



September 2018

LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - CROYDON COUNCIL

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FOREWORD

My name is Ashleigh and I am a Croydon care leaver. I am 21 years old and have been living independently since 18. I am still supported by the Leaving Care team and see my Personal Adviser from time to time. I work part time as a manager in Sainsbury's and I have recently qualified as a hairdresser after attending an adult course at college.

In my spare time, I volunteer with the Children In Care Council (CiCC) to offer support and advice to Looked After children. I wanted to come back as a volunteer so that I could use my experiences to help others and make sure that we push for positive change. Since I began my volunteering I have helped support lots of young people and have been able to provide an insight into some of the ways the care system works and can be improved. I've even spoken with the Mayor of London and Cabinet members about the sort of changes I believe would help both Looked After children and care leavers.

As part of my work helping to improve services I have read over the Local Offer and given lots of feedback on it. I think it is very exciting for us to have a document that lets us know what support we are entitled to and what services are out there. I found out a lot of very helpful information by reading through it, as I'm sure you will too.

But this is only the start!

Now that we have a Local Offer in place we have a foundation to build on so that one day we can have an even stronger offer for

young people leaving care. The great thing about the Local Offer is that now we have something to show that we know what support we are entitled to.

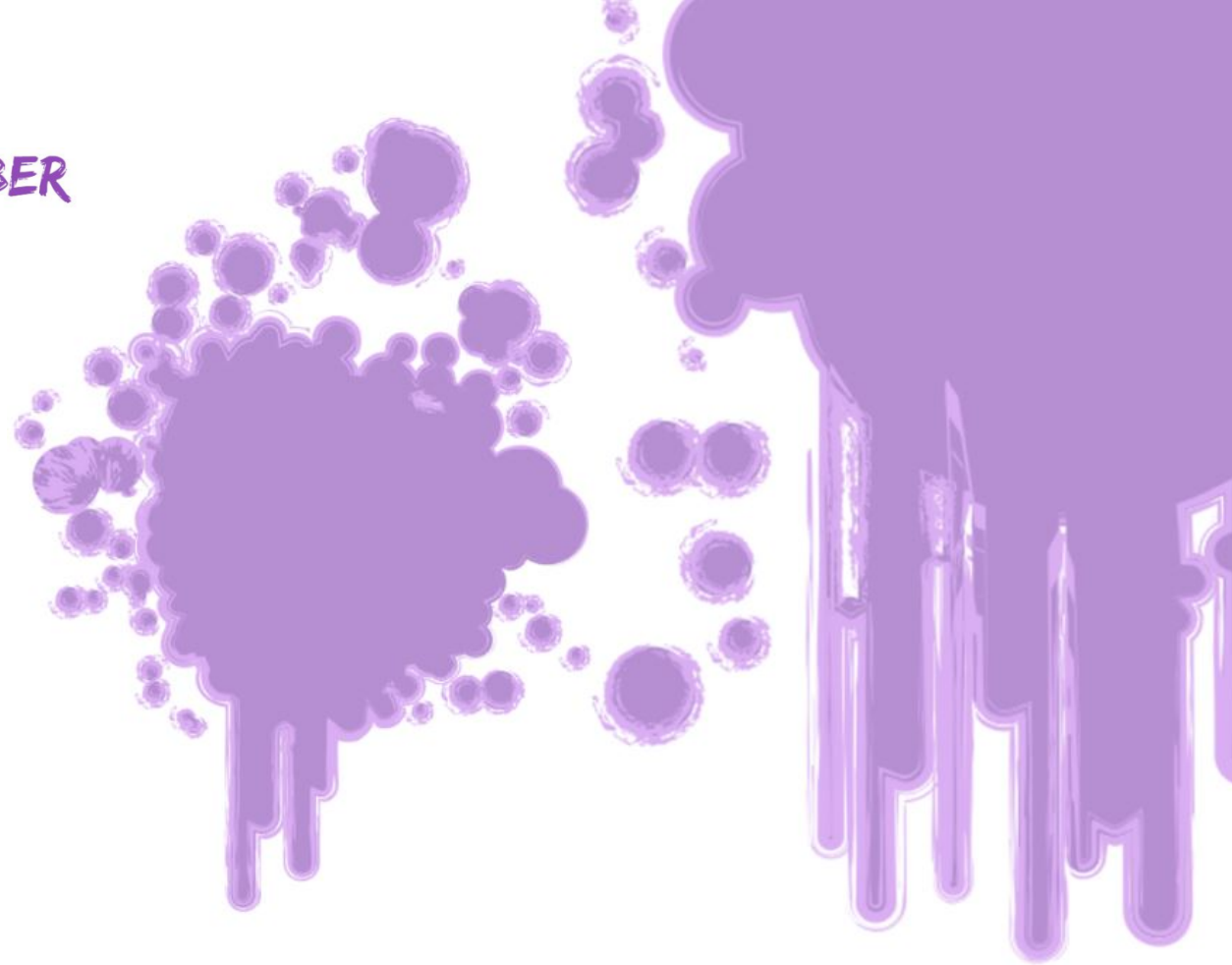
It doesn't stop there though: this is a building block for us to be able to start having conversations about change. Change doesn't happen by sitting back and waiting – it happens by taking control and not being afraid to show what you are happy or unhappy with. There is so much information in this Local Offer and it may take a little while to digest, but one of the best things that you can do is read through it, think about the things that you are happy with and things that you think could be better. Set aside the time to talk to your Personal Adviser and help me and the Council improve things for the people that are going through the same experiences as us. I'm using my experience to help others; you can too!

Ashleigh (21), Care Leaver and Croydon Youth Ambassador



A WORD FROM OUR ELECTED MEMBER

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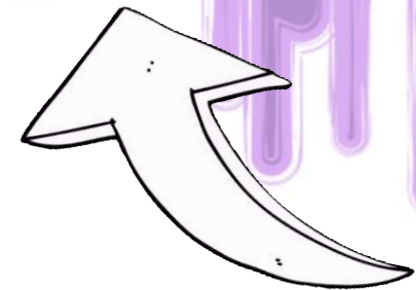


OVERVIEW OF THE LOCAL OFFER

This Local Offer has been produced to give you, as a care leaver, an idea of what services Croydon Council provides. It has been written with the aim of outlining exactly what you can expect from our organisation: expectations against which we, as a council, can be held to account.

The need for a Local Offer arises from the introduction of the **Children and Social Work Act 2017**, which basically says that we, as a council, have to publish information about the services we provide you. However, we feel, in Croydon, that our published Local Offer should go *beyond* our legal requirement and should, rather, be a more comprehensive document. Our publication, therefore, builds upon the base requirements as stated in the Act to provide you with a more detailed overview of exactly what we offer and how we will deliver it, as well as other information about services for care leavers provided by others.

At the heart of our practice, we will aim to identify and promote what is working well in your life, while exploring concerns, assessing the impact of these and planning in partnership with you.



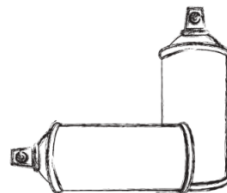
OUR CORPORATE PARENTING PRINCIPLES

The term 'Corporate Parent' isn't particularly warm, is it? But it does stand for the very positive idea that Croydon Council should act as your parent. What this means is that we have the same

hopes, wishes and aspirations for you as we would for our own children. We want you to have access to the same opportunities and chances that any other child or young person would – being care experienced does not mean you do not have

the same potential as those who are **not** care experienced.

That all sounds very nice but what does it actually mean?



It means that we have a set of principles to frame our relationship with you – principles we return to time and again to ensure that we are doing our very best as your parent. These principles are as follows:

- ✓ To act in your best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of all care leavers.
- ✓ To encourage every care leaver to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- ✓ To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of every care leaver.
- ✓ To help care leavers gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- ✓ To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for care leavers.
- ✓ For care leavers to be safe, with stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
- ✓ To prepare care leavers for adulthood and independent living.



HOW HAVE WE CREATED OUR LOCAL OFFER?

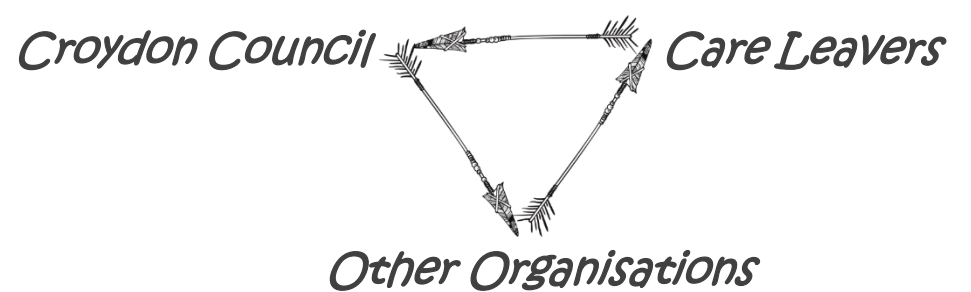
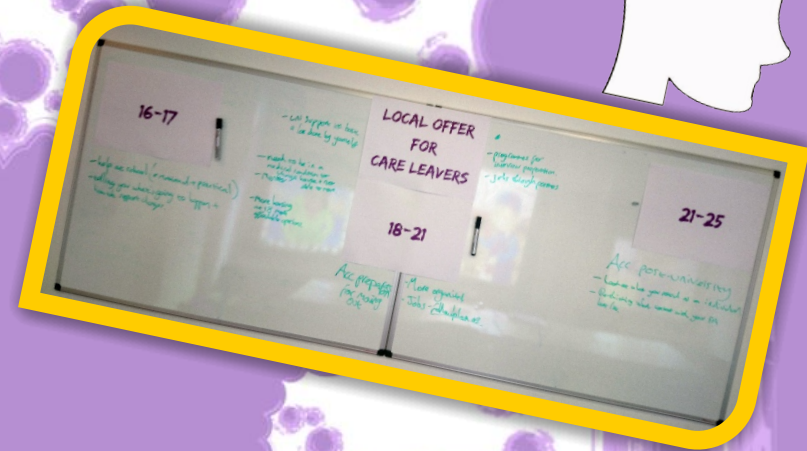


Putting together our Local Offer has involved a big discussion inside Croydon Council, as well as with other organisations in the borough with whom we work and – most importantly – listening to the care leavers we support, like you.

We have done that in three ways: firstly, with feedback forms (such as the ones to the left) available for completion in

the Turnaround Centre asking for ideas on how to improve the service as well as what is working well; secondly, through an engagement group meeting with care leavers; and finally, it was quality assured by Ashleigh, who kindly provided the foreword for the document.

It's important that we're clear about something though: this Local Offer is a *live* document. What that means is that this version you're about to read is only the beginning and we will keep looking at it, building on it and really working out how we can be better for you. And we want you involved in that, so don't be shy about telling us what you think so we can offer something that we can work towards something that is not just good, but outstanding...



