A YOUNG PERSONS GUIDE TO

LEAVING CARE

SUSU

STANDUP SPEAKUP

DEVON'S CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO OUR GUIDE TO LEAVING CARE

This document will tell you about the practical and financial support available to you as a care leaver in Devon. There is an appendix to this document which gives up to date information about how much money you may be entitled to from Devon County Council. You can use both of these documents to make sure that you are getting the support that you are eligible for.

As fellow care leavers, we know that moving on to independence is a big change and we are here to offer guidance and support to help this be as smooth as possible. We hope you find the content in here useful but if you need to know any more or about how you can get involved please just get in touch. If you have any suggestions to improve this guide please send these back to us.

If you need this document in an alternative format please just let us know and we will support you to access this document in a way that meets your needs.

Beth & Sam

01. Sam Heaton

02. Beth Wakefield

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

We want for our looked after children what any parent should want for their child; to feel loved and cared for. To be happy, able to achieve their potential and given the best chances in life. Too often this is not the case and we need to do everything in our power to make things better for the future.

We have also made a series of promises to our Children in Care in 'Our Pledge' and have adopted the Care Leaver's Charter.

These are important documents you may want to read and set out what you can expect from us. You can ask your worker or Personal Advisor about how you can get a copy or you can find them at

www.standupspeakup.org.uk

WHO WILL RECEIVE A SERVICE?

In order to understand the type of support that you will receive you will need to understand some key words that are used to describe each type of care leaver. The definitions of 'relevant', 'former relevant', 'eligible' and 'qualifying' young people are taken from the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

Below are explanations for each of these definitions

ELIGIBLE

A young person who is aged 16 or 17 years old who is currently in care and has been in care for more than 13 weeks since age 14. The 13 weeks does not have to be all in one go. ***(See page 23 for your entitlements)***

RELEVANT

A young person aged 16 or 17 years old who has left care but was previously eligible.

(See page 28 for your entitlements)

FORMER RELEVANT

A young person aged 18 years and over who was either eligible or relevant.

(See page 33 for your entitlements)

QUALIFYING

A young person who may be one of the following:

Has been privately fostered and also assessed as a child in need

Is aged 16-21 and was Looked After immediately before the making of a Special Guardianship Order

Is 16 or 17 years old and has spent **LESS THAN 13 WEEKS** in care since the age of 14 years old but includes at least 24 hours in care aged 16 or 17 and is not returning home to a parent or adult with Parental Responsibility

Has been successfully living at home for more than six months and was previously an 'eligible' or 'relevant' care leaver

Is aged 16 to 21 and was looked after in a series of pre planned 'Short Breaks'

This may still be a bit confusing for you to understand, so here are some useful links that you may find helpful to know what group you are in.

(See page 37 for your entitlements)

You can go to this website:
www.coramvoice.org.uk/young-peoples-zone/are-you-care-leaver

there is an easy to use step by step guide that will help you understand your status.

The Children's Commissioner has some really useful information explaining your rights and entitlements depending of your status here:

www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/get-advice/questions/what-are-my-rights-and-entitlements-care-leaver

If you need more information to help understand what some of these key words mean you can go to **www.standupspeakup.org.uk/what-does-it-mean/**

where we have explanations for all the terms used in detail.

PERSONAL ADVISOR WHO ARE THEY? WHAT DO THEY DO?

When you become 16 you will get a Personal Advisor, also known as a PA, as well as having your social worker.

Your PA is there to support you as you move to adulthood and independence. They can help you to access specialist support when you need it, including counselling, advice on issues such as drugs and alcohol, sexual health, benefits, financial support and housing options.

Once you turn 18 your social worker will stop working with you and your PA will become your main worker, giving you support until you turn 21 or up to 25 if you are in full time education or training.

A PA is there to help support you on your journey into independence. Here are some of the important things that your personal advisor will be able to help you with:

- Helping you look at your housing options
- Attending college and university open days and interviews with you
- Helping you to pursue interests and hobbies
- Helping with budgeting, money matters and making benefit claims
- Agreeing how much and what type of support you think you'll need

They will keep in touch with you regularly, this will be at least once every two months once you are 18 years old. You can contact them at any time between these visits.

If you would like any more information about what to expect from your PA you can use these helpful links:

www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/pages/whats-a-personal-advisor.html

