

Southampton City Council

Care Leavers offer

What is a Care Leavers offer?

This leaflet is to tell you about the support that Southampton City Council has in place for you as you become a care leaver. This is about the help and guidance you can expect to receive from the Pathways Team and the rest of Southampton City Council. This is called our Care Leavers Offer.

Why is there a Care Leavers Offer?

This is because we know that leaving care can be a difficult time for some of our young people, and we want you to know that we still want to support you and care about what happens next. We want you to feel safe supported and know that you can still turn to us to advise and help you when you need. You are leaving care, but this does not mean that we are leaving you!

Who has been involved in creating this offer?

This care leavers offer has been discussed at all levels of Southampton City Council, and has included not only Social Care, but the Councillors who have supported exemption from Council Tax for Care Leavers, our colleagues in the financial service part of the council, and those colleagues who are involved in the support of our young people to develop aspirations and careers.

Most Importantly, our Care Leavers Forum, alongside our participation worker have also been exceptionally helpful in looking at this offer, advising us as a service on using this question and answer format, and suggesting things that we could also look at to increase this offer in the future.

Children's Services are very grateful to our Care Leavers who took the time and effort to engage in this work with the Service Manager responsible for Looked After Children and Care Leaving Services, and their helpful extra suggestions will be part of ongoing consideration.

What is the Care Leavers Forum?

The Care Leavers Forum is a group of Care Leavers from Southampton, who help Children's Social Care think about what it is like to have been a Child in Care, and to be a Care Leaver now, so that they can help us develop their service to meet the needs of our care leavers.

We would like as many of our care leavers as possible to be part of this forum and help us understand from you what will make your service the best it can be for all care leavers. To get involved please contact Sallie White on 023 8083 2062, sallie.white@southampton.gov.uk.

How do I know if I am a care leaver?

The Law can be a little complicated in this area, and so there are some explanations below about the different care leavers' statuses. If you have any questions about whether you are entitled to a service as a care leaver then please contact Children's Services on 023 8083 3336

- **Eligible child** is a child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who is still being looked after by Children's Services.
- **Relevant child** is a child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who has left care. This also includes young people who were detained (e.g. in custody or hospital) when they turned 16, and who were looked after immediately before being detained
- **Former relevant child** is a young person over 18 who was previously 'eligible' or 'relevant'. Children's Services must support this group until aged 21, or longer if they are in education or training
- **Qualifying child** is any young person aged 16 - 21 who left care on or after their 16th birthday, but have been in care for **less** than 13 weeks since their 14th birthday; or were a "relevant," young person who has returned home for six months or more.
- **Former relevant child pursuing education** is any former relevant child stopped being worked with by Children's Services, for any reason. If children's services are informed that they're planning to continue education or training they can ask the council for support. If eligible, any help would last until their 25th birthday
- **Extension to 25 years old** - If you are under 25 year old and previously open to the Pathways Team, and fit with any of the above categories, then under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 you are entitled to return to as for support and advice.

To be able to get all the support set out in this leaflet, you must be or have been a relevant or a former relevant child/young person. If you are not sure whether you are entitled to support, then ask your Personal Adviser, or phone Pathways duty team to ask for advice. This leaflet is available online at www.southampton.gov.uk/careleavers.

Your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will talk with you about the information in this leaflet, and if there is anything else you would like us to do to make sure that you understand it please let us know.

I think I am a "Qualifying Care Leaver," what does this mean for me?

To be a Qualifying Care Leaver a young person must have been

- In care on their 16th birthday
- Left Care on or after their 16th birthday, but were in care for less than 13 weeks since their 14th birthday.
- Be a relevant Care Leaver who has returned home for 6 months or more.

The good news is that we are still able to provide you with a service, and want to do so. The minimum level of service you can expect is listed below.

- We will keep in touch with you
- Give you advice and support
- Provide or pay for accommodation during college or university holidays if you are studying full-time away from home, up to the age of 25

Children Social Care **MAY** also

- Support you with accommodation in exceptional circumstances
- Support you by directly purchasing some things that you directly need, or in exceptional circumstances providing some financial support to meet your education or welfare needs
- Support with some expenses relating to education and training until the age of 25
- Contribute towards some living expenses related to your education and training.

What does the Law say about my rights?

From the age of 18 to 21 years we must provide you with a Personal Adviser, who is there to support and guide you as you leave care. This can be about lots of things, examples are around health, further or higher education or finding employment, housing, relationships etc. This support will be to help you live, or prepare to live independently, and will be recorded on a Pathway Plan, that should be made with you, which helps guide what we and you need to do to support you with what you want to achieve. We have to do this until you are 21 years old, but we would like to do so for longer (see below).

What is a Pathway Plan?

A Pathway plan is written by the local authority after consultation with you and important people in your life. It sets out your needs, views and future goals, and identifies exactly what support you will receive from us. And what we and you need to do to help achieve these. We will review your pathway plan with you regularly so that it is kept up-to-date.

What if I want support or a Pathway Plan after I turn 21?