GUIDANCE FOR READING THIS DOCUMENT

This document is designed to be quite easygoing with a focus on keeping things clear for you.

In a minute, you're going to be introduced to a care leaver who you can follow on his journey from the age of 16 to 25, while reading about all the services that you can access. But before you meet him, let's just review how this document works and how you can use it effectively.

First of all, you will find lots of links to other organisations, Council procedures and even other locations in this document. The links are colour coded as follows:

- **Orange:** these links will take you through to other websites and, sometimes, Croydon procedures. Use these links when you want a little more explanation on how we do things in the Council or how another organisation can help.
- **Green:** these links will send you to relevant pieces of the law and even directly to specific sections in Acts of Parliament (e.g. to Section 23c of the Children Act 1989).
- **Blue:** these links transport you to other sections in this document where relevant (e.g. you may see a link in the Keeping In Touch section to Personal Information and Data Sharing).
- **Purple:** these open up an email contact.



THE LEAVING CARE SERVICE

Overview

Our Leaving Care Service is the key team for you to know, as they will be your first contact point for pretty much all your needs. You will start to work with an allocated Personal Adviser or Social Worker from this team when you turn 18.

Here are some facts about Leaving Care:



Who can receive a service?

If you've been Looked After, then that doesn't automatically mean you'll get a Leaving Care service. There are some important distinctions to make on who **can** receive a service.

The key terms to be mindful of are: **Eligible**, **Relevant**, **Former Relevant** and **Qualifying**. These are terms that can be used in different ways to describe young people aged between 16 and 25, and serve to distinguish the levels of support that will be offered.

What do all these terms mean?

Eligible means the young person is 16 or 17 and has been looked after by the local authority for 13 weeks or more *after* turning 14, and is *still* being looked after.

Relevant means the young person *was* Eligible, but is no longer looked after and has returned home but not been settled there for more than six months. This will also include young people who were detained after turning 16 (e.g. in a psychiatric hospital, youth offending institution, etc.) and *had* been looked after immediately prior to this happening.

Former Relevant means the young person is aged 18 to 21 and was Eligible or Relevant. They continue to be Former Relevant until they are 25 if they remain in education.

Qualifying means a young person aged under 21 (or under 24 if in education) who was *not* looked after for 13 weeks or more after turning 14, but was looked after for a period when they were 16 or 17.

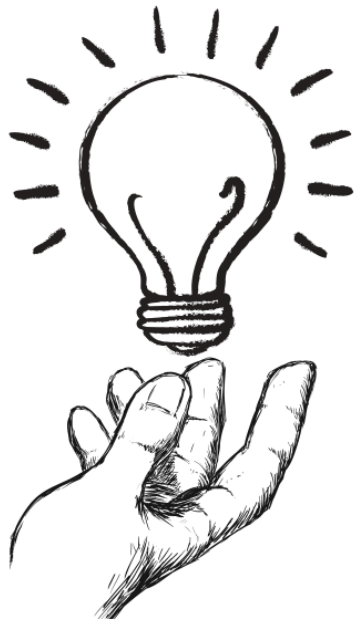


What services are available?

This document will explain in detail exactly what support and services are available to care leavers in Croydon but, as a brief overview, young people who are eligible, relevant or former relevant can expect the following:

- ✓ Personal Adviser or Social Worker
- ✓ Needs Assessment
- ✓ Pathway Plan
- ✓ General advice and assistance

There are plenty of other entitlements, but they will relate quite specifically to areas such as housing or education and will be covered later.



But let's take a

moment to give you

a bit more information on the difference between the service you will enjoy if you are former relevant or qualifying:

Former Relevant	<p><i>We have to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide you with a Personal Adviser who visits you at least once every two months. ✓ Provide you with and review a Pathway Plan at least once every six months. ✓ Help you with expenses relating to getting into, or remaining in, education, employment or training. ✓ Offer you advice and support. ✓ Keep in touch with you. ✓ Offer or pay for somewhere for you to live during the extended university holidays (summer and Christmas) if you have no other home. ✓ Provide you with a £2,000.00 Higher Education Bursary and a Setting up Home Allowance (SUHA). ✓ Provide a home for you.
Qualifying	<p><i>We have to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Offer you advice and support. ✓ Keep in touch with you. ✓ Offer or pay for somewhere for you to live during the extended university holidays (summer and Christmas) if you have no other home.



16 and 17 Year Olds

The Leaving Care Service itself only starts to take a *leading* role on working with you when you turn 18. However, the Leaving Care 'journey' begins before adulthood, and each young person who qualifies for a service is matched to a Personal Adviser or Social Worker at the age of 16. The idea of an earlier match is to ensure you get to know the worker who will provide post-18 support *before* you become an adult. The worker will also have a much stronger idea of your support needs before you turn 18 and can better prepare for what is to come.

Work with an Eligible or Relevant 16 or 17-year-old will still be led by a Social Worker in the Permanence Service or, in some cases, a different team, but the matched worker from the Leaving Care Service will also help the Social Worker prepare for your independence.



What is a Personal Adviser?

A Personal Adviser is, in many ways, very similar to a Social Worker – so much so that you, as a care leaver, may struggle to make a distinction between the two in your day-to-day contact.

They will befriend you, provide general advice and guidance, and support you more intensely where you have particular assessed needs (e.g. you wish to get into education).

The key thing to note with a Personal Adviser is that the onus is very much on **you**, as a care leaver, to say *when* you need support – you are an adult, after all and more is expected of you!

Compliments and Complaints

If you think we've done a particularly good job with helping you, or else we've done something that you're really *unhappy* about, then you can let us know using this form:

To be embedded for final copy



Pathway Plan

A solid, written plan **has** to exist in order to support you properly, and that is done – as laid down in the law – through a Pathway Plan. A Pathway Plan is a document outlining how you and your Personal Adviser will jointly respond to your needs and help you develop into an independent adult. But its biggest aim is to ensure there is an ongoing and evolving conversation about how you can move forward in your life.

A Pathway Plan will talk about all your key issues (i.e. health, education, housing, money, etc.) and is as an opportunity for your Personal Adviser to say, 'Hey, what do you want to achieve and how can I help you achieve it?'. For each issue, a goal or action will be agreed with you. Each goal or action in a Pathway Plan will be SMART, so that is:

- ✓ **Specific:** clear about what needs to be done.
- ✓ **Measurable:** work out how we know when it is achieved.
- ✓ **Assignable:** tasks to achieve it can be assigned.
- ✓ **Realistic:** ensure there is a good chance it can be done.
- ✓ **Time-constrained:** state when it should be completed.

Any target that is not SMART is just going to frustrate you and make all professionals involved in setting it look a bit silly, as it simply will not be achieved. Each target will also take account of your individual strengths, allowing you to use and build upon them accordingly with necessary support brought in where you need it.

Once the Pathway Plan is written up, you will have an opportunity to read, comment on it and sign it – so long as you agree to its

content – at which point it becomes a *legally* binding document. So, signing it is kind of a big deal.

Your Pathway Plan will be reviewed at least once every six months, though it can be reviewed sooner should you wish.

Oh, and one last thing: we realise that you may be Captain Independent and think, 'A Pathway Plan? Why should I bother with such nonsense?'. Well, our thinking is that if you *are* that independent then a short plan – or one drawn up without you engaging – simply tells us that everything in your life must be pretty much perfect. However, we very much doubt that that will ever be the case!





Turnaround Centre

The Turnaround Centre provides a single place for young people and their families to access support for a range of issues. The Centre is operated by Croydon Council in partnership with a range of expert agencies and provides a base for the Leaving Care Service, as well as several other teams.

Unique to the Centre is its Drop in Zone (DiZ) – a place where you and other young people can ‘drop in’ (hence the

name) for advice and support in a safe and secure environment. Services on offer include:

- ✓ Access to advice, information and support with housing and potential homelessness up to the age of 21.
- ✓ Access to information on local events and activities.
- ✓ Computer and internet access.
- ✓ Events and activities held by Croydon Council and CAYSH.
- ✓ Mediation for 16-to-21-year-olds provided by CAYSH.
- ✓ Family support and advice (by appointment only).

The Turnaround Centre can be contacted on **020 8760 5530**, is open Monday to Friday, from 9.30am-5pm, and can be found at **51-55 South End, Croydon CR0 1BF**.

You should also be aware that the DiZ does have appropriate security – including a guard and alarm system – and has a strict no friends and no hoods policy. The safety precautions in place are to protect staff as well as other people using the building.

Duty System

Things usually work best for you if you are able to with your allocated worker. However, the Leaving Care Service has a ‘duty’ system for responding to you if you are unable to get in touch with your Personal Adviser and need urgent help with something. All you need to do is come to the Turnaround Centre on any weekday between 10am and 4pm, and you will be able to speak with someone. You will not have to wait any longer than an hour, though you will only be seen if the matter is urgent. Alternatively, you can speak to a duty worker by phoning the Turnaround Centre and asking for them.



THE LOCAL OFFER

Meet Saed Khan...



Saed came to the UK from Afghanistan when he was 14 years old. He claimed asylum upon arrival, as several members of his family had been killed by the Taliban back home and his own life was in danger. He was accommodated by Croydon Council under the **Children Act 1989 – Section 20**.

Since arriving, he has lived with a foster family in Selsdon and his English speaking skills have grown far stronger as he has progressed through ESOL Pre-Entry and ESOL Level 1 at Croydon College. Saed loves to play cricket and enjoys regular matches with a wider group of young people with whom he is

friends. His ambition is to become a nurse as his father was a doctor when he was alive and, after his experiences in Afghanistan, he wishes to do good for people.

We're going to follow Saed's story as he becomes Eligible at the age of 16, leaves care at 18 and, finally, has his case closed at the age of 25. The idea is to see Croydon's Local Offer through the eyes of someone who actually receives the service so you not only understand the service provided, but appreciate how it is *received*.

Saed's story will run side by side with us telling you exactly what services you can expect from us as a local authority, as well as some of our partners.



KEEPING IN TOUCH

Overview

If you're a Looked After child, then when you reach the age of 16, our Leaving Care Service matches a Personal Adviser to you. For the moment, this Personal Adviser will be a bit of a distant figure in your life, as your *allocated* worker (that is: the lead person responsible for supporting you) remains your Social Worker and this will be the case until you reach adulthood. However, your Personal Adviser will meet with you, so you know who they are.

