



Care Leavers Newsletter

1st Edition May 2023

Welcome
to our
Newsletter

The local offer – Share your views and shape our services



Each Council has a 'local offer' for care leavers, this offer covers the range of rights and entitlements that care leavers have and gives information about the support on offer.

Walsall's local offer is available online at:

<https://go.walsall.gov.uk/children-and-young-people/children-care-and-care-leavers/local-offer-care-leavers> or scan QR code:



We are always looking for ways to improve and expand our local offer and this is where we need your help! We want to gather your views around what is important to you, what you think is missing from our local offer and where you think we need to focus our energy in improving our offer. If you have any views or ideas for how to improve our offer then please ask your PA to share these or contact the TLC Team Manger directly to share your views on the local offer by calling **01922 650 555** (option 2).

Health update – new offer for care leavers!

We have been collaborating with our local NHS partners to see how we can improve the health offer for our care leavers. It has now been confirmed that care leavers will be eligible for free prescriptions up to the age of 25! This could save you money if you need medication and would usually be required to pay for this. 'Pre-payment' certificates can now be requested by contacting your PA who will then complete a form to request this for you – the certificate will mean that you don't have to pay prescription charges for 12 months and can be renewed as much as needed up until your 25th Birthday.

More info is available at:

<https://blackcountry.icb.nhs.uk/your-health/find-right-service-you/your-local-pharmacy/care-leaver-prescription-pre-payment-certificate> or QR:



Walsall NHS have specialist nurses who are experienced in supporting looked after and care experienced young people. If you are worried about your health or need some non-urgent advice then please let your PA know and they will be able to contact one of the nurses, depending on the issue this could mean the nurse will call you back or they may direct your PA to a service which could support you. An app has also been developed with input from local NHS, this is still in the early stages of development but has lots of important information and advice about health.

Search your App store for "Care Leavers Health Passport" and take a look, the app logo is:



Walsall Council

Thinking of going into Higher Education?

Here is a quick guide:



Going into higher education has lots of benefits for care experienced young people. There is also a lot of support you can access via the leaving care team, virtual school and other organisations who support young people in education.

Talk to your school/ college and the virtual school to get some careers advice, this will help you to make your career plan, which your social worker and/or PA will include in your pathway plan. If you are not currently in education and want to start exploring how you progress towards university then ask your PA for support – they can set up a meeting for you with the 16+ Virtual School advisor who can offer advice and help you find the right path.

Higher education is level 4 and above:

| Higher Education Provider | | |
|---------------------------|---|----------------------|
| Level 8 | Doctorate PhD | |
| Level 7 | Master's MSc, MA, MPhil | |
| Level 6 | University Degree BA, BSc | |
| Level 5 | | Foundation degree |
| Level 4 | | HND HNC |
| Level 3 | A-level A2 AS | |
| | L3 (Extended) Diploma National diploma National Certificate | |
| | School/ 6 th form | |
| | FE College | |

Accredited qualifications in the UK. Based on: <http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/qualifications-and-credit-framework-qcf.html>

It is good to go and visit different universities and most have open days - your carers adviser, Social Worker and/or PA can all support you with attending open days. This helps you to get a feel for the place and make more informed choices of where you would like to study.

This link below is useful to look at, it covers everything from personal statement workshops to all you need to know about open days and top tips of how to prepare. There are also some great videos of virtual tours for most universities in England:

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/events-and-open-days>

Financial support

Walsall Council will support care leavers who are eligible with the following support:

- £3000 maintenance grant for the academic year, which is split into weekly payments.
- £2000 Higher Education bursary. This is split into instalments over the entire course, normally three instalments of £667 at the start of the first year, £667 at the start of the second year and £667 and the end of the final year.
- £400 for essential education equipment
- 20 weeks vacation costs to cover your accommodation outside of term time

All HE plans will need to be discussed and written into your Pathway Plan so that we can ensure that you get your maximum entitlements and support.

Student finance will also provide financial support. In addition there are a lot of universities who have their own offers for care leavers which includes bursaries and grants for care leavers – check this website for a lot more information:

<https://propel.org.uk/UK/>

Other useful websites for care leavers going into HE include:

<https://becomecharity.org.uk/about-become>

<https://www.careleavers.com/>

<https://www.nnecl.org/>

Open university – Care Experienced Scholarship

The Open University offers flexible part-time study, supported distance and open learning for undergraduate and postgraduate courses and qualifications. This means that you can study your degree from home and at your own pace. This type of study is sometimes better suited for people who want to work alongside studying or want additional flexibility for other reasons.

