

My Life, My Future

Supporting care-experienced young people to be healthy, resilient and prepared for life beyond care

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What care-experienced young people tell us

We heard from young people who have experience of growing up in care in Devon about developing their independence and preparing for adult life. This is what they told us were the most important things:

- Having someone you can trust and rely on to turn to for help and support
- Being made aware of what support and housing options are available, especially knowing what is realistic and achievable when we get to our 18th birthday
- Learning about money management and budgeting, including things like setting up bank accounts, renting, paying council tax and claiming benefits
- Having financial and practical support when first leaving care, to get set up for living independently
- Being able to access mental health and wellbeing support because the challenges that come with living independently can become overwhelming. Leaving care can be a very isolating experience which can make mental health and wellbeing much worse
- Having stability at home is so important for being able to access and take advantage of education, work and training opportunities
- Apprenticeships and work experience are really valuable in taking the first step in working adult life

Young people raise similar themes nationally too. The importance of knowing what support is available, building trusting relationships with the people around them, and having stability at home, at their place of study and at work are all key factors in a successful transition to adulthood.

In 2021, Ofsted¹ research found that **over a third of care leavers felt they left care too early** and didn't feel ready for adult life. Many young people felt isolated and didn't know who to turn to for help, compounded by some young people saying they could not trust the professionals who were there to help them. To some degree, this breakdown in trust is caused by a quarter of care leavers not feeling involved in the plans about their lives and futures. As a result of not being involved early in plans, made worse by a lack of suitable and affordable housing options, many young people felt they had no control about where they lived after leaving care and felt unsafe as a result.

After hearing from care-experienced young people, the all-party parliamentary group (APPG) for looked after children and care leavers² has called for **communities to play a greater role in supporting care-experienced young people** to develop their independence and be ready for adulthood. Communities often provide the friendships, experiences and support that help care-experienced young people to be happy and thrive as they get older. Having resilient, dynamic and nurturing communities around care-experienced young people can reduce the stigma around care experience and support young people to have a stronger sense of self and belonging. Stigma, sense of self and belonging are important, and often understated, factors which shape care-experienced young people's ability to transition smoothly to life beyond care and what that entails.

¹ ['Ready or not': care leavers' views of preparing to leave care - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

² [appg-for-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers-spotlight-inquiry.pdf \(becomecharity.org.uk\)](https://www.becomecharity.org.uk)

Introduction

Developing independence is a fundamental part of the human experience. It is what allows us to be ourselves, find our place in the world and strive to achieve our full potential as we get older. While it signifies an ability to live on our own without outside help, true independence does not come at the cost of interdependence with the people around us. In fact, the opposite is true. Having positive and meaningful relationships and connections in our lives underpins our ability to be truly independent.

In Devon, we want to put relationships, connection and interdependence at the heart of promoting independence for our care-experienced young people as they leave our care. By having positive and trusting relationships in their lives, young people are better equipped to keep healthy and well, develop the necessary practical skills and knowledge, and have access to the opportunities needed to step forward in life. Trusting relationships and community bring protection, stability and support into young people's lives, especially as they navigate the transition to independent adult life.

A recent report³ by the Children's Commissioner for England emphasises the particular importance of family, relationships and connections for care-experienced young people. For these young people, family, friendship and community is often made up of multiple networks of different adults, including birth family, extended family and friends, carers and workers. But, whatever family, friendship and community look like, the same things matter to everyone – love, care, security and stability.

The nature of growing up in care means that care-experienced young people are more likely to make the move to independence much earlier than other young people their age. This also comes in the context of past trauma, instability and/or damaged links with family and friends, which can deeply affect the ability to form positive relationships later in life. As their [corporate parents](#), it is our duty to promote independence early on in young people's lives, long before they turn 18, to give them the best possible start to adulthood.

Finally, we know that every individual is unique, with different needs, interests and experiences in life. Some young people in care may have special educational needs and/or disabilities, or delayed development which may be linked to past trauma. While promoting independence will look different for every young person, the underlying approach, expectations and principles remain the same. Every young person in care has a right to corporate parents who will promote their independence at every opportunity and support them to step forward in life as they get older. For every young person, trusting relationships are at the heart of achieving positive transformative change in their lives.

This document is for any professional, carer or significant adult working with young people currently in care or who have recently left care as young adults. It sets out the key principles, expectations and resources underpinning Devon's approach to promoting independence and supporting the transition to adulthood.