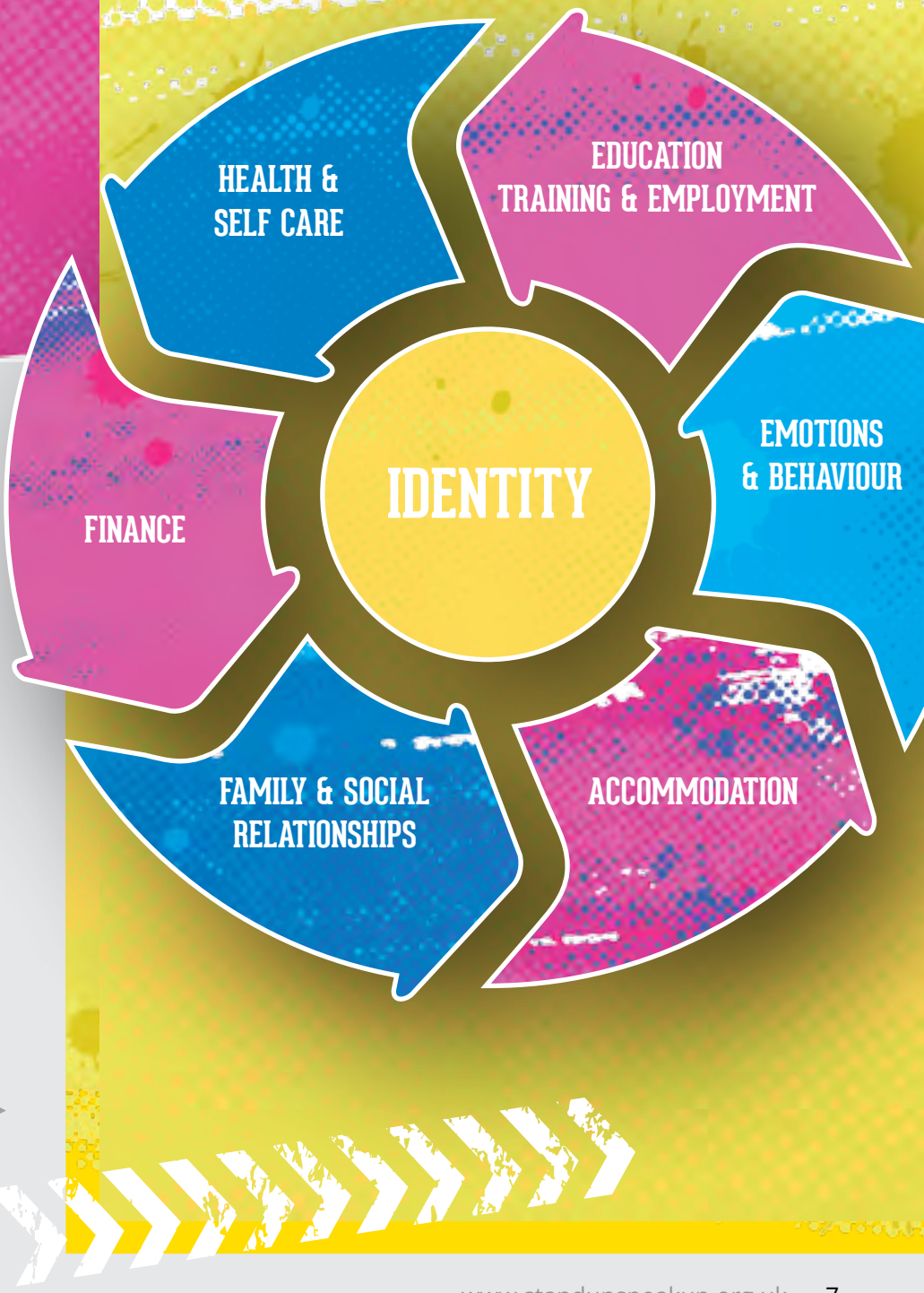
www.anationalvoice.org/info/rights/children-leaving-care-act

PATHWAY PLAN

By the time you are 16 your care plans will stop and a pathway plan will take its place.

This is a document that is written by you and your social worker or PA that you will review and refresh every six months. The pathway plan looks at all of your dreams and goals for now and the future and helps figure out what is needed to help you achieve them.

We will work with you so that you can lead the development of your plan.



WHO ELSE MIGHT BE INVOLVED IN MY PLAN?

With your agreement, we will ask the views of key agencies when completing your Plan. This may include Housing, Education, Training and Employment providers, Benefits, Health Services, the Youth Offending Service and Youth Services to ensure we all work together to provide you with clear and consistent advice and support.

This diagram shows you how the different elements of your Pathway Plan fit together.

POPP

PERSONAL OCCUPATION PROGRESSION PLAN

A POPP will also be part of your Pathway Plan and will replace your PEP*. Your POPP brings together all of your educational and career needs. The POPP can be filled out by you or you can ask your social worker or PA for help.

Together we will review this over time as you may not be certain about what you would like to do in your future.

You will review your POPP regularly and you can change it if you want to pursue something else.

What about changes to my plan?

Your plans will be updated and reviewed at least every 6 months or within a month of any important change, such as moving house or school or college. If you are still in care and under 18 these plans will be reviewed by your Independent Reviewing Officer*.

If you are over 18 your plans will be reviewed by your Personal Advisor. Speak to either of them if you want to make a change.

* A PEP is a Personal Education Plan. It's part of the care plan which details your educational needs and support.

An Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is the person who manages your care. They chair review meetings and make sure that social workers are doing what they should be for young people in care

HOW LONG WILL I RECEIVE A SERVICE FOR?

If you are not in education or training, then support will usually stop around your 21st birthday.

However, if you are in education or training this will be until your 25th birthday, this includes if you are receiving training whilst you work i.e. apprenticeships. If you have significant needs you may continue to receive services as an adult. Your social worker or PA will discuss this with you before your birthday to make sure you are fully aware of your options, any plans and what services you will receive.

Your personal advisor will arrange a final meeting with you to go through any other services you might be able to get help from.

If, before your 25th birthday you would like to return to education or training you can come back to Devon by contacting your personal advisor or the nearest office and ask for support.

If you need help after the age of 21, get in touch and we will do our best to support you.

WHERE WILL I LIVE?

We have developed a range of options for young people leaving our care which have been put together under a joint agreement with housing and other agencies. You will want and need a planned move toward independence which includes ongoing support and access to safe, secure and appropriate accommodation.

It will be for you to work with your PA to decide what choices you have and what level of support you want and need. Some care leavers live in individual flats or houses and want very limited support.

