

Care Leavers **Protocol**

Joint Protocol between:

DWP Jobcentre Plus and
Herefordshire Council
Care Leavers Team

Background

Care leavers are one of the most vulnerable groups of young people in society. Young people who enter local authority care can, if not adequately supported, leave care with poor educational attainment and low aspirations which can result in long term unemployment.

We believe that every young person should be encouraged and supported to plan their future careers and achieve their potential through learning new skills and having a wide range of practical experiences. Across Herefordshire we are committed to raising young people's aspirations by providing on-going support to help them make positive decisions about their future.

Aims of the Protocol

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Herefordshire County Council will work together to provide an enhanced service to support young people leaving care into education, employment and training. This will ensure: -

- Co-ordinated support to engage young people into Education, Employment or Training
- An early entry system and a smooth transition for those young people leaving care and needing to claim benefits
- Prompt and accurate payment of benefits where these are required
- Young people are empowered and enabled to gain sustainable paid employment through individual route ways

DWP will:

- Provide the Leaving Care Team with up to date contact details for Work Coaches supporting care leavers
- Provide an early entry system for care leavers (processing forms in readiness for 18th birthday)
- Ensure a warm handover – a three-way diagnostic interview between the young person, Work Coach and Leaving Care Team.
- Work Coaches will ensure that the young person is aware of all assistance available to them, including any support through the Flexible Support Fund.
- The first time a care leaver fails to attend an appointment with Jobcentre Plus, the Work Coach will try to contact the young person to explain the procedures, or refer back to the Leaving Care Team.
- When required a three-way case conference will be arranged with young person, Leaving Care Team and Work Coach.
- DWP will ensure that the Universal credit account has a message pinned to the account to detail that the customer is a care leaver

- DWP will ask the care leaver to note their UC Journal that consent can be given to appropriate partner on their behalf *
- DWP will note the claimants profile with “Care Leaver”
- DWP Work coach will make contact with the Local Authority if the care leaver has not signed the Claimant Commitment or where there is the risk of closure or stopping payments
- DWP will incorporate this protocol into operational policies

The Leaving Care Teams will:

- Provide DWP with up to date contact details for the Leaving Care Teams
- Notify the local Jobcentre SPOC of a young person who is leaving care
- Ensure that young people are aware of the enhanced service they will receive from DWP
- Explain to the Care Leaver that they must not **submit** their claim before their 18th Birthday
- Must attend a three-way diagnostic interview at start of the claim for DWP benefits
- Will support the care leaver by helping the young person in ensuring they understand what actions they need to take to maintain their entitlement for benefits.
- Will ensure the key worker attends case conferencing to support the young person on their recommended pathway, where appropriate
- Provide on-going support to the care leaver and liaise with the local jobcentre ensuring that the Jobcentre are notified of any changes in the young person’s circumstances, e.g. finishing education, a change of address or returning to parental home.
- Will incorporate this protocol into operational policies

Consent to Share

* Under Universal Credit Full Service (UCFS) there is no implicit consent so Care Workers (CW) can only talk to DWP work coaches on a Care Leavers (CL) behalf if:

- They have the Care Leaver with them and attend the Jobcentre
- They phone when they have the Care Leaver with them so they can answer the security questions posed and give verbal consent for DWP to speak to the Care Worker
- The Care Leaver goes into their UC account and updates their journal with a message giving
 - 1) The name of the 3rd party care worker, organisation and their role.
 - 2) What the query is about – it has to be specific e.g. housing costs for December 2019
 - 3) Why the information is required

4) You should then be able to phone the Service Centre/ Jobcentre and DWP will discuss the issue.

Summary

Herefordshire County Council and DWP aim to support young people leaving care to access an enhanced service. The aim of this protocol is to help young people leaving care to apply for Universal Credit prior to their 18th birthday. To support them with the application combined with the complex issues faced by care leavers.

It is hoped that working together supporting these young people, outcomes and aspirations will increase, enabling and empowering them to gain sustainable employment. Both parties recognise that regular liaison and review are essential if we are to achieve our aims and deliver the standards set out above.

