

Rotherham Care Leavers Local Offer



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Rotherham Care Leavers Local Offer March 2024.

Introduction

Our Local Offer for care leavers sets out how we can support you to achieve your full potential. We want you to have the stability and support you need to be successful, resilient and safe, and to have access to the opportunities and experiences that will help you reach your goals. Moving into independence and adulthood is never easy, but we want you to know that we believe in you, and we will be alongside you to celebrate your successes and help you when things are difficult.

Rotherham Local Offer for Children and Young People Leaving Care

Leaving care can be a worrying and challenging time for young people. This guide will tell you what support you can expect from Rotherham Council as you take your next steps to independence. We want you to continue to feel safe and supported and know where or who to go to for advice and help when you need it.

Just because you are leaving care, or have already left care, we haven't stopped caring about you wherever you are and whatever your situation. We will be by your side every step of the way and will be alongside you when times are tough and celebrate with you when you reach your goals. If you do not live in Rotherham, you will still be entitled to a personal advisor and financial support as outlined in the financial policy for care leavers. We can help you access support in your local area, however some support outlined in the Local Offer for Children and Young People Leaving Care may not be available outside Rotherham.

Contact Us

Rotherham Leaving Care Service is based at Chatham House, and we are available Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm.

You can reach us in the following ways:

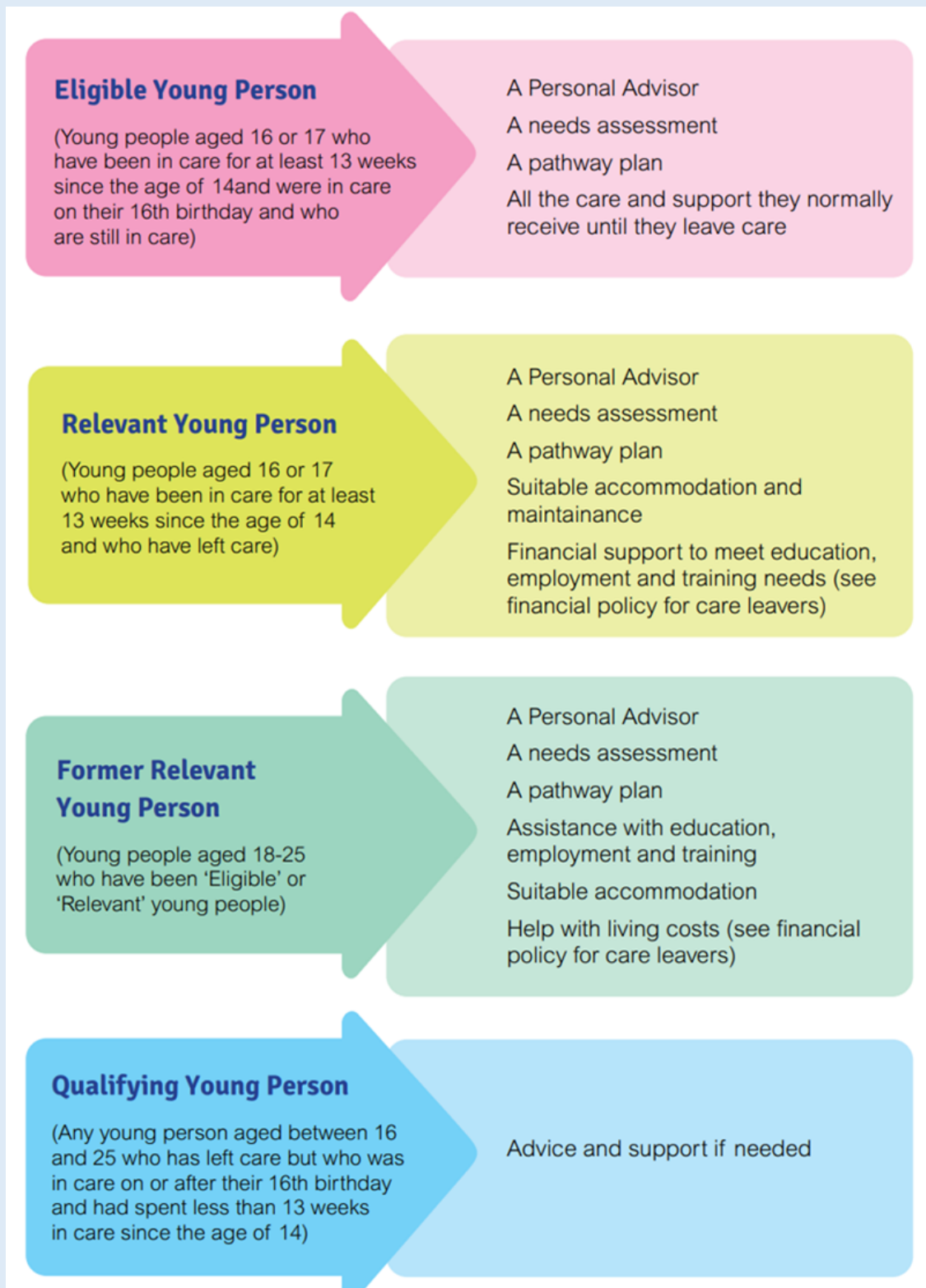
Call us on 01709 822673.