With good planning, preparation and support you will be able to gain a safe home in which to live

STAYING PUT WITH YOUR FOSTER CARER

SUPPORTED HOUSING

DEVON YOUNG PEOPLE ACCOMMODATION SERVICE (DYPAS)

DEVON HOME CHOICE LETTINGS

PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

OTHER PROVIDERS

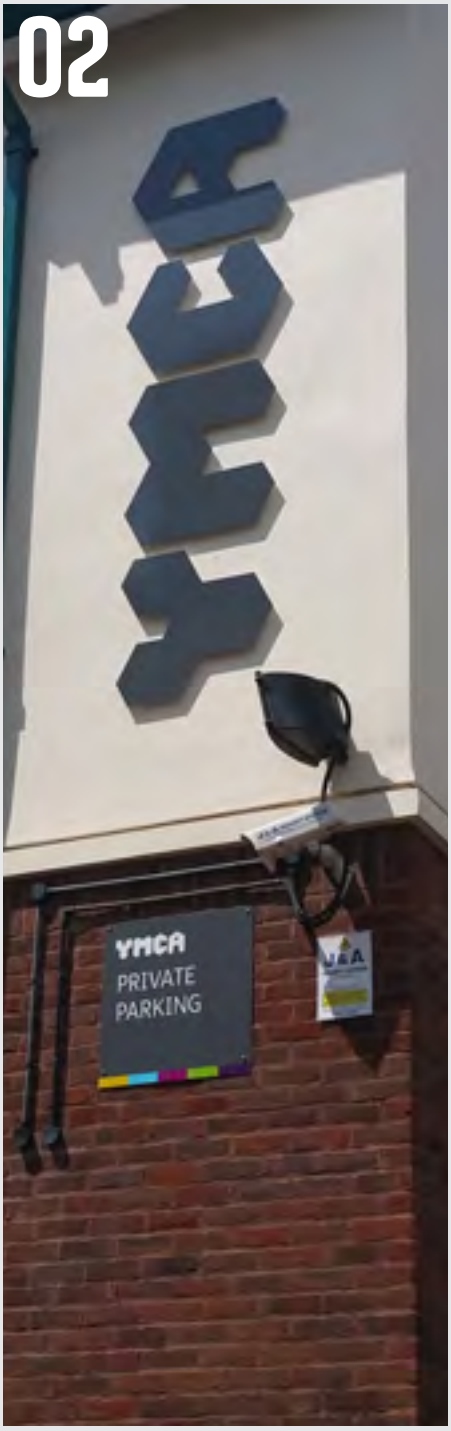
TYPES OF ACCOMMODATION

There are lots of options for housing and your PA will be able to go through these with you as some options are only in specific areas. Your PA will support you in identifying what best will suit your needs.

TYPES OF ACCOMMODATION

STAYING PUT

You may not feel ready to move out on your own yet and it may be possible for you to stay with your foster carers. This is dependent on you and your carers wanting to continue this placement. If you are working and earning more than £100 per week you will have to pay 30% of your earnings to your carer as 'rent'. This is to help you to learn how to manage your money and budget when you leave the staying put arrangement.



SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

These are normally small flats in a bigger building with staff on site. They are able to offer you support if and when you need it. You can claim benefits while you live there but you must pay any service charges or bills and cater for yourself. You will eventually move on from these flats but not until you, the staff there and your PA think you are ready to take the next step.

PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

There are different types of tenancy that may be offered to you but the most likely is an 'assured shorthold tenancy' (this will usually last for 6 months). Normally the landlord or estate agent want one month's rent and deposit in advance. We may be able to help you with the cost of the deposit and pay your first month's rent.

If you rent privately, you will also need to think about furniture if the accommodation is unfurnished. Speak to your PA as we may be able to help you with some additional items for your home.

We can also act as a guarantor depending on your individual circumstances.

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GUARANTOR SCHEME

Sometimes when you rent privately you need a guarantor. A guarantor is someone who vouches for you legally and agrees to be responsible for your rental costs if you fail to make payments. If you need a guarantor we can undertake an assessment to see if you can cope both financially and emotionally and be responsible for your own accommodation. If the assessment advises that you are ready and able, Devon County Council as your corporate parent will act as guarantor.

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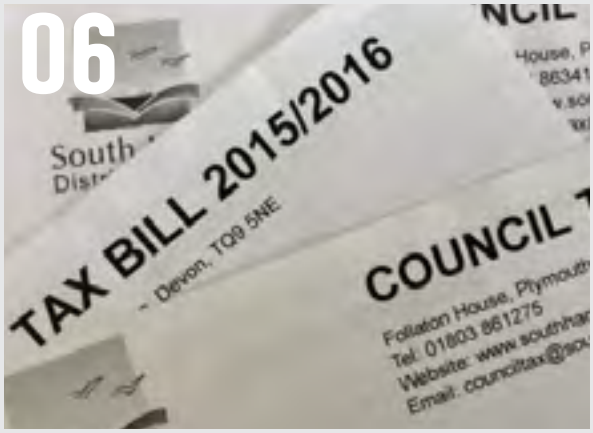
SOCIAL HOUSING

Social housing can be applied for through either a housing association or the District Council where you live. Your PA will support you in making an application for housing and show that you are in 'need'.

If you would like some more information please ask your PA or follow the link below:

www.citizensinformation.ie/en/housing/local_authority_and_social_housing/applying_for_local_authority_housing.html



06

COUNCIL TAX

If you are over 18 and live in privately rented accommodation you will need to pay council tax. You may be entitled to some exemptions if you are in education (over 21 hours per week) or are unemployed.

You can use this link to get further information:

www.gov.uk/council-tax/working-out-your-council-tax

SETTING UP HOME

If you are leaving your supported lodgings or a foster carers' house to move into your own accommodation you are entitled to a Care Leavers Grant.

You can talk to your PA about accessing this and they can support you to buy the things you need for your new home. Alternatively please see the appendix.

WHAT IF I BECOME HOMELESS?

We must provide accommodation for you up to the age of 18.

Your local housing department should help you to find a place to live after you turn 18 and your PA will support you to do this. You will automatically be classed as a 'priority need' until your 21st birthday as a care leaver. If the council are satisfied that you are definitely homeless, they will check to make sure you are not intentionally homeless.

