**Care Leavers Protocol**

 Joint Protocol between:

Jobcentre Plus and

 Devon County Council

 Care Leavers Team

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**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 Devon we are committed to raising young people’s aspirations by providing on-going support to help them make positive decision s about their future.

**Aims of the Protocol**

Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and Devon County Council (DCC) 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

**Consent to Share**

Under UCFS there is no implicit consent so Care Workers (CW) can only talk to DWP on a Care Leavers (CL) behalf if:

* They have the CL with them and attend the JCP.
* They phone when they have the CL with them so they can answer the security questions posed and give verbal consent for DWP to speak to the CW.
* The CL goes into their UC account and updates their journal with a message giving

1) The name of the 3rd party (CW), organisation and their role.

2) What the query is about – it has to be specific e.g. housing costs for December 2017

3) Why the information is required

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

**Jobcentre Plus 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.
* Jobcentre Plus 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
* Must notify the local JC SPOC of a young person who is leaving care
* Ensure that young people are aware of the enhanced service they will receive from DWP
* Must attend a 3 way diagnostic interview at start of the claim for DWP benefits
* Will re-iterate conditionality with care leaver if/when the first infringement occurs
* Will ensure the key worker to 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 JCP, ensuring that JCP 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

**Summary**

Devon County Council and DWP aim to support young people leaving care to access an enhanced service. It is hoped that working together supporting these young people, outcomes and aspirations will increase, enabling and empowering them to gain sustainable employment.

Signed by DWP

Position Service Leader for Devon, Cornwall & Somerset Jobcentre Plus

Signature 

Date 13/03/2018

Signed by Local Authority

Position Lead of Children in Care and Care Leavers

Signature 

Date 21/10/21

The aim of this protocol is to support a young people leaving care to apply for Universal Credit prior to their 18th birthday. It is recognised that when care leavers first enter the benefit system, the complexity of the system combined with the complex issues faced by care leavers often result in lengthy payment delays for the young person and financial cost to the Local Authority in ‘holding payments’ paid to bridge the gap until benefits are in place.

**Universal Credit Claim Process**

The following process will be available to all Care Leavers.

**The Leaving Care Teams will**:

Six months before the care leaver‘s 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 a Universal Jobmatch account
* 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](http://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](http://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 contact to arrange the ‘pre-claim’ appointment to:

* confirm the claimant’s identification (Work Coach will access Confirm Identification for Care Leaver Agent Led Process (ALP))
* confirm bank account details (Work Coach will access the Confirm Bank Details for Care Leaver ALP)
* 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 (ALP).

Pre-claim interviews for care leavers are booked using the ‘Advance claim for care leaver’ appointment type. (There will not be an account to link it to so you will need to go into booking bug and input the CLs name and ‘advanced care leaver’, into the box the URL number normally goes into).

The care leaver may bring a social worker or support worker with them to this appointment.

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

* Universal Credit payments are made in arrears, a calendar month and 7 days from the date of claim.
* 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 (IEI)/ Claimant Commitment (CC) 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 CC interview has to be attended and the CC accepted after the interview in order to receive payment.

**Care Leaver Teams Named Contacts (Updated 15.12.2021)**

* North Devon – Ross Carter – Team Manager Permanence and Transition Team – 01392 383000 – ross.carter@devon.gov.uk
* East and Mid Devon –Diane Davies– Team Manager Permanence and Transition Team – 01392 383000 – diane.davies@devon.gov.uk
* Exeter – Shine Sibanda – Team Manager Permanence and Transition Team – 01392 383000 – shine.sibanda@devon.gov.uk
* South Devon – Kate Jones – Team Manager Permanence and Transition team – 01392 383000 – kate.jones@devon.gov.uk

 **Jobcentre Plus Named Contacts**

* Bideford JCP, Northbank House, North Rd, Bideford EX39 2NR,

Paul Garnsey - 01237 496901 - PAUL.GARNSEY@DWP.GOV.UK

* Barnstaple JCP, Princess House, Queen St, Barnstaple EX32 8HD,

Nicky Turner – 01271395474 - NICOLA.TURNER@DWP.GOV.UK

* Exeter JCP, Clarendon House, Western Way, Exeter, EX1 2DA, Rachel Guest – Rachel.guest@dwp.gov.uk - 01392 473909
* Honiton JCP, 128 High Street Honiton Devon EX14 1JP

Siobhan Kent - Siobhan.kent@dwp.gov.uk - 01404 403201

* Newton Abbot JCP, Sherbourne House, Kingsteignton Road, TQ12 2PG

Viv Glanvile - Vivian.glanvile@dwp.gov.uk - 01626 236309

* Tiverton JCP, Phoenix House, Phoenix Lane, Tiverton EX16 6FF Elaine Seatherton - Elaine.seatherton@dwp.gov.uk - 01884 369737
* Totnes JCP, 68 New Walk, Totnes TQ9 5WE

Iris Sumption - Iris.sumption@dwp.gov.uk – 01803 356201

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

**Addresses**

On occasions when claimants send post to Universal Credit Full Service, there are two addresses they need to be aware of.

Signed delivery and Recorded delivery must be addressed to:

UCFS Post, Canterbury BC, Nutwood House, Chaucer Road, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1 ZZ

All other post must be addressed to:

Freepost DWP UNIVERSAL CREDIT FULL SERVICE

Claimants can also contact the Service Centre by telephoning 0345 600 4272.

Appendix 1

Local Authority written confirmation of Care Leaver status



Appendix 2

Consent Form