This is not a problem! Since the Children & Social Work Act 2017, you have the right to a Pathway Planning service and a Personal Advisor from the service or a Personal Adviser up to the age of 25, whether you are in Higher Education or not. We will also advise you if at the age of 21, we think it would help if we remain involved to support you, however this will be your choice. More information about this can be found on our website at www.southampton.gov.uk/careleavers. You may only want a short period of support about one thing, or a fully Pathway

Planning Service. That is ok as you are in control of this. We are here to support you.

We will try to enable you to keep the same Personal Adviser, though this will not always be possible. The amount of support that you receive from your Personal Adviser will depend on what you want and your circumstances.

Importantly, even if you have decided to stop working with us, you have the option to come back to us for help and support until the age of 25.

To be clear, we do not want you to leave us at 21, we want you to stay and have our help until you feel ready to leave. This means that we will not stop working with you unless you ask us to do so. However, remember if you do ask us to, you can still come back until you are 25!

I have some extra things that affect me happening for me in my life, can you help?

Yes. Whilst there are lots of things that we would like to support you with to help with day to day living, there are some other areas that we would want to offer you extra support and attention with to help you. These will include

- Any support you may have because of any special educational needs or disability
- If you have been an unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child, and your immigration status is unclear
- You are in or are leaving custody
- You are going through a difficult time in your personal life
- You are a young parent and may need some advice to give your child the best start possible

What about my wishes and views?

It is very important that we listen to you, your wishes, hopes and what you tell us about your needs. You have the absolute right to be involved in all decision about your leaving care plans, and importantly you have the right to an advocate if you want help to question the support that we are offering or you have received.

Independent advocates can inform you about your rights and help you to be heard in meetings. They are separate from Children's Services.

You have a right to see the information we keep about you, including the files and records written about you when you were in care, if you would like to know more about this then please discuss this with your Personal Adviser.

Advice on advocacy services and how to contact them is found at the end of this document.

What if I want to leave care before turning 18?

You have the right to go to Court to ask for your Care Order to be ended after you turn 16. However, we will normally encourage you to stay in care until you are 18. Most young people would still live at home with their families at this age.

If you choose to leave care before age 18, the law says we must provide you with suitable accommodation.

What support is there to help me to engage in education, employment or training?

We want to make sure every young person leaving our care has the support they need to achieve their goals and aspirations. If they are not sure what they want to do with their life, then we are also able to help provide and give them advice on this.

The law says we must provide you with assistance with expenses linked with employment, education and training. In particular:

- We will provide you with a Higher Education (HE) bursary of £2000 if you go to University.
- We will help source accommodation for you in the university holidays, or support you to do this if you prefer, if your term time accommodation is not available.

There is other information about what services we can provide to support you with this below.

What if I want to stay with my foster carer after the age of 18?

- If this is what you and your foster carer(s) want, we will support you to remain with your foster carers under what is called a 'Staying Put' arrangement. This can last until you are aged 21. Please talk to your Social Worker or Personal Advisor about this, if you would like to consider this.

Who else can help me if I have a concern or a complaint about the service I have received or I am receiving?

Within Southampton City Council and partners

- Personal Advisors/Pathways telephone number/address
 - 02380915350
 - Church View
28-29 St Mary Street
Southampton
SO14 1AT
- Management team details
 - mary.hardy@southampton.gov.uk
 - spencer.peirce@southampton.gov.uk
 - toby.flight@southampton.gov.uk
- Service Manager for Looked After Children and Care Leaving Services
 - julian.watkins@southampton.gov.uk
- Complaints Service
 - customer.relations.team@southampton.gov.uk
 - https://www.southampton.gov.uk/images/children-and-families-complaint-policy-2018_tcm63-361791.pdf

- SCC Housing Advice number
 - Via the switchboard 023 8083 3000
- Care Leaver Employment worker contact details
 - Jon Martin
 - jon.martin@southampton.gov.uk
- Care Leavers Forum and Participation Team
 - Sallie White. 023 8083 2062
 - sallie.white@southampton.gov.uk.

Organisations outside of Southampton City Council who offer help and advice to care leavers

