

REACH Care Leaver Offer

Local Offer for Care Leavers
aged 16-25



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Welcome

Welcome to the City of Wolverhampton Council's Local Offer for Care Leavers in Wolverhampton

In this booklet you will find information about the support that is available to young people who have been in the care of Wolverhampton and are now aged 16-25.

From the age of 16 you will be provided with a Young Persons Advisor (YPA) who will support until you turn 25.

Here we outline what you are entitled to by law and the additional support that we and our partner organisations have been able to make available to you.



The Children and Social Work Act (2017) requires us to publish a Local Offer for Care Leavers so we can outline the support that is available to you up until you turn 25. This is our Local Offer in Wolverhampton and so you can use this to identify the support you are able to access across various aspects of life. We are proud that our Local Offer has been produced with our Care Leavers and professionals who support Care Leavers. We are always reviewing our Local Offer so we can be sure you are getting the best possible support, so keep an eye out so you don't miss any changes or additions!

What can you expect from your Corporate Parents?

Being a Corporate Parent means that the Council and its partners do everything that we can to provide children and young people in care and care leavers with the same opportunities that other young people might get. In Wolverhampton we are extremely ambitious for our young people and want to encourage you to dream big!

Our promise to Care Leavers

- We will respect and honour your identity
- We will always listen to you
- We will always believe in you
- We will always keep you informed
- We will be there to support and guide you
- We will find you a safe home
- We will always be a champion for you
- We will be realistic and honest with you



What does the REACH Team do?

The REACH leaving care team are there to support you throughout your leaving care journey up to the age of 25 should you want it. You will be able to access support from the team through your YPA who is there to support you to live independently, and offer advice and guidance after you leave care. Your YPA should record what support you need through your **pathway plan**, and the amount of support you receive depends on what you want and your circumstances. The REACH team are always looking for new and innovative ways to support you across various aspects of your journey into adulthood and will consider with you any extra support you might need. As a local authority, we cannot meet all the needs of all of our young people and therefore this Local Offer is delivered with our partners who are committed to supporting you.



Your **Pathway Plan** is written with you, and people who are important to you. It sets out your **needs, views,** and **future goals** and identifies what support you will receive.

Your YPA will review your Pathway Plan with you regularly to make sure it is kept up-to-date.

Who will support you?

Once you turn 18, in most circumstances your YPA will become your primary worker and main point of contact. Your YPA will continue to work with you up to the age of 25 if you continue to want their support.

Your YPA will be allocated to you just prior to your 16th birthday and will work with yourself and your social worker to support you with developing your independence skills. Your YPA will also provide you with advice, information and guidance to support you to make informed choices for yourself and signpost you to services in the community where you can access further support. They will also be your first point of contact to support and enable you into accessing any of the services that are listed within this document.

**You may still have a
Social Worker up to 25**

This could be because
you are vulnerable
and need additional
support or have a
disability.



What support will I get?

The support you are entitled to is outlined in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017. What you will get will depend on how long you have been in care and how old you are.

Eligible (E)

You are 16-17 and have been in care for more than 13 weeks since 14 and are still in care.

Relevant (R)

You are 16-16 and were in care for more than 13 weeks since 14 and have now left care. This also includes young people in custody.

Former Relevant (FR)

You are 18-25 and previously were in care for more than 13 weeks since 14.

Qualifying (Q)

You are under 25, and ceased to be in the care of the Local Authority at 16, were privately fostered after 16 or part of a Special Guardianship Order.



HEALTH &



WELLBEING

We want you to have the right support to have a happy and healthy life, your mental and physical health is important. Remember - to access any of these offers please speak to your Young Person's Advisor (YP) at any time.

You will be supported to access a Health summary from the CL nurse which will provide a summary of your health history.



You have access to our Care leaver Nurse who is available weekly at the drop in on Thursdays 1-6pm at the Oasis Hub (unless set workshops or events on)

You can access free toothbrushes and toothpaste to support your dental hygiene from the Oasis drop in hub. Just ask one of the staff.



You can access specialist dental support should you have any phobias or worries around your dental health. A referral can be made via your YPA or the Care leaver nurse.

You can get sexual health advice from Embrace which includes free access to contraception. You can also meet the Embrace Team at the REACH Oasis drop-in hub, Old Health Crescent, WV1 2HW every Thursday, 1pm – 6pm.





