may assist Care Leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living. This includes services relating to health and wellbeing; relationships; education and training; employment; accommodation and participation in society.

This policy is intended to give an overview of Rutland’s offer to Care Leavers.

2. Legislation:

The **Children and Social Work Bill** seeks to combine a commitment to protect the most vulnerable in society with the “ambition to ensure that disadvantaged children have the brightest possible future”. The Bill has been heard in the House of Lords and will be debated in the House of Commons in October 2017. A subsequent strategy entitled **Keep on Caring – Supporting Young People from Care to Independence** published in July 2016 sets out a plan for the delivery of a ‘step change’ in services for children in and leaving care.

At the same time the House of Commons Education Committee published its inquiry into the **Mental Health and well-being of looked-after children 2015/16**.

The **Children and Social Work Act 2017** received Royal Assent on 27th April 2017. The Act aims to:

- Improve support for children looked after in England and Wales especially for those leaving care;
- Enable better learning about effective approaches to child protection and care in England;
- Establish a new regulatory body for the social work profession in England.

3. Current Position:

Rutland underwent their Single Inspection Framework in November 2016 which was published in February 2017. **The graded judgement about the experience and progress of Care Leavers was that it was good.**

Ofsted considered

- Local authority staff make strenuous efforts to maintain frequent contact with all its Care Leavers, and have remained in touch with all of them for the past two years.
- Care Leavers are safe and none are judged to be at risk of harm.
- All current Care Leavers reside in suitable and safe accommodation, either with former foster carers or independently.
- Local authority prioritises the accommodation needs of Care Leavers.
- Care Leavers successful make the transition to independent living and there have been no tenancy breakdown for Care Leavers in the last two years.

4. Status of Care Leavers:

Sections 23B and 23C of the 1989 Act impose duties on local authorities to provide assistance and support to relevant children and former relevant children (namely, children who were formally looked after by a local authority).

- **Eligible child** is a child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who is still being looked after. The local authority will for all 'eligible' young people undertaken an assessment of the young person's needs and prepare a pathway plan with them. The assessment is defined as determining whether any services offered by the local authority may help to meet the young person's needs and what advice and support would be appropriate for the responsible authority to provide.
- **Relevant child** is a child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who has left care. This also includes young people who were detained (e.g. in a youth offending institution or hospital) when they turned 16, but who were looked after immediately before being detained. The local authority will for all 'relevant' young people undertake an assessment of the young person's needs and prepare a pathway plan with them. The assessment is defined as determining whether any services offered by the local authority may help to meet the young person's needs, and what advice and support would be appropriate for the responsible authority to provide.
- **Former relevant child** is a young person over 18 who was previously 'eligible' or 'relevant'. Councils support this group until aged 21, or up to 25, if they are in education or training. Where a former relevant child seeks support or advice regardless of pursuing education they must be offered a personal advisor who remains involved until such time as the young person is 25 or the young person advises the local authority that a personal advisor is no longer required.

The former relevant young person will have an updated assessment of their needs and a pathway plan outlining support as assessed.

- **Former relevant child pursuing education** is any former relevant child whose case was closed for any reason. If we are informed that they are planning to continue education or training they can ask the council to assess whether they can get any support. Any help would last until their 25th birthday.
- **Qualifying child** is any young person under 21 (or 25 if in education or training) who stops being looked after or accommodated in a variety of other settings, or being privately fostered, after the age of 16. This also includes young people who are under a special guardianship order. We will offer the same assessment process, support and advice to qualifying children in Rutland to enable the right support to be offered.

5. The Local Offer

The local offer for Care Leavers is a combination of statutory entitlements i.e. what the law says must be given and what Rutland and its partners can give over and above its local duty.

The Children and Social Work Bill wants local authorities to consult on and publish details of their Local Offer to Care Leavers setting out areas such as education, health, employment and accommodation.