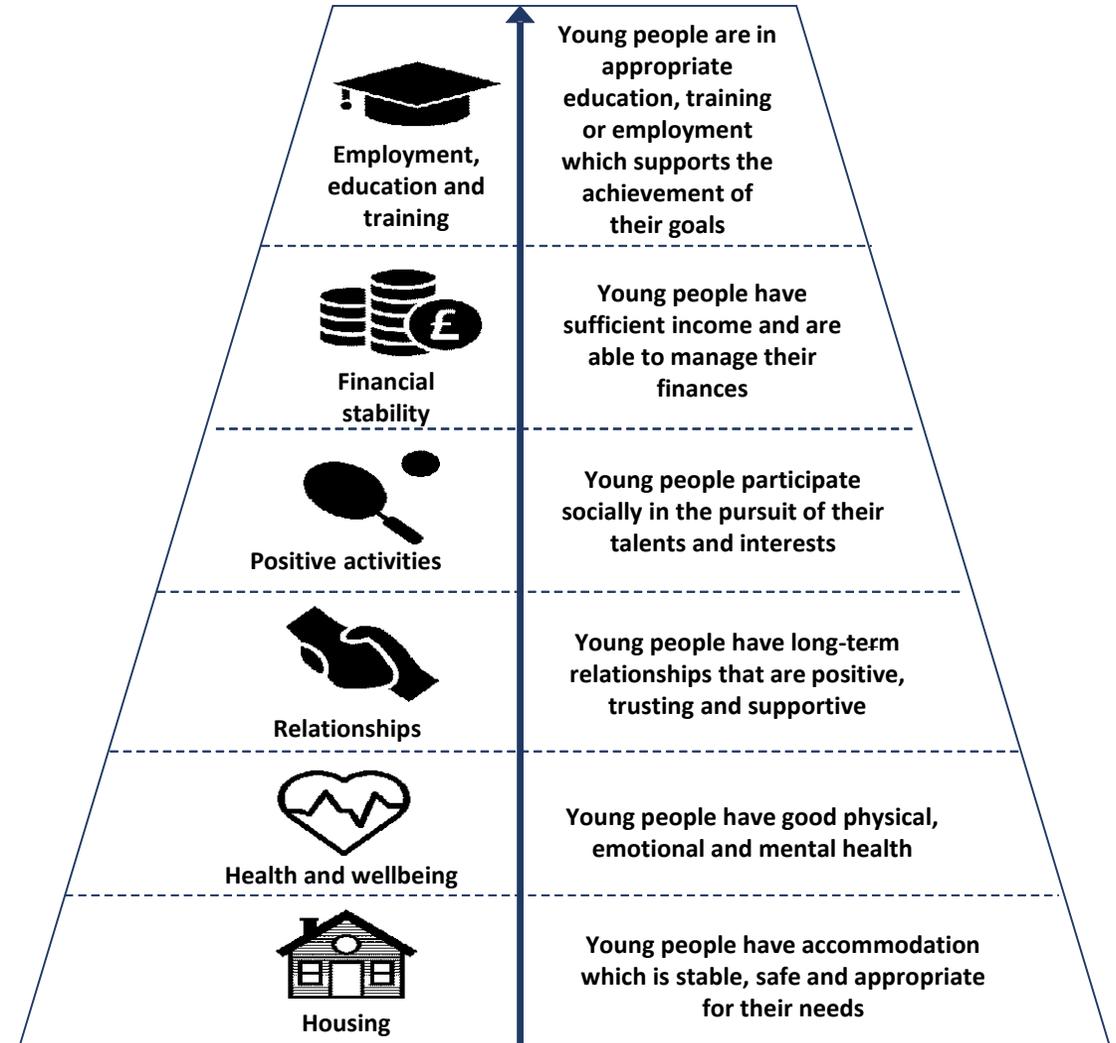
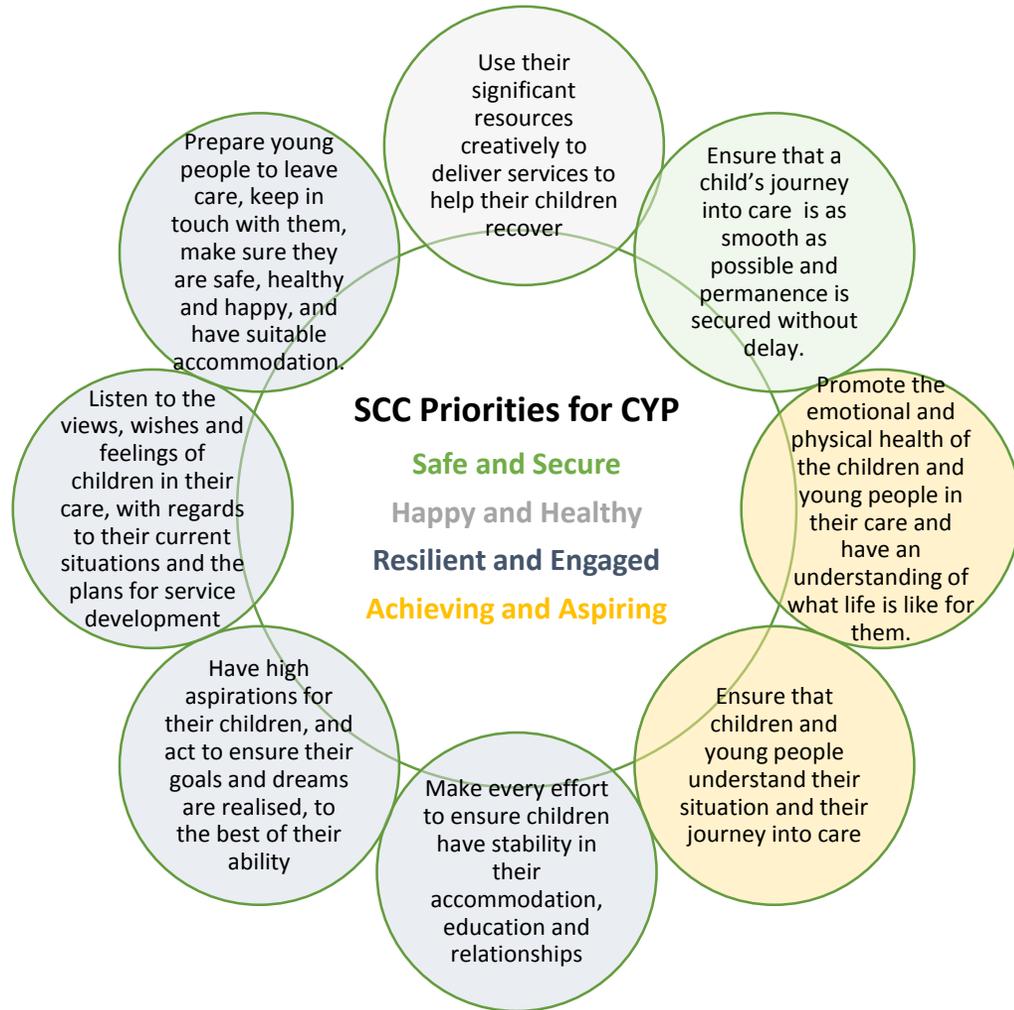
- No Limits – offer advice and advocacy to children in care and care leavers
 - enquiries@nolimitshelp.org.uk
 - 02380 2242324
- Children’s Commissioner’s Office
 - 08005280731 (Freephone number)
 - help.team@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk
- Coram Voice – can offer advice to children in care and care leavers about the service they are receiving.
 - coramvoice.org.uk
 - help@coramvoice.org.uk
 - 0808 800 5792