The Open University has now launched its 'Care Experienced Scholarship' which will give cover the full cost of an undergraduate degree for 4 young people per year. Speak to your Social Worker or PA if you want some support with applying for this – more info is available at:

<https://www.open.ac.uk/courses/fees-and-funding/care-experienced-scholarship>

Cost of living crisis – Support available for our care leavers to overcome the “Cozzie Livs”!

We are all very aware of the ongoing cost of living crisis and many of us are feeling the effects of increased prices for essentials such as food, clothes and utilities like gas and electricity. It's more important than ever that care leavers are accessing their full financial entitlements and getting any discounts or grants which may be available to them to help with budgeting.

To help support care leavers we have extended the support and services available at the Transition and Leaving Care Hub and have also brought together information about local services which can offer support.

The Transition and Leaving Care Hub – Brineton Street, Walsall, WS2 9EP – 01922 650 555 (opt 2)



The TLC Hub is open each weekday and is accessible for you to use. We have Personal Advisors on site who can chat with you if you need support or are

experiencing a crisis. Feel free to drop in for a hot drink or if you need a hot meal, we also have a kitchen which can be used with Personal Advisors support. In addition, we operate our own food pantry for emergency food parcels which can be accessed in case of any crisis.

We have a washing machine and dryer which you can come in to use if you are struggling with your energy bills – we know that washing machines and dryers can cost a lot to run.

We want you to know that we have an ‘open door’ and that you are welcome to come in and use these facilities – they are there for you!

If you are struggling with budgeting then please don't suffer in silence – tell your PA so that we can explore how we can support you. Get support with completing an income and expenditure sheet to help you get on top of your finances, this will help you see where you are spending money and will help your PA identify where you can make savings or may not be getting your full financial entitlements.

There are a range of ways that we can support your finances – Care leavers are eligible for reduced water bills and exempt from paying council tax until the age of 25. Your PA will also know of a range of supports such as the British Gas Energy Trust which can help support you with energy bills (even if British Gas is not your supplier).

Other organisations

If you would rather speak to an independent local organisation about your finances, you can get support from local charities such as:

- Ablewell Advice – Central Hall, Ablewell St, Walsall WS1 2EQ / **01922 639700**
- Citizens Advice - Unit 30, Bradford Mall, Saddlers Centre, Bradford Street, Walsall WS1 1PL / 0300 330 9017 / **office@citizensadviceandwell-walsall.org**

FoodCycle run a kitchen in Walsall on Wednesday evening where anyone can attend for a free hot meal – no need to book or explain circumstances. This is run from Green Lane Baptist Church, Burrowes Street, Walsall, WS2 8NX at 7pm each Wednesday. Contact email is **greenlane@foodcycle.org.uk**

Apps and websites:

- ‘Help for Households Campaign’ – this website contains lots of offers and discounts from retailers (**www.helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/discounts-and-offers/**)
- The ‘Too Good to Go’ App – this helps link people with reduced price food in their area (this is usually fresh food that cannot be kept, for example from restaurants and take aways). The app is free to join and you just need to confirm they want the food then attend and collect and pay.
- The Care Covenant App contains discounts available for care leavers -current discounts include free TalkTalk Wifi for job seekers in receipt of UC and discounted furniture at Barnardos stores nationwide.

Have you got the Care Leaver Covenant app?

The Care Leaver Covenant is a promise made by a range of organisations to support care experienced young people to live independently. The Covenant website and app contains lots of opportunities for care leavers – from discounted services and goods to internship and job opportunities. The website and QR code is:

<https://mycovenant.org.uk/for-care-leavers/care-leaver-opportunities/>

Download the app from the app store to explore more, the app is named “Care Leaver Covenant App” and its logo is:



Walsall Council Chief Executive visits TLC Hub

Walsall Council's interim Chief Executive, Deborah Hindson, took time to visit the TLC Hub in April to learn more about care experienced young people and the support that the hub offers. She talked with young people, PAs and managers to understand more about the lived experiences of care experienced young people in Walsall and what we could do to improve the services and support that we offer as a Council.