Contact for you as a 16 or 17-year-old is very different to contact when you turn 18, as this table demonstrates:

Age	Contact Arrangements
16/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Visit once a month ✓ Looked After Child (LAC) Reviews ✓ Emphasis on Social Worker reaching out to offer you support ✓ Professionals involved: Social Worker, Personal Adviser, Foster Carer, Supervising Social Worker and Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)
18-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Visit once every two months ✓ Emphasis on you reaching out to your Personal Adviser to seek support ✓ Professionals involved: Personal Adviser

Of course, the legal guidance on how regularly you should be seen should not be used as an excuse to *prevent* more regular contact, if you need it. If we were worried that you were at risk of something bad happening to you, for example, or if you needed more contact for a short time, then we'd want to see you more often – 'cos we're meant to be your parent! Remember?

Looked After Child (LAC) Reviews and the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)

You will have been allocated an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) after first becoming Looked After. This IRO may very well have changed over time, but you will have IRO-level involvement until you turn 18.

The IRO's job is as follows:

- ✓ To chair Looked After Child (LAC) Reviews (more on these in a minute).
- ✓ To check the work being done by all professionals involved with you is good and ensure it all comes together nicely.
- ✓ To be an independent person to whom you can turn when you have worries.



A LAC Review is held every six months for you and ends when you turn 18.

The purpose of the LAC Review is as follows:

- ✓ To give you a chance to privately discuss things with the IRO.
- ✓ To give the foster carer or a keyworker in your care setting a chance to give feedback on how you are doing.
- ✓ To serve as an opportunity for the IRO to check all ongoing work with you relating to the key areas in your life (e.g. health, education, preparation for leaving care, etc.).
- ✓ To agree actions between everyone to better or further support you.

Your Personal Adviser will attend the last two LAC Reviews before you turn 18 and explain the process of you becoming supported by Leaving Care; they will also give you their mobile and email, and their manager's contact details too.

Where do we meet up?

Before turning 18, your Social Worker is most likely to visit you where you are living though they can meet you elsewhere as well. After turning 18, your Personal Adviser will meet you wherever you're both happy to meet – be that at your house, in the **Turnaround Centre**, in a café, or elsewhere. It may be that your Personal Adviser wishes to visit your house for a particular reason – perhaps he/she wishes to see how you are managing with living independently, or maybe he/she has safety concerns – and it is

expected that you will cooperate unless there is a very good reason not to!

How will we keep in touch?

Okay, here's the legal bit: your Personal Adviser has to, by law, see you at least once every two months (unless expressly against your wishes). But between visits, you'll keep in touch through other means. As it is the 21st century, contact is very unlikely to be by letter, landline or carrier pigeon; instead, contact will be via text, mobile, email, Skype and/or app.

Social media is not acceptable – nor is WhatsApp (see **Personal Information and Data Sharing** for reasons why).

Once again, the Personal Adviser will be led by your wishes on the subject. And if you want to see your worker's big smiling face more often then they'll be happy to see you too!





Saed's Story...

Saed, 17, walks into his LAC review, sinking into the comfy armchair in his foster home; he gets downstairs a few minutes early to secure this seat as his Social Worker competes with him for it. The IRO arrives soon after and both he and Saed accept the foster carer's offer of tea. Then the usual people file in: his Social Worker, the Supervising Social Worker and, tired from bringing in small mountains of biscuits, his foster carer takes a seat.

A knock on the door and someone new enters the living room. This person introduces herself as Saed's Personal Adviser.

'Hi Saed. I'll be at these LAC Reviews from now on – and your Pathway Plan updates. I'll be your main support when you're an adult, but I'll also be available before then if you ever fancy a chat. Let me dropcall you now so you have my number,' she says.

Before he knows it, Saed's phone is shaking along to his Justin Bieber ringtone and he has this stranger's number.

'Remember though,' Saed's Social Worker says with a wry smile,



LIFE SKILLS AND GENERAL SUPPORT

Overview

As a 16 and then a 17-year-old, you will be building your life skills in preparation for adulthood. Before turning 18, you have a lot of support available to you from a number of people both inside and outside the Council – linked and not linked to Children’s Social Care. The goal is to help you find your own independence. But what is ‘independence’ and how do you achieve it?

independence

noun

freedom from the control, influence, support, aid, or the like, of others.

At its heart, independence suggests the idea of freedom to support yourself, but clearly no one is an island and we all need help sometimes. We aim to ensure you are well equipped to tackle the demands and trials of being an adult. These demands can range from the fairly dull, such as



being able to manage and pay utility bills, all the way up to securing the job or career you hope for.

Who’s available to provide support?

As mentioned, there are a number of people who are potentially available to support you, depending on your circumstances.

Although not an exhaustive list, you may expect to receive support from any of the following:

- ✓ Foster Carer or Keyworker
- ✓ Social Worker
- ✓ Personal Adviser
- ✓ Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)
- ✓ Independent Visitor (IV)
- ✓ Support Worker
- ✓ Virtual School (please see [Education and Training](#) for further details)
- ✓ Advocate

As stated, your own unique circumstances will decide exactly who is available for you – for example, a 17-year-old in semi-independent accommodation will not have a current foster carer. Formally, the Social Worker and IRO stop working with you when you reach the age of 18, but a care leaver who has a particularly strong relationship with their foster carer may very well keep in touch or ‘stay put’ (see [Home](#) for further details) – which is a good thing.



Floating Support –

We also work in partnership with an organisation called **CAYSH** who are based in the middle of Croydon and offer a floating support service to you if you need it – no, that doesn't mean you have a support worker levitating around you; it means you have a support worker who sort of 'floats' in and out of your life as you need them but who can provide more intensive or targeted support than your Personal Adviser.

CAYSH is an organisation that supports young people in a number of ways. In Croydon, CAYSH has two workers providing floating support for care leavers who are referred to them by their Personal Adviser.

The floating support consists of:

- ✓ General day-to-day assistance, such as accompanying you to appointments, helping you set up your gas/electricity supplier, budgeting, chasing immigration solicitors, etc.
- ✓ Signposting you to other appropriate services, such as Off the Record, Turning Point and StepChange.
- ✓ Working in partnership with your Personal Adviser to meet your needs in a way that works for you.

CAYSH also has a direct link to the charity 'Mind' in South Croydon, and is commencing the first of what will be an annual skills programme in September 2018.



Advocacy Services – Barnardo's

If you feel as though you are struggling to express yourself, or your views are not being taken seriously, then you can approach an advocacy service to support you in making yourself heard. Although there are a number of advocacy services available, Croydon has a working partnership with **Barnardo's** and will always try to work together with an advocate where they are responsibly and supportively involved. They will always be asked to provide evidence that you are happy for us to speak with them though!

Barnardo's notes that there is a growing recognition of the importance of advocacy for children and young people when plans are being made for their lives. Appreciating the views and feelings of the young person helps them feel involved and can help everyone make better decisions. Working like this is not just good practice, it is also a legal requirement.

The **Children Act 1989** says young people must be treated with respect and this means (amongst other things) that young people must be listened to. If a local authority is deciding what should happen to a child or young person they have to find out how they feel and what they want. They have to tell the child or young person what is happening and why.

Listening to children is at the heart of all Barnardo's work, but their work in advocacy especially shows Barnardo's commitment to giving children and young people a voice.

To request an advocate, phone Barnardo's on 0808 800 0017 or 020 8768 5058. Alternatively, email them on Advocacy2@barnardos.org.uk.



Play Me! 



Support Groups –

We're proud to run a support group that brings both Looked After children and care leavers together in a friendly, safe environment where they can develop independent skills.

Esther Outreach is a voluntarily-run initiative that provides practical support, advice and advocacy to care leavers. The practical support covers everything from assistance in finding work all the way through to preparing meals. Past workshops have covered money management, drug awareness, parenting, cooking on a budget and creative art.

There are two regular groups that run at the Turnaround Centre from 6.30-8.30pm as follows:

- ✓ Young Men Meeting on the first Wednesday of every month.
- ✓ Young Women Meeting on the third Wednesday of every month.

To sign up you can phone either 07847 844 269 or 07783 894 358, or email esthersoutreach@wwmf.org.



Legal Support – Civil Legal Advice (CLA)

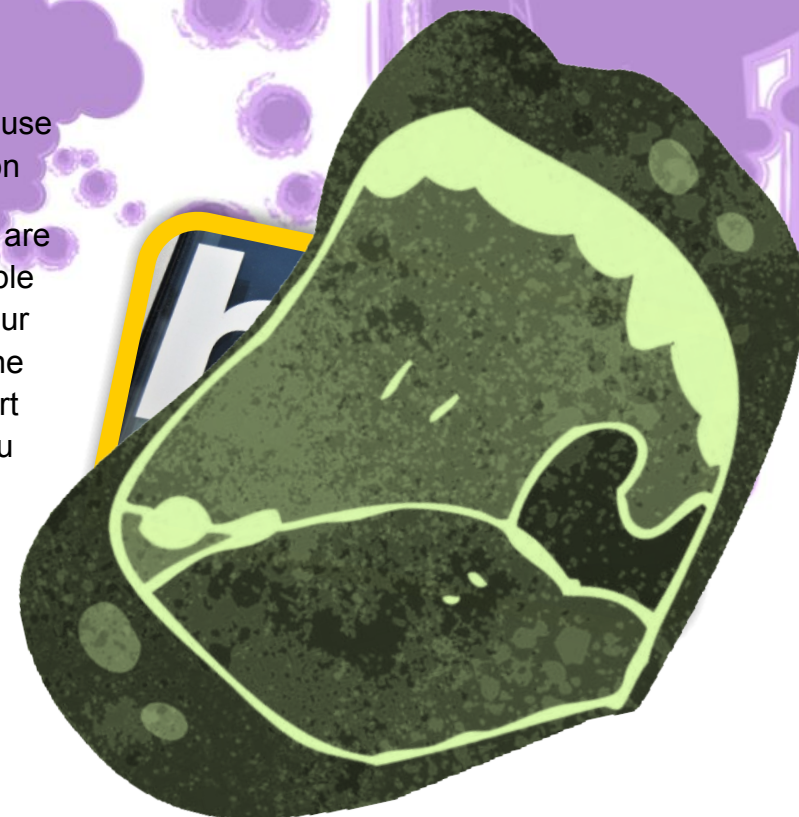


Sometimes the support you need is a little bolder in nature and that's when you can turn to **Civil Legal Advice (CLA)**, who may be able to offer you free and confidential advice as part of Legal Aid.

Some of the issues you can ask their support for include:

- ✓ Debt
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Domestic Abuse
- ✓ Discrimination

If they decide you are eligible, you'll be able to discuss your issues with someone and get their expert thinking on what you can do.



Transitions Team

It is important to let you know that we do have an enhanced offer of support for young people with physical and mental health disabilities, as well as those with learning difficulties. This support comes from our Transitions team who, in place of the Leaving Care Service, will take a lead role in providing you with a service. Instead of a Personal Adviser, your support comes instead from a Social Worker who specialises in working with young people with disabilities. However, you should know that you will still be legally entitled to all the rights and entitlements outlined in this document as any other care leaver.