As a Relevant or Formally Relevant Care Leaver, what will you provide to support me with my Housing, Health and Well-being, Relationships, Positive Activities, Financial Stability, and Employment Education and Training needs?

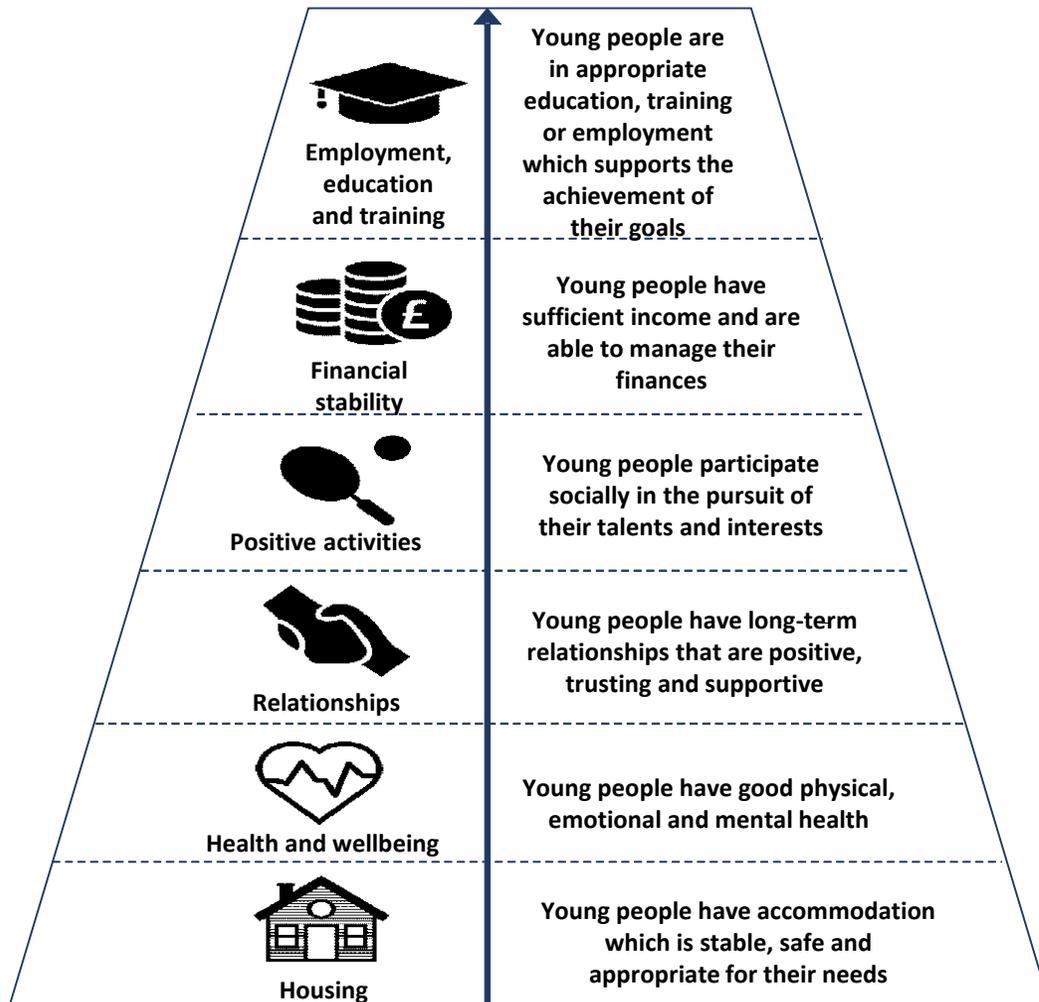
Please see below for what specific support we will give you in each of these areas.

