

# Family Services

## Consultation on Care Leavers Local Offer

16<sup>th</sup> January – 13<sup>th</sup> February 2019



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# 1. Introduction

This information is for you as a young person who has been looked after by Barnet Council. It is about the support available to you as you leave care. We want to make sure that young people in care and care leavers feel safe and supported and know where to go for advice and help. We know that entering into the world of adulthood is a big step with many new decisions and we want you to know that we still care about you and are determined to support you as best we can.

To be able to receive the support and services 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 you were 14 years old and includes some time on and after your 16th birthday. Personal Advisers (PA) within the care leavers service, will share and promote the Barnet local offer and ensure young people are aware of what services are available and the services they are entitled to. The offer applies to all young people who have been in the care of Barnet Council, as outlined above, whether you are still living in Barnet or in another local authority area. At times we may need to make our support available to care leavers who are not from Barnet but live in the area.

If you are not sure whether you qualify for support, then ask your PA/social worker or visit the Barnet Care Leavers Service, known as the Onwards and Upwards team at:

**34 – 36 Woodhouse Road  
North Finchley  
London  
N12 0RG**

Some information may change so please make sure that you check this offer regularly. If you would prefer a paper copy of this information or require this in a different language or format, please let your social worker or PA know.

In Barnet, we want to ensure that the support we offer you when you leave care:

- recognises you as an individual with individual needs
- supports you in taking responsibility for yourself as a young adult. We will support you if things do not work out the first-time round. Most people make mistakes during their move to independence whether they have been in care or not
- helps you access and maximise all the support available to you through a range of services, including accessing benefits, practical and financial support; and
- ensures all young people who have left our care are treated equitably.

The amount of financial and other support you will get as a care leaver will be dependent on your age and individual circumstances.

## 2. Advice, guidance and support

Following changes introduced through the Children & Social Work Act 2017, you will be able to ask for support from the care leavers service up to the age of 25, whether you are in education or training or not. Your PA is there to help you to prepare to live independently and to offer advice and support to you as you leave care. PAs get involved in discussions about your needs and your Pathway Plan and will help put into place the support you are entitled to at the earliest appropriate stage.

**When you reach the age of 15 and a half a PA will begin working alongside your social worker and your carers to provide advice and assistance in helping you and them to begin building your pathway plan.**

Your Pathway Plan will replace your care plan and should consider all the very important points in your growing up and becoming independent.

At your last Looked After Child Review in your 18<sup>th</sup> year, the role and expectation of your PA will be set out in your pathway plan with you. **Your PA will work closely with your social worker until you turn 18 when your PA will take over the responsibility for supporting you.**

The PA's role is different to your social worker's, in that they are there to provide advice and support to you with relation to work, housing and study. They will probably visit you less frequently than your social worker and generally your relationship will not be as formal.

The amount of support that you receive from your PA will depend on what you both agree you need and your circumstances. The care leavers service will consider with you what extra support you may need. You might for example, need extra support because:

- you have special educational needs or a disability
- you are an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC) and your immigration status is unclear
- you are in or leaving custody or you have had contact with the criminal justice system
- you are a young parent; or
- you are going through a difficult time in your personal life.

As well as support from a PA, the care leavers service will be able to offer you additional practical and emotional support, such as help to maintain or regain contact with people special to you or who cared for you in the past, like your birth parents, former foster carers or social workers. Where appropriate, we will continue to support contact with the independent visitor or advocate you had while you were in care. We will also give you advice and support in preparing for parenthood.

### 2.1. Getting advice from your Social Worker or Personal Adviser

Your PA will be in touch with you at least 6 times a year; or more often depending on your Pathway Plan until you are 21 years of age. You can also contact your PA at any point if you need advice and support. At 21 your Pathway Plan will be finalised and you will no longer have an allocated PA.

In Barnet, the support through the Care Leavers Service known as Onwards and Upwards, can continue up until your 25th birthday. Between the age of 21 and 25 you can still seek support and advice from Onwards and Upwards and at times from a PA to deal with a particular issue.

## 2.2. Your Pathway Plan

Your Pathway Plan is written with you in consultation with the important people in your life. It sets out your needs, views and future goals, and exactly what support you will receive from us. We review your Pathway Plan with you regularly so that it is kept up-to-date. Your Pathway Plan will begin when you are aged 15 and a half and will replace your Care Plan.

