



# Care Leavers Newsletter

4<sup>th</sup> Edition December 2024

Welcome  
to our Winter  
newsletter!

## Hi everyone!

It has been a great 6 months here at the TLC Hub since our last newsletter. We have continued to expand our local offer to ensure that we are giving you the best support that we can and have also expanded our calendar of events. It was great to see many of you at our Summer BBQ, Beach Trip and Care Leaver Week celebrations. We love to spend quality time with you all and get to know you better so please do come along to our events whenever you are able to.

Additions to our local offer include the expansion of health and employment support drop ins as well as a 'plus 1' leisure pass. These are vouchers that we can offer to you for use alongside your leisure pass to get you and a friend free access to swim and gym at Walsall leisure centres. Please ask your PA for more information and let us know if you need some vouchers sent out to you. We have also secured more games and activities for use at the hub during events and drop ins.

We have also now launched a new TLC and Tots group for parents. Our initial meet ups have been really well attended and these give a good opportunity to bring your little ones along and meet with other care experienced parents. We have done lots of consultation work and as a result we have now lined up monthly meet ups for the next 6 months, each is themed and supported by our family hub volunteers. We have included the calendar of events within this newsletter.

As we move into winter we will be eager to support you with ensuring that you are keeping warm and safe. We have a range of supports available, including free oil heaters and access to the Household Support Fund for gadgets and improvements to help keep your home warm. Please do not hesitate to let us know if you are worried about keeping your home warm this winter, there is lots that we can do to support you – we don't want any of you sitting in the cold!

We are now preparing for our big Christmas celebration and doing all we can to ensure that we are able to offer each of you a present and sweets hamper again this year. These should be brought out to you by your PA around Christmas time. It would be great to see lots of you at our Christmas event, the poster with more info is further on in the newsletter.

As always, please do not forget that we are here if you need us. If you are unable to contact your PA you can call the office on 01922 650 575 or drop into the hub if you are in the area. We always have warm drinks and hot food on offer as well as duty PAs who can lend a listening ear and support you with any issues that you may have.

If I don't see you at events over the coming month then I want to take the opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Andy Caville**  
TLC Team Manager