The Southampton City Council Local Offer

Corporate Parents Should

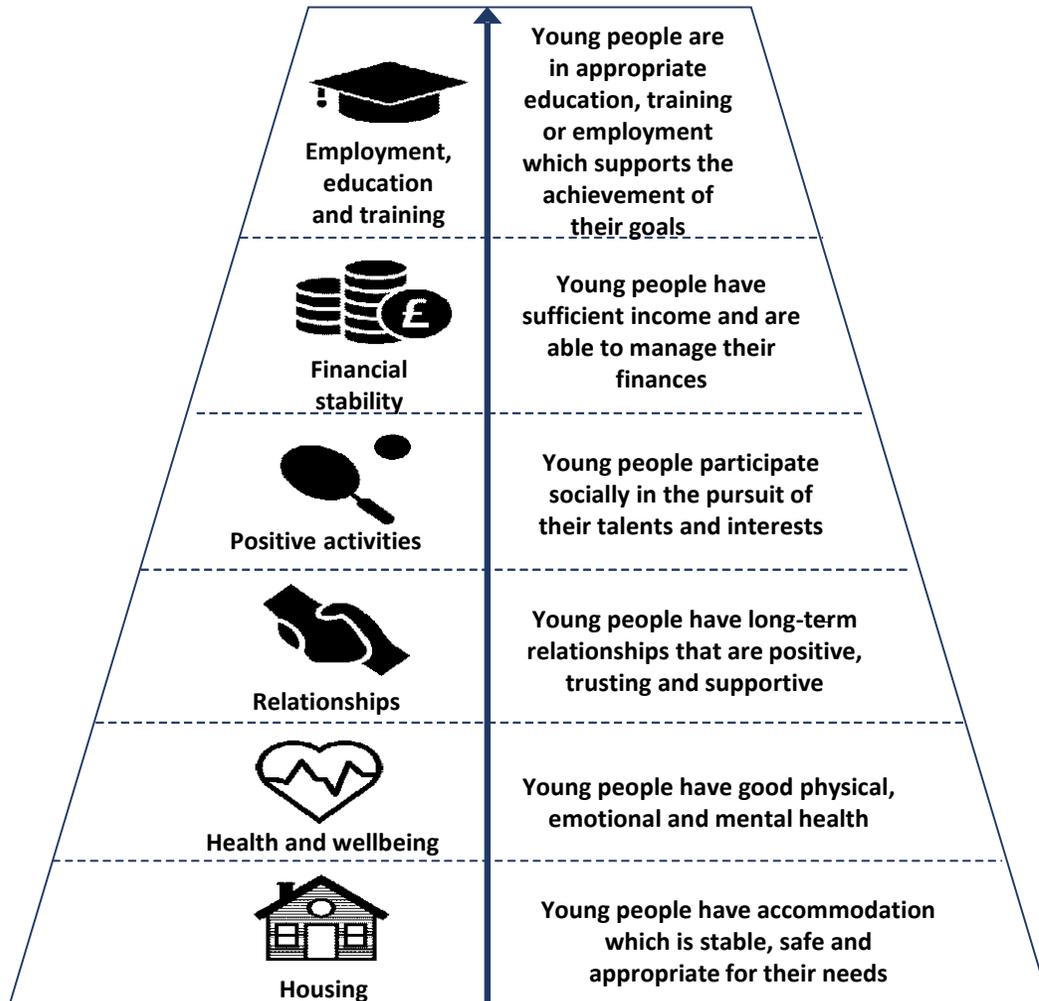


Housing



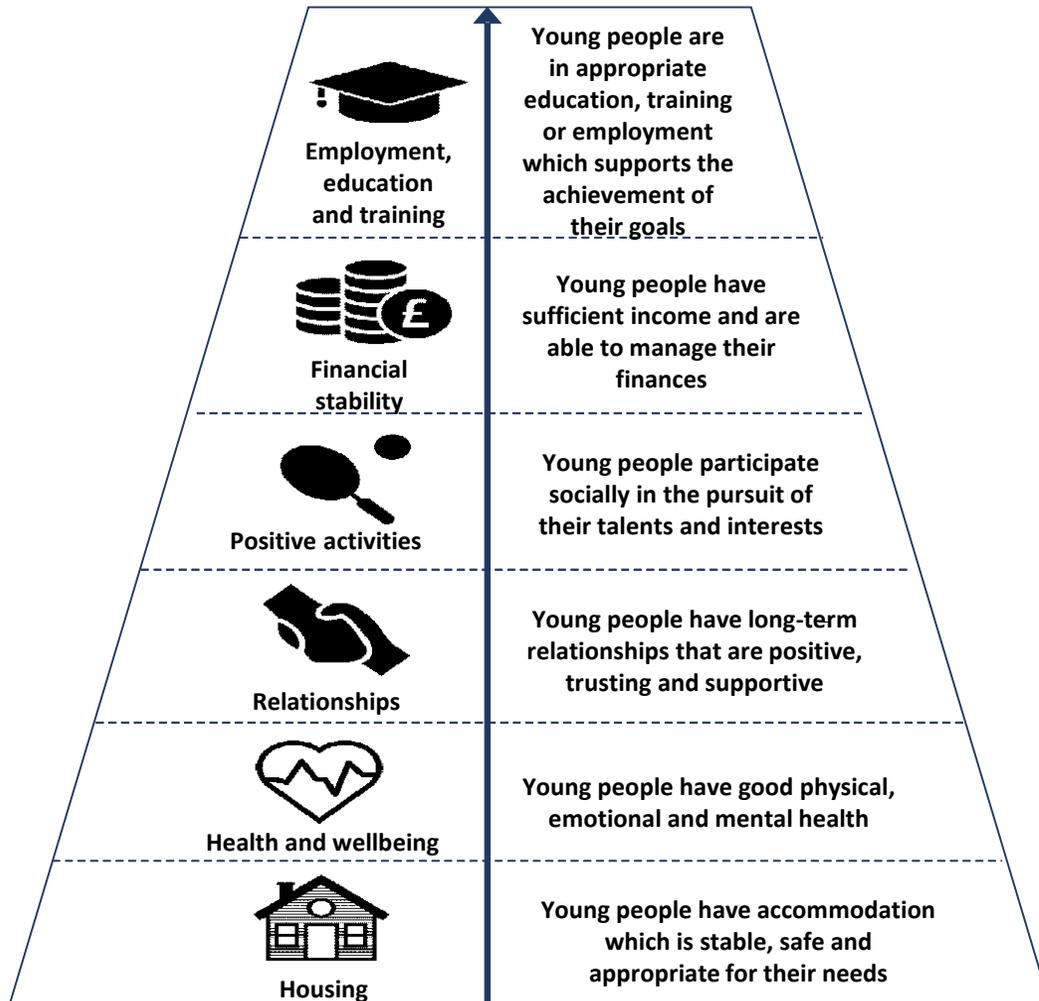
- We will help to stay with your carers for a while if you would like to after you turn 18
- We will meet with you to discuss your housing requirements and work with you to ensure that you are in suitable accommodation that is appropriate to your needs
- We will help you remain close to your networks even if this is outside of Southampton if you would like us to
- We will ensure that you are supported to claim any entitlements that you are eligible for to assist you with accommodation
- We will help you furnish your first home with your care leavers grant (£2000)
- We will help you with a handyman/woman if you need things putting up when you move in
- We will ensure that landlords do not exploit you and advocate for you if there are difficulties
- We will support you to attend college or university, housing issues should not prevent this