Parts of your service will, necessarily, be different to that received by other care leavers –

for example, you will receive enhanced support with housing. For full information on the available support, have a look at our **SEND Offer**.



Independent Visitor (IV) Service

We also have the Independent Visitor (IV) Service, which recruits, trains and manages volunteers who meet with Looked After children one on one to build a supportive friendship. IVs give Looked After children a chance to have fun, take a break from their daily lives with someone who is just there for them, and to model positive behaviours. They also offer a form of continuity – with many matches lasting years – that often cannot be offered by professionals and carers in social care.

In terms of what they *actually* do, IVs do what you want to do! They travel with young people for cinema trips, cycling in the park, days out in London or Brighton, an ice cream or a burger – but they're really there to listen, to chat, to reflect and to care. They might meet a child in central Croydon or as far afield as Wolverhampton.

If you're 16 or 17, an IV is really worth considering and even after you turn 18, they can be in your life for a further six months. Result.



YouTube Channel for Care Leavers – *formeR* ← Relevant

Another form of support to be aware of is the developing YouTube channel, **formeR Relevant**, which is unique to Croydon and aims to give you help on a range of issues, including housing, money and immigration. Let's be honest: production values aren't high, but it is a work in progress for you to be aware of and there may already be some content worth looking at.

21-25-Year-Olds' Service Offer

Now, if you are between the ages of 21 and 25 our service may look a little different to how it was when you were 18, 19 and 20. This slight change is because of the **Children and Social Work Act 2017 – Section 3** which basically means you can ask for support from us up until you turn 25, whether you are in education or not. It used to be that, at 21, if you were working or not in education, employment or training, we would say goodbye, but that is no longer the case if you still want support. Also, if we do say goodbye to each other then you can still return to us before your 25th birthday to ask for more support.



We recognise that a 21-to-25-year-old is likely to be a lot more independent than someone younger. So, as you approach your 21st birthday, your Personal Adviser will sit down with you and work out the following:

- ✓ Whether you still need our support.
- ✓ If you do need support, what tasks you need support with.
- ✓ If you do need support, how often we will keep in touch and how we will keep in touch.

After this has been discussed, your Pathway Plan will be updated accordingly. If you would like support with a lot of things, then you may require a full needs assessment; if you only want support with a couple of things – such as finding a job or accessing a scuba-diving club – then a full needs assessment is going to be overkill.

But if you decide you're happy for us to say goodbye at 21 then – guess what? – we're going to write to you on each of your birthdays until you turn 25 just to remind you that we're still here ready to support you if you need it! And, if a few years pass and you think, 'Yeah, actually I could do with a little help at the moment,' then you can come into the **Turnaround Centre** during duty hours and the following happens:

- **Request:** firstly, you tell the receptionist that you'd like to see the duty Leaving Care worker to talk about your current needs.
- **Needs Assessment:** the duty worker will talk with you about what tasks you'd like support with. Perhaps you only want help with something small or perhaps you'd like quite a lot of assistance. Either way, the duty worker will write all



the important information down. You will then provide your contact details and leave the building (unless you need emergency support).

- **Allocation:** you will be contacted within two weeks and told who your allocated Personal Adviser will be, and they will meet up with you and start providing support. We will try our best to make sure your worker is the last Personal Adviser you had before we said goodbye.



Saed's Story...

Saed is almost 18 and he's about to say goodbye to his Social Worker, IRO and Foster Carer in quick succession. He's only left with his Personal Adviser. This adulthood business is tough...

But his Personal Adviser knows Saed's going to be feeling this way and surprises him by ringing up and saying, 'Hey! Fancy a coffee? I want to hear how you're doing.'

The café is empty but for his Personal Adviser and after they've each grabbed a coffee that *doesn't* cost more than a small yacht, they sit down together.

'Big changes, Saed! How you been doing?' the Personal Adviser asks.

'I feel a bit alone,' he says. 'I had a lot of people there when I was 17 and now it's just you – not that you're not good to have, of course.'

'I understand,' the Personal Adviser replies, smiling. 'That's why I wanted to give you this invitation' – she pulls a flyer from her bag – 'for something called the Esther Outreach group. It meets once a month for lads like yourself, and I think you could make some friends there.'

'Thank you,' Saed says, cheered at the prospect of meeting others. 'I'll give it a go.'

'Remember: you can call me at any time too!'



HOME

Overview

One of the key forms of support we will give you is an offer of accommodation. Housing in Croydon, to put it bluntly, is hard to come by and very expensive. There is also a big shortage of 'council houses' and 'council flats' (sometimes called social housing), and this is reflected in the fact that care leavers should expect to be renting privately for a certain period of time; therefore, you should prepare to rent privately for a number of years. However, our Housing department does find alternative homes for care leavers. In addition, there is supported accommodation available to young people who have a higher level of need, as well as housing for young people with No Recourse to Public Funds

(NRPF). Finally, looked after children aged 16 or 17 will have foster care and semi-independent homes available to them, and there is also a Staying Put option available for young people who wish to remain with their foster carers after turning 18.

Foster Home

The most common form of accommodation for 16 and 17-year-olds in Croydon is foster care. The support of a foster carer is absolutely vital to ensuring you are ready for adulthood, and the foster home itself can be treated as a 'practice arena' for tackling issues as an adult might: for example, budgeting to limited finances; shopping for the right kinds of food; learning to prepare meals; and understanding and responding to letters and documents (e.g. utility bills, tenancy agreement, etc.). The wisdom of an experienced foster carer will make the difference to whether you make a successful start to adulthood or not.

Semi-independent Home

For 16 and 17-year-olds who have already demonstrated that they've developed strong independent skills, a semi-independent home monitored by Croydon Council offers young people an opportunity to prove that they can not only live independently, but live independently with *other* young people under the same roof. The Council has limited semi-independent homes, but does work with several semi-independent providers to ensure that young people who are ready for this step will be given the opportunity to have a go at it.



Staying Put

In certain circumstances, it is preferable for you to remain with your foster carer *after* turning 18. Such an agreement is called Staying Put and is usually considered as an option where there is a clear reason why there should be no disruption to your accommodation arrangement. For example, if you had a year left on your college course and intended to go to university; in this situation, you and your Social Worker might consider Staying Put as the first choice for housing once you become an adult, so as not to disrupt your learning. Or if you had a physical disability and a strong attachment to your foster carers who, in turn, had proven that they were very supportive of you; in such a circumstance, it could be considered far too disruptive for you to leave upon turning 18 and a Staying Put agreement might be considered.



Independent Accommodation

At the age of 18, as with the majority of care leavers, you move into your own accommodation which is most likely to be a private-rented room in a shared house – or house with multiple occupants (HMO), as it is often called. Very few care leavers are fortunate enough to be offered a studio or one-bed flat and so the expectation should be that you will live with other care leavers.

The independent accommodation is offered by our Housing department and must be requested through something called a Housing Panel by your Social Worker before you become an adult. An effort is made to find somewhere in your preferred area to live – so if you were studying at Lambeth College, for instance, then we will try to find you somewhere to live nearby; however, there is never a guarantee that this can be done and you run the risk of running out of options and even homelessness if you refuse multiple offers of accommodation. Also, you will not be given the opportunity to view the room you will live in before you sign the tenancy agreement.

Oh, and on that point: what is a tenancy agreement? A **tenancy agreement** is basically a legal contract between you and a landlord stating what *your* rights are and what your landlord's rights are.

There are different types of tenancy agreement, but the most common type is an assured shorthold tenancy (AST) which means your deposit is protected under a government-approved tenancy deposit scheme and, at the end of the tenancy period (as stated



on the agreement), the tenancy will just carry on going unless you or the landlord choose otherwise.

But you may not live in an accommodation under a tenancy agreement at all – you may instead have a *licence* agreement, which is similar to a tenancy but is very specific about a (usually) *short* period of time you can live in a property. Generally speaking – and being perfectly honest – you tend to have less rights with this type of agreement, so be careful!

Accommodation will also be found by us for young people with NRPF, though there are some key differences between how their property is handled versus how property is handled for local care leavers and those with recourse to public funds (please see [Money](#) for further details).

You will have to sign and maintain your tenancy agreement, but should make sure you read it through first to be certain you are comfortable with it. You will also be expected to pay rent on the property in a timely manner and will be able to access a Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA) to furnish it (again, please see [Money](#) for further details).

Finally, support from Housing to find independent accommodation will not stretch to 22, 23 and 24-year-olds, and so they will have to access [Croydon's Independent Living – Young Adults Support Page](#) for advice. However, you can approach the Council for support with a deposit or rent in advance (please see [Money](#) for further details).

Supported Accommodation

Supported accommodation is, as the name suggests, housing where there is some type of on or off-site support. There are occasions where it is more appropriate for you to be offered this type of accommodation – perhaps you have learning difficulties and do not feel confident living independently right now, but were unable to enter into a Staying Put agreement. Alternatively, we might be worried that you are at



risk of sexual exploitation or drug misuse and feel you would benefit from a higher level of support. All of the supported accommodation that the Council uses is located within the borough of Croydon.

Council Houses and Council Flats

Owing to high local pressures on limited housing stock, we – in Croydon – cannot guarantee you a council property and you should be prepared to rent privately, at least for a time. However, we *will* support you to apply for a place on the Housing Register; if you were previously on the Housing Register, you may have been removed and should ask your worker to confirm this for you,



so we can look at getting you added again. If you live outside of Croydon, we will happily explore whether living in a council house or flat is a possibility and help you apply.

Vacation Accommodation

Legally, we have to offer accommodation to care leaver university students during the extended holiday periods (Christmas and summer) if they have nowhere else to live. If you are at university and your accommodation is not for 365 days a year, then you will be entitled to support from us. Alternatively, if you find somewhere yourself for the holiday then you could be given up to £400.00 per month as a contribution towards your rent. Other care leavers may be able to make arrangements with family members or friends, however, and will not need support. Remember: this duty also applies to care leavers at university who are qualifying, as opposed to former relevant.

Release from Custody

If you are in custody – be it a prison or a young offender institution (YOI) – we will make plans for where you will live once you are released, so long as you are still entitled to a Leaving Care service. We'll begin by liaising with Offender Management in your prison who will update us on your release date. Your Personal Adviser informs our Housing department and they will find you an

appropriate home. We will take into account the fact that there may be areas in which you may not be safe – perhaps because of gang affiliation – and find supported accommodation if you require it.