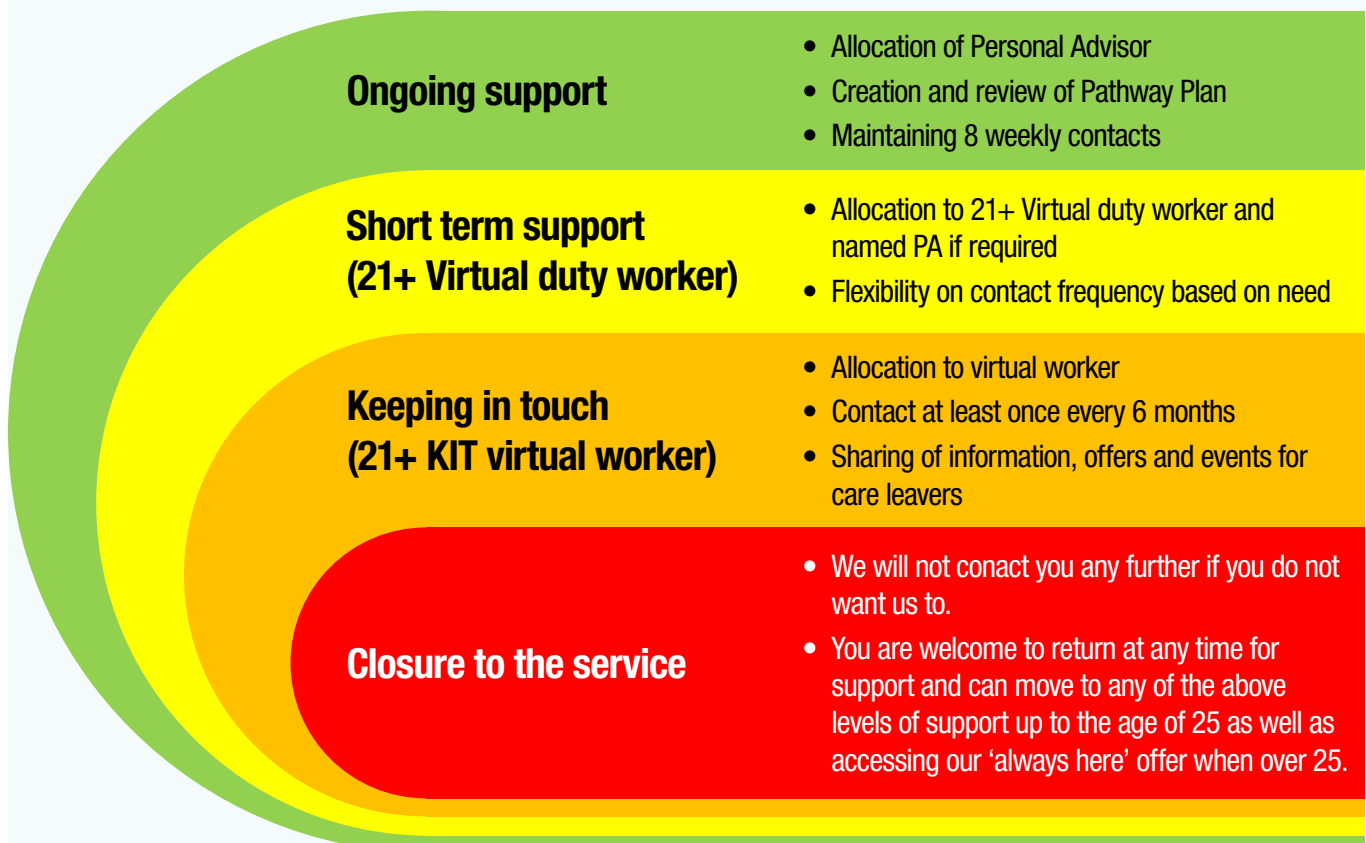


**Walsall Council**

# What happens when you turn 21?

As many of you will be aware, from the age of 21 you can let us know that you no longer need our support and don't want a PA to be allocated to work with you. We would prefer for you to continue to work with us but accept that you may not want the same level of support so we have developed a tiered approach to the support you can ask for from the ages of 21-25 to encourage you to come back to us whenever you need help. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to this and you are welcome to move up and down between the different levels of support on offer to suit your needs as these change over the years. We just want to be here for you in a way that best meets those needs. The local offer for care leavers will continue to apply to you up to the age of 25 regardless of whether or not you have a PA allocated so you will still benefit from things such as your council tax exemption, Setting Up Home Grant balance, free leisure pass and other such benefits offered to care leavers.

At 21 you can now choose from the different levels of support available as detailed in the chart below. Some levels of support will need more input, such as regular contacts and a pathway plan. We are more than happy to provide this level of support if you feel that you need it so please speak to your PA about what support you want from us. Remember – this is about you and how you want to be supported.



# Interviews and Participation

In Walsall we make the Participation of care experienced people a priority. Participation means being involved in activities and having a say in decisions that affect you. It's about taking part in things, sharing your ideas, and making choices.

We believe that getting people with lived experience of children's services involved in decision making and shaping services to support young people is a crucial part of getting things right and improving people's lives.

During September and October we facilitated 8 interview panels. We interviewed for all kinds of roles including The Director for Children's Social Care, Social Workers and Family Support Workers. The panel is a group of care experienced young people who interview candidates for jobs and feedback on their views of whether the person is suitable for the role.

At these interviews you get the opportunity to work in partnership with different managers and other care leavers. You have a say and a choice in what questions should be asked and you are involved in the decision making on



who you think would be good for us to employ. This is done through a fair scoring system and through discussion after the panels with the management team that are also interviewing the candidates. We also get an incentive for taking part which includes reimbursed travel, food and drink and a payment to thank us for our time.

If you want to find out more then please contact our Participation Lead – David Hughes on 07787284682.

## Upcoming Video Project – Support in the localities

We are in the process of starting to plan a new project in which we want to create a series of short videos that can be used for staff in Walsall as well as for care leavers and children in care. One example is to go around each locality of the Walsall borough to identify what support is available for children and adults within their local community. This project will involve using recording equipment and a computer to edit the footage. There is an opportunity to be on camera or off camera, sharing your views and providing vital information through the eyes of a care leaver when trying to navigate what support you can access locally.

