

GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE






**JERSEY PUTTING
CHILDREN FIRST**



Government of
JERSEY

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Introduction

The information in this guide is for you as a young person if you have been in our care.

Parenting doesn't stop once you reach a certain age and it is important that you know that we, as your 'corporate' parent, will remain here to guide and advise you as you transition to adulthood. Where appropriate, that also extends to offering practical and financial support to ensure you can reach your goals and aspirations and become the person you want to be.

Entering the world of adulthood is a big step with many new decisions. This guide sets out the support available to you as you leave care, so that you can feel safe and supported and know where to go for advice and help.

The circle of support that is provided through the offer is split across six areas:



- Health and wellbeing
- Finances
- Education and training
- Housing
- Employment
- Relationships

Definition of a care leaver

This offer is for those young people who are eligible as a care leaver. You are a care leaver if you are aged 16-25 and were looked after by the Minister at the age of 16 or above and are no longer looked after by the Minister.



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This section outlines the support arrangements that will be provided to you from an early age so that we can ensure strong foundations are in place to enable you to flourish in adulthood.

Personal advisors

Before or shortly after your 14th birthday, you will be allocated a Personal Advisor (PA). The PA will be in addition to your social worker, who will remain with you until you reach 18. We are keen to ensure that you build a strong relationship with your PA – ideally extending over a considerable period of time. Our proposal is that you have a PA until you are least 25, although that will be your choice.

The role of the PA will be to help you prepare (and regularly update) your pathway plan. They will help you to access services and be there to provide advice and support. They might also offer practical support such as helping you to buy furniture or move into your new home once you leave care.

Pathway plans

The PA and your social worker will work with you to create a pathway plan. This will be informed by a needs assessment which must be completed before you are aged 15 $\frac{3}{4}$. The pathway plan should be completed by the time you reach 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ years of age.

The pathway plan should reflect your hopes and aspirations for education, training and

employment and should set out the support needed to help you reach your goals. Like any good parent we want these plans to reflect a strong sense of self belief and aspiration for what you can achieve. They need to reflect your thoughts, ideas and aspirations, and any plan and subsequent updates need to be driven and informed by you.



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This section outlines the specific elements of the care leavers' offer across each of the six headings:

- Health and wellbeing
- Education and training
- Finance
- Housing
- Employment
- Relationships

Health and wellbeing

We know how important it is to make healthy lifestyle choices to maintain your health and wellbeing.

We will ensure you have access to information on healthy living and provide help to find local services such as GPs, dentists, drop-in health centres or counsellors. Your PA can go along with you to help you register with a GP. We pledge to ensure that by the time you leave care you are already registered with a GP, dentist and any other relevant health professionals.

You will also be able to access discounted membership to leisure and sports facilities through the Active Card, which will be provided to all care leavers.

Care leavers will be exempt from paying for GP visits, dental care and opticians. The Government already funds some of this for people who are on income support – although there is no special exemption currently for care leavers.

Under the proposed new arrangements, this will change and there will be specific arrangements made for care leavers to ensure you are able to access a range of health care services when needed and be automatically exempt from paying for them.

You will also be eligible to access an annual health check/wellbeing assessment.

Protecting your mental wellbeing is as of equal importance as maintaining your physical wellbeing and all care leavers will be eligible to access a mental wellbeing officer/life coach who will work with you to ensure your mental health and wellbeing is also looked after.



Education and training

We are keen to raise the aspirations and attainment levels for our young people who have been in care. Care experienced people are significantly underrepresented in the numbers of young people currently accessing further and higher education. This is not good enough.

We also want to ensure that there is a choice of education and training pathways and that there is parity between those pathways. Academia does not suit everyone, and it is important that we recognise and support you to reach your potential – whatever that might be.

In the future, academic and vocational training will be treated in the same way and access to funding and support will be the same.

As part of your pathway plan you will be given access to a skilled careers advisor who will be able to help you think about your options for the future.

If you decide to go on to further education or higher education and the course is off-Island, we

will fund the cost for you and an approved adult to visit up to five potential places of study.

If you are over 18 and in further education (below degree level) you may be eligible to claim income support and housing benefit. You will also be eligible for an annual bursary of £900 per annum.

If you attend Higher Education, we will fund your tuition fees. You will also be eligible for a living expenses grant, currently set at £7,500 per annum and an additional bursary of £3,000 per annum. We will also help and support you to find accommodation during the university holidays.

In addition to your weekly money, you can access an Equipment and/or Computer Grant if needed for your coursework. For this, you must be in education or training for more than 12 hours a week.

There may also be charitable or legacy funds available to help support you through education or training. If eligible, we will help you to apply to access this funding.



If you decide to continue your education to post graduate level, we will give you a bursary of £2,000 per annum.

If you choose to start an apprenticeship you can also apply for a bursary of £1,000 to help the transition into the workplace. You will also be able to apply for a bursary for suitable clothing.

You will be entitled to a free bus pass until you are 25.

We will support you to get your driving licence. We will pay for your provisional driving licence, theory test and one practical driving test. We will also pay for up to 20 driving lessons.

When you complete your degree or apprenticeship, we will give you an achievement award of £2,000. We will be consulting on how this is best provided to ensure it delivers maximum benefit.

We are also looking into how we celebrate the success of care leavers through an annual celebration event.



Finance

Ensuring that you are financially stable and supported is a key component of the pathway plan. This will be the opportunity for the PA to discuss finances and financial planning with you before you move into independent or semi-independent living.

Your pathway plan will include assessments of how much you need to live on, how you manage that money and advice on applying for support you may be entitled to after you turn 18.