Things that your Pathway Plan will cover will include, work experience, subjects you may need to study if you want an apprenticeship, or to go to University and what job or career you want to pursue. It will also set out where you will live when you are over 18. This may be where you live prior to turning 18 but if you are in foster care or a children's home the conditions of the arrangements will change as you will no longer be in care and will need to be agreed in your plan.

Your Pathway Plan is important as it will look at the things important to you in moving to independence, such as being ready to leave care, money management, looking after yourself, health, employment, education and training issues. Your Pathway Plan is your record of the support that we agreed to provide to you.

During your 20<sup>th</sup> year, you and your PA will decide what type of support you will need after your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday from Onwards & Upwards.

## 2.3. Drop ins

Onwards and Upwards is based at the Woodhouse Road Centre, which operates from Monday to Friday from 9am – 5pm. The centre is open for you to drop in, whether you just want to socialise, use the computers, or speak to someone about an issue or query. There are a range of drop in sessions that take place at the centre, such as:

- Welfare advice
- Financial advice
- Sexual health
- Education, Employment and Training
- Psychotherapy (Therapia)

For more information about drop in times and services, please speak to your PA. Details will also be published on the [children in care website](#) and in regular newsletters that will be circulated via WhatsApp and [MOMO](#)

## 3. What financial support can I expect to receive?

As a council, we want you to feel financially secure. We will support you to feel confident in budgeting and generally looking after your money. This does not mean we will pay you money each week, but it does mean that we will support you to ensure you are getting all the financial support you need, whether you are at university, college and/ or working.

Barnet has a [Financial Policy for Care Leavers](#) that sets out what financial support you will be eligible for when you leave care.

### 3.1. Opening a bank account/credit union

By the time you leave care, you will have a bank account, and payment of any finances, including wages, will be made directly into your bank account. Your PA or social worker will support you with this as needed.

If you find it a bit difficult to maintain a bank account or are not able to open one, alternative arrangements will be made, supported by your PA.

We expect that at 18, you will either be working, in education, an apprenticeship or at university. On the rare occasions that you find yourself between jobs or courses, you may be able to claim benefits from the age of 18. If you need to, you can claim Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit. If you need benefits for a time, Onwards and Upwards will provide you with a 4 week subsistence loan to assist you while you are waiting for your initial benefits claim to be processed. Your PA will help you with the necessary applications and the loan agreement. This loan will be repayable once you are in receipt of your benefits and receive the back payment.

There is a dedicated Universal Credit Work Coach based at the Onwards and Upwards Centre in Woodhouse Road, who can see you by appointment to assist with your benefits application.

### 3.2. Travel

If you are in education or training you will be given financial assistance with travel costs during term-time which covers zones 1-6, or the equivalent, based on an assessment of need. You will need to have a current education contract signed by the Virtual School and apply for a student Oyster Card if eligible. If you need to attend university or college during the holidays, any additional support for fares will be based on an assessment of need, confirmation from the university or college and outlined in your Pathway Plan.

If you are on an apprenticeship then you need to speak to your PA to find out what support you can get with travel. This should be in your Pathway Plan.

Additionally, we may assist with some fares for family contact, leisure and cultural needs. This will be based on an assessment of need and outlined in your Pathway Plan.

### 3.3. Birthday Payments

A birthday gift will be arranged for you by Onwards and Upwards.

The birthday allowance paid to all Care Leavers is as follows:

- 18th birthday - £100
- 19th birthday - £30
- 20th birthday - £30
- 21st birthday - £50

For young people in Young Offenders Institutions the birthday allowance is paid by postal order.

You can indicate your preference for a voucher or cash to your PA who will arrange for the gift.

### 3.4. Social and leisure activities

You will be encouraged and assisted to take part in social and leisure activities. If you are 16 or 17 years old you will be eligible to apply for a local leisure card called a 'Fit & Active Barnet (FAB) Carers Pass' which is a free concessionary membership for registered carers, young carers, care leavers and looked after children and entitles you to free access to five Barnet leisure facilities. More information can be found at [www.better.org.uk/barnet](http://www.better.org.uk/barnet)

If you live outside Barnet, your PA will assist in obtaining an equivalent card from the authority where you live. Depending on an assessment of need, we may pay for a hobby or fee for a club, if a leisure card is not available, provided you can demonstrate commitment to keeping it up. When you are 18 we will encourage you to access healthy activities as agreed in your Pathway Plan.