Find us at 2 Chatham Villas, Chatham Street, Rotherham. S65 1DP

Email us leavingcare@rotherham.gov.uk

Who is a Care Leaver?

A Care Leaver is a young person aged between 16 and 25 who has previously been in the care of a local authority. The type of support we can offer you will depend on when and for how long you were in care. You are considered to be a Care Leaver when you reach 16 years old, even though you may not yet have left the care of the Local Authority.



Advice and Support from a Personal Advisor (PA)

Your Personal Advisor will be there to support you on your journey towards leaving care. You should meet them when you are 16 and you will be able to ask them for support until up to the age of 25, depending upon your needs.

Once allocated, your Personal Advisor will contact you within two weeks to arrange to meet you.

We will try and make sure you have the same Personal Advisor during your time with the service, but if this does need to change, we'll let you know as soon as we can.

Your Personal Advisor is there to support, advise and guide you, and these are some of the things they may help you with:

- Going to appointments.
- Co-ordinating support for you from other services.
- Helping you achieve your ambitions in education/training/employment.
- Supporting you to access the correct finances.
- Being a shoulder to cry on when you may be struggling.
- Helping you with your Setting Home Allowance to make sure you have everything for your home!
- Reviewing your Pathway Plan.
- Supporting you to make sure you have accommodation that meets your needs.
- Supporting you to attend meetings.
- Supporting you to engage in leisure and social activities.
- Making sure your voice is heard.
- Engaging with you to make changes for other children and young people.
- Helping you with your family and social relationships.

Your Pathway Plan

When you are 15 and 9 months old, you begin to become a Care Leaver and the Local Authority (your Corporate Parent) start to help you plan the pathway to your future. They do this with you by completing a Pathway Plan. There are two parts to your Pathway Plan. Part 1 is all about what you need (leaving care assessment of need) and part 2 is all about your goals and plans. In part 2 this will cover what you want to do, who is going to help you do it and when will it be done by. Your first Pathway Plan will be completed by your 16th birthday, when you become an eligible young person, and this will set out your plan from age 16 to age 18. You may take stepping stones to your independence in this time.

When you are 16 and 17, you will have a Care Plan and a Pathway Plan. You will review the plan with your Social Worker or Personal Adviser:

- If you have any big changes in your life, such as any worries about your health, your housing situation changes or there's a change with your family.
- If you want your Pathway Plan updated.
- If your Social Worker or Personal Adviser thinks your Pathway Plan needs to be updated.
- At a minimum of every six months.

Remember it is **YOUR** plan!

Your Social Worker and Personal Adviser will be there to support you and hopefully make all those goals on your Pathway Plan achievable.

Your Personal Advisor will visit you at least every eight weeks. However, if you need more support that can be agreed within your Pathway Plan.

Your Pathway Plan will be in place and regularly reviewed up until you turn 21, at which point you can choose whether you need a Pathway Plan to help you with your future and this will depend on your needs.