We will provide a small financial incentive for anyone involved in this project.

If you want to find out more with a view to becoming involved then please contact the Children's Champion via email or phone on: david-j.hughes@walsall.gov.uk – 07787 284682



# Care Leaver forum – Independent Advocacy

## A visit from Commissioning –

Commissioning is the process where the council plans and buys services to meet the needs of people. For example, in the context of care leavers, commissioning involves asking them what kind of support and services they find important so that these necessities can be effectively provided.

On the 24th of October, the commissioning team came to ask care leavers what they feel is important from an advocacy service. Advocacy for young people means speaking up for their rights and needs. It involves helping young people express their opinions, ensuring their voices are heard, and supporting them in getting the services and assistance they need. Advocates work to protect young people's interests and make sure their concerns are taken seriously by those in authority. All children with a social worker are entitled to support from an advocate at any point.

The feedback that was provided included things like having a timely service, having a variety of advocates from different cultures/ages/genders to meet the needs of young people and care leavers.

If you want to get your views heard then why not come along to our monthly get togethers!

The care leavers forum meets once per month on the 4th Thursday of each month. We meet at the TLC hub from 4:30 – 6:30pm.

For more info contact our Care Leaver Ambassador Jada by phone or email:

07561 600697 – [Jada.Marie@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:Jada.Marie@walsall.gov.uk)



# ASK ABOUT OUR 25+ 'ALWAYS HERE' OFFER!

GROWING UP CAN BE SCARY... WE GET IT. THAT'S WHY WE ARE NOW COMMITTING TO AN 'ALWAYS HERE' OFFER. REGARDLESS OF YOUR AGE YOU WILL BE ABLE TO CALL THE TLC HUB FOR ADVICE, GUIDANCE OR JUST A CATCH UP. WE LOVE TO KNOW HOW YOU ARE GETTING ON AND WILL ALWAYS BE HERE TO OFFER OUR ADVICE WHEN YOU NEED IT.

ASK YOUR PA FOR MORE INFO OR ASK AT RECEPTION FOR A COPY OF OUR ALWAYS HERE OFFER



# Cost Of Living Resources

The cost of living continues to be something that a lot of people struggle with. We found the service that the Green Doctor offers has really helped some of our young people:

## Some of the ways the Green Doctor can help

- Fixing causes of heat loss in your home
- Installing small energy saving measures such as draft excluders
- Help with accessing other support
- Providing advice on energy or water debt

If you would like support from Green Doctor speak to your PA who can put you in touch or go on to the link below for more information & some great tips



## Some tips for saving energy include:

- 1) Switch off standby – You can save around £45 per year just by remembering to switch devices off standby mode
- 2) Draught proof windows and doors – use draught excluders around doors and windows
- 3) Turn off lights when you leave the room
- 4) Wash your clothes at 30°C – This is usually enough to clean your clothes and will save around **£24** per year
- 5) Avoid using a tumble dryer – dry clothes on racks inside or outside in warmer weather and you could save around **£50** per year
- 6) Spend less time in the shower – capping your shower time to under 5 minutes can save **£55** per year
- 7) Careful with the kettle – only filling the kettle with the water you need, instead of filling and boiling it, can save you **£10** a year

## South Staffs Water discount scheme

Are you aware of and registered with the South Staffs Water discount Scheme? Let your PA know if you need more information or support to register:



### Assure tariff

We are helping to support over 40,000 of our customers with the Assure tariff. It's a two-year discount of 60% in year one and 40% in year two.

Find out more at [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/assure](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/assure).

You may be able to receive help from Assure, if your yearly total household income is less than £19050 (approx. £366 per week) if you have dependent children living with you, we will add an extra £1,500 per child to that amount.

Remember if you receive the guarantee part of Pension Credit you will qualify for Assure.



### Assure Assist tariff

If you have no household income at the moment (you may be applying for Universal Credit) we have Assure Assist. A 100% discount for eight weeks, if you qualify, you will then go on to the Assure scheme.

Find out more by going to our website [www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/assure](http://www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/assure), there is also a really useful compare our tariffs section on the website too.