### **3.5. Live Unlimited / The Imagination Trust and other charitable grants**

Live Unlimited is a charity set up by Barnet Council to support looked after children and care leavers in the borough to have the best possible life chances through providing enrichment activities.

The Imagination Trust is the first charity scheme run by Live Unlimited. The Imagination Trust creates the opportunity for Barnet's looked after children and care leavers to apply for small grants to help them explore their passions and further their interests.

Whether you are a budding sports champ who wants to use the grant to pay for the cost of joining a football club, a wannabe chef who wants the grant to help contribute towards a chef's course or an aspiring entrepreneur and needs a little help with set-up costs, this scheme can provide you with help on the way. You can apply for a minimum of £25 and maximum of £250.

To apply, complete an application form which can be found [here](#); speak to your PA for any questions or help completing the application.

You are encouraged to access the [LiveUnlimited](#) website to read up on their new initiatives and how to get involved with the charity.

### **3.6. Cost of key documents**

It is important that all young people have a photographic form of identification (e.g. passport or driving licence) and their birth certificate when they leave care.

You will usually need formal identification of some kind, often a passport or driving licence, as well as your National Insurance number (if you are entitled to one) to, start work with an employer, set up a bank account, prove you are who you say you are, claim benefits and to get into various venues.

When you leave care, where possible, you will have a birth certificate as well as a passport or at a least a provisional driving licence. If, for any reason you do not have a formal type of photographic identification when you leave care, we will support you to obtain formal identification.

If you are an unaccompanied young person and there are immigration issues to be resolved, your PA will help you to get the right advice to obtain documentation.

If you have lived here for more than 7 years but are not British or a European National, we will pay for you to be naturalised prior to your 18th birthday. You will need to discuss this with your social worker before you leave care.

It is important to keep all your documents safe as you will be responsible for paying for any replacements if they are lost or destroyed.

### **3.7. Student holiday accommodation**

If you are a student over 18 in full time residential education or in higher education, we will ensure that you have suitable accommodation, if you need it, during the holiday period. For young people in higher education the financial support we provide covers the academic year but we can provide advice and support with finding accommodation and additional costs, where appropriate.

If you are in a Staying put arrangement, you will return to your home during holiday periods.

### 3.8. Support in pregnancy

If you are expecting a baby and aged 16 or 17 years please speak to your social worker.

At 18 your PA or midwife will support you to claim a grant of £500 from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) if you are eligible for one. This is to buy essential items you need for when your baby is born.

Your PA may also be able to offer support to access funding from other organisations for you and your baby.

### 3.9. Council tax exemption scheme

Barnet has renewed its commitment to care leavers and one way that we will be showing this commitment is with our Council Tax exemption policy. As a care leaver, regardless of your employment status, you will receive a maximum of 100% discount on Council Tax bills for the first 2 years of independent living, up to the age of 25. The 2 years may be paused for up to 2 periods where a full council tax exemption is already being given because you are a student.

After the two-year period, you can still get support with council tax if you are experiencing financial difficulties. All decisions on eligibility and levels of financial support after the initial two-year guaranteed relief period will be based on a thorough assessment of your circumstances. Your PA and Revenues and Benefits Council Tax staff member will ensure that you are aware of and fully understand the assessment criteria and how decisions have been made regarding applications for relief.

If you have any questions or want to see a full copy of the policy, you can review it [here](#). (To be provided)

### 3.10. Setting up Home Allowance

When you leave care, and we all agree you are ready to live independently, you will receive a Setting Up Home Allowance of £2,000. This allowance is to provide you with sufficient furniture or equipment when moving into independent housing and will be written into your Pathway Plan. Payment method will be agreed with your PA.

Please consider the following when spending your allowance:

- consider second-hand furnishings – they are often better quality and cheaper than some new items. Never buy second hand electrical equipment
- look at buying items on special offer or waiting for sales to get bigger discounts
- planning ahead, for example, by buying some items such as towels, bedding, crockery etc. while you are still in care. You could use your short-term savings for this; and
- using some of your savings, and any other grants available to you, to help towards some of these costs.

#### **Remember**

- when most young people leave home to live independently they cannot always afford everything they need straight away and cannot always afford everything new; and
- your savings are there for you to use in your transition to independence and into later adulthood.