5.1. Our Pledges

Our Pledges are our (the Council) promise to Children Looked After and Care Leavers. Our young people have fully contributed to the Pledges and they are based on their voice and what they want from us as their corporate parent.

The pledges have been adjusted to meet the council's commitment following the new Act.

Our Pledges:

Children Looked After and Care Leavers are happy and have good Health and Well Being

Children Looked After and Care Leavers are safe and have stable accommodation (including staying out options)

Children Looked After and Care Leavers achieve their potential and have access to good education, training and/or employment

Children Looked After and Care Leavers are listened to and participate in society

Children Looked After and Care Leavers build positive relationships

Young People are prepared to become independent and successful adults

Our local offer is as follows:

5.2. Personal Advisers

Currently all local authorities must appoint a personal advisor for Care Leavers until they are 21 or until they are 25 if they are in education or training.

Once the Children and Social Work Bill is legislated the right to a personal adviser will be extended to the age of 25.

In Rutland personal advisors' caseloads are on average 15 and we work hard to ensure young people have a consistent advisor. Our personal advisors sit within the Fostering, Adoption and Care Leaver Service to ensure there is access to support, knowledge and advice as it is needed.

5.3. Assessment

All our care leavers will have a needs led assessment which will fully consider their needs including information, advice and guidance around the suitability of their choice of further/higher education or training. Care Leavers will also have a pathway plan which will support their needs and outline the local authority's duty to support and assist as assessed. Pathway plans will be overseen by managers and regularly evaluated as part of our internal audit process.

5.4. Health assessment

All our Care Leavers will have a leaving care health assessment and have information about their health to support them into adulthood.

5.5. Accommodation

Following assessment, care leavers in Rutland are considered priority; we will work with housing to locate appropriate housing based on the young person's needs including access to supported accommodation to continue to prepare them for independence. This means that the Local Authority should

- a. provide accommodation that meets the needs of the care leaver, particularly considering any health needs or needs arising from disability
- b. be satisfied that the landlord is safe and of good character
- c. take into account the care leaver's wishes and feelings and their education, training or employment needs

The Children and Families Act 2004 introduced Staying Put to allow young people to stay with their foster families until the age of 21. Where this is an option, Staying Put is high on our agenda to ensure that young people can access Staying Put options and Rutland will consider this when placing children in care from the earliest stages. Where this is not an option we will work closely with housing to ensure appropriate options are accessed.

Supported lodgings will be accessed and provided when the assessment identifies this as a need; whilst Rutland do not have their own supported lodgings provisions we would and do purchase such provision to ensure the needs of young people are met.

5.6. Advocacy Support

Care Leavers are able to seek support from the Independent Advocacy Service offered by the Rutland Youth Service. Care Leavers are able to access the service directly or through their personal adviser. Advocates support Care Leavers in getting their voice heard and speak up about things they may be unhappy about or wish to change.

5.7. Mentoring Service

Care Leavers are able to access one to one mentoring support via the Youth Service to help them work through any personal difficulties they may be experiencing. Mentors typically support young people with a range of issues including personal relationships, confidence building, being safe online and managing emotions. Young people can self-refer to the service or ask their personal adviser to refer them. A mentor will typically support a young person for up to 12 weeks.

5.8. Education and Careers Support

The Youth Education and Careers Service supports Care Leavers to find suitable education, training and employment opportunities and can work one to one with young people to achieve their identified goals. Support on offer typically includes the Five Steps to Success programme - Steps include skills and interests audit; how to search for jobs/courses; CV writing/completing application forms, preparation for interviews; and action planning/goal setting. The Service also offers drop in appointments for general careers advice and works around the needs of the young person. Young people can drop into Jules House to seek support or ask to be referred by their personal adviser.

5.9. Sexual Health Information Service

Care Leavers are able to access confidential support and advice regarding sexual health through the Jules House Service and dedicated advice phone number. The Service offers 'C' card registration and along with a number of other local providers is able to distribute condoms in a safe and confidential environment, it also offers confidential pregnancy testing and information/advice around relationships and contraception choices.