After the age of 21, if you no longer have needs which require a Pathway Plan, we still would like to keep in touch with you. This means that we will contact you every year to see how you are doing. If you need support, but do not have an allocated PA, you can call in to the Journey and access the drop-in service for advice or guidance or to tell us about things that are happening for you. We also love hearing positive news from you so if you've had a baby, passed your driving test or got a new job we'd love to hear about that too. We will be on hand to offer information, advice and guidance when things go wrong or those times in life when you reach a bump in the road and just need someone to talk to about it.

Accommodation:

Your Social Worker and Personal Adviser will discuss with you about different housing options for your future. Your Independent Reviewing Officer will talk about this with you and your important people at your Looked After Child reviews and will help you think about how to get where you want to be.

Depending on your needs, and what goals you have for where you want to live in the future, there are lots of options that your Personal Advisor and Social Worker can consider with you.

Your own tenancy

The Leaving care service can support you with accessing your own tenancy through Key Choices, Rotherham's council housing service. Your PA will work with you to help you become ready for your tenancy and when you are, will apply to the priority panel for your care leaver priority status. If the panel agrees that you are ready for your own tenancy, you will become eligible to bid on council properties. Your PA will support you to do this. It is really important that you know that you can only make bids for housing when you have priority status. When you make a successful bid, you will become the tenant of your own council property.

We can only ensure that you have priority status in Rotherham. If you have lived in another area for a certain amount of time, you may be accepted on to that area's housing list. It is very

difficult to apply for council housing in some areas of the country where housing stock is low. Your PA can talk to you about this and help to find alternatives if this affects you.

Supported/semi-supported accommodation:

We have access to supported and semi-supported accommodation both in Rotherham and outside of Rotherham. Some of these homes are shared homes, where young people may have their own room, and there are staff in the home who support you with learning the skills you need to live independently in the future. Some of these homes are individual flats, with staff on site in an office who can help you. Your Social Worker and Personal Advisor will talk to you about whether these types of accommodation are right for you when you are thinking together about independence.

You can move into these types of arrangement from age 16, however we would prefer this move on arrangement was delayed at least until you have completed year 11 at school.

Dispersed accommodation:

These are flats which you would live in on your own, but where you would have a tenancy support worker who visited you to support you with paying bills, budgeting, setting up your home and other independence skills. In some situations, when you are ready to live independently without that support, you can take over the tenancy.

Staying Put:

If you live with a foster carer, you might be able to remain living with your foster carer after the age of 18 up to the age of 21, this includes support if you go to university or into the armed forces. As you will be living with your foster carer as an adult, we will help you develop a Staying Put living together agreement which details how you will contribute to household expenses.

Supported Lodgings:

You can choose to rent a room in a house of a 'host' family. Similar to Staying Put, this means that you would be a lodger in the home. RMBC do an assessment with people who want to become Supported Lodgings providers, so that we know they have the right skills and values, and we do all of the checks needed to make sure this would be a safe home for you.

Shared accommodation:

When you are over the age of 18 and are able to take care of yourself with minimal support, shared accommodation may be right for you. RMBC lease some shared houses which you can live in with up to five other young people. You can claim housing benefit towards the cost of the rent, or if you are working there would be a rent charge. Shared accommodation provided by RMBC is a short-term option until we can help you access your own tenancy.

Privately rented accommodation:

You may want to rent a property in an area where you can't access council housing, or you may want to share a property with friends. If you do, we can help you to look for suitable housing.

University accommodation:

We can help you with a contribution towards your accommodation costs throughout your university course, and vacation accommodation in the summer holiday.

Education, training and employment:

We will support you to access education, employment or training and to achieve your full potential.

We take your education seriously and want you to achieve at the highest level you can. That is why we will work hard to support you through whatever education or training you decide to take on. Whether this is supporting you through an apprenticeship, helping you to gain work related qualifications or supporting you for up to four years through university, we will help you achieve your goals. We can also help you with accessing advice from the DWP about opportunities that interest you.

We don't believe that any ambition is too big, so speak to us about yours and we will do our best to help you achieve them. We will ensure if you have any additional or learning needs, we help you to get support from the relevant services.

Your Personal Advisor can support you to access:

- 16 to 19 Study Programmes.
- Traineeships.
- Apprenticeships.
- Community Learning (Adult Provision).
- English, Mathematics and Digital Skills Programmes.
- Support with looking for and applying for jobs and work experience.
- Referrals to organisations who offer specific qualifications.
- links with training providers and opportunities through the care leaver covenant.
- University courses. There is financial support available for your first undergraduate course (please see the financial offer for more details).