You will have access to free prescriptions, dental care and eye care till 18 years. Post-18 you can access free prescriptions through various routes including:

- **Over 18 and in receipt of Universal Credit** - just take your entitlement letter with you.
- **Working and on a low income** - you may have access to free prescriptions, dental care and eye care by applying for a [HC2 form](#) online. You can access the link to apply for support with healthcare costs [here](#).
- **If you are in full time/part time employment or attending university** - you can access a pre-payment certificate to access free prescription medication as part of the Black Country offer to Care Leavers. Care Leavers who are eligible for the pre-payment certificate must be:
 - Registered with a GP.
 - A Care Leaver and eligible to receive a leaving care service from the City of Wolverhampton Council.
 - Be under 25 years old.
 - Not already exempt from prescription charges.

To apply for a pre-payment certificate, complete the relevant application form using this [link](#). Once you have completed the form, send it to the Designated Nurse for Children in Care by using the email highlighted at the bottom of the form. Once the form has been received and eligibility checked, you should receive your pre-payment certificate within 2 weeks. You will be updated if there are any delays. If you are not eligible you will be informed of the reasons and provided further advice including appealing the decision. Your YPA can help you with this.

Pre-paid certificate renewals - You will be contacted around one month before the expiry of the certificate to see if you want to renew for the following 12 months and check your eligibility. If a response is not received you will need to pay for any items once your certificate expires.

You can access a free membership to all WV Active Gyms in Wolverhampton, with the addition of being able to take a guest with you. You can also get free 1:1 swimming lessons and lifeguard training.

The logo for WV Active, featuring the letters 'WV' in green and 'ACTIVE' in white, set against a dark blue rounded rectangular background.

You can access a Yo! Active account which gives you access to various fun activities and sports sessions in the community with various partners such as minikickers, just ramps, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and more.

You can get help with your mental health and feelings from Wolverhampton Healthy Minds and free access to the Ask Jan app. The app can help care experienced young people access advice and support for mental health alongside other benefits. Please view the guide on the Wolves Children in Care Website for information on accessing the app.



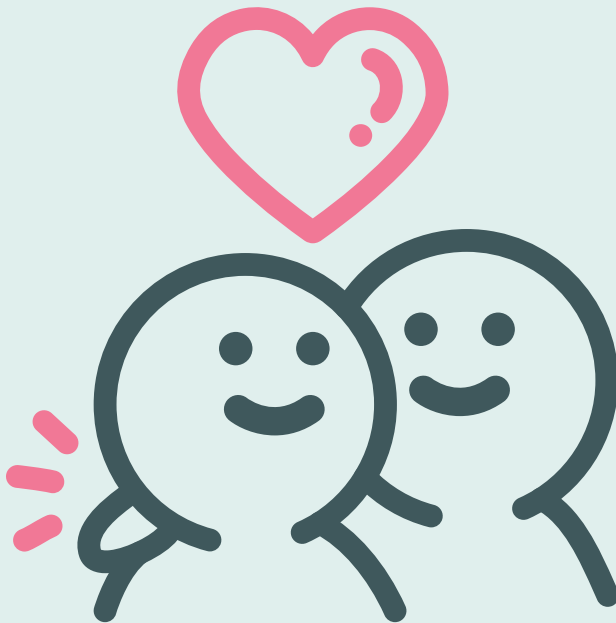
You can get help and support for drink and drug issues at Wolverhampton Recovery Near You.

You can have access to a 'nurturing you' retreat and WhatsApp support channel to offer self-care tips and strategies to help support your mental health.



You can access wellbeing days and events throughout the year at The Oasis Hub.

RELATIONSHIPS IDENTITY &



COMMUNITY

We want you to have positive, secure and meaningful relationships with the people who are important to you. Below are the ways we support you in building and maintaining these relationships, as well as in celebrating your identity and community involvement

Support from your Young Person's Advisor (YPA)



Your YPA can help you maintain or re-establish contact with your family, if it is safe to do so.

You can access a Grandmentor who can offer advice and support in many areas of your life.



Your YPA can connect you with Children in Care Mentors for additional support should you need this.

Advice on how to take up volunteering opportunities to make a difference in your local community.



