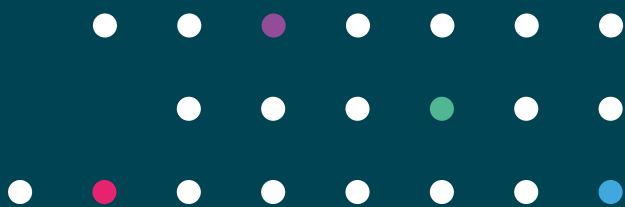




A guide to

ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

for Qualifying Children and Young People



Protect
Care and Invest
to create a
better borough





AIMS OF THIS LEAFLET

The purpose of this leaflet is to:

- 1 Explain which young people are deemed, 'Qualifying Children and Young People', i.e. a person qualifying for advice and assistance under Section 24 of the Children Act 1989 and who, therefore, may be entitled to certain types of leaving care support;
- 2 Explain how 'Qualifying' young people can contact Telford & Wrekin Children's Services, should they feel they need support;
- 3 Set out the process that will be undertaken to assess a 'Qualifying' young person's needs;
- 4 Highlight what services and support may be available to a 'Qualifying' young person following the assessment of their needs.



WHO ARE 'QUALIFYING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'

Section 24 of the Children Act 1989 sets out that certain young people ('Qualifying' care leavers) may be entitled to leaving care support subject to an assessment of need undertaken by the Local Authority Children's Services (Telford & Wrekin Council).

The following groups of young people aged over 16 and under 21 (under 25 if the support request is related to education or training) are deemed 'Qualifying Children and Young People':

- 1** Young people who were subject to a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) and who were looked after immediately prior to the making of the SGO;
- 2** Young people who were privately fostered and where the arrangement was registered with a local authority;
- 3** Young people who were looked after by the local authority for more than 24 hours after the age of 16, but less than 13 weeks and were not deemed 'Eligible' or 'Relevant' care leavers;
- 4** Young people who were deemed 'Eligible' or 'Relevant' care leavers and returned to live with a parent or someone who had parental responsibility; ceased to be looked after and have lived with their parent for 6 months and then transfer from being an 'Eligible' or 'Relevant' care leaver to being a 'Qualifying' care leaver;
- 5** Young people who received 'Short Breaks' (respite care) under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989;
- 6** Young people who were accommodated (provided with accommodation) for at least three months, which ended after the age of 16, i.e. they were provided with accommodation by a health authority, a local authority in the exercise of an education function or by a private children's home.

ASSESSING YOUR NEEDS

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers (England) Regulations and Guidance 2010, (Revised 2015) that set out the rules and requirements for 'Qualifying Children and Young People' highlights that you are eligible for a service subject to the local authority assessing your leaving care needs. The assessment will be undertaken in Telford by a member of the Leaving Care Team and will explore:

- 1 What support you feel you need and your circumstances, such as where you live;
- 2 What practical and financial support you have and what support may be available to you from your family, friends and universal services, for example, what wages and/or benefits you have and what practical support you receive.




ASSESSMENT PROCESS



To get a comprehensive understanding of your needs, the leaving care team will need to talk to a range of agencies, individuals and your family and friends who are providing support or who could support you. As such, you will be asked to give your written consent to the checks that the leaving care team and the local authority will need to undertake. The leaving care team will always tell you who they will be contacting and what information they need.

If you do not want the leaving care team and the local authority to contact agencies or people providing support, or agencies and people who may be able to provide you with assistance, that is ok, but it may mean the assessment cannot get a complete and full understanding of your needs and therefore may limit the support that can be provided to you. These issues will be discussed and explained to you in detail at the start of the assessment.




SERVICE OFFER

Once the assessment is completed, it will be shared with you and will be used to develop a plan of what support you will be provided with, how it will be provided and for how long it will be provided, and/or when it will be reviewed. The service/s to be provided to you will be set out in writing in the form of a plan. Where your needs are comprehensive and may be ongoing, the service provided may be like that provided to other care leavers and you may have a named leaving care worker and a full pathway plan. Where you need limited support, or a specific task completing, such as contacting another agency to confirm you are a care leaver, this will be completed as a one-off activity by a duty member of the leaving care team.

As your needs will differ from that of other young people, the service provided will be specific to you and will be set out in an individual plan.

A major focus of the support provided, will be to explore what services are available and how the leaving care team can help you to access and make use of them. For example, working with you to help you to access organisation or agencies that can help with your accommodation needs, help you to access education, training or employment opportunities, helping you to access health support or financial, benefit and student finance opportunities.





A key priority is to support you to access education, training or employment activities, this may involve letting organisations know that you are a care leaver (subject to your agreement); many organisations or educational establishments provide additional support to care leavers, but need confirmation of your leaving care status. For example, universities may provide additional support via their 'Fair Access Offer'. Where a 'Qualifying' young person attends university, the leaving care team may have a responsibility to help organise accommodation during your vacation periods.

Other examples of support, may include liaising with the housing authority about accommodation opportunities, as care leavers who were looked after for at least 24 hours at the age of 16 or 17 are likely to be deemed in 'Priority Need' with the housing department.

In most circumstances, support will focus on practical help, only in exceptional circumstances will financial support be considered.

As set out above, the service provided to you may continue for a period of time and until the goals set out in your plan are completed, or it might involve a short-targeted piece of work. Once the goals are completed, the service will cease; you will be able to return to the leaving care team again, should you wish, or need to, and a further assessment will be undertaken.

Responsibility for Providing the Service:

If you are a 'Qualifying' young person due to having been looked after at some point, the responsibility for providing a service to you is the local authority that looked after you. If you are a 'Qualifying' young person and you haven't been looked after (i.e. as a result of a private fostering arrangement), the responsibility for providing a service to you is the local authority where you are living.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1 Will I always need to have an assessment of need?

Yes, the leaving care team have a duty to undertake an assessment to ensure that they have a comprehensive understanding of your needs and can develop a plan with you to meet your identified needs. The length and complexity of the assessment will depend on your situation and needs.

2 Do I have to stay in touch with the leaving care team?

No, as a 'Qualifying' young person, if you don't want, or need a service, you do not have to stay in touch with the leaving care team. If you do need a service (based on an assessment), once the goals (based on your assessment and plan) are met you can cease your involvement with the leaving care team, you can then return again in the future if you have further needs.

3 Do I need to give permission to the leaving care team to contact other agencies?

Yes, to ensure the leaving care team has a full understanding of your needs, they will need to talk to other agencies, organisations and people about your needs and how to meet them. They will ask you to sign an authorisation to share information form. If you do not agree to, or do not want to give your permission, that is ok, however, the leaving care team will then not be able to build up a full picture of your needs and it may limit the support the team can provide to you.

How to contact the Leaving Care Team

Email: TWCareLeavers@telford.gov.uk

Telephone: 01952 385817

Address: Leaving Care Team, Darby House, Lawn Central, Telford, TF3 4JA