Being 'intentionally homeless' means that you are homeless because you left accommodation that you could have stayed in but chose not to. To be classed as intentionally homeless the council will have to prove this and that:

- You did, or failed to do, something that caused you to leave your home
- What you did, or failed to do, was deliberate or you knew what was happening
- It was reasonable for you to continue living in your accommodation

The council still have to house you in the short term if you have made yourself intentionally homeless, this may not be settled accommodation and there will be little choice available. We advise that you put your name on the housing register as soon as possible .

We aim to never place you in a bed and breakfast but in emergencies this might happen. If this does happen then it will be for the shortest time possible whilst we find you suitable accommodation.

If you have been told you made yourself intentionally homeless you can appeal this decision. Speak to your PA for advice and support as soon as you can.

More information about 'intentional homelessness' can be found through Shelter's website: http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/homelessness/help_from_the_council_when_homeless/intentional_homelessness

BENEFITS INFORMATION

Additional information about the benefits that care leavers can claim including those whilst in education and training can be found at: **www.ncl.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/assets/documents/CareLeavers.pdf**

You can also access information from the Citizens Advice Bureau via Quid's for kids. Have a look at the website **www.cabdevon.org.uk** or call 03005000404.

CAN I GO BACK TO MY FAMILY?

When you become 18 you can go back to live with your parents or other family if you choose to and if they agree.

If you want to do this, you should think about this carefully and talk to your PA about your thoughts and decisions to make sure you will be safe.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Health can mean lots of different things to people but generally it is about looking after your body and your mind.

There is help available and details and information about people you can contact can be found on pages 21 and 22

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US

When you become 16 you will receive a personal Health Passport. This is for you to keep all your health information in. It is currently a booklet but we are hoping to have an electronic version soon.

You will continue to be offered an annual health review by a specialist Nurse. This gives you the chance to talk about your health and make a plan to ensure your well-being.

OVER 18

The specialist Nurses for Young People in care are still more than happy for you to contact them about any health questions. You can contact them via your Personal Advisor or via the Virgin Care website:

www.virgincare.co.uk

LIFE SKILLS: DRIVING RIDING & TICKETS

We can work with you to support you with getting around and getting in to work. For example if you want to learn to drive a car or need your Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) so you can ride a moped speak to your PA about what level of financial input you can expect from DCC.

Other things we can support you with are things like getting CITB (Construction Industry Training Board) tested and your cards so that you can work in construction or gain other vehicle licences to help with your employability.

MY IDENTITY

Your PA can support you with making applications. If you need support with funding applications your PA can help you up to the age of 21.

MIND OF MY OWN [MOMO]

MOMO is an app that you can download onto your Android or IPhone or use on any web browser. You can use the app to have your say about a meeting, change something that you are not happy with in a plan or make a complaint. The great thing about MOMO is that you can use it whenever you want, wherever you want and it creates formal reports for you.

You can find detailed information here:

www.mindofmyown.org.uk

Available on the App Store

Google play

STAND UP SPEAK UP [SUSU]

SUSU is a website that is run and managed by the Participation Team and is the voice of children in care and care leavers in Devon. It is full of useful information about what's going on, opportunities to get involved and other important things like this leaving care guide and social groups.

www.standupspeakup.org.uk

SUSU
STANDUP SPEAKUP
DEVON'S CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL

WHO CAN I CONTACT?

If you need to contact your PA and they are not available then you can ring your local social work office from the list below to get in touch with us.

CHILDREN IN CARE & LEAVING CARE NURSE TEAM

Cathy Jermey
Lead Nurse for CIC and Care Leavers

Tel 07814 658576

cathy.jermey@nhs.net

Gwyneth Nightingale
Designated Nurse

Tel 07969129938

gwyneth.nightingale@nhs.net

CUSTOMER RELATIONS

If you would like to get in contact with us to make a complaint or compliment you can always ring our Customer Relations Team and they will deal with your call appropriately.
Tel: 0800 212 783

customer.relations@devon.gov.uk

LOCAL SOCIAL WORK PERMANENCE & TRANSITION TEAMS

BARNSTAPLE P&T

Business Support
Civic Centre
North Walk
EX31 1EE

EXETER P&T

Business Support
County Hall
Topsham Road
EX2 4QD

NEWTON ABBOT P&T

Business Support
Estuary House
Collett Way
TQ12 4PH

TIVERTON P&T

Business Support
Unit 7 Oaklands Court
Tiverton Business Park
Tiverton Way
EX16 6TG

01392 383000

ADVOCACY
SERVICE PROVIDERS

If you aren't happy with your experience of any Health or Social Care service and you want to make a complaint about it, you can refer yourself to one of two local advocacy services.

This is **COMPLETELY FREE** to access.

NATIONAL YOUTH ADVOCACY SERVICE (NYAS)

As a care leaver you can contact NYAS directly, they can offer confidential advice, support and guidance to help you get your voice heard. NYAS are independent and not part of Devon County Council.

Tel: 0808 808 1001

help@nyas.net

DEVON INFORMATION ADVICE & SUPPORT (DIAS)

If you have a special educational need or a disability (SEND) or are in the process of moving from Children's Services to Adult's Services DIAS can help you with independent advice, support, guidance and advocacy.

Tel: 01392 383080

devonias@devon.gov.uk

You can find more information about here:

www.devonias.org.uk/children-young-people

You can find leaflets and detailed information about both services here:

www.standupspeakup.org.uk/advocacy

WHAT FINANCIAL SUPPORT WILL I RECEIVE?