Helping you register to vote and ensure you are on the electoral roll.

Provide information on clubs and groups you may wish to join.



Your YPA can provide you with advice and support to challenge any discrimination you might face.

Celebrating you and your milestones



You will receive a birthday card from the Director of Children's Services on your 18th and 21st birthday.

You will receive a £25 birthday gift each year between the ages of 18 and 21.



You will receive support to access important documents before your 18th birthday, such as your passport, provisional driving license and birth certificate.

If required, you will receive advice and guidance to secure British Citizenship before you turn 18.



Cultural and Religious Support

If you are under 18 and not living in foster or residential care, you will receive a Religious Festival Allowance of up to £50 per year. This is given during a festival period of your choice such as Ramadan, Hanukkah, or Christmas.



We celebrate all our young people's differences and will support you to attend events that recognise your diversity, such as Pride, religious events, Black History Month, and other cultural celebrations throughout the year.

Community and Participation Opportunities

At age 17, you can access group conferencing to help reconnect with important people in your life.



Wolverhampton has a participation team to enable care leavers take an active role in designing services, including:



- Membership in the Care Leavers' Independent Collective (CLIC).
- Participation in forums with councillors and senior officers to improve services.
- Opportunities to represent Wolverhampton at National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum events.

You will be involved in planning and invited to events that celebrate your achievements.



Peer Support and Drop-In Services



You can visit the REACH Café drop-in centre every Thursday from 1pm - 6pm. Here you can meet with your peers, YPAs, and a variety of support services to help you with whatever you need.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT &



TRAINING

We want to help you aim high and achieve your goals whatever they may be! You might already have an idea of the kind of job, course, or career you want to go into, or you may still be figuring it out and that's okay! Your YPA is here to support you every step of the way. You will also have access to an Education, Employment and Training Advisor, who can help you explore your options, give advice and guide you to make choices that are right for you. We work closely with Connexions and other local organisations to find opportunities that match your interests and needs - whether that's college, training, apprenticeships or work.

Support we can offer you:

Until you are 18 years old you will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) to help and support you in post-16 education, employment or training. This is a plan that is solely about education, employment and training and is there to support your progress, career aspirations and goals.



Support from a dedicated Education, Employment and Training Advisor as part of the Virtual School Team from year 11 right up to 25 to support your aspirations and career choices.

Support to apply for the 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary and any additional financial incentives you may be entitled to.



Support to apply for the 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary and any additional financial incentives you may be entitled to.

Support with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to access and engage with relevant benefit entitlements. We also offer a bespoke service for young people at the Oasis Hub if you find attending the job centre challenging. We have a designated person to support you in each of our job centre locations.



Support and guidance to help you with financial planning.

Support you to access a programme to help you develop financial know how with the Share Foundation who contribute to your Junior ISA where you:

- Are between 15-17 years old
- Have been in care for 12 months or more
- Can earn financial incentives for each step you complete up to a maximum of £700



Support if you have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP):



Specialist Education, Employment and Training Advisors available to support you if you have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)

If you have an EHCP your Employment and Training Advisor can support you with your annual review and support you to make career choices.



If you have an EHCP you may be eligible for tailored employment support with the Supported Employment Team where you are:

- Aged 16 years or over
- A resident of Wolverhampton or receive a service from the City of Wolverhampton Council
- Have a care and/or support need assessed by Adult Social Care with Learning Disabilities, Physical Disabilities, and/or Autism
- Currently hold an EHC Plan or have previously had an EHC Plan
- Have a mild learning disability, physical or sensory impairment, and need support to obtain sustainable employment



You may be eligible to undertake a Supported Internship which:

- Is a structured work-based study programme for 16-24 year olds
- Last for a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 12 months
- Are not paid, but you can access the usual benefits you are entitled to during this time
- Are offered with both Adult Education and City of Wolverhampton College



Further information can be found on the SEND Local Offer which can be accessed [here](#).

University support:

Support with your UCAS application, your Student Finance application, exploring Universities and accessing your entitlements.



Support to look for suitable accommodation at home or away and support you during vacation weeks as well as term time.

Support to access and explore scholarships and additional bursaries that you may be entitled to.



Financial support towards your rent costs for the whole year (please speak to your Education, Employment and Training Advisor or Young Person's Advisor for further information).