5.10. SUSO (Speak Up, Speak Out)

SUSO (Speak up, Speak out) is our Children in Care Council (CiCC). Care Leavers are invited to attend and contribute to enable them to have a voice and also to support the development of services, policies and procedures for children looked after, sharing their experiences to allow us to continually improve our service.

5.11. Corporate Parenting Board

Our Care Leavers are invited to our Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) where they can influence practice and policy and have a voice. This is open to all our Care Leavers and Children Looked After (age appropriate). Where there is no attendance, their voice is captured through our Pledges and feedback surveys which is gathered and shared at the CPB.

5.12. Education and Employment:

The Government's [Keep on Caring Strategy](#) sees the local help and support that Care Leavers receive from their local authority as being critical to whether Care Leavers make the transition from care to independence successfully. One of the key outcomes of the strategy is to improve access to education, employment and training.

Our virtual head teacher attends our Corporate Parenting Board and has oversight of all our children looked after and care leavers to ensure we measure attainment.

There is access to performance data which is reviewed regularly with regards to young people accessing education, training and/or employment.

5.13. Mental Health

Care Leavers are able to access free, confidential Mental Health and Wellbeing advice and support through a variety of service providers.

Rutland County Council Early Help Youth team offers a range of support and information services as note above including 1 to 1 mentoring to support young people up to age 19 with personal and social development.

Rutland has a **specialist emotional health and wellbeing practitioner** who covers Melton and Rutland who works with our schools and our young people to deliver support on emotional health and well-being issues. While in Rutland the specialist emotional health and wellbeing practitioner works closely with the youth services team at Jules House. 1 Cold Overton Road, Oakham, LE15 6NT, Telephone on 01572 758301

ChatHealth – 'ChatHealth' is a messaging service for young people to get confidential advice about health related issues. It is for young people attending school or living across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) aged 11-19 years. **07520615387**, Care Leavers up to the age of 19 can also access this service

Healthforteens – Healthforteens is a website providing information and advice for young people and web chats on a variety of health topics – e.g., ways to deal with peer pressure and 'ways to manage sadness' <https://www.healthforteens.co.uk/>

Kooth - Kooth delivers online counselling, advice and support across LLR: <https://kooth.com/> It delivers 1 to 1 counselling and live and off line advice forums. This can be accessed on your mobile, tablet or desktop.

'Let's Talk-Wellbeing' – provides psychological assessment and treatment for mild to moderate common mental health problems offering a range of approaches including one to one appointments, group workshops, self-help books, leaflets, online and telephone support. This is available to young people aged 16 and over who are registered with a GP and self-referral is available you can call **0115 8760157** or visit <https://www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/leicestershire-county-and-rutland-service->

For any kind of support Care Leavers will have a personal advisor who can sign post them to ensure that the right support is accessed.

5.14. Transitions and Adult Social Care Support for Care Leavers who have Special Educational Needs.

Rutland County Council can carry out an assessment for an adult who appears to have a need for care and support. The aim of an assessment is to find out what your care and support needs are, to help understand your situation and get the right kind of care and support when needed. It is also a way to recognise and build on strengths, and look at what adults want to achieve in their day to day life.

To find out about having an assessment please contact the Adult Duty Desk on 01572 758341 or email adultduty@rutland.gov.uk or visit our website at <https://www.rutland.gov.uk/>

Transition Planning for Disabled Young People

Until the age of 18, the care of children with long-term health conditions is the responsibility of child health and social care services. From 18, they are usually the responsibility of adult services. Between the ages of 16 and 18, the child will start a "transition" of the services affecting:

- **health and social care**
- **mental health**
- **education**
- **financial benefits for the young person and their family**
- **work**
- **housing**

Planning for this transition should begin when a child is in Year 9 at school (13 or 14 years old) at the latest. Transition should be an ongoing process rather than a single event and should be tailored to suit the child's needs.