Here is some useful information about what you can expect to receive, broken down by each type of care leaver as explained on page 3

ELIGIBLE

As an Eligible Care Leaver you will have an allocated social worker from Devon's Permanence and Transition Team. Your social worker will be responsible for the preparation of your Personal Occupational Progression Plan (POPP) and your Pathway Plan (PP). If you are an eligible care leaver you will keep your Social Worker until you are 18 years old.

Alongside your Social Worker you will also be have a Personal Advisor (PA) who will take over responsibility for the preparation of your Pathway Plan and help you in preparing for adult life. The PA will remain in touch with you until you are 21, or 25 if you are in full time education.

If you are supported by the Children with Disabilities Social Work Team your current Social Worker will continue to support you as a Care Leaver until your successful move to Adult Services. The Permanence and Transition Team will provide you with a PA to work alongside your social worker.

You will be entitled to financial support from the leaving care service.

If you are 16 or 17yrs old you must be in some form of education, employment or training. If you are living independently you may receive the equivalent of Job Seekers allowance which is called the Leaving Care Maintenance Allowance. See the appendix to this document for more details.

The Permanence and Transition Team will also provide an incentive payment depending on your college course/ training, apprenticeship, hours of attendance and your employment salary/wages. This will be assessed on an individual basis and for the full amount you must be attending over 90% of the time. (see appendix 3)

The service will also cover the cost of your rent until you reach 18 years old.

HELP WITH GOING TO COLLEGE AND THE 16+ BURSARY

You may also be entitled to claim an Education Bursary through your school, college or training provider.

See
www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund/overview
for more information.

Your PA will help you to claim the bursary. We will also pay the cost of special clothes or expenses associated with your education, employment or training. This will be assessed on an individual basis with you and your PA.

WHAT IF I AM NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING?

If you are not in employment, education or training the level of financial support that you will receive will be less than the amount that you would receive if you were in education, training or employment.

You will only receive the Leaving Care Maintenance Allowance if you remain in touch with us and if you're actively seeking work or training opportunities.

The Permanence and Transition Team will also pay:

- Your rent.
- Any costs associated with transport to and from interviews.
- The cost of special clothes or expenses associated with attending interviews or associated with starting a job or a training course.

Your PA will:

- Help you to claim any benefits that you are entitled to, including the education bursary.
- Provide you with a copy of your Pathway Plan which will include in it a description of the financial support you will receive from the Permanence and Transition Team.
- Provide you with advice on how to manage your money. You will be helped to complete an individual budget plan which will help you manage your money and not get into debt.
- Regularly review your Pathway Plan so it can be kept up to date and reflect any change you experience.

EDUCATION TRAINING & ACHIEVEMENTS

Vouchers will be purchased by your PA if you gain qualifications or complete a training course.

If you are in Further Education on a full time course an additional allowance can be claimed to cover the costs of books, stationary and equipment, receipts must be provided (a smaller amount can be claimed for part time courses). This is over the full length of the course.

In exceptional circumstances on an individual basis this can be claimed annually on the evidence that is provided that there is a significant need due to the course attended.

EMERGENCY PAYMENTS

In exceptional circumstances we will pay a £10 emergency payment only to a 'Payment' Card or into your bank account.

We will also pay up to six weeks' benefits once you leave care to ensure time for the benefits agency to sort out your payments. We have a special agreement with the job centres that you can apply 6 weeks before your 18th birthday

BIRTHDAY ALLOWANCE

You will receive a birthday allowance so that you can celebrate your birthday. The amount is set each year in April.

You will also receive a birthday allowance on your 18th birthday

These allowances will only be paid if you remain in touch with your PA.

SETTING UP HOME ALLOWANCE

You will be entitled to a grant to help you to set up your new home if you are moving into independent living.

This will either be given in vouchers, paid into your bank or on a "Payment" card.

The allowance you receive will be dependent on your individual circumstances. It will only be paid once.

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RELEVANT

As a Relevant Care Leaver you will have an allocated social worker from Devon's Permanence and Transition Team. Your social worker will be responsible for the preparation of your Personal Occupational Progression Plan (POPP) and your Pathway Plan (PP). If you are an eligible care leaver you will keep your Social Worker until you are 18 years old.

Alongside your Social Worker you will also be have a Personal Advisor (PA) who will take over responsibility for the preparation of your Pathway Plan and help you in preparing for adult life. The PA will remain in touch with you until you are 21, or 25 if you are in full time education.

If you are supported by the Children with Disabilities Social Work Team your current Social Worker will continue to support you as a Care Leaver until your successful move to Adult Services. The Permanence and Transition Team will provide you with a PA to work alongside your social worker. You will be entitled to financial support from the leaving care service.

If you are 16 or 17yrs old you must be in some form of education, employment or training. If you are living independently you may receive the equivalent of Job Seekers allowance which is called the Leaving Care Maintenance Allowance.

The Permanence and Transition Team will also provide an incentive payment each week depending on your college course/training, apprenticeship, hours of attendance and your employment salary/wages. This will be assessed on an individual basis and for the full amount you must be attending over 90% of the time. Unless special circumstances apply.

The service will also cover the cost of your rent until you reach 18 years old.

HELP WITH GOING TO COLLEGE AND THE 16+ BURSARY

You may also be entitled to claim an Education Bursary through your school, college or training provider.

See
www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund/overview
for more information.

Your PA will help you to claim the bursary. We will also pay the cost of special clothes or expenses associated with your education, employment or training. This will be assessed on an individual basis.

WHAT IF I AM NOT IN EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING?

If you are not in employment, education or training the level of financial support that you will receive will be less than the amount that you would receive if you were in education, training or employment.

You will only receive the Leaving Care Maintenance Allowance if you remain in touch with us and if you're actively seeking work or training opportunities.

The Permanence and Transition Team will also pay:

- Your rent.
- Any costs associated with transport to and from interviews.
- The cost of special clothes or expenses associated with attending interviews or associated with starting a job or a training course.