A Higher Education Bursary of £2000 split over the duration of your degree from the Reach Leaving Care Team.

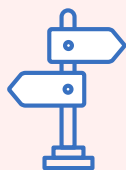


Support to buy books and equipment up to £100.

Support with academic reviews with the University to support you to settle in, help you keep on track and offer any additional support you may require from either the Virtual School Education, Employment and Training Advisor, The Reach Leaving Care Team or the University.



Financial support with graduation costs if these are not provided by your university.



Support from an Education, Employment and Training Advisor when leaving University to help explore your next steps and access to graduate and employment opportunities.

Careers Advice:

You can attend weekly drop-in sessions at The REACH Oasis Hub every Thursday for career advice and guidance, support and help with job search, building your CV, preparation for an interview and anything else related to education employment and training.



If you are unable to attend the Oasis hub, one to one appointment can be made with your Education, Employment and Training Advisor.

Support to explore long term career planning and access support until you reach 25.



Support from Connexions, who provide careers advice and support to young people aged 13-19, and up to age 25 if you have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). To contact Connexions or make an appointment with a Personal Advisor call 01902 554499 or email Connexions@wolverhampton.gov.uk



Work Experience:

You can access support with exploring a work experience placement with your Education, Employment and Training Advisor.



If you are age 18 plus you can access work experience through the Open Door Project, this can be for a minimum of 4 weeks and a maximum of 12 weeks for further information please ask your Education, Employment and Training Advisor for a referral.



Support to access additional opportunities for care leavers from the Care Leavers Covenant.



Interview Help:



We can support you to help buy clothes for an interview.

Support from Education, Employment and Training Advisors and your Young Person Advisor to attend interviews and appointments with benefit services/work coaches, job interviews and interviews for education.



Support from an Education, Employment and Training Advisor with interview skills and organise mock interviews for you before you attend your real one and provide you with hints and tips and preparation.

Support with free dry-cleaning services through Timpson's Cleaners to help you to prepare for interviews.



If you are female, support with clothes for an interview, a dressing session and interview preparation with Smart Works (ask your Education, Employment and Training Advisor for more information).

Apprenticeships and Jobs at the City of Wolverhampton Council:

The City of Wolverhampton Council activity supports job opportunities and apprenticeship for Care Leavers. As a Wolverhampton Care Leaver we offer:

- Guaranteed interviews for any apprenticeship you apply for as long as you meet the essential criteria
- The chance to apply for any job opportunity at an "internal" stage (if you meet the essential criteria) rather than when they are published for "general" applications.



Apprenticeships:

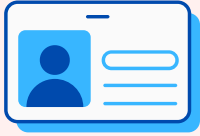


We can support you to apply for apprenticeships.

Support to apply for a £3000 support bursary when you have been in your apprenticeship for 12 weeks or more, this is paid in three instalments throughout your apprenticeship.

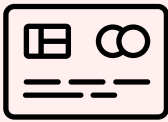


Travel to Work, Training or Education:



We will support you to get a 16-18 photocard which entitles all 16-18-year-olds to buy child rate tickets for travel on the bus, train and tram. The 16-18 photocard is available to those in full-time education, apprentices, trainees and those in employment.

You could be entitled to an English National Concessionary if you are registered disabled you can have free travel by bus anywhere in England during 'off-peak' times from Monday to Friday.



You are also entitled to a free Swift bus pass through travel West Midlands (please ask you Young Persons Advisor for more information).

You may be able to access support with driving lessons as part of our pilot to support care leavers in education, training or employment in getting to and from work or training.



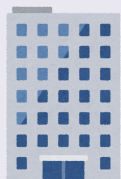
ACCOMMODATION



We want you to feel safe, secure and happy in suitable accommodation for you. There are several housing options that might be right for you, these will be discussed in your Pathway Planning meeting, but you can also speak to your YPA about this at any time.

Supported Accommodation:

You will have access to different types of supported accommodation, these are places where you can live independently but also have someone on hand to help if you need it.



You can also access a 'training flat', to help you trial what it would be like to live on your own. If your training flat stay is successful, you could move into a 'Housing Support' flat where you will receive support from a Housing Support Worker between 10-30 hours per week to prepare you for living on your own.

We will support you moving into your new home.