³ [Family and its protective effect: Part 1 of the Independent Family Review | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](#)

Devon's approach to promoting independence

Three core principles underpin how we promote independence in the lives of care-experienced young people in Devon:

1. Meaningful, trusting and reliable **relationships are the key** to promoting independence in young people's lives while in care and after leaving care

What this looks like in practice:

- We work restoratively with young people, putting them and their interests at the heart of every decision we make
- Together with young people, we identify who the key people and communities are in their lives, and we are relentless about nurturing those relationships and connections

2. Promoting independence, as responsible corporate parents, is **everyone's responsibility**

What this looks like in practice:

- Any adult, working with, or caring for, care-experienced children and young people, has an important role to play in promoting their independence
- Foster carers, residential staff, teachers, youth workers, community leaders – alongside health and social care professionals – are equal members of the team around the young person, all striving for the best possible outcomes for the young person

3. Promoting independence should happen **early** – it is about building individual capacity and expanding life chances at every stage in life, more than just the transition to adulthood

What this looks like in practice:

- We begin work early on in young people's lives to promote their independence, individual capacity and expand opportunities and aspirations
- Discussions and planning for the transition out of care start from when the young person first enters care. Young people are fully included in planning about their lives as early as possible, so they have clarity about what leaving care means in practice for them

Overcoming the barriers to independence

Providing stability

Providing stability at home and at school is fundamental to young people's ability to form trusting relationships, learn and access opportunities. We are committed to ensuring sufficient accommodation for young people in care in Devon and making sure we have a stable workforce.

Repairing harm

Our practice framework is built on trauma-informed approaches which emphasises the importance of positive relationships in repairing harm and trauma. We will work with our young people as individuals to tailor how we promote their independence as they get older.

Promoting ambition

We must be aspirational for all our young people and promote their own ambitions at every opportunity. We will also understand, and actively challenge, the negative impact that stigma can have on young people who grow up in care.

Our core principles

Putting relationships at the heart



Our shared ambition, across different teams and services, is that we work restoratively with all children and young people across Devon. [Restorative practice](#) is about putting meaningful and trusting relationships at the heart of who we are and how we work, with the aim of supporting transformative change in children and families' lives.

Restorative practice sees relationships as the key driver of positive and lasting change in people's lives. For young people growing up in our care, positive relationships and connections with the people around them are crucial for their independence and readiness for life outside of care.

From as soon as a child or young person first comes into our care, we will work with them to identify who the key people are in their lives – from immediate and extended family members and friends, to teachers, youth workers, and many others. Care Plans and Pathway Plans will include what we are doing to nurture those important relationships and enable those people to play an active role in supporting the young person as they get older. Action plans and review meetings, which hear from the young person about their experiences, will hold us to account for how we are doing.

Promoting independence is everyone's responsibility

As corporate parents, we are committed to supporting our young people early on to develop their independence and be ready for life as a young adult outside of care. To be the best possible corporate parents, we will always ask ourselves **"would this be good enough for my child?"**. This means holding high expectations and being 'pushy' parents when it comes to striving for the best possible outcomes for the children and young people in our care.

[Our strategic plan for corporate parenting](#) sets out our ambitions and commitments to support care-experienced young people to develop their independence and thrive as young adults. The box below describes the key strategic actions for promoting independence:

We will..

- Support young people to prepare as early as possible, for adulthood through practical, emotional and financial support
- Help young people to save some money while in care and learn about managing money
- Support young people to live independently through a tenancy-ready course
- Make sure young people are supported to stay in education, making sure there are no barriers to being able to continue learning
- Provide apprenticeships, traineeships, and internships across a broad range of organisations and roles
- Support young people's mental health and wellbeing and reduce any logistical barriers to education, work or training
- Work with young people early on to build up their skills and confidence so they are ready to take advantage of opportunities

As a Council, we are also committed, in [our Strategic Plan](#), to making Devon a child-friendly place to live and grow up for all children and young people. The vision for a child-friendly Devon is a whole-Council ambition, which builds on collaborative partnerships with our statutory partners, voluntary and community sector and business across the county.

This vision for Devon begins with our care-experienced children and young people. To be a truly child-friendly Devon, we must be getting it right for our own children and young people as their corporate parents. Promoting independence and supporting improved outcomes in the lives of care-experienced young people is everyone's responsibility, requiring commitment and collaboration across specialist services, universal services, the voluntary and community sector and the private sector.