Homelessness

The protocol for supporting you if you're homeless differs depending on your age. If a Looked After 16 or 17-year-old presents as homeless, then we will find appropriate accommodation as follows:

- ✓ Night stop-type or short-term supported lodgings in homes of trained and vetted hosts.
- ✓ Emergency beds in specialist young peoples' supported accommodation services.
- ✓ Other specifically designed crash pad services with on-site support.
- ✓ Emergency foster home.

However, if you are aged 18 to 21 and homeless you should present at the **Turnaround Centre** as early in the day as possible and your application for emergency support will be completed by a member of staff in the Drop in Zone (DiZ). You will then be able to attend a same-day appointment with a member of our Housing department at Bernard Weatherill House (BWH). Depending on



the reasons for homelessness, we may offer emergency accommodation until housing issues can be resolved.

However, if you are aged 22, 23 or 24, although unable to declare yourself homeless at the **Turnaround Centre**, you will still be able to declare yourself homeless at BWH and be assessed the same as anyone else.

It's been a few days since he turned 18 and Saed has now signed his tenancy agreement for a room in a shared house in Thornton Heath – ideally, he'd liked to have remained in Selsdon, near his Foster Carer, but it wasn't to be.

He arrives at the new place in a cab with his bags and find his Personal Adviser waiting for him. She helps him unload and, together, they go inside.

There are three other boys living in the house and he meets two of them immediately: both seem pleasant and he shares a language with them, which is a good start! They show him around and he sees the shared kitchen, living room and bathroom. His room is at the top of the house and they leave him with his Personal Adviser to look at that together.

Fortunately, he's got a double bedroom, presented clean and tidy with a view out onto the street. But something's missing...

'No bed? Or furniture?' Saed says to his Personal Adviser.

'Don't worry. I've ordered a double bed, mattress, chest of drawers, desk and wardrobe: they'll be delivered in a couple of hours. You'll also have a "starter pack" which has bedding, towels, pots and pans, and a few extras.'

'Thanks,' Saed says. 'It all feels quite strange.'

'It will', his Personal Adviser replies. 'But, in time, it will start to feel like home.'

Emergency Duty Team (EDT)

If you find yourself homeless outside of office working hours (9am-5pm / Monday to Friday) then you can get an emergency bed and breakfast room by going to the Corporate Reception at BWH. These really are for emergencies only and you must make contact with your Personal Adviser as soon as possible to advise them of your situation and follow the homelessness procedure (see above).



Saed's Story...



MONEY

Overview

Becoming an adult and becoming independent is financially challenging for anyone, but you may face the extra challenge of having few or no blood relations to support you. We take our financial responsibilities to you very seriously and do our best to make sure that you do not have to go to bed each night wondering

where the next meal is coming from because your bank account is empty. Financial support does not mean that we pay you money every week – no matter how much we'd like to; it instead describes a range of ways in which Personal Advisers and other Council employees are expected to help you

get your money situation looking

healthy.



Financial Entitlements

There are several legal entitlements for you to be aware of with regards money. So, here's what you can expect to receive from us:

- ✓ **Four weekly payments** of £50.00 (£200.00 in total) upon turning 18 to help you out until benefit payments can commence, which will be deducted from your Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA) (see below).
- ✓ **Setting Up Home Allowance** of £1,000.00 to be used for furnishing your first home.
- ✓ **A Higher Education Bursary (HEB)** of £2,000.00, usually paid in instalments of £666.67 over the three academic years of university (obviously, you have to be at university to get this!).
- ✓ **A Graduation Fund** of up to £200.00 towards the cost of gown hire, graduation photos, mortar, etc. when graduating from university.
- ✓ **No Council Tax to pay** if you live in Croydon.
- ✓ **Expenses** linked with accessing and remaining in education, employment or training (for example, the cost of a suit for an interview).
- ✓ **Support to open a bank account** if you've not already done so.
- ✓ **Support to get a National Insurance (NI) number**, which you will need for any benefit applications and work.
- ✓ Potentially, a **financial gift on birthdays and/or holidays** if you qualify and you're under 18.



Budgeting

Budgeting is a vital skill and you need to be developing it from as young an age as possible. Help is at hand though. You can expect advice from your Personal Adviser on how best to use your money and how to make sure you're getting all the money you're entitled to. This support will be ongoing, but in times of crisis it will be more focused, and you will have a **Triple A Financial Assessment** to look very carefully at what is going on with your money – this is how it works:

- ✓ **Assess:** firstly, we work out all your regular income and outgoings using this exciting form:
- ✓ **Analyse:** secondly, you and your Personal Adviser will work out where the problem areas are and decide what needs to change.
- ✓ **Amend:** finally, the Personal Adviser will help you 'maximise your income' (e.g. looking at whether there are any extra benefits you can claim, or whether there are any bursaries for which you are eligible); and you will start to make changes to your spending habits, else you'll be eating tins of baked beans forever.



Income Maximisation

Income maximisation is the term we use when we talk about helping you get all the money you're entitled to. Now, your financial entitlements will depend on a few things, including your legal status, your age and whether you're a student, working or neither of these. However, some of the support that *may* be offered to you is outlined below:

- ✓ **Benefits:** referral to our friendly Income Maximisation Team who can help sort out any issues with your benefit payments through direct links with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (they're the guys who manage the Jobcentre). They can also work out whether there are any other benefits you can claim that you didn't already know about.
- ✓ **Bursaries:** there are several bursaries available to which you may be entitled, including the **16 to 19 Bursary Fund**, which can be accessed while you're at college. Again, the sheer range of bursaries reflects the fact that everyone's situation is different. We will also consider other bursary or grant options, such as **Buttle UK** or the **Jack Petchey Foundation**.
- ✓ **Ongoing Support:** in exceptional cases, we *might* consider offering you temporary financial support – usually when we are worried about your immediate safety (please read on for specifics).



Croydon Council Gateway Service

We simply *have* to mention our Gateway service (it's won awards, y'know!), which is all about solving problems with money and housing as early as possible to stop things getting worse for you. If you have any benefits questions, you can phone them on 0800 731 5920 or go to a **benefit surgery**. And if money is still tight, you can consider applying for some form of **discretionary support** to help with general living and housing payments, including a **deposit or rent in advance**.

Leaving Care Discretionary Payments

As a rule of thumb, we will not make any ongoing payment to you – nor to any other care leaver with recourse to public funds – as it is expected that if you are not earning you will be accessing benefits (**Universal Credit** in Croydon) to support yourself. However, there are exceptional circumstances where we think you may need some help – but we make our decision by thinking about the following ideas:

- ✓ Are there genuine safeguarding concerns and you would be placed at immediate risk if you do not receive financial support?
- ✓ Is there a SMART plan in place (ideally reflected in a Pathway Plan) of how you and your Personal Adviser will try to overcome your current money issues?
- ✓ Have you provided a bank statement to confirm that you have nothing in your account?

- ✓ If your Universal Credit payment has stopped, have you tried to fix the issue and/or access an **Advance Payment** from your local Jobcentre?

If we decide to help you, you will be offered one or more of the following:

- ✓ Food Vouchers (Tesco or Iceland)
- ✓ Food Bag
- ✓ Referral to a food bank
- ✓ Direct payment to your bank account

Your request will be entered into your Pathway Plan as well, so there is a record. But, more importantly, there will be a discussion, within your Plan, of your money situation and how we can work together to improve it.

And another thing: if we do offer to pay money to your bank account you will not receive the payment immediately; it will take at the very least a week owing to the way our financial systems work. There is nothing your Personal Adviser can do to change that.

General Ledger Savings, Child Trust Fund and Junior ISA

Okay...that doesn't sound exciting, but you may want to pay attention, because this is important: as a Looked After child, and then as a care leaver, you'll be able to access three different types of savings:



1. **General Ledger Savings** are savings Croydon itself keeps for you and will be paid to you when you turn 18. The Council will set aside the sum of £5.00 per week for you while you are in care and 0-10 years old, and £10.00 per week while you are in care and 11-18 years old. Previously, it had been that you only received these kinds of savings if you lived with a foster carer, but that has changed and these savings now apply to all Looked After children (though they will not be paid retrospectively).
2. The **Child Trust Fund** is another form of savings that Croydon takes care of for you and you can request the money from it by speaking to your worker when you turn 18. However, the fund will only be available to you if *all* of the following criteria apply:
 - a. You were born *between* 1st September 2002 and 2nd January 2011.
 - b. You were looked after by Croydon before 3rd April 2011.
 - c. You were living in the UK.
 - d. You weren't subject to any immigration restrictions or, if you were, your restrictions were no longer active before 3rd April 2011.
3. The **Junior ISA** is sorted out by the Share Foundation on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE). When it's set up for you, £200.00 is put in it by the government (thank you very much) and, over time, that amount grows a little. At the age of 18, you can request for some or all of the money to be paid to you. However, the ISA will only be available to you if *all* of the following criteria apply:

- a. You must have been born *before* 1st September 2002 or *after* 2nd January 2011.
- b. You must have been in care for at least 12 months uninterrupted.
- c. You must be under the age of 18 (on application).

No



Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

The financial arrangements for care leavers with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) is very different to the arrangements made for everyone else. Let's imagine a scenario where you have NRPF: you are unable to access benefits and housing, and are very likely to not be legally able to work as well (please see the **Settler Support** section for full clarification on NRPF). In such a position, you would be extremely vulnerable and, given that we

have a duty to support care leavers – even those with NRPF – we make the following provision:

- ✓ The **provision of a prepaid card** to be used in place of a normal debit or credit card.
- ✓ **Weekly subsistence payments** of £45.00 to be used for food, drink, toiletries, clothing and other essentials.
- ✓ **Weekly subsistence payments for your children** if you have NRPF, as follows:
 - £40.39 per child *under* the age of 1.
 - £38.39 per child aged between 1 and 3 years.
 - £35.39 per child aged *over* 3.
- ✓ **Fully subsidised rent and utility bills** in accommodation sourced by Croydon Council.
- ✓ **Travel payments for getting to college** as this should not come out of your weekly subsistence.

However, this support with money is conditional, which means we can stop paying you in the following circumstances:

- ✗ You fail to comply with a Removal Order.
- ✗ Your application for extended leave is refused.
- ✗ Your appeal against refusal is dismissed.

Oh, and we *do* expect you to stay in contact with us if we're providing you a subsistence payment so that we know you still need our support.

And here's the legal bit: we have made this decision in line with the **Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 – Schedule**

3. A Human Rights Act assessment will be conducted by the local authority to assess eligibility for further support.

Care Leavers in Prison

Care leavers who are in prison receive no financial support from us, as it is expected that the prison itself will be providing food, drink, clothing, etc. You can also take up work inside prison to pay for any additional items you want.





Saed's Story...

It's been four months since Saed turned 18; in that time, he has struggled with money – after all, he only receives £251.77 in Universal Credit each month. At least he has his college bursary. However, there's been some kind of error with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and his benefits have been reduced to only £170.00 a month.