You will receive up to £3000 Setting Up Home Grant when you move into your accommodation to help you buy essential items for your new home.

If you live in Wolverhampton, you will not have to pay Council Tax until you are 25, if you live outside of Wolverhampton, we will support you with paying your Council Tax.





If you live with a Foster Carer then you can 'Stay Put' until you are 21. This needs to be agreed between you and the family you live with.

You can access a flat for a short stay in an absolute emergency.



Wolverhampton Homes:

PRIORITY

You will be given a high priority (Band 1) if you are in need of permanent accommodation.

We will work with Homeless Services and the YPA Housing Champion to prevent you being made homeless.

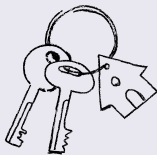


You will receive assistance with up to 4 weeks rent in advance when signing a new Wolverhampton Homes tenancy.

Wolverhampton Homes Young Person's Team will support you at the start of your tenancy.



The House Project:



When you are 16-17 you can apply to be part of **The House Project**. You will work towards skills that will help you set up your own home. For more information please see the House Project booklet in the downloads section.

Staying Close

Wolverhampton Staying Close is designed to help you through one of the most important periods in your life and to give you the skills and confidence to build a life for yourself when leaving care. Moving to independence from 16 and living alone from 18 as a care leaver can be daunting. Staying Close is an enhanced support package for young people leaving care and care leavers. It is designed to support you to live independently in move-on accommodation with ongoing practical and emotional support, which will strengthen your confidence and skills for independent living. You will also be supported with your aspirations for the future, by maintaining relationships that you have established with important people in your life. For more information please see the Staying Close Project booklet in the downloads section.

We want you to feel part of your community, to be proud of where you come from and to feel your voice is heard. Remember to access any of these offers please speak to your Young Person's Advisor (YPA) at any time.

FINANCE



We want to support you in making sound financial decisions that are right for you now and in the future.

At 16-17, while you are in care:

You will be supported to set up your own bank account.



You will have a National Insurance Number.

Your rent allowance will be paid to cover the full cost of your home. You will receive an allowance from your home for day to day costs.



If you are living in semi independence you will receive a weekly personal allowance to pay for food and living costs. This may continue when you are 18 if you do not have recourse to public funds.

You are entitled to £10 per week pocket money if you are in custody or a hospital establishment (see custody offer).



You will receive a festival allowance of £50 for a religious celebration of your choosing e.g. Christmas, Eid etc.

Between 18-25, you will become responsible for your living costs.

You will get support and information on how to access your child trust fund, your Junior ISA and any saving that you have received whilst being in care. This information will be shared by your Social Worker before turning 18.



If you are working, you will need to pay rent from your earnings. Otherwise, you will be supported to apply for benefits. Through our joint protocol with the DWP, you will have the opportunity to make a claim prior to your 18th birthday to ensure you receive benefits you are entitled to.

Where there is a gap, and to prevent you borrowing money, we will fund up to 6 weeks personal allowance (as long as you have engaged with all personal requirements).



You will have access to dedicated DWP care leaver champions who will attend our OASIS hub drop-in monthly (ask your YPA for the next date). Where suitable, DWP appointments may also take place with your work coach at the hub in a more relaxed environment.

If you have access to Universal Credit, you may be entitled to 6 months free unlimited internet access from Talk Talk, your work coach can access this through the flexible support fund.



If you are on a low income, you may be entitled to access lower cost Wi-Fi packages from a range of providers, please speak to your YPA about this.



When times are tough, we are here to help you. You may be able to receive an emergency crisis payment from us, please speak to your YPA about this.

You may be entitled to be part of our free bus pass **trial** with Transport for West Midlands.



We will provide you with a financial gift on your birthday until you turn 21.

You will be offered opportunities to engage in courses on budgeting skills which could lead to an ASDAN award. We will put on dedicated money management workshops at our hub.



The Wolverhampton Cost of Living Website provides some useful links, tips and pointers on where and how to find cost of living support across the city.

You can access information on benefits and financial support if you are looking for work through the Government Website. You can also access advice as and when needed from our EET service and the DWP advisor at the drop-in hub.





You can access [Barclays Life Skills](#) for free which provides a vast range of resources around financial skills, and contains Care Leaver friendly resources.