Promoting independence early

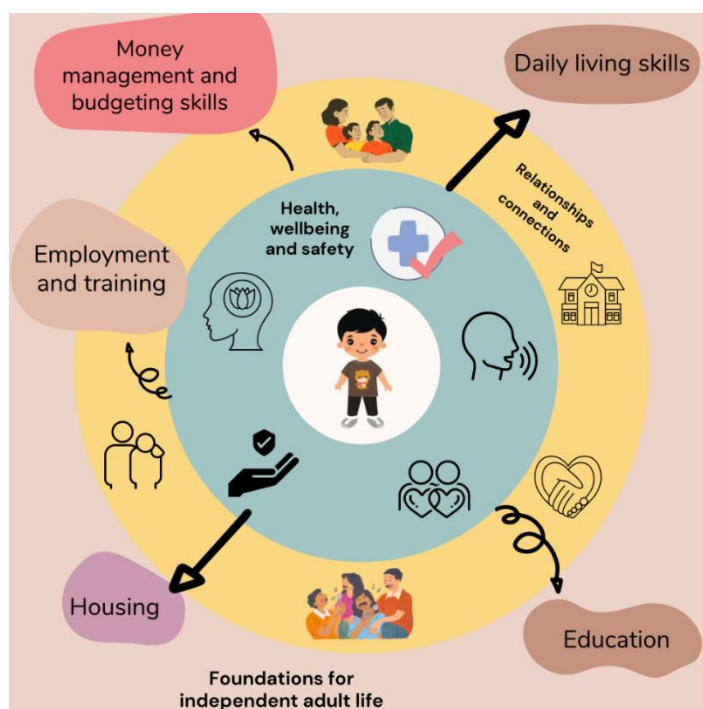
Responsibilities for promoting independence and preparing for life outside of care start as soon as we become corporate parents. When a child or young person comes into our care, we will begin thinking about what they need to keep stepping forward in life as they get older. As they get closer to adulthood, we will work with them on the more specific things they need to have in place to make sure the transition to adulthood is smooth. But promoting independence is not limited to pathway planning. It includes all the conversations about goals, ambitions and dreams for later life. It includes learning skills at home, like cooking, cleaning and budgeting. It includes understanding how to keep healthy and well on a day-to-day basis and make the best possible choices in life. It includes making the most of opportunities at school, college and in the community. These conversations, behaviours and life skills can begin long before pathway planning.

Our framework for promoting independence

Our framework identifies three key parts of promoting independence. These are then split into distinct areas of focus, where we can work directly with young people to help them identify where they are currently at, where their strengths are and what they would like to work on more.

Each part will matter differently to young people at different stages of their life and with different individual needs. But they are all equally important and dependent on the others.

For more information and resources, for young people, carers and workers like, head to the [SUSU website](#).



Nurturing relationships and connections

Having people around us, who we can trust and rely on in the good times and the bad, is crucial for our ability to feel emotionally and physically safe and protected and be able to take full advantage of opportunities in life. For care-experienced young people, having consistent, reliable and supportive relationships and community connections is especially important in developing independence and preparing for life outside of care.

In Devon, we want to be relentless in our pursuit to nurture trusting relationships and connections in young people's lives which are meaningful and impactful. Time and again, young people, after leaving care, reflect on a particular relationship in their life which made all the difference for them as they approached adulthood – be they a social worker, personal advisor, foster carer, teacher, youth worker, or careers advisor. All of these relationships were consistent, reliable and unconditional.

Working with young people, we will identify who the key people are in their lives and where there may be opportunities for young people to find community. We will make space for these relationships to grow over time and encourage young people to seek out positive and healthy connections around them.

Reflective questions for practice

- Does the young person see their birth and/or extended family regularly? Is it as much as they would like to? If not, how can we make sure they have opportunities to do so regularly and safely?
- Who are the key individuals in the young person's family, who the young person trusts and can rely on?
- What kind of role does the young person want their family to play in their lives now and when they become an adult?

- Does the young person have friends around them who are supportive and trustworthy?
- How can we nurture good relationships and friendships in the young person's life?

- Is the young person already supported by anyone in the local community with whom they have a good relationship and could turn to for help?
- How are we supporting the young people to make the most of opportunities in their local community to meet new people, learn new skills and improve their wellbeing?

- Is there a positive relationship between the young person and their carers and workers? Do they have a particularly good relationship with any of their carers or workers? What can we do to support those relationships and ensure they are lasting and consistent?
- What steps can we take now to improve our relationship with the young person? Through more contact with them, more honesty, better listening, more patience?