Fortunately, his Personal Adviser has booked him an appointment with one of her colleagues: an Income Maximisation Officer, who he sits down with one afternoon at the Turnaround Centre.

'Nice to meet you, Saed,' the Officer begins. 'I've had a look at your Universal Credit online account and can see that a mistake has been made. But we're going to try and sort that all out.'

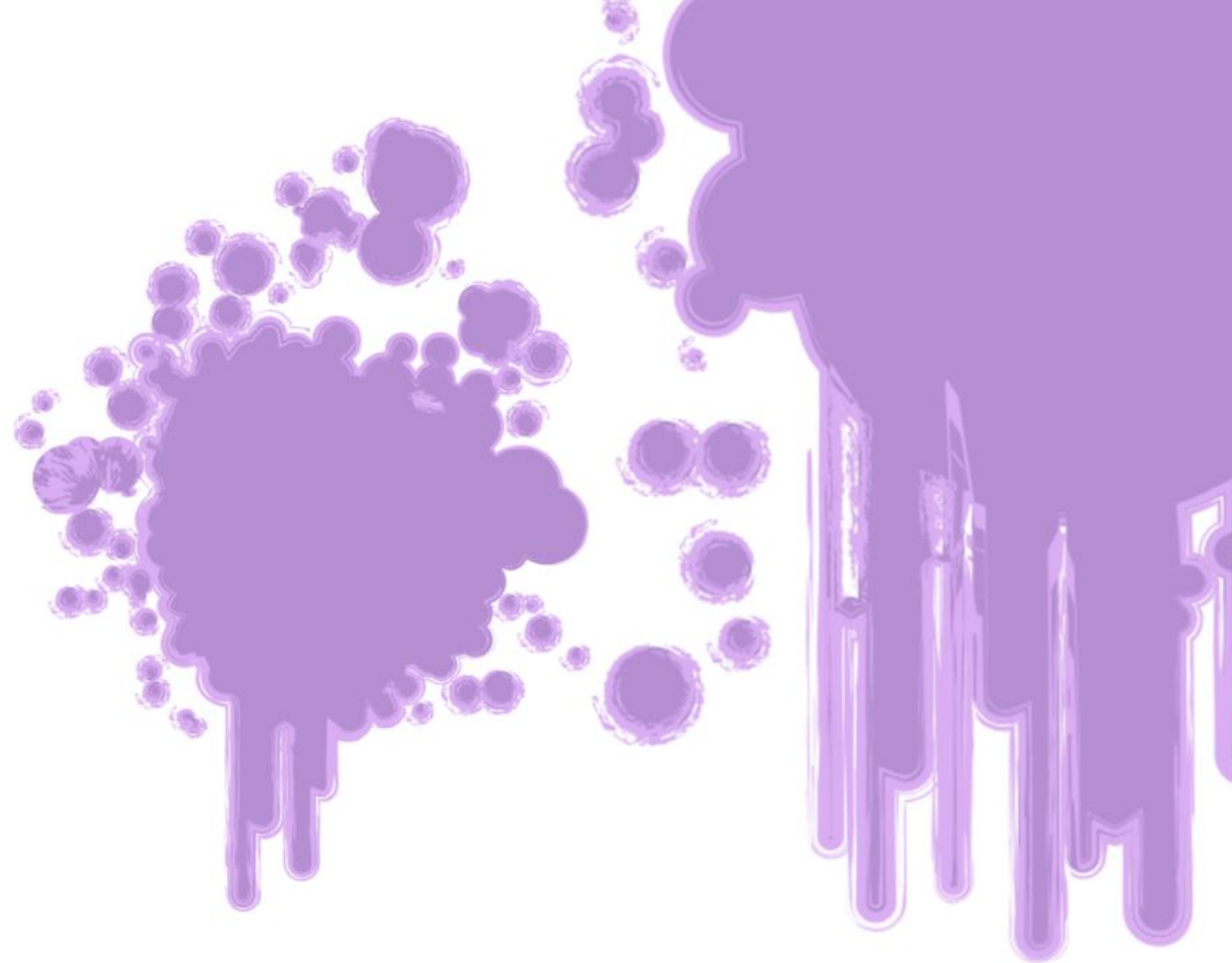
The Officer rings the DWP and, after waiting for 20 minutes for it to be answered, he gets through to someone. Another 20 minutes later, and the Officer has an answer for Saed...

'All sorted, Saed. They accept that they'd made an error and it will be corrected – you'll get the money you were owed.'

'Thanks,' says Saed. 'But even the full amount is difficult to live on.'

'That's where I come in,' says his Personal Adviser, stepping into the room. 'Let's do a Triple A Financial Assessment, work out if you can change your spending habits and think about some serious budgeting.'

'Thanks,' says Saed again. 'That would be a big help.'



MIGRANT SUPPORT

Overview

Croydon is home to people from a range of different backgrounds: some families have lived here for generations; some are high-flying professionals who have been attracted by the borough's ambitious plans for the future; and others have made a home for themselves after claiming asylum at Lunar House, headquarters for the UK Visas and Immigration division of the Home Office. When unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) come to Croydon, we look after them and give them a home with a foster carer. Once they reach the age of 18, they too receive a Leaving Care service.

Many of our Personal Advisers and Social Workers are extremely knowledgeable about immigration, bringing with them a great deal of experience in the field. They understand immigration law and procedure and they do their utmost to support you if you are subject to immigration control. Let's have a look at what that support looks like.



No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

Some of the young people we support have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), which means that they are not entitled to benefits or housing and, in the vast majority of cases, they are not permitted to work either. In fact, if you're reading this and you either know or think you may have NRPF, then check your biometric residence permit (BRP) – if it says **FORBIDDEN FROM TAKING EMPLOYMENT** then you will be treated by us as having NRPF.

Much of the overall support you, as someone with NRPF, will receive from us is going to be the same as for someone who is local or has recourse to public funds. So, you're going to have a Personal Adviser, a Pathway Plan and general advice and assistance. In fact, the main differences are only financial (see the **Money** section), accommodation (see the **Home** section) and work-related (see the **Jobs** section).

The reality for you if you have NRPF is that you are going to have to return home at some point; some people do successfully fight and overturn this status once the Home Office has issued it, but very few achieve that. The best way we can support you is to help you plan what will happen once you return to your country of origin and though you may not like to think about this, it can make all the difference if you are picked up by the Home Office and sent back home. In your Pathway Plan, therefore, you can expect discussion around the following:

- ✓ Who you have to support you back home (if anyone).
- ✓ What dangers you may face.



- ✓ Where you could stay and what you could do for work or education.
- ✓ How you could engage in education/training in the UK to give you skills for use back home.
- ✓ How you will comply with any Home Office conditions, such as attending weekly meetings at Lunar House.
- ✓ What voluntary return schemes there are and how you could take advantage of these.

And so one thing you do need to know about – but will probably not enjoying reading – is...

Deportation

Under UK immigration law, a Deportation Order may be made against a foreign national, such as yourself if you have NRPF, and this not only allows for you to be removed from the UK but also means you can be kept in custody until you are removed. The Order also means you can't return to the UK, so long as it remains in force – it doesn't matter what previous leave to remain you may have had.

A Deportation Order may be made for any of these reasons:

- ✗ It's been decided that it would be in the public's interest for you to be removed from the UK.

- ✗ You are the spouse, civil partner or child of someone who has a Deportation Order.
- ✗ You are over 17 years old, have been convicted of a crime which carries a prison sentence and the court recommends you be deported after you've served your sentence. The prison sentence can be bypassed altogether and you are simply deported – the more serious the crime, the more likely this is to happen.

A Deportation Order should not be made if it breaches your **Human Rights** or **The 1951 Refugee Convention**.

Once a Deportation Order has been made against you, you may be held in a detention centre without any warning, but you will also be advised of your right to appeal. This will be particularly unnerving if an Order has been made against you and you also have a child. The reality is that your child would also be at risk of being removed with you, unless they live separately with the other parent and **they do not** face deportation – in such circumstances, the child may avoid deportation.

Where a Deportation Order is usually reserved for someone who has been convicted of a crime, Administrative Removal is another term you may hear and it is exactly the same as a Deportation Order except it is for someone who breached the conditions of their leave to remain or who obtained permission to stay in the UK through deception. You



can appeal an Administrative Removal decision if you have the right to do so, else you can choose to leave the UK. There is some additional helpful information available on the **Citizens Advice** website.

Now, if you're reading all of this and you recognise it as your situation, then you may be tempted to 'go underground', which is to go into hiding in the UK. It's illegal to hide from the Home Office, but even if you did it successfully life will always be difficult for you. You'll never be able to legally work, you won't be able to open a bank account, rent a flat, buy a house and you will always be looking over your shoulder, because if the Home Office find you they will remove you. So, it's your choice, but we strongly urge you not to do it and will never support you in your decision to do it. You need to be clear about that.

Anyway, if you're subject to a Deportation Order or to being removed, one day you are likely to be...

Detained

You'll only be taken to a detention centre when you're going to be deported in the near future, unless the Home Office thinks you might try to avoid it. You're most likely to be taken into detention when you visit your reporting centre, but it can happen at any time. If you have children they'll be detained with you, so it's important to prepare them.

Once you're in detention, you won't be deported for at least 72 hours. You should be given information in your own language explaining your rights while you're there. If you don't receive this, you should ask for it.

Here are your rights though:

- ✓ Have visitors, receive post and telephone calls.
- ✓ Apply for bail.
- ✓ Keep your personal property.
- ✓ Communicate with the outside world – for example, to tell people in your home country that you may be returning.
- ✓ Live in accommodation with your family, if they are detained with you.

You can also ask to see a legal adviser while you're in detention. They'll help you apply for bail and make further appeals if new information about your situation is uncovered.

Other Agency Support –



There are a number of organisations that are able to offer more support to you with regards your immigration claim.

The **Refugee Council** is one of the leading charities in the UK offering support and advice to people who are seeking asylum.

The charity offers a range of helpful services to asylum seekers and refugees, including **destitution support** to those with NRPF and **therapeutic services** that encompass the following:



- ✓ Psycho-social Groups
- ✓ Creative Focus
- ✓ Safer Refugee Women
- ✓ Epione Project
- ✓ Mother & Toddler Group
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Volunteers and Student Placements

The Refugee Council also offers practical support that, in addition to other services, includes:

- ✓ Signposting to helpful services for asylum seekers by phone, in person or through its online resources directory.
- ✓ Classes to help with learning English.

Finally, it is involved in a great deal of policy work, research, parliamentary work and campaigning to try and improve the lived experiences of all young people who have claimed asylum in the UK.

Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) and British Citizenship

For those of you with the legal right to stay in the UK, you'll be considering making an application for **Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)** once your Refugee status expires. We'll be right behind your bid to get the permanent right to live in the UK and will be able to offer you a long list of immigration-specialist solicitors who can help you make an application. We anticipate most of you

will be able to access Legal Aid to fund the application and ask that you be as patient as you can, as it takes the Home Office six months (give or take) to make a decision. When you send off your application, you'll have to return your expired Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) – so please be aware of that! We are not able to fund your application if you are not able to access Legal Aid.



The absolute pinnacle of settling in the UK, however, is getting **British citizenship**; once you have this, you will have all the same rights as anyone who was born in the UK – that includes the right to vote and the right to get a passport. However, there

are two big obstacles you need to be aware of: the cost and the test. To apply, you will need to pay around £1,250.00 out of your own pocket (Legal Aid does not cover the cost and we will not pay for it either). You will also need to sit a test to see if you can tell your Arsenal from your Eltham. Here are a few genuine examples of questions you can expect to test your **vital** knowledge of this country:

- ? What charity works to preserve important buildings, coastline and countryside in the UK?
- ? Who was the tribal leader who fought against the Romans?



? What is the day when jokes are published in newspapers and telecasted on TV?

You'll probably be pleased to hear that there are apps available for you to do some practice questions – try testing your Personal Adviser and see if they'd be granted citizenship.

Saed is now 19 years old and his Refugee status is set to expire. He rings his solicitor and explains that he wants to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR).

'That's no problem at all,' the solicitor says. 'If you wish to apply for Legal Aid to cover the costs you'll have to provide me with some documents though.' And he lists the documents needed.

A week later, Saed meets up with his solicitor, face to face, and, an hour later, the application has been made.

'Remember,' the solicitor says. 'It could take up to six months for the Home Office to make a decision, so try to be patient.'

But at the back of Saed's mind is one question: what if the Home Office *don't* give me ILR?

He speaks to his Personal Adviser and they arrange to meet.

'Tell you what,' she says to Saed. 'Let's update your Pathway Plan with plans for what we do *if* the Home Office say "no". That way we are prepared and can immediately challenge the decision. If the worst should happen, I'll be here to support you and we'll fight it together.'

Saed thanks her after they're done. He realises that he won't be able to completely remove the worry from his mind, but he feels more comfortable knowing there is a plan if the worst should happen.

If you're successful, you can expect to enjoy a ceremony commemorating your achievement, which will involve singing the National Anthem while looking at a picture of the Queen's face (left).



Saed's Story...



HEALTH AND STAYING SAFE

Overview

The most important thing you have is your health and because of that we do offer a range of support options to you. Some of that support is offered at quite a 'local' level by Personal Advisers, but plenty is offered at a more 'corporate' level too. The Council has a number of initiatives already up and running that will benefit care leavers. It also has links with organisations in Croydon who are ready with some important help should you ever need it. As a starting point though, you can find a complete directory of services available in the borough by going to the **Croydon Health Services** website.



Personal Adviser Support

Every care leaver will have different support needs when it comes to health and it will be for you to ask your Personal Adviser for help where you need it. For example, if you feel there are things in your past that you really need to talk to someone about, then your Personal Adviser can direct you to services and perhaps attend some of the initial meetings with you, if you'd like some moral support.

However, there are some key things that you might want to consider asking your Personal Adviser to help you with:

- ✓ **Registering with a GP, Dentist and even an Optician** if you have not done so already or if you have moved to a new area. You have the right to choose your primary healthcare providers and cannot legally be refused treatment based on any outstanding application for leave to remain in the UK. To check for your nearest health service go to the **NHS Service Search** tool.
- ✓ **Signposting** you to appropriate services for your physical, mental and sexual health.
- ✓ **Attending hospital appointments** with you for non-routine health concerns, as these can often be stressful and so it is good for you to have someone there with you. Also, if you do end up as a patient at hospital then your Personal Adviser should come in and see you.
- ✓ **Advice on healthy living** which will include anything from being smart about having safe sex all the way through to having a balanced diet.



Local Support – Croydton Health Services NHS Trust

In Croydon, we have the expertise of someone called the designated Looked After Children (LAC) Nurse who supports you until you turn 18. They are responsible for several things, including booking you in for your annual health assessment and sometimes even travelling up to 20 miles out of the borough to visit you if there is an urgent need (this is discretionary though).

Shortly before you turn 18, the LAC Nurse will put together a Care Leaver Summary, which is basically your health autobiography with details of all the major events in your life that relate to your physical and mental health, as well as other important information for you, such as:

- ✓ NHS records
- ✓ LAC Health Assessments
- ✓ Current GP

The LAC Nurse, after putting together the Care Leaver Summary, will send it out directly to you before you reach adulthood.



Croydon University Hospital (CUH)

We're lucky enough to have a big, local hospital here in Croydon with a brand new state-of-the-art Accident and Emergency department, a very well-respected maternity unit and a whole host of other services.

Croydon University Hospital can be contacted on 020 8401 3000 and is open 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. It can be found at **530 London Road, Croydon CR7 7YE**.



Mental Health Services



Just as we all have physical health, *everyone* has mental health: sometimes it is pretty good, but other times it's *not* so good. We are experienced in supporting care leavers with a very wide range of diagnosed conditions, including:

- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Anxiety Disorders
- Bipolar Disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Dissociative Disorders
- Personality Disorders

If you also happen to have one of these diagnoses – or another diagnosis – then your Personal Adviser will ensure that the support offered is suitably tailored to something that works for you.

You may also be able to get longer-term support.

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) is a free service provided by the South London and Maudsley (SLaM) NHS Foundation Trust and is a popular way of accessing 'talking therapy' for more manageable mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety.

All you need is to be registered with a GP in Croydon and at least 18 years old. You can self-refer or ask your GP to do it for you and a member of the service will contact you to make an initial phone assessment, before deciding what support would be best for you – whether that is with IAPT or someone else.

And there's more...

Off The Record Youth Counselling Croydon was founded in 1994 to provide free, independent and professional counselling for 14-25 year olds in the Croydon area. Since then the charity has expanded to include further areas of work including Black and Minority Ethnic group and mental health work; a young carers service offering support to young people under 26 who are caring for a parent or sibling; a specialist counselling service for young refugees; online counselling and workshops; and counselling services for young people in the boroughs of Sutton and Merton.



To discuss the possibility of receiving their support, call 020 8251 0251 or email them at croydon@talkofftherecord.org.



Sexual Health Services

We encourage you to be smart about sex and your Personal Adviser will discuss this issue with you in a non-judgemental way – so be prepared for it! As with any other health matter, your Personal Adviser will be supportive of you and happy to offer their advice, but the borough does have ample support for its residents in the form of the **Croydon Sexual Health Centre** based at Croydon University Hospital (CUH). Croydon's sexual health team also do 'drop ins' at local colleges to talk with young people about keeping safe. Croydon also has its own **Condom Distribution Scheme** called the C Card, which will allow you to pick up free condoms from a number of places in the borough. Remember: if you're having sex, always be prepared!



Drugs and Alcohol – **TURNING POINT** inspired by possibility



Again, we encourage you to be smart about drugs and alcohol and your Personal Adviser will discuss this as well in a non-judgemental way, but if you ever have issues along these lines then we will urge you quite strongly to get the help you need. Once again, we value your health and hope you would too.

Croydon is fortunate enough to have specialist support available if you do ever have need of it. **Turning Point** is a national service that provides support across a broad spectrum

but, in Croydon, it runs the Croydon Recovery Network, which includes a service for substance misuse.

The organisation will provide you with a support worker who links you to other organisations who can help you turn things around. Nothing changes if you don't put in the hard work as well, but there is always someone there to help and guide you.

Healthy Eating

Your Personal Adviser will talk to you about shopping for a balanced diet, ensuring you're getting enough fruit and veg and the importance of not stuffing your face with a takeaway every night...and yes, Croydon does have a lot of takeaways, unfortunately, but it does also have **Surrey Street Market**, where you can pick up good food every day.

If you're interested in finding out more about healthy eating then the **NHS Eat Well** site is definitely worth a look.



Nom, nom, nom, nom...





Family Justice Centre

The Family Justice Centre brings together different people who can help you if you're a victim of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence (DASV). This service is open to all those experiencing abuse and can offer support at any stage of need. The Centre offers you all the support you need in one place so you don't have to go from

agency to agency, telling your story over and over, in order to get help.

The Family Justice Centre is run by a multi-agency team that helps you access support by:

- ✓ Listening and responding to your needs in a safe environment.
- ✓ Helping you access a wide range of DASV expertise, support and services.

The team itself provides:

- ✓ Fully-rounded assessment of need and risk.
- ✓ Advice and support on all aspects of DASV.
- ✓ Legal advice and support to obtain injunctions.
- ✓ Support and advice to access emergency safe accommodation.
- ✓ Support to access specialist services and advice for:
 - No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)-related issues.
 - Support for children.
 - Rape and sexual abuse.
- ✓ A drop-in and appointment service.
- ✓ A domestic abuse helpline for survivors and practitioners.

The Family Justice Centre can be contacted on **020 8688 0100**, or emailed at familyjusticecentre@croydon.gov.uk. It is open Monday, Tuesday and Friday, from 9am-5pm, and Wednesday, from 8am-5pm. It can be found at **Park Lane, Croydon CR0 1JD**.





Saed's Story...