Your PA will:

- Help you to claim any benefits that you are entitled to, including of the education bursary.
- provide you with a copy of your Pathway Plan which will include in it a description of the financial support you will receive from the Permanence and Transition Team.
- Provide you with advice on how to manage your money. You will be helped to complete an individual budget plan which will help you manage your money and not get into debt.
- Regularly review your Pathway Plan so it can be kept up to date and reflect any change of you experience.

EDUCATION TRAINING & ACHIEVEMENTS

Gift vouchers will be purchased for you by your PA if you gain a qualifications or complete a training course.

If you are in Further Education on a full time course an additional allowance can be claimed to cover the costs of books, stationary and equipment, receipts must be provided (£100 can be claimed for part time courses). This is over the full length of the course.

'In exceptional circumstances, on an individual basis, this can be claimed annually if evidence is provided that there is significant need due to the course attended.

EMERGENCY PAYMENTS

In exceptional circumstances we will pay a £10 emergency payment only to a 'Payment Card' or into your bank account.

We will also pay up to six weeks' benefits once you leave care to ensure time for the benefits agency to sort out your payments. We have a special agreement with the job centres that you can apply 6 weeks before your 18th birthday

BIRTHDAY ALLOWANCE

You will receive a birthday allowance so that you can celebrate your birthday. The amount is set each year in April and is the same amount that you would get if you were in foster care.

You will also receive a birthday allowance on your 18th birthday

These allowances will only be paid if you remain in touch with your PA.

SETTING UP HOME ALLOWANCE

You will be entitled to a grant of to help you to set up your new home if you are moving into independent living.

This will either be given in vouchers, paid into your bank or on a Payment Card.

The allowance you receive will be dependent on your individual circumstances. It will only be paid once.

WHAT FINANCIAL SUPPORT WILL I RECEIVE?

Here is some useful information about what you can expect to receive broken down by each type of care leaver as explained on page 3

FORMER RELEVANT

If you are in education or training you will be eligible to apply for Income Support.

If you are living independently you will also be entitled to apply for Housing Benefit to cover your rent.

If you are 18 you will be able to claim the education bursary up to the age of 19

If you are 18 years old and you are not in employment, education or training the level of financial support that you will receive will be less than the amount of money that you would receive if you were in education, training or employment. In these circumstances you will only receive Job Seekers allowance. You will be entitled to Housing Benefit to cover your rent.

The Permanence and Transition Team can assist with financial support until these claims are processed, but you will be expected to apply for these benefits.

We will pay initial costs (for up to 6 weeks) whilst your benefit claims are being processed. We will also pay the cost of special clothes or expenses associated in maintaining your education, employment or training.

The Permanence and Transition Team will also provide an incentive payment each week of up to £30.00 depending on your college course/training, apprenticeship, hours of attendance and your employment salary/wages. This will be assessed on an individual basis and for the full amount you must be attending over 90% of the time.

ADDITIONAL HELP WITH RENT & HOUSING SUPPORT COSTS

Under certain circumstance the Permanence and Transition Team may pay for:

- Additional costs associated with the individual staffing support provided to care leavers who live in semi-supported living accommodation.
- The start-up costs of a tenancy, such as the costs of deposits and retainers for privately let tenancies.

Your PA will assess your need for such additional costs and will provide you with further advice about support with housing costs.

THE COST OF GOING TO UNIVERSITY

Going to university provides an exciting but challenging opportunity to improve your future career prospects. Your PA can help and advise you about your decision to go to university. If you are a relevant or former relevant care leaver and you enter a higher education or university degree course, then the Permanency and Transition Team will provide you with the following support:

- **A weekly living allowance**
- **A bursary per academic year to cover accommodation costs during term time. This will be paid in termly instalments.**
- **Help and support with vacation accommodation**
- **Liaise with the nominated support worker at the university to ensure all necessary support is accessed.**

This support has changed a lot in recent years, you can get up to date information from student support services in schools and colleges. You can find more information here:

www.studentloanrepayment.co.uk

An application for finance has to be made each year through the Student Finance website. You can find this at www.direct.gov.uk. This has lots of information as well as the University web sites. There are downloadable guides that are very good and are easy to understand. Your university should be able to help you.

Applications for grants can usually be made from mid-March. The website will advise you of the date the application has to be submitted by. If a student changes course they will need to inform Student Finance. Grant Payments are made in three instalments - one at the start of each term.

If you are a student who is a parent with a dependent child you may be able to apply for additional help for childcare costs. The website and guides will let you know what you can apply for. All universities have an Access to Learning Fund. Whether students are given anything from this is the decision of the university itself. Students need to apply for an 'access to learning grant' to the Student Services Department once you have started their course.

Disabled students can claim additional allowances. These are to cover such things as special equipment or a helper. These are known as Disabled Student Allowances (DSAs) and an assessment has to be undertaken before any money is awarded. These allowances are grants not loans.

In addition to the above many universities provide additional bursaries to care leavers. More information about bursary payments can be found at:

www.gov.uk/extra-money-pay-university

Your PA will support you to buy some books for university, provided that you can produce a list of the books that you need.

Although we will support you in helping to buy your books, you don't have to ask your PA to cover this cost. There may be a library where you live and you can use this resource to help with your studies. If you are not sure on what books you need then you can ask your tutor at university and they will be able to tell you what books you may need.

If in doubt, ask your PA to help you to understand what you are entitled to and can access.

IF YOU'RE IN EDUCATION OR AN APPRENTICESHIP

NOT UNIVERSITY

You will be entitled to claim an education bursary from DCC to support you within your education

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Gift vouchers will be purchased by your PA for you if you gain qualifications or complete a training course.