### 3.11. Emergency support

You can access the Barnet Crisis Fund up to twice a year. Barnet's Crisis Fund policies are available on the [Child Poverty Action Group's \(CPAG\)](#) website.

The grant helps people who:

- need extra help in an emergency
- are working but are on a low income; and
- have a pending Council Tax support or Housing Benefit claim.

If you need to apply, your PA can help you with an application.

As a care leaver, you are also able to apply and have priority status for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) if you experience housing related payment issues.

DHPs can provide extra money to young people or their landlord if you already receive Housing Benefit, and if there is a shortfall between the rent you must pay and the Housing Benefit you receive.

DHPs are usually paid for a few months to help through a crisis or short-term problem, but can pay for longer periods in exceptional circumstances. These payments are helpful if you experience financial difficulties; your PA will support you to apply for DHPs.

## 4. What support will I get with accommodation?

We are committed to making sure that once you leave our care we help you find suitable accommodation that meets your needs. We know not all young people will be ready to live unsupported in their own tenancy straight away. Your social worker/PA will have worked with you to agree plans for when you are no longer in care. This will include plans for your accommodation and will be written into your Pathway Plan.

### 4.1. Finding suitable accommodation

In Barnet, your social worker and PA will work together with you to help you to find suitable accommodation.

This might involve:

- working with housing services to come up with suitable housing options for you, including supported accommodation if you are not ready or don't want to have your own tenancy
- supporting you to remain with your foster carers under what's called a 'Staying put' arrangement, if this is what you and your carers both want. This can last at least until you are 21
- support you to consider the option of Supported Lodgings – this is similar to 'Staying put' but is not with your foster carers. It means you move somewhere new to live but you remain living in a family home and have the additional support that comes with being part of a family. The support will be different to a 'Staying put' arrangement, as you will be lodging in a private house with a landlord/lady
- support to access different housing options including social housing (this is accommodation managed by the council or a housing association)
- renting private accommodation. If you want to rent a private property, it is likely your landlord will require a deposit and rent in advance before they will agree to a tenancy. In some circumstances, we can support you to access a rent deposit schemes

- advice about holding down a tenancy, including avoiding rent or Council Tax arrears, paying bills and budgeting. We know it can be very hard having your own place for the first time. We will do whatever we can to offer support and to ease the pressures on you
- helping you to claim housing benefit/universal credit
- practical and financial support with moving into and furnishing your new home; and
- supporting you if you have a housing crisis, including helping if you become at risk of eviction or loss of a tenancy.

## 5. What support will I get with education, training or employment

We want you to feel settled and successful when you leave our care. We want you to succeed in your education, training and employment and will ask you how you are doing and be ready to celebrate your achievements with you.

### 5.1. Virtual School

Like many other local authorities, we have a Virtual School in our Education department. The Virtual School is a small team of people who ensure you get all the help you need to make informed decisions about what you want to do next in education, taking into account your aspirations, skills and potential. If you are 16, 17 or 18 you can expect to have an individual Personal Education Plan (PEP). They also make sure there are termly PEP review meetings until you turn 19.

The team's experienced Education Advisors will support you to find up-to-date information about careers, jobs, education courses, volunteering and training opportunities.

#### **Education Bursary for 16 to 19 year olds.**

If you are still in education or training, the Virtual school or your college will be able to advise whether you are eligible for a 16–19 Bursary. Career Advisors will have more information about this. Your social worker/PA or Virtual School can help you complete the application form.

### 5.2. 18 to 21 year olds wanting to go to college

You will have the following support available to you:

- your PA will keep in touch and review your Pathway Plan with you to ensure you are getting the support you need with choosing the right course and making the application
- assistance with some expenses for travel or accessing education, training and employment if needed; and
- Income Support or Housing Benefit should be available if you have been in care and remain separated from your family and are in:
  - full time further/non-advanced education (this is up to A-level standard or equivalent)
  - OR
  - in direct training for 12 hours a week or more.

Income Support or Housing Benefit should continue to be paid until the end of the academic year that you turn 21.

In exceptional circumstances, and based on an assessment of need, we may be able to contribute towards course textbooks, field trips, special equipment or materials, clothing for work experience or job interviews.

If you are over 21 and want to go back into education or training, you will be given advice and support to consider your options through Onwards and Upwards. This will include exploring:

- suitability of the course
- using savings to support you during this time
- combining work and study
- applying for financial support from charities and trusts; and
- considering if you are eligible for funding from your employer.