The Virtual School is part of RMBC, and they will support you while you are in primary and secondary education and their role is to:

- Monitor and promote the educational progress and achievement of Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
- Ensure that Personal Education Plans are current, relevant and effective.
- Promote and monitor the use of the Pupil Premium Grant.
- Support schools and designated teachers to develop effective strategies and support for Looked After Children.
- Provide advice and guidance for social workers and carers on issues relating to the education of Looked After Children.
- Develop and implement programmes and activities to support the education and learning of Looked After Children.
- Provide information, advice and guidance to Looked After Children and Care Leavers about education, employment and training.
- Ensure the educational achievement of Looked After Children is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare.
- Be a source of advice and information to help parents of previously Looked After Children to advocate for them as effectively as possible. The Virtual School is not acting as part of the corporate parent role in these circumstances but is there to promote the educational achievement of these children through the provision of advice and information to relevant parties.

The Virtual School will come to your Personal Education Plan meetings, and our secondary advocate also runs a fortnightly drop in at The Journey where you can talk about your plans and get support.

16-19 bursary:

If you are in education and aged 16-19, you may be able to get financial support for costs associated with your education. See the link below.

[16-19 bursary](#)

Website: [Apprenticeship Care Leaver Bursary](#)

Finance:

Leaving care and transitioning to independent living will bring with it many challenges; one of these will be managing your own money.

We will try to help you stay on top of your finances by helping you to budget and letting you know about opportunities to build on your budgeting skills. We may also give you access to certain allowances for things like your living costs if you are ineligible to claim benefits, a gift for special occasions such as a birthday or religious celebration, staying in touch with people who are important to you, buying essential items for your home, buying necessary equipment for education, training or work and helping you with the cost of going to university. We may also agree to help you with things which we would consider as exceptional circumstances if we feel it is appropriate to do so. Before you receive this support, we will consider your

circumstances and the assistance available to you already. If we do agree to financially assist you this will be based on your needs and recorded clearly within your pathway plan.

If you're on a low income or claiming certain benefits, we realise that money is tight. We will help you to maximise your income ensuring you're aware of everything you are entitled to, child benefit and Universal Credit.

Dependent on your circumstances, the Leaving Care Service can offer varying additional financial support, which could include:

- Setting up home grant of up to £3000, to furnish and set up your home. The amount is dependent on eligibility and need (see the financial offer for more details).
- Support to prevent housing arrears.
- Council tax reduction scheme – up to the age of 21, you will be supported to apply for the reduction in council tax, even if you don't live in Rotherham.
- Weekly living allowance if you are living independently but are too young to claim benefits.
- If you are in debt, we can help you to get specialist advice and support.
- You may be eligible for a Junior ISA if you have been in care for more than a year and do not have a Child Trust Fund. Speak to your Personal Advisor to find out more.
- Your Personal Advisor can share with you the current finance policy for Care Leavers
- We will pay for up to ten driving lessons, if you have had some driving lessons already. We will also pay for your first theory test and practical test.

A chart to outline what finances you may be entitled to is included below.

Your important documents

You will need various documents and forms of identification to do things like applying for housing, applying to college, claiming benefits, opening a bank account and having ID in order to vote. To make sure you have everything you need we will support you with obtaining the following (if you have not already received these whilst you were looked after):

- your national insurance number.
- your first passport or ARC card (application registration card if you are seeking asylum).
- your birth certificate.
- a provisional driving licence if you need this for employment, education or training.

We will keep copies of these documents and keep these safe for you if you request it, however, at certain times you will need the original documents, for example, when you set up a bank account. Once we have given you your documents, it is your responsibility to keep them safe and if you lose them, you will have to pay for replacements. If you don't have a safe place to store your documents speak to your leaving care worker and we will discuss your best options to help keep the document safe.