Supporting young people to be healthy, well and safe

Keeping healthy, well and safe are part of the human condition. During adolescence and early adulthood, being healthy, well and safe mean we are ready to take advantage of new opportunities and build the foundations for early adulthood. Without them, life is just about living in the day-to-day and our horizons become narrowed.

As corporate parents, our most important responsibility is to make sure young people are safe and healthy. Promoting independence is about more than this though. It is about supporting and equipping young people to look after their health and wellbeing by making positive choices in life, building a strong sense of identity and belonging, and maintaining emotional safety and resilience. Underpinning this is our commitment to ensuring young people know and understand their rights, how to make their voice heard and how inform and influence decision-making.

Reflective questions for practice

- Does the young person know what they can do themselves to stay physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and well?
- Do they know where they can go / who they can turn to for advice and support about their health and wellbeing?
- How does the young person's current state of health and wellbeing impact on their ability to be independent? E.g., does it impact on their ability to take up education, employment, training or extra-curricular opportunities?
- How can we support the young person's health and wellbeing, so that they can develop their independence and take up the opportunities available to them?

- Is the young person safe and stable at school/college/work?
- Do they feel safe and understand how to keep themselves safe?
- Does the young person's safety negatively impact on their ability to develop their independence?
- How could we help them build safety into their lives?

- Does the young person have a positive and strong sense of their own identity? Do they know their background and life-story? Are they supported to be themselves? How does this affect (positively or negatively) their attitudes towards the future?
- Does the young person feel safe and supported to express their religion, culture and heritage?

- Does the young person feel able to make their views listened to, heard and understood?
- Do they know their rights, both as a young person and as a young person with care experience?
- Do they know who they can turn to make their voice heard, shape the decisions affecting them, and understand their rights?

Building the foundations for independent adult life

The foundations for independence are the more tangible things needed to live independently. This includes a suitable place to live, stable and sufficient finances, daily living skills, as well as education, employment and training opportunities. By planning and preparing as early as possible for these things, we enable and empower young people to put in place what they need for when they leave care.

Reflective questions for practice

- Where would the young person like to live when they leave care? What can we do to make that possible?
- Is the young person aware of all their options for when they turn 18? Do they know what they need to do to make those options a reality?
- Does the young people know who they can turn to for advice, guidance and support about their housing options, and how?

- Has the young person had opportunities to cook, clean and shop for themselves? Would they be confident in doing those things when living independently?
- What can we do to support the young person to develop those skills before they leave care?

- Is the young person confident in managing their money, making budgets and paying bills?
- Do they know where they can go to find out more about money management skills and personal finance?
- Do they know who they can turn to if they need support with debt?
- After leaving care, are they accessing their full entitlement of support and benefits? Does the young person know what they are entitled to? Who is helping them claim their full entitlement of support and benefits?

- What aspirations and goals does the young person have for their education and career? Where would they like to be in a few years' time?
- How can we help the young person achieve their goals and aspirations?
- What opportunities are available for the young person to develop their skills and experience in the workplace? Is there anything we can do to help them seek out those opportunities?
- Does the young person know who they can speak to, and where they can find out more information, about careers, apprenticeships, training, and higher education?

- Is the young person able to plan ahead, make good decisions, and be organised in order to put in place the practical things they need?
- How can we work with the young person to help them develop their executive functioning skills and capabilities so that they are in control of their own lives and decisions as they get older?

Expectations for practice

To deliver on our commit to promote care-experienced young people's independence, the following principles should be a part of everyone's practice:

- **Engage** early with young people about developing their independence, long before they turn 18
- **Include** the views, interests and lived experienced of young people, making sure our work with them is guided by what is best for them as individuals
- **Involve** young people, at every stage, in any planning and decision-making affecting their lives, starting from their strengths, needs and interests as individuals
- **Nurture** young people's relationships with their family, friends and other significant adults in their lives, in a way which is safe and based on the young person's consent
- **Build trust** with the young person, as well as between them and the adults around them, including their other workers and carers
- **Work restoratively** with young people, through meaningful and trusting relationships, and being informed by the impact of trauma and stigma
- **Be aspirational** for each young person, supporting them to identify goals and how to achieve them
- **Be proactive** about promoting extra-curricular opportunities at school and in the community
- **Communicate openly** with young people about their options for the future, including being clear about what is realistic and achievable in the short term, and the steps they need to take to get to where they want to be in life
- **Build up** the capabilities of each young person, always starting from their strengths
- **Support** young people to make positive and healthy choices in life
- **Acknowledge, understand and respect** the individual backgrounds, characteristics and experiences of young people
- **Encourage** and support young people to try new things and take healthy risks, in safe and rewarding ways
- **Facilitate** access to tangible support at key stages in the young people's development and transition to adulthood

The stages of promoting independence

The lists below set out, as headlines, what promoting independence looks like at different stages of a young person's approach to adulthood.