### 5.3. Support for young people wanting to go to university - eligibility

Your social worker, together with the Virtual School will help you with choosing the right course and university that matches your talents and interests and help obtaining tuition fees and maintenance grants and /or loans as well as support with your travel costs at the start and end of term. We will also give advice to ensure your applications to universities are as good as possible. Barnet offers a range of financial support including bursaries and a graduation allowance.

Payment of any financial support will be assessed as part of your Pathway Plan, including agreement from your Personal Advisor that the course of higher education is a reasonable career pathway that will lead to employment.

If you are unsuccessful in a year of your education, your Pathway Plan will be reviewed and a revised plan for your education or training will be agreed with you.

#### **Attendance**

Your attendance on the course is expected to be in line with the university or college's requirements. If there is any dispute about attendance, your PA will ask you to provide a letter of attendance from your Higher Education Institution (e.g. University). If you are not attending your course in accordance with your Pathway Plan, we may withhold payment of any bursary and other financial support provided by Barnet, following discussion with the Head of Corporate Parenting. Where you have been paid but decide not to attend, this is grounds for us to request for monies to be repaid.

#### **Additional funding**

There are sources of additional funding that you should make use of for financial support, including seeking part-time employment, student loans and grants and hardship grants. Some universities offer a Care Leavers Bursary or financial support through the Access to Learning fund. Your PA can discuss these with you.

#### **Support after university**

We can continue to offer you advice and support up until you are 25, if you need it, on employment, education or training. However, when you have completed your university course, you will need to be in employment, unless you are considering going on to a post graduate course.

If you want to go on to complete a post graduate course, we will offer you support and assistance to help identify financial support for you to continue your education and will advise you how to access this. We are not able to pay your fees or living expenses.

## 5.4. Support for parents with child care costs

If you want to access training or education you should find out what child care support is on offer from your employer, training provider, college or university.

All 3 year olds are entitled to free nursery hours from Early Years Services. In some areas, they also offer free provision for 2 year olds.

## 5.5. Barnet's Apprenticeship Programme

An apprenticeship is a full-time job which combines training and study - you'll learn as you earn. You can study for many qualifications across Levels 2, 3 or 4. Apprenticeship training takes place for a minimum of a year, but can last for up to four years depending on the qualification you take. You usually spend around 20% of your time studying, which is only one day a week, with the rest of the time spent working to get experience to help start your future career.

To find out more speak to your PA or the Virtual School.

## 5.6. What opportunities are available for care leavers through the BEETs team?

The Barnet Education, Employment and Training Service (BEETs) is employed through Cambridge Education in conjunction with the London Borough of Barnet.

Its role is to ensure that all young people in Barnet between the ages of 16-19 (Post Year 11), 24 for Care Leavers and up to the age of 25 for young people with learning difficulties and /or disabilities are participating in education, employment or training.

BEET service provides the following services to all young people in Barnet, as part of their statutory duty:

- advise and support to access education, employment or training for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities – Special Educational Needs
- specialist information and guidance service for young people up to the age of 25
- looked after children and children in care specialist services that support young people placed in the care system; and
- support and access to specialist provision for young people where English is not their first language.

The BEET team provides many opportunities for young people who are not in employment, education or training including:

### **BTG – Bridging the Gap**

This is a five-week course concentrating on Care Leavers who are **not** in Education, Employment and Training (NEET). This course focuses on areas where mainstream opportunities and provision have not been successful. This project is mainly centred on life skills and confidence building. They also run courses for disadvantaged and vulnerable young people.

### **Best Traineeship**

This is a sixteen week course (2 days per week). All young people who attend receive a financial reward based on weekly attendance. They can work on the following:

- a nationally recognised qualification in Retail, Business Administration, Hospitality or Customer Service

- support to achieve qualifications in English and Maths up to Level 2
- develop your CV writing and interview skills
- work experience placement in the Barnet area; and
- guaranteed job interview at the end of the programme.

### **Calm**

Careers and Learning Mentoring Service enables the team to provide intensive support to help young people engage in sustainable education, employment and training.

### **Boost**

This project is focusing on two of the most deprived areas of the borough, with the highest number of NEET young people. One member of the team is based in Burnt Oak Library and another in Childs Hill.