# Healthy Living

## Eat more healthily – within budget!

Eating healthy doesn't have to mean expensive. When cooking think about batch cooking, so you can freeze food to eat at another time. This makes your food go further, helping your budget and avoiding food waste.

There are some great recipes online, check out:

**Budget batch cooking recipes** - <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/budget-batch-cooking-recipes>

**Healthy on a budget** - <https://realfood.tesco.com/budget-meals/healthy.html>

**£1 dinners** - [https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/collections/1\\_dinners](https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/collections/1_dinners) - £1

Have a go and let your PA know how the meals went and send some pictures, we would love to see them!

**Budget batch cooking recipes**



**Healthy on a budget**



**£1 dinners**



## 5 minute chicken noodle soup

### Ingredients:

- 1 chicken stock cube
- 50g dried egg noodles (around 1 nest)
- 2 spring onions, thinly sliced
- 50g frozen peas
- 50g shredded cooked chicken

### How to cook

1. Pour 700ml/1¼ pint freshly boiled water into a saucepan, add the stock cube and stir well to dissolve. Add the noodles, spring onions, peas and chicken, bring to the boil and cook for 5 minutes, or until the noodles and peas are cooked and the chicken is hot through.
2. Ladle into a deep, wide bowl and, if you fancy, top with the chilli, ginger, garlic, coriander and soy sauce.



# What is #Endthecarecliff ?

Have you seen the hashtag #EndTheCareCliff? What does this mean to you?

During National care leavers week, the 'Become' Charity again highlighted with the government the issues of leaving care at 18, the expectation of young people to become 'independent' as they approach their 18th birthday. This has been an ongoing campaign since it was launched during National Care Leavers' Week in 2020.

When you think about the approach to your 18th birthday, how did that feel? Did you feel that the plan was yours or one that was being made for you, that you weren't ready for? What does independence mean to you?

For many of you the conversation starts at 16 or 17, for lots of you this is what you want, and you are keen to start thinking about having your own home – but this is not the case for everyone and for those young people it can be difficult to live alone before they are ready.

The aim of the campaign is to ensure that young people are leaving care when they feel ready, to

make sure there are options for you to remain where you already live at 18 and to make sure that you are supported to be happy, healthy and reach your full potential. There are many ways the charity is suggesting this can happen, funding for Staying Put and Staying close, changing homeless legislation so that you can stay in the area that you have settled in rather than having to return to Walsall when you may not want to. Requiring all local authorities to provide a consistent rent guarantor and deposit scheme for care leavers, so that you can access private tenancies that are decent homes in areas that you want to live in.

You can influence this, by attending consultation events, speaking to senior managers, local councillors, your social workers, PA's and IRO's – if they keep hearing from you then things can change so that you leave our care at the right time for you. You can also be part of the Become charity campaign, they offer lots of advice and support and are really focused on making these changes happen. Find out more at <https://becomecharity.org.uk/>

## Keeping Care Leavers Connected – free texts and data!

The Care Leavers Association has started a new project aimed at helping Care Leavers to stay connected with people who are important to them, regardless of age. The project has created a databank where care leavers can access a free SIM card with data preloaded to allow them to remain connected online. To apply you just need to email [info@careleavers.com](mailto:info@careleavers.com) and mention that you are making a request for data

bank support. They will then email you a brief application form to complete following which you can choose from the following:

1. Vodafone sim - Unlimited text and calls and 40g data, it refreshes every 30 days and will last for 6 months. If the support is still needed after you can re-apply.
2. O2 - Sim and data only vouchers - We send out a

sim and a top up voucher - this will give only 25g data and when it runs out you can apply for another 3 more data vouchers (one each month)

3. Three - 24g Data only sim (we recommend for tablets/iPads)

The Care Leavers Association offers a range of support for care leavers of all ages, learn more about their work at: <https://www.careleavers.com/>



# TLC AND TOTS GROUP MEET UP CALENDAR

Tuesday 17th December 2024	Christmas card, bauble and keepsake making
Tuesday 21st January 2025	Pictures and memory book making alongside crochet workshop
Tuesday 11th February 2025	Baby first aid and valentines keepsake making
Tuesday 18th March 2025	Health visitor led session around Developmental milestones tracking and how you can promote your child's development
Tuesday 15th April 2025	Easter crafts and visit to local family hub
Tuesday 20th May 2025	Teddy bear picnic and scavenger/mini-beasts hunt at the Arboretum

All events (apart from May) start at TLC Hub and run from 11am to 1pm. Transport support can be provided if needed.