All ages are provided only as a guide – every young person is different in their development, experience and circumstance.

From school year 7:

- Identifying the key relationships and connections with family, friends and community
- Seeking opportunities to build community around the young person
- Starting to learn and practice key living skills as part of daily home life, like cooking and cleaning
- Understanding the basic 'need-to-knows' for keeping safe at home, online, at school and in the community
- Understanding the basic 'need-to-knows' for keeping physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and well
- Beginning to explore personal identity and sense of belonging in a safe environment, and knowing where to go and who to talk to in confidence about identity and belonging
- Understanding basic rights as a young person, and as a care-experienced young person, including how to have a say in decision-making and planning

From school year 9:

- Nurturing key relationships and connections with family, friends and community
- Seeking opportunities to build community around the young person
- Building in more responsibility and freedom in learning daily living skills
- Learning basic money management (pocket money and savings)
- Early conversations about interests and goals in life, including how KS4 and FE can help achieve those goals
- Initial conversations about housing options post 16 and 18, linked to personal goals for the future and how to achieve them
- Learning the basics about how to keep safe at home, online, at school and in the community
- Learning how to be physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and well, and knowing where to go/who to speak to for more help and support
- More developed conversations around Identity and belonging, including signposting to more information and support
- More developed conversations about rights and participation, including signposting to participation groups, advocacy services and online advice and support

Services to support young people after the age of 18 should be considered as early as possible. For those young people who may require support from Adult Social Care, a referral to the Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) team can be made when the young person is in year 9 and should be made at the earliest opportunity. The referral may be made by the young

person themselves or anyone with their consent. To find out more about the PfA team in Devon and how to make a referral, head to the [SEND Local Offer website](#).

From school year 11:

- Nurturing relationships and connections with family, friends and community, including an explicit focus on these relationships and connections during life after care (which are the relationships which will last)
- More advanced money management and financial education focused on independent living after leaving care – savings, budgeting, paying bills, claiming benefits (signposting to more detailed online guidance and training)
- Exploring Further/Higher Education, employment and training goals and opportunities, and what is needed to achieve those goals
- Planning for housing options post-18, based on individual needs, goals and circumstances, including making sure the young person understands what all the options available are to them and what they mean in practice for them
- Advice, guidance and support to keep safe at home, online, and in the community, making sure the young person knows who they can turn to if they don't feel safe
- Advice, guidance and support to keep physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and well, signposting to online self-help guidance as well as universal and targeted health services where necessary
- Continuing conversations with young people about personal identity and sense of belonging – advice, guidance and signposting to local groups and online spaces
- Continuing conversations with young people about their rights and opportunities for participation – advice, guidance and signposting to local groups and online spaces

From 17+

- Involving family, friends and community in the young person's transition to adulthood
- Ongoing advice, guidance and support around money management and financial education while living independently
- Signposting to careers advice, opportunities for care-experienced young people, and wrap-around support for further/higher education inclusion
- Ongoing advice, guidance and support around housing options post 18, including signposting to targeted services if at risk of homelessness
- Advice, guidance and support on keeping physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and well, signposting to universal and targeted health services for care-experienced young adults
- Continuing conversations about personal identity and sense of belonging – advice, guidance and signposting to local groups and online spaces
- Continuing conversations about rights and opportunities for participation – advice, guidance and signposting to local groups and online spaces

