

Everyday is different

A Personal Advisor (PA) supports young people who have been in care, helping them become more independent as they transition into adulthood. Under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, all eligible care leavers are entitled to a PA, who provides guidance, support, and companionship. The PA helps them navigate the shift from being under social work care to living independently.

The following information has been written by PA's and young people to help gain a greater understanding of the role and their importance within Children and Families and Families First.

"We can begin working with a young person from 16 and we are there to really help the young person navigate the transition from being a looked after child and having a social worker in their lives to formally leaving care. Very often we are one of the only people providing positive support, guidance and befriending provision for the young person. We really are the young persons Corporate Parent. We can be a positive role model, the person who helps them celebrate, off load to or just act as a sounding board when things aren't going so well.

As a PA we offer young people very practical help with everyday tasks, like attending court, medical appointments, or moving homes. We also provide emotional support, help the young person celebrate their achievements, and we set boundaries together to help the young person stay on track with their goals. We aim to be that positive role model and advocate for care leavers, who offers guidance while encouraging them to take responsibility for their lives.

When young people get into difficulties we will support them through whatever issues their facing. We will attend court or visit them in prison, we move their furniture when they've been evicted or moving to a refuge, we remind them or go with them to medical appointments, we put in those firm boundaries and remind the young person of their responsibilities, their ambitions and their goals in life. Above all we will advocate for them wherever necessary.

Our greatest challenge currently is the lack of suitable housing available for young people. The young person gets one offer and if this is declined their application is closed. There is such delays in getting things processed and they only get one chance.

Working to support a young people who is deemed to be Intentionally homeless is so hard. The decisions are so hard to challenge.

There is a complete lack of accommodation for those young people at university and where can they go during holidays and break times. They may not have family or friends to live with and this becomes a real challenge.

Where a young person has rent arrears and property damages, they may be evicted. This can be so difficult to advocate for.

Supported accommodation can be good but it comes with a very high rent which isn't affordable for young people who are working

However there are positives. Priority is given to young people aged under 21. You don't need a 'local connection' as a care leaver anymore to apply for housing local to where you want to live.

We have increased our Supported lodgings and staying put provisions. These are more homely environment and can give the young person consistency, care. This might enable the young person to move on at the right time for them rather than just turning 18.

Working alongside the House Project young people get to complete a 6 month course and learn independent skills which are AQA accredited. They get to work with external agencies to build networks and independent resilience. They receive a psychological assessment to support them on extending their strengths and recognising their areas for development.

Their utility bills are paid until 6 weeks after they turn 18. They have fun times too.

Relationships are key. The PA is a source of honest, impartial advice and signposting when outside of our remit. They are not the decision maker and definitely not a rescuer. They are definitely not a Personal Assistant to the young person.

It can take a really long time to build a young persons trust, overcome language barriers or their acceptance of help and support. The transition from foster care to moving into independence comes easier to some young people than others so this can take time and perseverance and lots of patience. We recognise that building trust can take time, especially since many young people have experienced trauma. By maintaining clear boundaries and encouraging independence, we work together to ensure the young person doesn't become too dependent on our support. We want to support young people to make those connections that they might need in the future and to know how to access the resources and services they need.

A recent quote from a young person was 'My life would be a mess without you!'. This can be hard to hear but also balancing this with your professional conduct to ensure we maintain a positive relationship with the young person whilst not building or transferring dependence onto the PA is a tricky challenge. We work in a trauma informed way and recognise attachment difficulties may lend itself to over dependence or fluctuating levels of engagement. Therefore having clear expectations and boundaries between the young person and the PA is crucial. We endeavour to motivate young people all the time to take accountability and responsibility for their lives. Motivating them to having a positive future whilst working through the trauma of their past.

On the positive side, we love taking young people to their Halls of residence for their induction at University and getting them set up in their new home. Where young people are given a property and tenancy, helping them furnish and equip them for their own home is fabulous. When we take young people for their driving test and they pass, we get to celebrate with them. Every year we make sure we send young people a birthday card and even take them some cake. For some young people we work with, this is their only visit and

card on their special day. Our events for care leavers are crucial to help them celebrate together and share where they currently are with life's conundrums. Our Care Leaver forum also gives young people a real voice in making a difference. These activities stop our young people from feeling isolated or different to peers and gives them a different kind of community to belong to.

Despite the challenges, like limited housing options and high living costs, we continue to advocate for care leavers. Our goal is to guide young people towards a stable, independent future while addressing any emotional or practical needs along the way.

We also get involved in organising activities, special events, or drop-in sessions to reduce isolation and create a sense of community. For some young people we really are their only family and their only support links and networks. We never forget that the role of the PA is endless we are the young persons Corporate Parent.

We help and support young people to move towards independence by the age of 25

We run a daily duty system for young people

We have a dedicated facebook page for young people to share their stories

We now offer the 'always here' duty support for any care experienced young person (over 25)

We have a care leaver forum

We arrange:	We help and guide on:	We continue:
Education, training and employment including Driving lessons	Making appointments	Case summaries to evidence progress
Setting up home allowances and organising young people to order furniture	Universal Credit support and applications, Benefit claims, Council Tax	The young person's journey/their chronology
E-Visas & travel documents& Passports	Budgeting Plans Accessing Foodbank Charity applications	Where suitable, contact with family
Pathway Plan reviews which are a continuation of the AAMRs for consistency for the young people	We can fund gym membership to promote emotional and physical well being	Encourage Family Network meetings and Lifelong Links

Support letters for the young people to access education, housing,	Pregnancy and sexual health	Liaise with key agencies and advocate for young people
Special events for young people to enable them to celebrate Christmas, Eid and other religious festivals.	Careers – through weekly drop ins in key areas Interview support College applications	Work with young people and support them when they want to access their social care records
Drop in sessions, both social (chill; n grill) and groups with a purpose like careers or housing	Home Office interviews	Our responsibility to continue to safeguard our care experienced young people is crucial
Medical appointments	Clothing assistance	
Direct referral for substance misuse interventions & Smoking cessation		