Signed by DWP

Position Partnership Manager Jobcentre Plus

Signature 

Date 19/02/2020

Signed by Local Authority

Position Head of Service for looked after children

Signature 

Date 19/02/2020

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Universal Credit Claim Process

The following process will be available to all Care Leavers.

The Leaving Care Teams will:

From up to 28 days before the Care Leavers' 18th birthday the Leaving Care Worker will ensure that the care leaver has, or is working towards getting:

- Their National Insurance Number.
- Two forms of identification including photographic ID, this could be a driving licence, birth certificate, a home office resident permit, passport.
- An E Mail address – one for each person on the claim
- A Bank Account.
- A phone number
- A CV and introduce them to Find a Job through Gov.uk
- A current Pathway Plan that includes education, training and employment hopes for the future.
- Written confirmation that the care leaver is estranged and is just leaving care.
- Care leavers in full time education will need a letter from the college confirming course name, start and expected end date and hours of the course.

All of the above will need to be in place by the time the care leaver is 17 years and 11 months.

Care leaver – advanced claim process for Universal Credit Full Service

Care leavers can make an advanced claim to Universal Credit at www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit up to one month before their 18th birthday. These **claims must not be submitted until the claimant's 18th birthday** but can be viewed and checked by the DWP. Care Leaving Team to support Care Leaver to verify their ID using www.Gov.UK/Verify if possible.

Local Authority Leaving Care Teams can assist young people to make their claim online and to book appointments.

The Leaving Care Worker will then contact the appropriate Job Centre Plus site Hereford, Leominster or Ross SPOC to arrange the 'pre-claim' appointment to:

- confirm the claimant's identification. Work Coach will access Confirm Identification for Care Leaver Agent Led Process
- confirm bank account details-Work Coach will access the Confirm Bank Details for Care Leaver process
- confirm the claimant is a care leaver (for example, written confirmation from the local authority on headed paper or by email, official paper work relating to the claimant being in care) in order to lift the waiting days.

- confirm the housing situation by producing their tenancy agreement, proof of rent paid e.g. bank statement showing payment, and proof of residency e.g. A utility bill.
- book evidence and Claimant Commitment interview (on or as soon as possible after their 18th birthday)

The Work Coach will follow the Instructions for advanced claims Care Leaver

The following will also need to be discussed by Work Coach at the pre-claim meeting:

- Universal Credit payments are made in arrears
- Alternative Payment Arrangements – split payments and/or managed payments of rent directly to the landlord.
- Personal Budgeting Support
- Advance Payment application

The Work Coach will book the Initial evidence interview / Claimant Commitment interview so it is already arranged before the claim is submitted.

On 18th Birthday

On the 18th birthday the Care Leaver will log back into their on-line claim and the 'submit' button on the on-line claim should be pressed making the date of claim that day. Once the claim has been made the Care Leaver will get a phone number to phone to arrange an appointment at the JCP. Once this stage is reached the Care Leaver should contact the site SPOC for them to access the account and book the IE/Claimant Commitment interview to the slot already reserved. This must be within 7 days of their 18th Birthday.

At the interview, the Work Coach to submit application for advance payment if required.

Please note that the Claimant Commitment interview has to be attended and the CC accepted after the interview in order to receive payment.

Care Leaver Teams Named Contacts

Main contacts

16+ Duty

Tel: 01432 261626

Email: 16Plus@herefordshire.gov.uk

Managing Practitioner – Andrea Busk

Tel: 01432 383472

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Senior Personal Advisor – Tony Locke
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Additional contacts

Personal Advisor – Victoria Moon
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Personal Advisor – Holly Pavey
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Personal Advisor – Venetia Bradbury
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Jobcentre Plus Named Contacts

Hereford

Emma Mooney 01432 298839

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Tammy Colbert 01432 298838

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Leominster

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Ross on Wye

Juliet Millman 01989 792005

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Please note that Care Leavers may be interviewed by other Work Coaches.

Appendix 1

Local Authority written confirmation of Care Leaver status



**CARE LEAVER
PRIORITY CLAIM STE**