If you are in further education or on a full time course an additional allowance can be claimed to cover the costs of books, stationary and equipment, receipts must be provided. This is over the full length of the course.

In exceptional circumstances on an individual basis this can be claimed annually on the basis that evidence is provided to show there is a significant need due to the course attended.

EMERGENCY PAYMENTS

In exceptional circumstances we will pay a £10 emergency payment only to a 'Payment Card' or into your bank account.

We will also pay up to six weeks' benefits once you leave care to ensure time for the benefits agency to sort out your payments.

QUALIFYING

Where a young person has been looked after or supported briefly, or where they return successfully to their families, it is expected that the families themselves resume responsibility for their welfare and support. This is in line with the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

You will be contacted before your 16th birthday and advised that you may be eligible for information and support. If you consent to us completing an assessment, we will arrange to meet with you so that an assessment can be completed. We will be able to offer you information and support, keep in touch with you and may pay expenses towards your education. We will draw up a plan outlining the support that will be provided.

SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP

If you were subject to a Special Guardianship Order you should contact the Local Authority that granted your previous Care Order. If in Devon we have been supporting you recently, we will speak with the previous Local Authority.

We will contact you before your 16 birthday and advise that you will qualify for advice and support. This will be based on individual circumstances and an assessment of need.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Financial assistance will be given in exceptional circumstances, if we need to protect your welfare and assistance cannot be provided by any other agency.

If you are a disabled person who has been provided with 'short breaks' you may be particularly in need of financial assistance; especially if you have high communication needs that make it difficult for you to apply to other agencies, such as voluntary organisations, for help.

If you are in education and your assessment states that you have a need for accommodation during the university holidays we will ensure that you have suitable accommodation during the holidays. We must be satisfied that no other accommodation/options/ benefits are available to you. You will need to keep in touch with your PA so that they can help with this.

AGED OVER 21 AND RETURNING TO EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING

We want you to have the best future you can. We know as you get older you may reconsider some of the choices you made. If you decide to return to education, employment and training after you are 21 we may be able to support you.

You should contact your local Permanence and Transition Team to discuss support. See page 21. We will appoint a Personal Advisor (PA) who will meet you to talk about and asses your needs. A plan will then be written with you which will then be presented by the PA to a Team Manager. The Manager and an Area Manager will consider the request taking into account the following:

- Your assessment
- Your commitment and understanding of the course
- Your past involvement in education, employment and training
- Length of course
- Financial implications
- Your overall support needs

The managers will make a decision and they will ensure that this is explained to you and that the decision is confirmed in writing.

Should a decision be made not to support your request, you can challenge that decision by contacting the Customer Relations Team or through the MoMo app (see page 20).

KEEPING IN TOUCH

At the least your PA will want to meet with you once every eight weeks, this is to make sure that you are getting all the help and support you are entitled to and need.

It's up to you to decide how much contact and support you want in between these visits and how you would like your PA to keep in touch. You may prefer text messages, phone calls or emails, for example.

Devon's Childrens Services has a duty to keep in touch with you but we also understand that sometimes you may feel that you don't want contact from us. Sometimes you may feel like you want some space from your PA or social worker your case will remain open, we will do our best to build a relationship with you and you can contact us at any time.

Even if you tell us that you don't want to see us anymore your case will remain open and you can contact us at any time. It's really important for you to know that we will not walk away from you or give up on you.

If you have not been receiving a service from Devon and you are aged between 21 and 25 years old and want to return to education or training you can contact us to find out what support you can get.

Phone **0345 155 1015** and explain that you are a care leaver looking for support. The call handler will take some details and put you in touch with the right team.

UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN

& YOUNG PEOPLE

If you come to the UK without your parents and are assessed as being under 18 years old you will usually be supported by your Local Authority. This is to ensure that you are looked after properly. You will be entitled to a leaving care service.

Your social worker or PA will help you get legal advice so that you can make an asylum application in the UK. This can be a very long process and there are no guarantees that you will be able to remain in the UK. The outcome will depend on lots of things like what country you come from and the reasons you left.

If you are aged over 21 and do not have 'leave to remain' in the UK we will be unable to support you but we will put you in touch with agencies that can help and advise you.

WHAT IF I MOVE AWAY FROM DEVON?

If you do move outside Devon we will make sure the Local Authority where you are moving to knows so that they can offer support to you if need be.

If you are over 18 and decide to move away from Devon to live you will most likely remain the responsibility of Devon County Council until you are no longer a care leaver.

The only time this would not be the case is if as a qualifying care leaver you get support from the new Local Authority in which you live. You should speak to your worker about this so that they can explain things to you so you understand what to expect and from who.

REQUESTING YOUR RECORDS

If you are 18 years or older you have the right to request to see the records that are held about you. Speak to one of your workers and they can support you to do this.

CARE LEAVER FORUMS AND GETTING INVOLVED

We have lots of opportunities for you to get involved and run Care Leaver Forums across the county. The forums are a chance for you to make friends who are also care leavers, talk about things, get advice, learn new skills, cook and eat together and influence what's going on for leaving care services.

There are also lots of other opportunities to get involved in that will help with your employability.

If you want to join, speak to your PA or contact us for more information:

Call Beth on: 07970680846

beth.wakefield@devon.gov.uk

Call Sam on: 07970 680770

sam.heaton@devon.gov.uk

www.standupspeakup.org.uk/meet-the-team

USEFUL INFORMATION

www.appcessible.org

This is an excellent website which makes apps accessible. Follow this link to find out more.

www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch

You can use this page to help you find what apprenticeships are available in your area.

www.cafcass.gov.uk

Want to find out more about CAFCASS and the family courts? You can go to this web page to learn about what happens and who you will meet.

www.brook.org.uk

Brook provides free and confidential sexual health services for young people. There is also a text and webchat service you can use to get your questions answered. Use the link above to find out more.