The tangibles

- Devon's [local offer for care-experienced young people](#) includes a range of support, including direct financial support, which is available to care-experienced young people in Devon.
- **A tenancy-ready offer**, based around renting-ready training, will be available for care-experienced young people to support them to be ready to live independently when they leave care. The training will be delivered by PAs and is available either for groups of young people or one-to-one. It will cover themes like the local housing options available, setting up a new home, money management and budgeting, and maintaining a home. Find out more about the course [below](#).
- **Supporting transitions to adulthood**, through regular transition planning and joint-working between the young person, their social worker, PA and any other significant trusted adults in their lives. Transition planning begins from the young person's 16th birthday and continues until they leave care. After they turn 18, young people continue to be supported by their PA into adulthood. More information including checklists to support transition planning, can be found below by [clicking here](#).
- [Kooth](#) and [Qwell](#) offer online mental wellbeing support for young people and adults in Devon respectively. Care-experienced young people, for whom Devon County Council holds a statutory duty, will be able to access these resources wherever they are in the country.
- Devon County Council encourages all of its in-house and externally commissioned foster carers to offer a **staying put** arrangement for young people leaving care. Where it is in the interest of the young person and their foster carers, this allows the young person to remain living in the home beyond the age of 18. While it is not necessary the right option for every young person, for many, it provides the stability, consistency and ongoing support needed at a particularly important time in life.
- Young people may wish to express their views on their preparation for adulthood through the **Mind of My Own (MOMO)** app. This can be an easy way for young people to describe their current experiences and what they need going forward directly with their workers. Any worker or carer can work with a care-experienced young person of any age to use MOMO. The app is designed to help facilitate conversations which are expected to happen in any case with young people, on their aspirations for the future, how they are feeling about living independently and what they feel they need more support with. MOMO is not necessarily the right tool for all young people, but it is an option that should be considered for any young person.

Outcomes

When we promote young people's independence, we aim to broaden horizons, improve life chances and expand opportunity as they move into adulthood. Across the country, young people leaving care generally have worse outcomes than their non-care-experienced peers. This is not inevitable, and by being the best possible corporate parents, we can do more.

If we are making a difference in the lives of our young people, after leaving care, we will expect to see:

- Young people have at least two trusting relationships with an older adult in their life
- Young people tell us that, if they want to and feel safe to, they feel supported to build relationships with their birth parents, siblings, extended family and family friends
- The vast majority of young people continue to be in touch with leaving care services
- Young people tell us that they have access to extra-curricular opportunities locally
- Older young people in care (14+) have improved mental and emotional wellbeing
- Older young people in care (14+) have positive and healthy lifestyles and keep themselves well. They have improved knowledge, skills and support to do so
- Young people, wanting to have children of their own, are ready and supported to do so
- Older young people in care (14+) have regular and up-to-date health and dental health assessments, and receive the timely support they need
- Fewer older young people in care (14+) go missing from their placement, and a higher proportion of those who do have a return home interview
- Ahead of leaving care, older young people (16+) tell us they feel confident in cooking, cleaning, shopping and managing their money by themselves
- While in care, young people are more stable and settled where they are living, with homes and carers that meet their own needs, circumstances and aspirations
- More young people are living independently, after completing renting-ready training
- More young people are living with their former foster carers after turning 18
- More young people are living in suitable accommodation and are in education, employment or training by the time they reach 21
- Young people feel more involved in the planning for independence and are able to share their voice and lived experience to shape decision-making

Appendices

Crisis UK - Renting Ready Course

Renting Ready is the national housing and homelessness charity Crisis' tenancy training course, which is specifically designed for anyone experiencing or at risk of homelessness, as well as those who have limited experience of living independently. The aim of the training for care-experienced young people is to support them as they leave care and start to live on their own for the first time. After completing the training, young people will have an understanding of what it takes to live independently and be able to demonstrate that they are ready to find and maintain a place of their own.

In Devon, the course will be delivered to young people by PAs who have been trained in providing the content. The training will therefore be led by people who know the local context, and understand the strengths, needs and goals of our young people.

Module summaries

Summaries for each of the modules of the course can be found at the links below:

1. [Housing options](#)
2. [Getting ready to move](#)
3. [Money matters](#)
4. [Making your money go further](#)
5. [Making a house a home](#)
6. [Finding and living with flatmates](#)

Course content

Housing Options

- Different housing options
- Differences between PRS and social housing
- AST (joint and individual) and lodging agreements
- Landlord/tenant rights and responsibilities
- How tenancies are ended
- Housing Benefit/Universal Credit

Getting Ready to Move

- Different types of landlords
- Promoting yourself to landlords
- Tenancy set-up costs
- Deposit protection and inventories
- Searching for properties
- Property viewings – what to look out for and making a good impression

Money Matters

- Budgeting for a tenancy and consequences of not paying bills
- Council Tax
- Utilities – dealing with metres and getting the best deal
- Understanding bills
- Payment methods
- Priority and non-priority debts and payments
- Different bank accounts and sources of credit

Making Your Money Go Further

- Shopping and cooking on a budget
- Planning nutritious and affordable meals (inc recipe ideas)
- Saving energy and money on utilities

Making A House A Home

- Furnishing a home
- Keeping a property clean
- Local services incl. bin collection and recycling
- Property maintenance, including blocked drains and bleeding a radiator
- Damp and condensation
- Getting to know the area and engaging with the community
- Getting on with neighbours

Finding and living with flatmates

- Identifying well-matched housemates
- Common issues in a shared house and how to overcome them
- Housing meetings and house rules
- Paying bills in a shared house

Transitions guidance

Although statutory guidance requires that children meet their Personal Advisor (PA) from the age of 16, the reality for many young people across the country is that still they do not meet them until they are 18 or older. This is too late and means they may miss out on support.