- We will give you advice and guidance on managing your budget
- We will exempt you from paying council tax in Southampton (from April 2019)
- We will ensure that you can come back to us on all of these areas until the age of 25

Health and Wellbeing



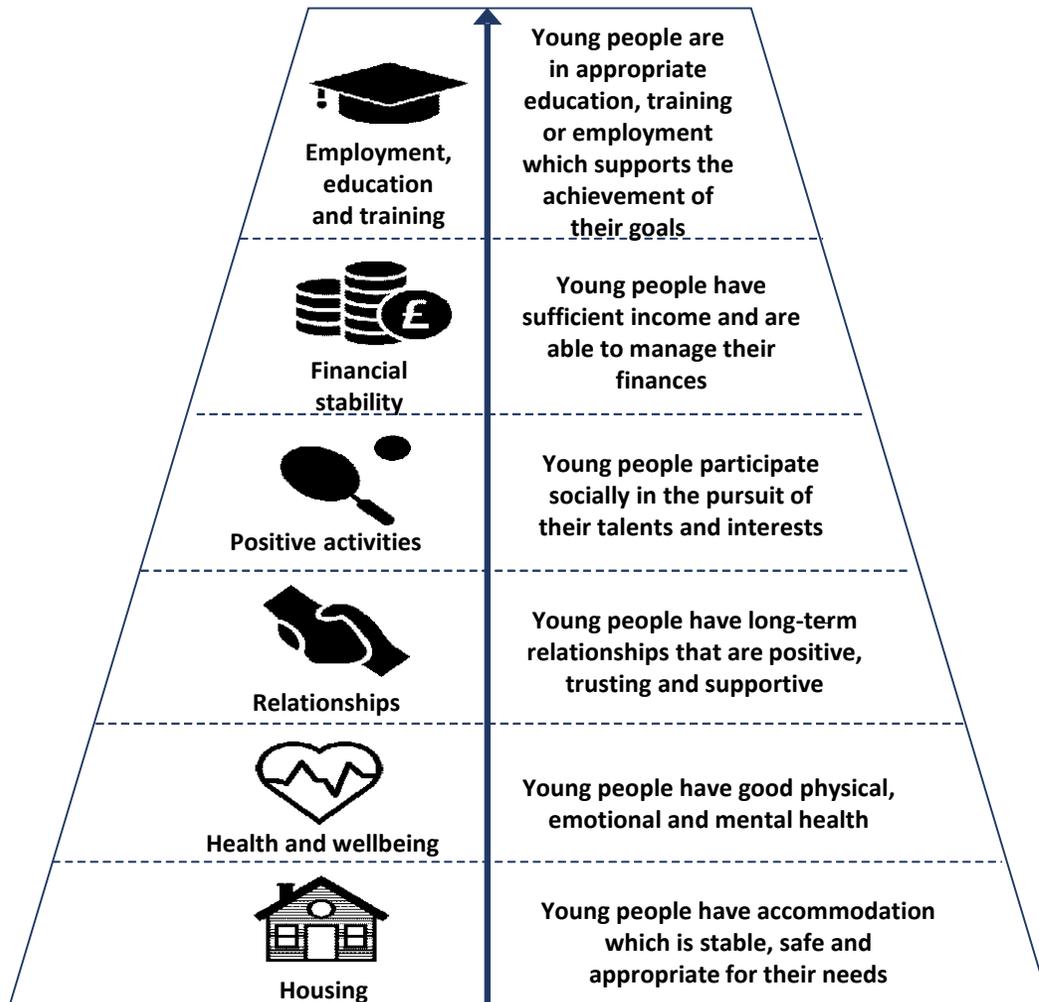
- We will help to ensure that you can gain access to your medical history
- We will help you with prescription costs if needed until the age of 21
- We will help you access specialist counselling or support if you would like us to
- We will ensure that you do not go hungry
- We will offer you support to learn how to make healthy meals on a budget
- We will be there emotionally when you need us to be – everyone needs this sometimes!
- We will visit you if we know that you are admitted to hospital and ensure that you have what you need
- We will help you to engage in healthy activities for the body or soul if you would like us to (see positive activities)
- We will offer you advice on all of these areas until, the age of 25