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

The CAB can help you with free advice on all sorts of things from finances, benefits, the law, tax and healthcare. Use the link above to see where your nearest office is and how they can help you.

devon.integratedchildrensservices.co.uk/camhs

The CAMHS Team provides help for children and young people (up to 18 years old) who may be experiencing problems with their emotional or psychological wellbeing or mental health. For more information see the link above.

www.lawstuff.org.uk

This is a great website about your rights. It tells you what you can do at what age.

www.catch-22.org.uk/expertise/care-leavers

Catch22 is committed to ensuring that care leavers have access to the best possible life chances when making the transition from the care system to independence. They have also provided the National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) for 10 years, offering advice and information on leaving care and a benchmarking service to local authorities.

www.kooth.com

This is a free, confidential and anonymous space where you can ask for advice and support. You can access online counselling and chat forums.

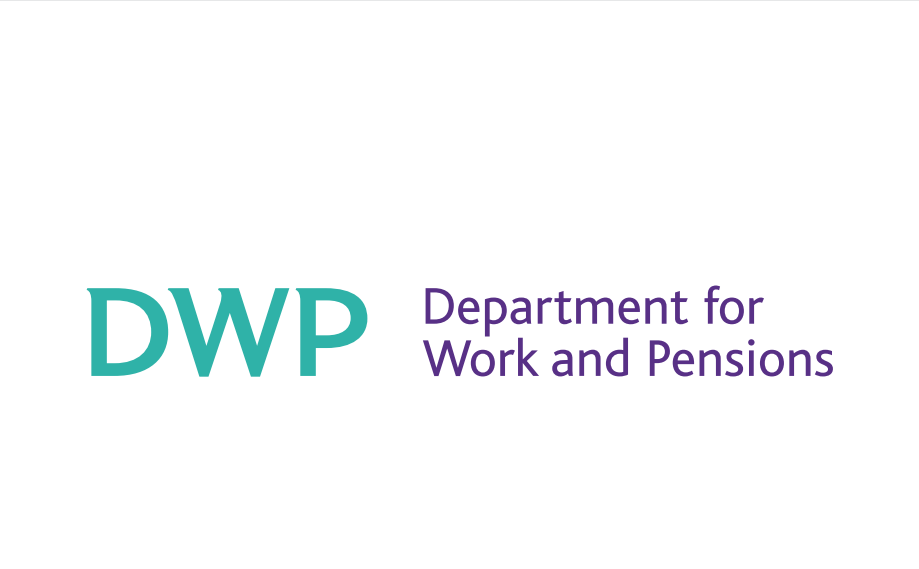
USEFUL INFORMATION

www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

The Children's Commissioner for England promotes and protects children's rights in England. She does this by listening to what children and young people say about what matters to them and making sure adults in charge take their views and interests into account.

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/264694/Care_leavers__charter.pdf

This document sets out a series of principles and promises that you can expect from Devon County Council as a Care Leaver. Have a look at the full document, use the link above.



www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions

This the official Department for Work & Pensions website with lots and lots of information.

www.childline.org.uk

Childline has loads of information about anything that may be worrying you – and you can talk to someone on the phone or even by email at any time.

Freephone **0800 1111** – 24/7

www.devonhomechoice.com

Search for council and housing association homes in your area and get registered.

www.police.uk/devon-and-cornwall

If you are in an emergency **dial 999** immediately or call 101 for non-emergencies. For more contact information and a link to the Youtube channel follow the link above.

www.talktofrank.com

Frank is a website where you can get information about drugs and legal highs. You can get advice, find out about treatment and addiction as well as talk to somebody if you are worried about yourself or a friend. You can call them on **0300 123 6600** or use the website.

www.intercomtrust.org.uk/portal.htm

Here is an organisation working with equality and diversity for young people in Devon who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, inter-sex and non-binary.

plymouthanddevonrec.org.uk

If you think you have been the victim of hate crime, racial discrimination or harassment you can call **01752 224555** or contact this website for independent advocacy, advice and support.

USEFUL INFORMATION

www.themix.org.uk

This site is a national information site for all young adults to find information, advice and guidance and answers to all sorts of questions you may have about a whole load of topics from finances to drugs and sexual health. You can email in a question for a professional adviser and discuss current issues on the forum.

www.youngdevon.org/youth/mentalhealth

Providing easier access to expert mental health consultation and advice. Young Devon also supports young people and adults to become volunteers as well as offering a range of support services to other voluntary sector youth clubs, groups and projects. You can access mental health and wellbeing support on the link above.

secure.jotformpro.com/form/50544849595974

This is a free to access service that will help you to find out if you are getting all the benefits and support you are entitled to. It is available for the following groups;

Call **0300 5000 404** or visit the website above for more information

www.princes-trust.org.uk

This site can help with giving practical and financial support, developing key workplace skills such as confidence and motivation. They work with 14 to 30 year olds have been in care, are long-term unemployed or have been in trouble with the law.

new.devon.gov.uk/adultsocialcareandhealth/health-and-wellbeing/sexual-health

You can find out more information about contraception, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's) and where your local clinic at the link below. There is lots of useful information about who you can ask for help in your area and provides information for LGBT young people.

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Think U Know is a place you can go to find out about internet safety or report worries you have about who you may be talking to online.

www.healthtalk.org/young-peoples-experiences

Healthtalk.org answers some of the questions that perhaps you may not want to ask your doctor and helps you to realise that other young people are going through the similar experiences and that you are not alone.

www.youngminds.org.uk

YoungMinds is the UK's leading charity committed to improving the emotional well-being and mental health of children and young people.