### **New Adult Project: Skills Escalator**

This project specialises in support for adults in low paid employment. It provides advice and guidance to enable adults to access training provision to support them into better paid employment (this could be with a current or new employer).

### **Alternative Employment Provision**

BEET Service is in communication with organisations including Tottenham Hotspur Foundation and Ultra Education to widen current employment and training opportunities.

## **6. How can I stay healthy?**

You will continue to have health assessments annually until your 18th birthday. These will be carried out by the Named Nurse for Looked After Children.

If you have specific health needs, the Named Nurse and your PA will discuss with you how these can be met as part of your Pathway Plan and offer you advice and support on how to access health services.

From the age of 14 you can ask for a copy of your health assessment from the LAC Health Team. You can either request this form from your Named Nurse at the time of your health assessment or contact the team at [CLCHT.LACHealthTeamBarnet@nhs.net](mailto:CLCHT.LACHealthTeamBarnet@nhs.net)

After your final health assessment, before you turn 18, you will be sent a health summary which will include your immunisation record, a copy of your last health assessment, how to access a GP, dentist or optician and where to go for health advice and information. This summary is an important document that your GP or any health practitioner will want to see and needs to be kept safe.

### **6.1. Mental Health Support**

There is a range of support available if you need support with your emotional or mental health. These are some of the options available:

- KOOTH – Online counselling support service available during evenings and weekends
- Woodhouse Road service – 1:1 appointments with trainee psychotherapists from Terapia are available for young people in need of emotional support. They are based at the Onwards and

Upwards centre. To access this support or to find out more about it, please ask your social worker or PA; and

- Voluntary Community Sector – Range of support lines available such as Childline (0800 11 11) and the Samaritans (116 123).

Please speak to your PA for more information about options available to you as support services can change over time.

## 6.2. Dental Care

You may be eligible for some financial support towards dental checks/treatment if you are:

- aged 16 to 18 years in full time education
- pregnant or have had a baby in the last 12 months
- having treatment as an in-patient or out-patient at an NHS hospital
- receiving Income Support, Income Based Employment and Support, or Job Seekers Allowance; and
- on a low income and have a Health Credit Certificate (known as HC2 or HC3 certificate).

## 6.3. General practitioner (GP)

We will support you to make sure you are registered with a doctor (GP) local to where you live.

## 6.4. Eye care

You may be eligible for free eye tests and vouchers towards glasses/contact lenses if you are:

- aged 16 to 18 and in full time education
- receiving Income Support, Income Based Employment and Support, or Job Seekers Allowance; and
- on a low income and have a Health Credit Certificate (known as HC2 or HC3 certificate).

## 6.5. Prescriptions for medication

We can give you advice and support about paying for prescriptions but we are not able to pay for the costs of prescriptions for medication.

You are eligible for free prescriptions if you are:

- aged 16 to 18 and in full time education
- receiving Income Support, Income Based Employment and Support, or Job Seekers Allowance
- pregnant or have had a baby in the last 12 months (you will need an exemption certificate from your GP); and
- receiving treatment in hospital.

## 6.6. Support for people on a low income

If you are on a low income you can apply for a Health Credit Certificate known as HC2 or HC3. This will give you reduced cost, or free dental and eye checks/treatment as well as prescription charges. This is dependent on your income and needs at the time you apply for support. A certificate can last from 6 months to 5 years depending on your circumstances.

To find out more, ask your GP, dentist or optician, or ask your PA to help you apply.

## 7. Savings

### 7.1. Savings accounts and ISAs

When you leave care, you should have a short-term savings account, with savings you and your carer have made while you were in care. Some of this may have been used to buy things before you moved to living independently.

It is important when you leave care to try and continue to save in case of emergencies or for special treats.

If you do not have a bank account, your PA can advise and support you to get one set up. A bank account is not only important to have for savings, but also to pay your wages or benefits into and potentially any financial support you receive from us.

If you were in care for more than 12 months you will have a Junior ISA which was set up with £200 initially. When you become 18 years of age these accounts will become Adult ISAs and you will be able to access this money. Your social worker and PA will be able to give you information about the money in your account and advise on how to access this money. From 1 April 2019 the weekly savings, previously held for you at your placement when you were looked after, will be paid directly into your Junior ISA account and you will have access to the savings at the age of 18.

#### **Remember**

Your savings are there to support you in your move to independence and adulthood. This may include buying items for your own place, driving lessons and supplementing the financial support available to you if you continue in education or training.