The local authority may also combine a transition assessment with any other assessment being carried out (provided everyone agrees). For example, if a hospital is carrying out an assessment the local authority can carry it out jointly with them. Transition assessments could also potentially become part of a young person's **education, health and care plan**.

Assessing needs

If a child, young carer or an adult caring for a child (a 'child's carer') is likely to have needs when they, or the child they care for, turn 18, the local authority must **assess them** if it considers there is a 'significant benefit' to the individual. The local authority has a duty to do this even if the person hasn't asked to be assessed or already receives any other services. This will help the young person to understand whether they (and their carer, where relevant) are likely to be eligible for care and support when they turn 18 and what might be available to them.

When either a child or a young carer approaches their 18th birthday they may ask their local authority for an assessment. A parent or carer may also ask for an assessment as the child they are caring for approaches 18 because the child's situation will potentially be changing dramatically which means that the carer's needs may change too. This right applies to everyone, whether or not they are currently receiving services.

The assessment should provide advice and information about what can be done to meet or reduce the person's needs as well as what they can do to stay well and

prevent or delay the development of needs. It will help you or the person you care for to plan ahead. There is no set age that you have to be assessed at as the best time to plan the move to adult services will be different for each person.

As a care leaver, all other support service as outlined here remains available and your personal advisor will support you to ensure all the support is coordinated.

6. Care leavers success and what they tell us:

From Ofsted report 2016:

Care Leavers feel positive about themselves. A key reason for this is the care and attention given to them by the leaving care worker who attends their parents' evenings and award ceremonies.

These young people feel that the interest and care demonstrated helps them to aspire to future success.

From Care Leavers 2016

I feel supported by my care leaver worker; she is always there to support me

My care leaver worker has supported me with so many things, including graduating from university

I have had a good experience of care, my journey did not start well but this has changed and is going well now

I have felt fully supported in preparing for adulthood

7. Conclusions

Rutland has been judged by Ofsted as 'Good', with regards to our work and support to Care Leavers.

We are very proud of all our Care Leavers and their achievements and would like to thank them for their ongoing support and influence they offer us as a council. We know there are things we can still do better and intend to work on these areas further as part of our local offer.

With our local offer alongside our promise (Pledges) to Care Leavers we are confident that as a council and in partnership with our partners and our Care Leavers and those young people looked after we will enhance our service further and ensure that all our Care Leavers have the best start possible into adulthood.

As a council we want to make sure also that our Care Leavers can access a range of services to meet their needs including financial support, access to health, education training and employment, personal advisers, effective pathway planning, appropriate housing including supported accommodation if this is assessed as being a need and mental health and counselling service as required.

8. Recommendations

- Our offer will be published on our website to ensure all information regarding 'Our Local Offer to Care Leavers' is in one place and accessible to care leavers, their families and our partners.
- Posters and Leaflets offering support and information will be devised which will go to all our young people looked after in preparation for becoming a Care Leaver as well as all current Care Leavers.
- Ensure all Care Leavers, including those who have already left the service, are aware they can access a Personal Advisor up to the age of 25 if they wish.
- We will ensure our Care Leavers are included and consulted in our quarterly survey which will go to all children looked after and Care Leavers to obtain feedback on how we as a local authority are doing.
- Continue work on Fostering sufficiency to consider Staying Put and providing sufficient resources to expand on this in Rutland.
- Begin working on a strategy to develop local supported lodgings locally to provide the 'next step' accommodation to bridge the gap from foster care to independent living.
- We will ensure there is a clear policy for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children nearing their 18th birthday to support them to claim asylum.
- There is a clear and transparent regarding the service offered to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who have exhausted their appeal rights in respect of asylum claims post 18 years.
- We will extend the invitation to attend part of the Corporate Parenting Board to allow Care Leavers to provide valuable feedback on their journey through care and into independence.

Our Local Offer to Care Leavers POSTER:



The Local Offer to
Care Leavers 2017.doc

Rutland Local Offer to Care Leavers LEAFLET

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