Accessing your Child Trust Fund

If you are aged 16-21 and were born in the UK after September 2002 you might have a Child Trust Fund.

HMRC and The Share Foundation offer support to locate your Child Trust Fund at **no charge**. There is no reason why young people need to pay to locate their account. Previously, some organisations have advised in their Terms and Conditions that there is a service fee of £350 + VAT, as well as a cancellation fee. There have been instances in other Local Authorities where a young person has incurred a high fee which was then taken out of their Child Trust Fund money, therefore please make sure you use HMRC or The Share Foundation services.

For young people in care, The Share Foundation do send a letter when a young person is 16 to provide them with the appropriate link to start the process of locating their account whether it is a Child Trust Fund account or Junior ISA - so the relevant link is included within the letter. If the link has not been actioned by the time you are 17 ½ then the letter is send again.

If you cannot find the letter, or didn't receive one, then, with your National Insurance Number you can visit [The Share Foundation](#) who will be able to help you find it.

PARTICIPATION IN



SOCIETY

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We want to support you in making sure that you feel connected with your community and the care leaver community. We will support you to access the opportunities outlined below.

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Awards:

You will have the opportunity to be nominated for the annual I Awards for Children in Care and Care Leavers.



You will have the opportunity to be nominated for the Young Person of the Month Award. Each month, the winner will receive a £20 gift voucher and card from the Head of Service.

Social Media:

You can access our Facebook page (REACH member) and our Children in Care/Care Leavers website so you can stay aware of upcoming events and significant changes to service delivery.



You are able to follow the WhatsApp Channel to keep up to date with what events and activities are taking place. This is called Reach Team Events (just search and click follow).

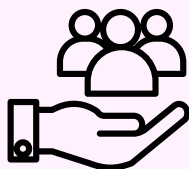
Activities:

You will have the opportunity to come together with other young people and staff to build relationships, for example, at our fostering events, care leavers Christmas party, summer BBQs, movie and games nights and other exciting events across the year.



You will have the opportunity to take part in a full months activities to celebrate Care Leavers Month in November.

You will be able to take part in workshops at the Reach Café Drop-In on Thursdays to help learn new skills.



The Reach Café Drop-In occurs every Thursday at the Oasis Hub between 1pm - 6pm. Here you can access support from YPAs, housing, education and employment advisors, our care leaver nurse and other various services. You can also come to relax, take part in activities and have some food. Any care leaver aged 16-25 can attend.

You will have the opportunity to join the Wolverhampton Warriors football team and get to play in both local and national tournaments.



Your Voice:

We can help you register to vote



You will be asked to take part in our annual care leaver survey to ensure you can feedback your thoughts on the services provided to you.

You will have the opportunity to attend the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum events as a care leaver.



You will have the opportunity to contribute to the selection process for internal and external job roles at the City of Wolverhampton Council.

You will have the opportunity to meet with other Youth Voice groups across the City.



You will have the opportunity to attend our annual Local Offer Review and have your say on this Local Offer and what changes you would like.

You are entitled to an advocacy service from the Children's Society to ensure that your voice is heard.



Care Leavers' Independent Collective:

You will have the opportunity to join a fortnightly Care Leavers' Forum (The Care Leavers' Independent Collective) supporting young people to have their say about the services they receive or require.



You will have the opportunity to attend and present to the Corporate Parenting Board, representing children in care and care leavers.

You will have the opportunity to be trained to deliver Total Respect Training (training for professionals delivered by care experienced young people) and facilitate this training for professionals.



You can also meet with a Participation Officer to discuss being part of the Care Leavers' Independent Collective by emailing Corporate.Parenting@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Identity:

We will support you to apply and pay for your first Passport and Provisional Driver's License.



You can access the records we hold on file for you, from your time in care. We have a process to support you through this so speak to your YPA or the REACH Leaving Care Team for more information.

We will support you to challenge any discrimination and ensure that your rights and entitlements are protected. Wolverhampton recognises care experience as a protected characteristic.



Community:



You have access to support from the Rees Foundation who support care experienced young people with no upper age limit. They often put on events and activities to support care leavers.

You have access to the libraries across the City including membership and all its benefits. Here you can access printing, free WIFI and computer access.



We can support you to find local clubs, groups, and communities to ensure you feel a sense of belonging and enjoyment where you live.