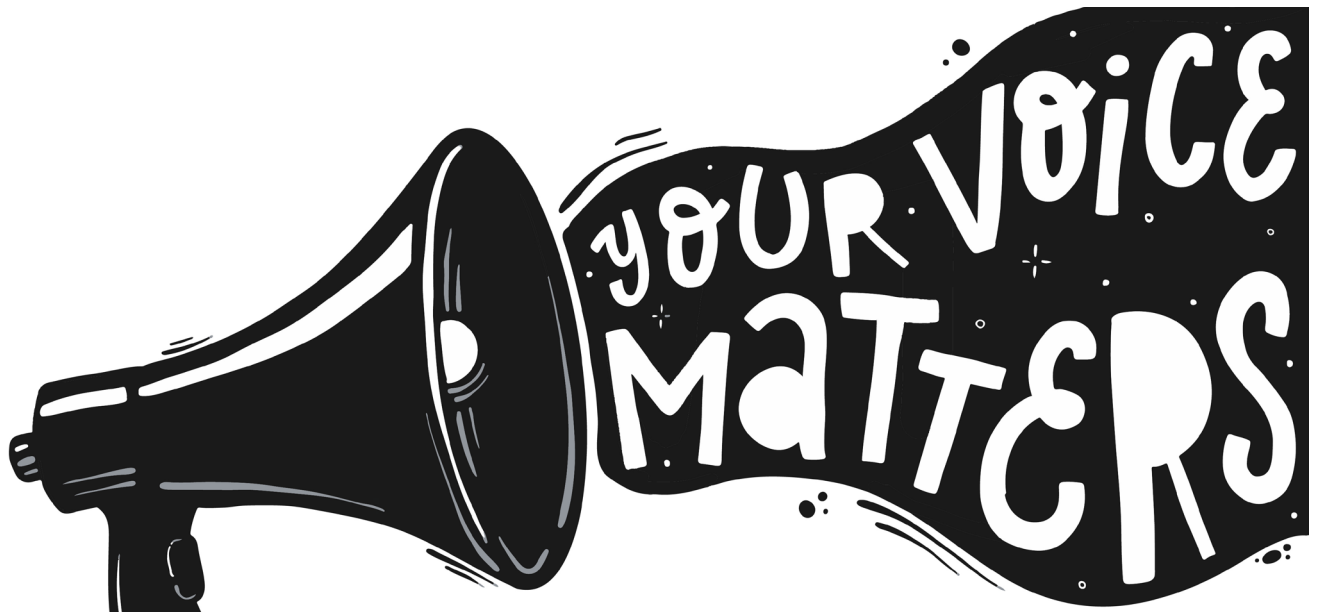


Deborah spoke positively about the young people that she met and the stories that they shared and also recognised the work of the Personal Advisors and wider TLC team in supporting Walsall's care experienced young people.

Deborah talked about the importance of the whole Council recognising our duties to care experienced young people in Walsall and since the visit she has engaged with senior managers in areas such as Housing to explore how we can strengthen our support for young people.

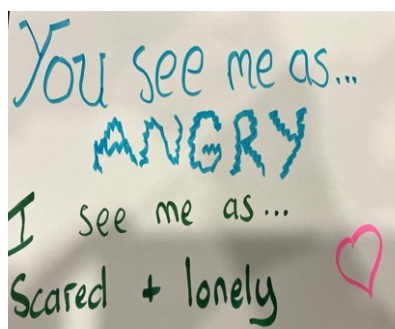
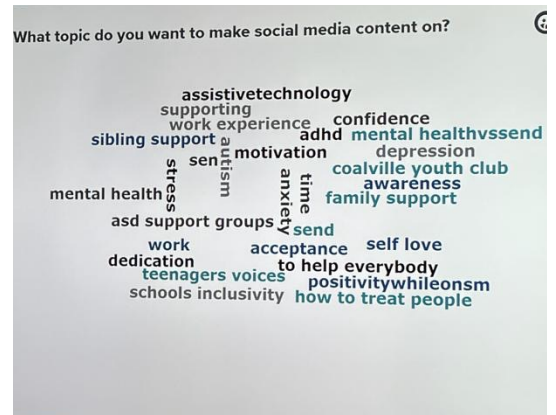
We want to give a massive "Thank You!" to the young people involved in the day – you all spoke with confidence and clarity and your comments will help shape and improve services for care leavers!