Health & Wellbeing:

Your health and wellbeing matter to us. When we talk about your health, we don't just mean exercising and eating vegetables (although this is an important part of staying healthy!). Health also covers things like how you feel about yourself, how you manage your emotions, whether you have good sexual health and whether you know where to go for support with your health if you are struggling. There are different services available to care leavers in Rotherham, some are provided by leaving care and others are accessed through your GP but either way, your Personal Advisor will be able to signpost you to the right support. Details of some of those services are below.

You will be given a health summary document when you leave care. This will be completed by a nurse, usually the one you knew when you were looked after, and you can meet with them to receive this document and help you understand the information it may have. It will give you a summary of things that are available in your health records. Health information like your blood type, dates of your immunisations and the name of your GP and any other significant health information you need to be aware of. If you don't want it at this time, it will be kept on your medical records at your GPs for you to get at any time in the future.

Other services in Rotherham:

Primary Health Needs - Your GP will continue to be your main contact for your primary health needs and any general health problems. You can find your local GP service on the NHS website.

For health emergencies and emergency treatment, you will need to go to your local accident and emergency department or ring 999 and ask for an ambulance. For non-emergencies you can call the NHS 111 service for advice and signposting.

Counselling services can also be accessed through your GP, or we can help you call IAPT. [Talking sense website](#)

CAMHS is the service that supports young people who are under the age of 18.

With Me in Mind [With Me in Mind](#)

Making sure any substance use is safe and does not affect your life

In Rotherham, the substance misuse service is ROADS. They can help you with any difficulties you or the people around you have any worries about substance use.

[ROADS \(We are With You\)](#)

Sexual Health Services are also available at Rotherham Hospital at Moorgate. They are in the main hospital on Level C, along the corridor from the main Outpatient department and opposite the hospital chapel.

They also have some community clinics. Information about the service can be found here:

[Find a community sexual health clinic](#)

They can be reached on 01709 427777.

If you don't want to go to the hospital, MESMAC also offers advice and guidance around sexual health and can be reached on 01709 242202 and are based at:

Yorkshire MESMAC Rotherham Office:

11 Mansfield Road

Rotherham
S60 2DR

Culture, identity and your rights

If you have religious beliefs, we will respect them and work with you to create a plan which meets your religious and cultural needs. We will also celebrate your religious festivals with you, this will include ensuring you have opportunities to practice your religion and support with travel to get there if you need it.

We will help you to maintain contact with family members and significant people in your life. And can get additional support to help with this if needed. We hope this will contribute to your sense of identity and build your resilience.

We will listen to your views and take them seriously. We will ensure we do this within the work we complete directly with you and by consulting with you on the service that we provide. You will have opportunities to record your wishes and feelings within your pathway plan reviews and by speaking to your Personal Advisor.

If you should ever be unhappy with the service you have received from us, the first port of call would be to speak to your Personal Advisor or directly to the team manager. You can find the contact details for the Leaving Care service at the top of this document.

If you are not happy with the response you may wish to make a complaint. You can make a complaint in the following ways:

Via the online form on the Council website: www.rotherham.gov.uk/complaints

Email: complaints@rotherham.gov.uk

By post: Using a complaint form or by letter.

No postage is required for posting forms or letters to us, as you may use our freepost address below.

FREEPOST RTCT-XKLS-ZHAZ

The Complaints Manager

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Riverside House

Main Street

Rotherham S60 1AE

By telephone: 01709 382121. The customer service representative handing your call will direct you to the appropriate department.

By text: 07860 021 447

In person: At one of our Customer Service Centres or any Council reception point.

Advocacy:

If you are, or have ever been, looked after by the Council you can get support from our Right to Rights Service. They will help you with anything that is important to you and provide you with information, advice and assistance to help put things right or to help you to understand what's happening and why.

Right to Rights will also listen to you and help with any concerns you have about the service you have received either now or in the past from the Council. They want to hear about things that you are happy with as well, so that we can help to make sure they continue to happen for you and other looked after children and young people.

Find out more here [Right to Rights](#)

Accessing your social care records

Sometimes you might need a bit of help making sense of your journey, what happened, why decisions were made and who helped make them. As a care leaver you are able to request your files, your Personal Advisor can put this request in for you, more information is available on our [Subject Access Requests](#). Sometimes, it can take a long time for them to arrive, and they might be bundled in an a few envelopes depending how much there is. There can be a lot of information that might be difficult to understand and have bits that are redacted because they relate to another person as well as you (data protection prevents us from sharing that information).