Care leavers need PAs and social workers who know them well and work together effectively, so that their support meets their individual needs. This helps make sure care leavers receive the help they need, feel better prepared for adulthood, and are more involved in the decisions about their future.

Adult Social Care

For young people who are likely to need continued care and support into adulthood, Devon County Council's Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) team are a part of Adult Social Care and work with young people as early as possible to promote their independence and ease the transition into adulthood and adult services.

Young people, between 12 and 18 years old, themselves, or their workers or carers can complete an online referral form for a contact from the team and a possible Care Act assessment. More information on the PfA team, including contact details and a link to the referral form, is available on the [SEND Local Offer website](#).

Transition meetings

In Devon, we allocate our PAs to our young people as close to their 16th birthday as possible and have developed guidance to support the work required between the social worker, PA and the young person to effectively plan for the next stages in life and ensure key activities are undertaken.

Transition meetings are arranged within 1 month of young person turning 16, and then 3 monthly to continue until young person's 18th birthday. the frequency of these may be changed where that is in the best interests of the young person. Transition planning and progress will also be reviewed as part of the child in care review process.

After the initial transition meeting between the young person's social worker and PA, further meetings should include any other professionals who are also working with the young person. This might include an adult services social worker, a placement support worker, or homelessness prevention worker. The young person is able and encouraged to attend if they would like to, and they are supported to participate and share their views and experience.

Key actions and decisions are recorded and saved on the young person's Eclipse record. Progress is tracked through supervision and review meetings. The checklists below are used by professionals to understand the young person's circumstances, including their strengths, needs and interests, and ensure they have what they need when they leave care as an adult.

Transition checklist - 16 years

Overview of circumstances (Living arrangements, education/employment, hobbies, family and friends contact etc.)

Strengths

Worries

What are this young person's plans for the future?

Checklist of priority tasks

Birth Certificate	<u>Yes/no</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u> <u>YP-Foster carer?</u>
National insurance number	YES/NO	Date	Number:
Bank Account/Savings	YES/NO	Date	Details
DLA-PIP	YES/NO	Date	Who receives this money?

Referral to Adults services/Mental health	YES/NO	Date	
Devon Home Choice	YES/NO	Date	Number
Preparation for Independence work	YES/NO If NO, when?	Date	Responsible person
Passport	YES/NO	Date	Number
Provisional Driving License	YES/NO	Date	Number
Is Staying Put a consideration, do carers understand what this means?	YES/NO	Date	Discussion

All actions completed - Yes/No

If No S/W & P/A to discuss outstanding issues- agree action timescale and record details here:

Team managers comments:

Transition checklist 17 years

Overview of circumstances (Living arrangements, education/ employment)

Strengths

Worries

What are this young person's plans for the future?

Checklist of priority tasks

Action	YES/NO	Responsible	Date	Outcome
Pathway plan ~Social worker & Personal Advisor to collaborate and agree plan with young person	YES/NO	Social Worker	Date	Outcome
Application for Stay Put	YES/NO	Social Worker By 17	Date Agreed at panel	Duration

Notification to Placement Team to amend placement costs	YES/NO	Personal Advisor	Date	Outcome
Further 18 plus planning- accommodation – supported provisions/YHPP -homeless hub referrals	YES/NO	Social Worker & Personal Advisor	Referrals made	Agreed Plan
Application for Devon Home Choice	YES/NO	Social Worker	Date	
Reference for Devon home choice banding	YES/NO	Social Worker	Date	
Discussion / Application for Benefits	YES/NO	Personal Advisor	Date	Agreed Plan
Personal allowance Application/ Cancellation	YES/NO	Personal Advisor	Date	Agreed Plan
Education training & Employment Planning	YES/NO	Social Worker & Personal Advisor	Date	Action/Agreed Plan
Emotional Health & Well-being – Social worker to advise of referrals/input from Other agencies	YES/NO	Social Worker	Risk assessment required? YES/NO If YES Completed by transfer date	Outcome-
Referral to Adult Mental Health	YES/NO	Social Worker	Date	Outcome