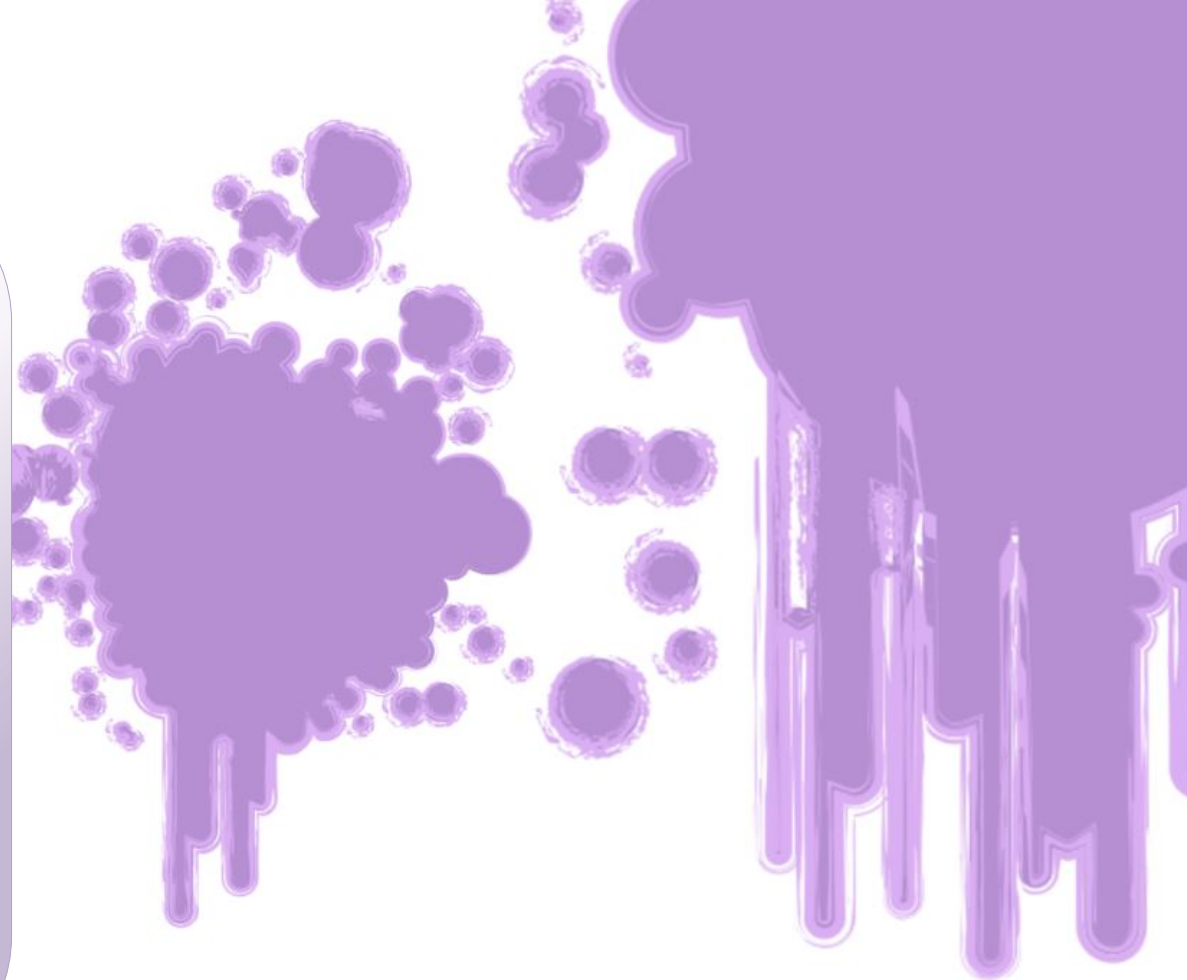
Saed has now been granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) and he is delighted. But all this worry has taken its toll on him and, more and more, he has been remembering bad things from Afghanistan. It's started to affect his college attendance, his sleep and his appetite.

'You should talk about it, Saed,' his Personal Adviser recommends. 'Might do you some good just to go over it with someone. I know just the people.'

She assists Saed to refer himself to Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) in Croydon. A week later, someone from IAPT rings him and he spends 40 minutes on the phone answering some questions. At the end, he's told that he will be able to get some support from them.

Three weeks on from the phone call, Saed goes to his first face-to-face appointment with a talking therapist. The room they're in is plain, clean and quiet. The therapist is easy to speak to and Saed finds himself willing to speak.

'In your own time, Saed. Just tell me anything that comes to mind.'



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Overview



We're keen to see you achieve all you can through education, as it provides the foundations for finding a higher-skilled job but, more than that, education helps build your overall knowledge, teaches you new skills and lets you meet

other like-minded people. If you are not in education or work then we will do everything in our power to change that, as you can't get through life doing nothing – plus, you'd be bored silly if you just stayed at home all day.

Croydon itself has a number of local colleges and other opportunities for studying. Croydon College, for example, not only runs further education courses, but also offers some higher education courses. You don't have to be academic and acing exams to get something out of education, and there are more than enough vocational courses available too – so whether you want to be a particle physicist or a construction worker, we're right behind you and we'll do our best to see you achieve your goal.

Personal Adviser Support

As ever, your friendly neighbourhood Personal Adviser will be your main supporter in finding a course of education or training, or indeed being there to advise you if you're already doing it.

But what exactly can they help you with? Here's an overview:

- ✓ **Signposting** you to education and training opportunities that match your interests.
- ✓ **Planning** your overall route from education to employment with you and assisting you in your applications for further or higher education where you need any help.
- ✓ **Attending parents' evenings and college/university open days** with you so your Personal Adviser stays an active participant in your educational progress.
- ✓ **Liaising with college/university tutors** to provide more joined-up support to you while you are on a course of further or higher education.

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

If you're 16, 17 or 18 you can expect to have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). A PEP is a good opportunity for your Personal Adviser and your college or 6th form tutor to meet to discuss and review your academic progress and identify any other form of support you'd like and/or you are entitled to. The Virtual School will also track and monitor your attendance and progress to enable us to intervene and advocate when required.



Virtual School

Like many other local authorities, we have a Virtual School in our Education department. What is a Virtual School, you might say? Well, it sort of suggests some kind of big cyber classroom with computer-generated teachers. As badass as that would be, it's not the case.

The Virtual School is a small team of people who ensure you get all the help you want to make informed decisions about what you want to do next in education, taking into account your aspirations, skills and potential. 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 – so you'll never be short of help!

Local Support



Croydon College



Croydon is brimming with education opportunities and it would take quite a while to list them all, so we're going to give you some of the key possibilities that might interest you – however, please do speak to your Personal Adviser, as they will have plenty more!

First up, **Croydon Adult Learning and Training (CALAT)** is a local authority adult learning provider, delivering a wide range of academic, pre-vocational and vocational courses. Courses are offered in three main locations (Central Croydon, New Addington and Strand House in Thornton Heath); two of these centres are located in areas with pockets of high deprivation to reach priority groups. Targeted provision is also delivered at children's centres, schools and community venues to support access to learning and family learning. A key focus is to prepare learners for employment, through embedding employability skills across the curriculum. The service also works with businesses and employers to raise the skills level of employees.

CALAT currently delivers a programme of apprenticeships in:

- ✓ Business Administration
- ✓ Early Years
- ✓ Health and Social Care
- ✓ Teaching Assistants (this area is being developed further and the service is working in close collaboration with Croydon's Employment Pathways Team).

Another key education provider in the borough is **Croydon College**, which is situated close to East Croydon Station and takes in 8,000 students each year. It has an Ofsted rating of 'Good' and provides both college and university-level courses. The courses can be studied part-time, full-time or in the evenings and, as well as academic pursuits, there are vocational or industry- and work-based options too.

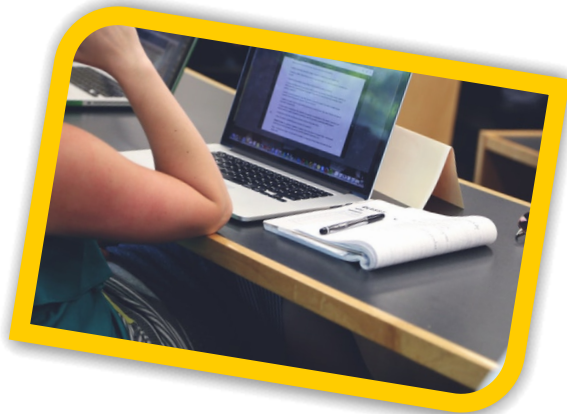


Qualifications on offer include:

- ✓ Skills for Life
- ✓ ESOL Certificate
- ✓ Foundation Learning
- ✓ BTEC Level 1, 2 and 3 Diplomas
- ✓ NVQ Level 2 and 3
- ✓ Intermediate, Advanced and Higher Apprenticeship
- ✓ Higher National Certificate (HNC)
- ✓ Foundation Degree (FdA)
- ✓ Bachelor's Degree (BA)

The college also offers an **Enrichment Programme**, which lets you get involved in a number of different activities both locally and

more widely. There is also the all-important **Employability Hub** which is there to help you take your next steps after getting a qualification. If you fancy support with job hunting, completing a CV, applying for university through UCAS or preparing for an interview, then all you need to do is ask.



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So, whether you want to liven up your language skills, beef up your bricklaying or hop into health and social care, Croydon College has something for you.

A huge campus isn't for everyone, and for smaller classes with more personalised support, you can't go wrong with **Sutton and District Training**, which has sites in Croydon, Sutton, Rosehill and Brighton and supports up to 250 learners at a time. Course delivery includes Construction, Health & Social Care, Customer Service, Employability, Floristry, Hairdressing, Beauty Therapy and English & Maths, and you can enrol at **any** time in the year.

The teaching is tailored to what works for you and the atmosphere is relaxed, with a focus on how training with Sutton and District can help you on your way to college, employment or an apprenticeship.





Saed's Story...

Saed makes progress with his talking therapy and returns to regularly attending college. At the age of 20, he finishes his Access to University – Nursing course at Croydon College and tells his Personal Adviser, 'I want to apply to university to do BSC(Hons) Adult Nursing!'

He and his worker sit down together and make an application through UCAS to various universities. Come March, Saed receives a reply from the first: it's a no. Then the second: it's a no. This isn't looking good. But then, his first choice university, Kingston, gets back to him...it's a yes!

The summer seems to last forever.

'You'll live with other students when you're there,' his Personal Adviser tells him, 'in student halls. Because you're a care leaver, you'll be able to stay there all year long – and they'll give you a Care Leavers' Bursary each year, which is pretty sweet. That should make money less of a worry and let you get on with the important stuff: studying!'

September comes and Saed packs his bags. He's gotten on well with his housemates over the last few years, but it's time to move on with his life and university is a dream come true.

He goes down with a college friend who has a car and they help him settle in.

The campus is big. There are lots of new faces. But Saed feels right at home already.

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It's two weeks until Saed's 25th birthday and the end of his Leaving Care journey. His career is wonderful, he feels happy, his relationship is going well and he's even getting on with his partner's daughter!

He thinks of all he has been through – both the good and the bad – and wonders what his workers have made of it, over the years. He sits down and sends an email to Croydon's Data Protection team with the following message: I want to access my file.

He receives the files a few weeks later and starts reading them, finding the information he most wanted: how he seemed when he first entered the UK. Reading the Social Worker's notes, he realises that he was only a boy – scared and alone. Blaming himself for leaving Afghanistan behind suddenly doesn't seem the crime he had believed it was in his own mind.

'I suppose this is goodbye,' Saed says, two days before his birthday.

'You're always welcome here,' his Personal Adviser replies. 'Don't forget that, 'cos it isn't goodbye.'

Later that evening, he receives a call: it's the Red Cross, and they've made contact with his mum. Can he come in to Wimbledon tomorrow to speak to her?

He hardly sleeps that night. And when tomorrow comes and the phone is held out to him, he shakes, but puts the phone to his ear.

'S-Saed? Tell me everything...'

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