We will give you a copy of all the information we have found, and we will help you to understand what happened in your life, and why. If you have any questions hopefully, we can answer them as we have looked through the files.

Family & relationships:

As a care leaver in Rotherham, we would really like to get to know you as a person, and we want to support you to have strong and positive relationships with the people who matter to you. That's why we will help you maintain these relationships by providing you with support to reintroduce or maintain contact with family or other people who are important to you (it doesn't matter how long ago it is since you last saw them), as long as we feel this is in your best interests.

Your Personal Advisor will be your main link to the Leaving Care Service and can continue to support you with other relationships as you become an adult.

- A Social Worker will continue to support you until you turn 18 if you remain in care and a Personal Advisor will be allocated at age 16.
- We will help you develop social networks.
- We will work with Adult Social Care for Care Leavers with disabilities and additional needs.
- We will agree with you how often you would like contact and visits from us.

- We will continue to support you to access and engage with your cultural heritage.
- We will help Care Leavers who identify as LGBTQ+ to access SAYit and any other relevant support.
- We will help Care Leavers who are Asylum Seekers to access a **monthly** service at Chatham House.
- Should you need support with language we can help you access language support.
- We will help you to understand your time in care and build relationships for your future, including support to access your Social Care records (Subject Access Requests).
- Should you become a parent, we will offer help with parenting skills and support.

If you are worried about any of your relationships talk to your PA, who can help you access services that can help you.

You can contact Rotherham Rise, a service who can support you if you are experiencing abuse.

[Rotherham Rise website](#)

Or, if you are living away from Rotherham;

[Refuge](#) or call their national helpline 0808 2000 247 (this is available 24/7)

Becoming a Parent

When you hear the news that you are going to be a parent, there will be lots of things to think about and lots of things to plan for, but there will be time to get ready and your Personal Advisor can help you start to think about what you will need and what will have to change as you think about a future with a child.

To start this, your personal advisor will work with you to review your pathway plan. Part of this may be encouraging you to think about where you are living, what things you might need for your home and how you will manage financially.

We will also talk to you about who is in your life and who can support you, this may be family, partners and/or friends. We will also think about those professionals who you know, are part of your life and who you would want to be part of your future. This might be professionals who can help you learn about being a parent or people who can help you stay in college or work as well as being a parent.

Lots of care-experienced young people are frightened that their baby will be removed from their care, because they have been in care themselves. This is not true. Just because you have been in care, it doesn't mean that you won't be a good parent to your own child. If your PA does have any worries about your baby's safety, they will always talk to you about this and will help you plan for how we can help you and your baby be safe. If it is felt that you need help from Social Care to increase that safety, your PA may make a referral. Your PA will always talk to you about this first and will support you with any meetings you need to have with Social Care.

Helping you learn to become a parent:

This can include activities at the Journey (see the Journey programme for more information).

We can also help you find activities and groups that are local to you that you can access to help you as a parent. We can do this by talking to Early Help. We can also visit venues and groups with you to help you see what happens and what they are like.

The Health Service makes sure you get more intense support as a new parent. The Young Parent Team, part of the Rotherham Children's Public Health Nursing Service, can support you. Parenting during your teenage years can bring its own challenges, so they offer a programme of regular visits for young parents. This means young parents get the help they need to do the best for their baby at a time in their lives when they may also need support as young adults.

The programme is delivered by a Young Parents' Nurse through visits to your home or they may invite you to a clinic. The Young Parent Nurse would visit at key milestones throughout your child's development for example Antenatal Visit, New Birth Visit, 6-8 Week visit, 3-4 month visit, 6 month contact, 9-12 month assessment and 2 year assessment. If you are aged 19 or under and are pregnant with your first baby, you will be referred to this service by your midwife or health visitor who will discuss with you whether you would benefit from the programme.

The programme starts in pregnancy and lasts until your child is 2 years old. The programme covers topics such as health, child development, relationships, emotional wellbeing and everyday health support as a new parent. You will have the opportunity to get to know your Young Parents' Nurse which means you will feel more able to ask questions and get the help you need which may involve seeking support and information from other specialised services.