Referral to Adults Social Care	YES/NO	Social worker	Date	Outcome
Completion of Preparation for Independence work and detail in Pathway Plan	YES/NO	Social Worker /Personal Advisor	Date	~
Risk assessment	YES/NO	Social Worker	Date	
Move on Planning	YES/NO	Personal Advisor	Date	Agreed plan
Birthday money at 18yrs	YES/NO	Social Worker	Date	~
Leaving Care Grant	YES/NO	Personal Advisor		
Chronology up to date 18th Birthday	YES/NO	Social Worker	Date	
Recommendation and actions from last CIC review completed	YES/NO	Social Worker	Date	
Eclipse Relationships added and up to date	YES/NO	Social Worker	Date	
Visits/case notes up to date	YES/NO	Social Worker	Date	
Final Transfer meeting with Manager/ATM, Social Worker & Personal Advisor	Planned date 2 weeks prior to 18th Birthday	All	Date	Outcome/agreed plan

All actions completed- Yes/No

If No S/W & P/A to discuss outstanding issues- agree action timescale and record details here:

Team managers comments:

Pathway Planning

Local authorities have a statutory duty to plan for young people's transition into adulthood. From the age of 16, PAs and social workers should work together with the young person, through their Pathway Plan, to plan for adulthood and put in place everything the young person needs. Plans should involve the young person, they should be aspirational, outcomes-focused and focus on what needs to happen achieve long-term goals. It is also important that pathway-planning remains flexible to changing circumstances and needs.

Pathway plans are the main tool we use to promote young people's independence and help them prepare for adulthood. While they are not a silver bullet, high-quality, comprehensive and inclusive plans go a long way to ensuring the young person has access to the support they need and are prepared for adult life.

Key principles and expectations for pathway-planning

All pathway plans should be..

- **Involving** - care leavers must be listened to, heard and represented in their pathway plans
- **Aspirational** - pathway plans should be aspirational for the young person, both in the short and long-term
- **Dynamic** - pathway planning is a continuous and dynamic process and not a one-off meeting
- **Outcomes-focused** - the direction of travel should be clear, with targets and actions set out clearly to help the young person keep moving towards their goals
- **High-quality** - there should be strong analysis of the strengths, needs and risks in the young person's life, with a clear narrative about what support is being provided and what difference this will make

Content of pathway plans – the dimensions of need

Pathway Plans should cover all aspects of the young person's life. Plans include the following sections:

- Health and development
- Education, training and employment
- Emotional and behavioural development
- Identity
- Family and social relationships
- Practical and independent living skills
- Financial arrangements
- Accommodation (suitability)

Reflective questions for pathway-planning

- Is the young person's voice, experience and interests recognisable in the plan?

- Is the plan aspirational and ambitious?
- Does it set out, as clearly as possible, what the next steps are to help the young person move towards their goals in life?
- Does the plan support the young person to build trusting and reliable relationships with the people around them?
- Are other specialist, targeted and universal services that the young person may need to access referenced in the plan?

For more information and guidance about writing purposeful and evidence-informed pathway plans, you can [download this slide-pack online](#).

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people have the same rights as any young person in the UK under the Children Act 1989. For asylum-seeking young people in care in Devon, we have duties as corporate parents to promote their wellbeing, development and life chances.

Asylum-seeking young people are some of the most vulnerable people in society. They may be victims of exploitation and abuse and are separated from their usual primary caregivers and wider family networks. On top of this, many unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people find themselves in a society and culture which is unfamiliar to them, with a new language, new norms and new local services to navigate. It is vital that, as part of promoting their independence, their cultural and social needs are understood and supported. This may include facilitating access to a faith group, supporting them to meet with young people from a similar background or helping address any stigma or discrimination they may experience.

Due to their vulnerabilities, circumstance, and the nature in which they arrived in the country, many unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people are disproportionately at risk of [going missing](#) and being exploited. The [Safer Me framework](#) is a useful resource to help professionals respond effectively to contextual risk.

These principles guide how we work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people:

- Build trusting relationships with the young people, helping them feel safe and supported where they're living
- Promote their participation in groups and activities conducive to their social and cultural needs
- Understand the signs of exploitation and spot them early
- Share information early with other agencies if a young person may be at risk
- Help them understand their rights in the UK and what happens after they turn 18, so that they have certainty about the future
- Involve the young people in planning and decision-making about their lives