From the age of 16 your pathway plan will also consider:

- what money you need to live on
- what help you need to manage your money
- how you can start to save money in the future
- how to get a bank account.

We understand that the transition to independence is a big thing. Managing a budget is one of the main things you will need to learn and we appreciate that things can sometimes go wrong. If you find yourself without money your first contact will be your PA who will be able to support you and ensure you can access emergency arrangements to pay for electricity, gas, food etc.

After the emergency has been dealt with, your PA will sit down with you and understand what happened and talk through options to make sure we reduce the risk of it happening again.

Housing

Most young people still live at home with their families until they are at least 18. We hope that you will stay being cared for by us at least until you reach that age.

If you and your foster family want to remain living together, we will support you to do that until you are 25. Like all young adults we would expect you to contribute to rent and living costs. Depending on your circumstances this may be funded through income support payments.

If you are living in a residential care home, your PA will discuss with you the options for remaining in residential care until you are 21. This would be either in your current home or, if this isn't possible, an alternative suitable option. These will depend on what is right for you and your own personal preferences. If the decision is that you will leave residential care, you will then have housing pathway options available to you.

Your PA or social worker will help you to complete a personal housing plan. In most cases the preferred route would be to follow

the fully supported pathway until you are at least 21.

Your PA will help you to understand and navigate the different housing options available to you. These will vary depending on your age. You will be fully involved in all decisions.

When you are ready to move on from the fully supported pathway, we will ensure you are housed in suitable accommodation. This has been defined as either a self-contained studio or one-bedroom flat but we appreciate that for some young people, the option to share might be a more suitable or desirable option.

Moving into a new home can be expensive and we will support you in the following ways:

- You will be eligible for a grant to contribute towards buying furniture, white goods and carpets for your new home
- Every young person moving into their first home will get a home starter kit, which will include cutlery, pots and pans etc

- We will pay your cooker and washing machine connection costs
- If it is allowed under your tenancy agreement, we will pay towards your decorating costs
- We will pay the removal and transport costs to get you moved into your new home
- We will pay for the first year of your TV licence and contents insurance
- If you are moving into a private rental, we will pay the deposit for your first home. Any subsequent deposit payments would be offered as a Special Payment loan if you are on income support

We understand that becoming independent can potentially be overwhelming, so we promise to review your living arrangements within 28 days of you moving and at least every three months after that to make sure everything is okay.

Even when you have moved on, we want you to feel that your old home is still a place where you can return to share experiences and celebrate special occasions. Or simply come and have a meal or a cup of tea and be with people who know you well and care about you.

Financial support to fund your accommodation costs will continue until you finish your education or training.

If you move away from Jersey to continue your education or training, we will make sure there is somewhere for you to stay during the holidays if you want to come home.

Employment

We have a unique opportunity as a corporate parent to provide opportunities to our young people that will enable them to have a head start in the world of work. We are proposing to offer care leavers the opportunity to have a 12-month paid internship with the Government of Jersey or a private business. We will try and ensure we have a range of opportunities to reflect a wide range of interests and aspirations.

We are also considering how we might introduce a similar concept to the Care Leavers Covenant that has been launched in England. This would encourage businesses to work with us to raise the aspirations of our young people by offering internships, apprenticeships and mentoring.

¹The aim of the Care Leaver's Covenant, to which organisations commit, is to provide additional support for those leaving care; making available a different type of support and expertise from that statutorily provided. Drawing on the resourcefulness and imagination of their staff and their working environment, organisations have the potential to offer new perspectives and professional expertise. These can offer opportunities and a new way of thinking to aid the care leavers in moving forward successfully to the next phase of their lives.



Relationships

Strong, supportive relationships can make all the difference to the lives of young people and their life outcomes.

For most people, bonds with family and friends underpin wellbeing and resilience to life's challenges. Yet these are often the bonds that are lacking for some of the most vulnerable children, including those in the care of the Minister.

Care leavers who have a more positive transition to independent adult life tend to have supportive personal relationships, for example with former foster carers, family members and close friends. That is why our focus is on strengthening and maintaining these relationships wherever possible.

This is not simply about professional relationships. It is about enabling you to build or maintain connections with people who care about you.

That is why we want to support you to remain with your foster carers for longer whenever possible and why we will encourage you if you are leaving residential care, to retain your relationships with your former carers.

We know it is important for you to maintain healthy relationships with friends, family and anyone else who loves and supports you. As a young person transitioning to independence, we want you to feel that care and support has not left you and that people and places who have been important in your life are still there for you to return to when needed.

The most important relationships are likely to be with your family and the role of the PA will be critical in helping you to maintain these relationships, where it is appropriate and safe for you to do so. If this is difficult, perhaps because they live far away, we will help you work out a way to keep in touch. If you have lost contact with a family member your PA will help you to reconnect with them. They will also explain to you any reason why it may not be safe for you to see a particular family member.

Your PA can also put you in touch with an independent visitor, mentor/peer mentor, advocate or similar to support you and make sure your voice is heard. We are investing in independent advocacy to make sure that any decisions taken are done so with your full involvement and engagement.

The final part of our offer relates to gifts and celebrations. Like any parent, we want to be there to help you celebrate birthday, festivals or other milestones that are important to you. To help you celebrate those important occasions in your life we will:

- Give you £100 or buy you a gift of that value for your 18th and 21st birthday
- Give you £50 or buy you a gift of that value for your other birthdays
- Take you out for a meal to celebrate your birthday (or pay towards you going out with your friends if you'd prefer)
- For Christmas or other religious celebrations we will buy you a gift or contribute to a celebration up to the value of £50