Youth Voice Matters Conference - Manchester SEND Event

Thursday 16th February, the Children's Champion and Care Leaver Ambassador took a trip to Manchester with 2 care leavers to attend a Youth Voice Matters event. This conference with a difference was designed and delivered by young people for young people. Delivered as part of the Making Participation Work programme, bringing together children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (age up to 25) to build on their participation skills, develop their voice and feel empowered to participate in decision-making at a local, national and strategic level. We got to meet some fantastic young people, professionals and charities, which support, advocate and help young people with SEND. Participation is something we strongly believe in Walsall and we want to create opportunities for children to get involved, have their say and to work alongside us to make things better for all young people. If you would like to find out more then please visit their website: www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk



Corporate Parenting Board Comes To Council4Kids

On Monday 13th February, our children in care council and care leavers were joined by members of the corporate parenting board to discuss the priorities in Walsall as well as gathering care experienced views and feedback on what they would like to see change or improve within the care system and for care leavers. We looked at where we are now as a council and the things that are working well as well as what is missing.

We had amazing feedback from this gathering as the young people were able to engage with members of the corporate parenting board in a collaborative way. We have gathered all of the feedback and have put an action plan together; we will now work towards achieving some positive outcomes from this and will give the Council4Kids and our care leavers some regular feedback on the progress made. We look forward to welcoming the Corporate Parenting Board back sometime soon.



Total Respect Training

In Walsall we get care experienced young people involved with training staff. The Total Respect training is delivered once per month from 09:30 – 4:30pm. David and Sophia train the young people and support them getting them ready to train people. We are calling out for care leavers to help us deliver. This would be a great opportunity for you and you can put this on your CV!

We deliver lots of activities in this training which help professionals think about what it is like for young people when they have a social worker. It's really rewarding and great fun to be part of and it can really help build confidence and self-esteem.

We also get rewarded for delivering the training and receive voucher or money.

Get in touch with David or Sophia if you want to find out how you can get involved.





Save the date

Upcoming sessions...

Our Care Leavers Group meets on the 4th Thursday of each month. We meet from 4 - 6pm and provide food and drink. It's a great opportunity to socialise with new people while having your say on things which we need to improve.

We can provide free travel scratch cards so you can get there and back and will also give each person £10 for your contributions.

Inspiration Story

Does anyone know who Barry Keogan is?



If his name does not ring a bell, do any of the following pictures look familiar to you?

Barry Keogan is an Irish Actor who has featured in some blockbuster movies including Batman and Dunkirk. Keogan has just won a BAFTA award for best supporting Actor.

Why are we mentioning Barry in this newsletter?

When he was 12 years old, he lost his mother to drug abuse as she suffered an addiction for much of her life. This had a massive effect on Barry's life as he and his brother were then placed in foster care and moved around 13 different homes before they were permanently looked after by their grandma.

This is just a snippet of what Barry went through however I wanted to share this with you as an inspiration story. No matter what you have been or going through, it is important that you take the right steps in following your dreams and reaching your goals.

Trip to Lasertag and Bowling

In the Easter Half term, we went into Walsall to do some fun activities. We did Laser tag and Bowling. This was a treat for us to say thank you to all our groups who participate in Participation. We had such a blast and made some awesome memories with friends. You should come and get involved, it's so much fun!



Care Leavers Survey

We have been working with care leavers to get them to write a survey for all Walsall Care Leavers to complete. We would love it if you could scan the QR code and take 5 minutes to tell us your thoughts. This will really help our group understand what's going well in Walsall for Care Leavers, but also, where things need to change.

The questions are based around things which are important to our care leavers group which are: Relationships, Money and Finance, Health and Wellbeing, Routines and Daily Life and Employment, Training and Education.

So, why not have your say and help all care leavers from Walsall to shape the future! To be in with a chance of winning some theme park tickets or vouchers, once you have completed the survey please send your name and contact details to either my mobile: **07787 284682** or email: **david-j.hughes@walsall.gov.uk**

You will then be able to enter our prize draw, 1st prize £50, 2nd prize £30, 3rd prize £20.... Good Luck everyone!

Care Leavers Survey 2023



SCAN ME

How to get in touch

Children's Champion – David Hughes

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