Relationships



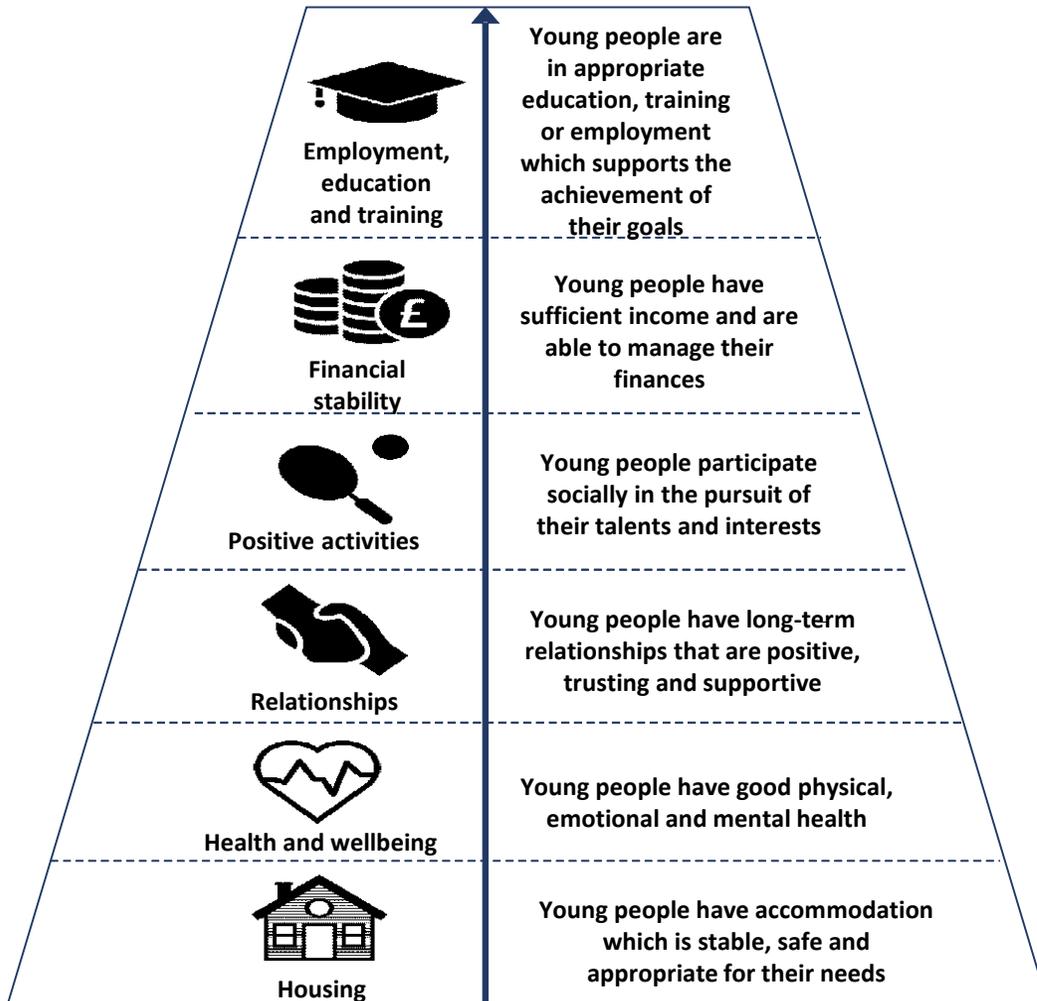
- We will help you to remain with your foster carers or near to your networks if out of Southampton as we know this may be important to you
- We will be around to support and advise you should you return to or want to have links to your birth family
- We will be there if you fall out with a partner and need someone to talk to
- We will help support you when you become a parent, and contribute to some of the essential items you will need
- We will help you with support from “Safe Families,” if you do not have a safe network to fall back on when you become a parent so someone else is there to help advise you or give you a break
- We want to help advise and protect you if you are being exploited or you are being abused in a relationship in anyway
- We will ensure that other agencies treat you with respect and will help you meet with them if you need us to
- We will advocate for you when you need us to, or help provide an independent advocate when you need one
- We will ensure that you can come back to us for advice on these areas until the age of 25