You can be referred to this service after your booking appointment with your midwife. Their contact details are:

Telephone: 01709 423333. The central helpline is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (excluding bank holidays)

Early Help:

Early help services such as children's centres and parenting classes are available for you to attend and participate in if you would want extra support in being a good parent. Your PA can help you access these settings, we can attend with you if this will help you feel more confident.

Rotherham Family Hub:

The Rotherham Family Hubs are a partnership between the Council and local services, like the NHS and voluntary agencies. Families with children aged 0 to 19 (or up to 25 for those with additional needs) can access support across a range of areas.

This includes health and wellbeing, education and childcare, family support and parenting, and employment and training.

Rotherham Family Hubs has a key focus on supporting families to help children to have the very Best Start in Life. This includes a range of services from different organisations, located in one place and support is available for families with children aged 0 to 5.

You can find more information here [Rotherham Family Hub - Best Start in Life](#)

Managing financially when you are a parent:

We will support you make a claim for the right benefits when you are 24 weeks pregnant.

We will also make sure you apply for your maternity grant from the DWP.

We will also be able to provide some financial help in the last 3 months of the pregnancy to help you get ready for your child arriving.

Where am I going to live when I'm a parent?

If you already have your own property, we will help you make this ready for your baby.

We will help you make sure you have all the equipment you need to care for your baby and will help you make use of the support available to help you learn to become a parent.

If you need some extra help, there is the option of a project called Fleming Gardens. This offers a purpose-built supportive environment for young parents to learn how to become parents. The project is made up of 10 2 bed properties that are offered fully furnished. The project staff offer support and advice to young parents aged 16 – 25 years of age. When their parents appear more confident, they also support young people moving on into their own accommodation.

Events and The Journey

The Journey is our hub, based at Chatham Villas, where you can come to groups and drop in. We have a drop in and duty service every day, which you can access by giving us a call or popping into The Journey. If you drop in, you can speak to a PA about any help you need. Your PA will give you a timetable of the groups and events which are taking place at The Journey.

We have events for Care Leavers week (October) and at Christmas every year. Please speak to your PA for details.

Current Finance Offer for Care Leavers

	Eligible Young Person	Relevant Young Person	Former Relevant Young Person 18 21	Qualifying Young People (up to 21)
Weekly Living Allowance if you are unable to claim Universal Credit.	£71.93	£71.93	£71.93	No
Setting up Home Allowance.	£3000	£3000	£3000	No
Clothing Allowance Summer	£150	£150	£150	No
Clothing Allowance Winter	£150	£150	£150	No
Additional clothing allowance for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children	To be assessed but up to a limit of £150	To be assessed but up to a limit of £150	N/a	N/a
Birthday Gift - 18			£100	No
Birthday Gift- 19	£50	£50	£50	No
Birthday Gift - 20	£50	£50	£50	No
Birthday Gift - 21	£100	£100	£100	No
Festival Payment (18-21)			£100	No
Cultural and Religious Items	£50	£50	£50	No
Maternity - First Child	£200	£200	£200	No
Driving (Licence and Test Fees)	£120	£120	£120	No
Driving lessons	£350	£350	£350	No
University HE Bursary and maintenance costs at university	£2000	£2000	£2000	Based on assessment
University accommodation costs	To be assessed but up to £7500	To be assessed but up to £7500	To be assessed but up to £7500	To be assessed but up to £7500

University Vacation Accommodation	To be assessed but based on average halls of residence rates	To be assessed but based on average halls of residence rates	To be assessed but based on average halls of residence rates	To be assessed but based on average halls of residence rates
University UCAS application	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Prom and Graduation	£100	£100	£100	To be assessed
University Travel costs	Based on assessment	Based on assessment	Based on assessment	No
University Household Items for Accommodation	Based on assessment	Based on assessment	Based on assessment	No
University Initial Food Shop	£75	£75	£75	£75
Custody Remand and Sentence weekly payment	£20 p/m	£20 p/m	£20 p/m	No
Payments for Consultation / participation work	£30	£30	£30	£30
Financial support in an emergency	Based on assessment	Based on assessment	Based on assessment	Based on assessment