Our TLC and Tots group is free to join for all care experienced parents. Drinks, snacks and all resources for each event are provided.



# Our first Summer BBQ!

It may feel like a long time ago now but August saw our first summer BBQ event at TLC and it was a roaring success! We had lots of you come down to the hub to enjoy BBQ food, hanging out with the team and playing lots of games including table tennis, swing ball, giant 4 in a row, football, basketball and much more. We were lucky that the weather was good for us through most of the day so we got to spend lots of time in our outdoor space – we were also joined by a DJ and representative from the Blue Light Choir thanks to Fiona Wilson and the Youth Hopper project.

We are now looking to make this a standard part of our calendar of events to offer you more opportunities to come and hang out with us and to make new connections with other young people. We hope to see you there next year!



## Want to get political?

We are eager to support our care leavers to become more politically engaged. In our last newsletter we encouraged you all to register and engage in voting. Voting is important as it allows you to express your view and directly impact who are chosen to be decision makers and leaders. You can register to vote by following the QR code below:

We also want to encourage you to engage in local politics. We have great working relationships with some of our elected members in Walsall and they have offered 1:1 chats with anyone who would be interested in

learning more about the work of councillors, how decisions are made and what steps are needed to stand for election to become a councillor. You could even have a tour of the council chamber and learn more about its history! We know that many of you have a strong voice and we would love to see you become politically active - If this is something that you are interested in then please contact Andy Caville at [Andrew.caville@Walsall.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.caville@Walsall.gov.uk)





# TLC CHRISTMAS PARTY

**WEDNESDAY**  
**18TH DEC**

**2PM TO 7PM**

JOIN US FOR GIFTS, GAMES AND A CHRISTMAS DINNER!

YOU ARE WELCOME TO BRING FAMILY OR A FRIEND TO HAVE  
DINNER WITH YOU - PLEASE LET US KNOW IN ADVANCE WHO  
YOU ARE BRINGING ALONG



TLC Hub, Brineton Street, Walsall, WS2 9EP  
01922 650 575

# An introduction from our new Assistant Personal Advisor



My names Brendon and I'm the new Assistant Personal Advisor at TLC. Never did I think after spending my upbringing in the care system that I would ever be working inside of it. After 8 years of working in factories and production lines, never feeling that I fitted in or that I had found my calling, my old PA reached out to me about an

opportunity that was coming up at TLC as an Assistant Personal Advisor. I had always dreamed of being able to make a change so after a big push from my incredible PA I took the plunge and after a tough interview process I was lucky enough to be able to secure the job. After years of wishing I could make a difference and help and support people who are like me I finally can... because who knows care leavers better than a care leaver?! I hope my story of success shows that no matter what you're doing or where you come from that you can make your dream a reality. I have been in the role for

a few months now and I'm enjoying settling in. It's a job with lots of variety – some days I am supporting groups of young people at an event, other days I am working 1:1 with someone in their home to help them through difficult times. I get a lot of support from my team with understanding systems and I'm able to give a lot back to help them understand the lived experience of being a care leaver. Its early days but I am confident that I am going to be able to make a difference for the people that I am working with. Keep your eyes peeled as a new Assistant Personal Advisor job is soon to be advertised!

**Social Gathering**

COME & JOIN US FOR A GET TOGETHER BETWEEN CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

30th Decemeber 1-4pm at the TLC Hub

Contact the Children's Champion Dave if you ae coming on - 07787 284682

FREE DRINKS AND PIZZA

The poster features a chalkboard background with drawings of pizzas and a photo of people socializing. A large pizza is shown at the bottom.

COME AND JOIN US AT THE BIG **DROP IN**

FREE ENTRY

LAST WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH 5-7PM

EAT . CHILL . GAME . SEE YOUR PA

TLC HUB, BRINETON STREET, WALSALL, WS2 9EP

01922 650 575

ASK YOUR PA FOR MORE DETAILS

The poster has a vibrant, colorful design with hand icons and a photo of people with their hands raised.