Positive activities



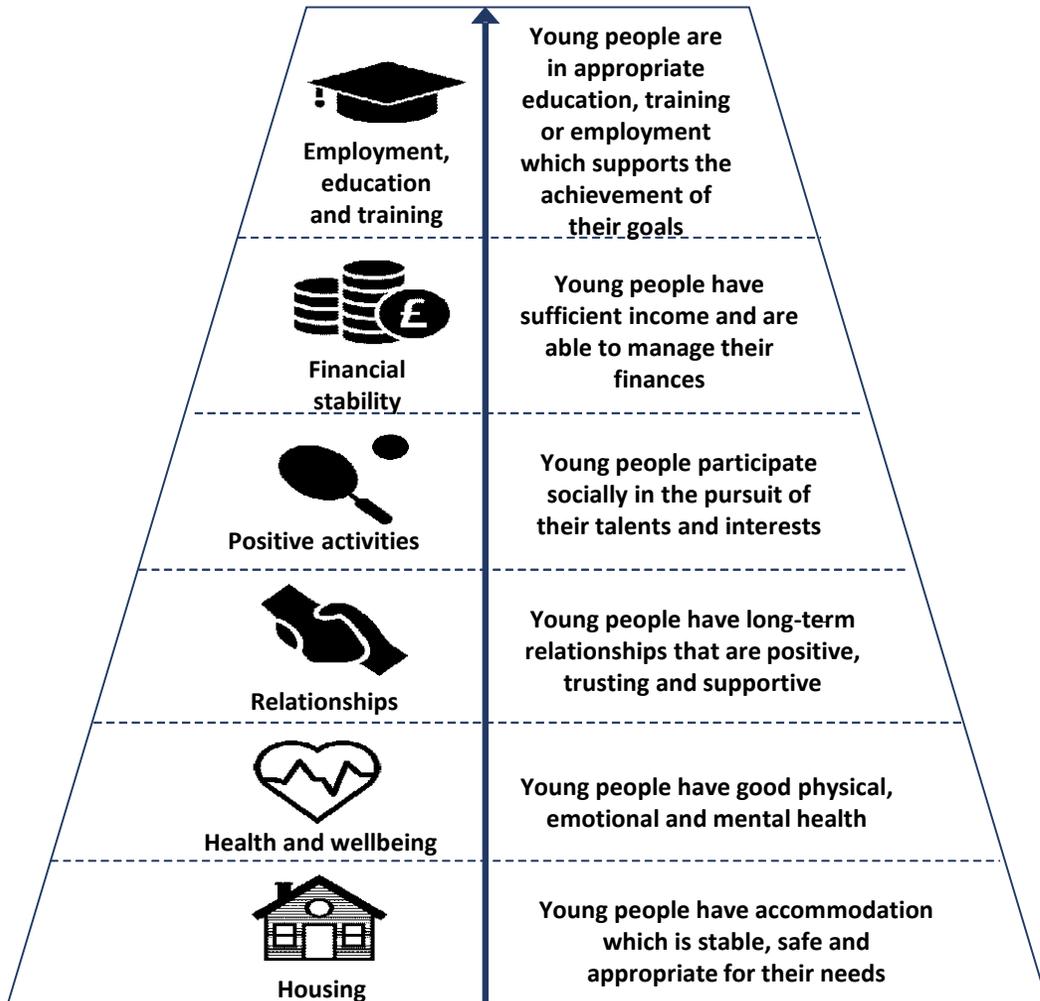
- We will pay £10 towards a recognised activity or hobby a fortnight until you are 21
- We will help you with any initial equipment you may need to pursue a hobby or sport until you are 21
- We will help ensure that you can get to your activity within Southampton until you are 21
- We will help you to attend parent and child groups until you are 25
- We will support you to attend a Care Leavers Forum to help us know how to support all our care leavers until you are 25
- We will ensure that you can come back to us for advice on all of these areas until the age of 25

Financial stability



- We will exempt you from paying council tax in Southampton until the age of 25 (from April 2019)
 - Please note you do not have to be open to Pathways between the ages of 21-25 to qualify for this exemption. You simply need to be a care leaver.
- We will help you open a bank account
- We will help you to obtain ID such as a driving licence or a passport
- We will offer you advice on budget or debt management
- We will help you to learn to cook healthily on a budget if this is needed
- We will provide you with a £2000 care leavers grant
- If you are not exempt from charges, we will pay for your prescriptions until the age of 21
- We will help you to find affordable housing
- We will ensure that you can come back to us for advice on these areas until the age of 25
- We will provide you with support in buying some essential items if you become a mother or father
- We will ensure that you can come back to us for advice on all of these offers until the age of 25

Employment education and training



- We will provide you with access to careers advice
- We will offer training on CV/Application writing and interview preparation
- We will advertise Southampton City Council apprenticeships to our Care Leavers first
- We will consider offering you one week paid work experience within the council to help you become work ready
- We will offer support to buy interview clothing
- We will offer support to purchase uniform or tools of the trade
- We can provide a bus pass in Southampton to help you get to and from work for the first month of employment until you are paid
- We will support you to attend college or university
- We will ensure that you can come back to us for advice on these areas until the age of 25