It is important that you think before you spend your savings, as once the money has been spent, it may be a long time before you are able to add to them again.

[The link to the revised Savings Policy will be placed here when it is approved]

### 7.2. Savings over £16,000

Some young people may have a lot of savings. This includes money in bank accounts, ISAs but can also include inheritance or compensation given by the courts.

If you have savings of £16,000 or more you will not be eligible for Housing Benefit, Income Support or Income Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), or Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). You can put up to £15,000 of these savings into a tax-free savings account such as an ISA or Trust Fund.

If you have a lot of savings, it is important to get appropriate financial advice. Your PA will be able to help you to get appropriate financial advice.

## 8. Barnet on Point (#BOP)

#BOP is the Council for Looked After Children in Barnet. It is a group of young people aged 12–25 who are in care or have experienced care, who aim to represent the voice of young people in care, to raise ideas or concerns about how to improve services. The group meet regularly, participate in consultations, and research and deliver events to young people in care to gather their views and raise their voice. The

group also attends Pan London Children in Care Council meetings and contributes to ongoing dialogue around corporate parenting both locally and nationally.

The group have monthly meetings on the first Tuesday of every month, 5.30-8pm at Onwards & Upwards Centre. All young people in care or who are care leavers are invited to attend. As a young person who has experienced care, we would welcome your input and invite you to come along and get involved. There are opportunities for training, work, and to make positive change that will help other young people.

To find out more, please go to: <https://www.itsaboutme.org.uk/>

## 9. What if I do not get the support I need?

Sometimes we may not be able to provide you with the support you feel you need, or we may not agree to provide you with a particular piece of funding or service you have requested.

There may be several reasons for this so it is important you understand the reasons for you not getting the support you feel you need.

### Your PA will:

- record any decision made not to provide you with a service or funding and the reasons why; and
- tell you about the reasons for this decision (and give you details of the complaints and appeals process if you would like this).

If you are unhappy about a decision, firstly you need to try to talk to your PA before making a complaint, as they may be able to help you understand more about why this decision has been made or why the support is not available.

### 9.1. Advocacy

The Council has a statutory duty to provide an advocacy service for children and young people age 0-25 who are residents in the local borough of Barnet and are in care or receiving a leaving care service to support them to be able to express their wishes, views, secure their rights and represent their interests. This may involve making a complaint or putting forward a representation for a change to be made in the service they receive or the placement they live in.

Barnet care leavers are currently able to access advocacy through two organisations who provide such support :

- Action for Children - who deliver our independent visitors scheme which has been extended to include advocacy for care leavers.
- Young Lives Foundation - have a dedicated care leavers advocacy project and support Barnet Care Leavers with advocacy services.

Information on services within Barnet or in the area where you live can be obtained through the organisation [Coramvoice](#)

Our commissioning team will be developing a framework of approved providers very shortly so that you have a choice of services to approach.

## 9.2. Complaints procedure

If you wish to have the support of an advocate who can help with understanding rights and entitlements, submitting a complaint, understanding the response and dealing with any issues that come up along the way you will be able to obtain advice on advocacy from the Young Lives Foundation who provide an integrated service to achieve the best possible outcomes of care experienced by young people.

The Complaints Officer can be contacted by:

- email: [FSComplaints@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:FSComplaints@barnet.gov.uk)
- online: [www.barnet.gov.uk/family-ccc](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/family-ccc)
- paper form – available from Onwards and Upwards
- telephone – 0208 359 7008
- in writing – Family Services Complaints Officer, North London Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, London, N11 1NP.

If you want to tell us your views on policies or anything that relates to the support and services available or any ideas/innovations you may have to improve services, write to us via the Children in Care website <https://www.itsaboutme.org.uk/>

## 10. Useful information and contacts

### National Care Advisory Service (NCAS)

Web: [www.leavingcare.org](http://www.leavingcare.org) The latest news and information on all issues relating to transitions from care and care leavers are available on the NCAS website.

### Benefits information

Web: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) The latest news and information on benefits will be available on this national website. You can search for individual benefits and use the 'benefits calculator' interactive tool that can help you find out what benefits you may be entitled to.

### Turn2us

Web: [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk) Freephone: **0808 802 2000** (9am to 8pm Monday to Friday) Helps people access the money available to them through welfare benefits, grants and other help.