Leaving Care and Transition

**SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER**

These procedures apply to young people who are or have been in care and are entitled to support after their 16th birthday.

There are three categories of those leaving care all of whom are entitled to support after their 16th birthday. The categories are Eligible, Relevant, and Former Relevant.

These procedures also refer to Qualifying Young People who may receive support, advice and assistance after their 16th birthday.

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| **Note** that when a young person leaves care or transitions to another placement, suitable luggage should be used. A child's belongings should never be transported in bin-bags or other inappropriate containers (see [**NYAS, My Things Matter Report**](https://www.nyas.net/news-and-campaigns/campaigns/current-campaigns/my-things-matter/)). |

**RELATED LOCAL GUIDANCE**

[**Wirral Local Offer**](https://wirralchildcare.proceduresonline.com/files/local_offer_care.pdf)

**RELATED CHAPTER**

[**Staying Put Procedure**](https://wirralchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_stay_put.html)

**AMENDMENT**

This chapter was amended in September 2022 to add a link to the NYAS ‘My Things Matter’ Report – support and respect care-experienced children and their belongings when they move. (See Scope Box above.)

**This chapter is currently under review.**

**1. Introduction**

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduces 3 new provisions:

1. A duty on local authorities which requires them to offer **Personal Adviser** support to all care leavers towards whom the local authority had duties under section 23C of the Children Act 1989, up to age 25 - irrespective of whether they are engaged in education or training. This includes care leavers who return to the local authority at any point after the age of 21 up to age 25 and request such support. (Under previous legislation, local authorities were required to only provide care leavers with support from a Personal Adviser until they reached age 21, with that support continuing up to age 25 if a care leaver was engaged in education or training. However, this support was not available to care leavers aged over 21 who were not in education, training or employment);
2. A duty on local authorities to consult on and then publish their '**local offer**' for care leavers, which sets out both care leavers' legal entitlements and the additional discretionary support that the local authority provides; and
3. A duty on local authorities which requires them to have regard to seven '**corporate parenting principles**', that will guide the way in which the local authority provides its services to children in care and care leavers.

These are specific requirements in addition to the existing provisions relating to support for care leavers. The Children and Social Work Act does **not** extend **all care leaver support to age 25**.

The duty that extends Personal Adviser support (where requested) to all care leavers means that the local authority continues to exercise functions in respect of care leavers to age 25 and should therefore apply the corporate parenting principles when exercising those functions.

The aim of leaving care services is to support care leavers so that they can experience a smooth transition and go on to live successful independent lives. Each care leaver will reach that point at a different age and there should be no assumption that the duty means that all care leavers will require statutory support until the age of 25. Children are supported to prepare for their future and develop their independence in line with their individual needs, while protecting themselves from being in unsafe situations or with unsafe people.

The duty therefore means that local authorities do not necessarily need to provide the same level of support to care leavers aged 21 to 25 as it does for those aged 18-20. The duty does however enable local authorities to respond positively to requests for support from care leavers aged 21-25 who may be continuing to struggle with the transition to independence and adult life.

**2. Definitions**

Normally the definitions relating to Keywords are found by accessing the Keywords Glossary, but a number of the terms used in this procedure are specific to it; therefore they have also been summarised below:

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|   | **Eligible Young People**They are aged 16 or 17, have been Looked After for a period or periods totalling at least 13 weeks starting after their 14th birthday and ending at least one day after their 16th birthday, and are still in care. (This total does not include a series of pre-planned short-term placements of up to four weeks where the child has returned to the parent). There is a duty to support these young people up to the age of 18, wherever they are living.The statutory definition and requirements to undertake a needs assessment, prepare a Pathway Plan, keep the Pathway Plan under review and appoint a Personal Adviser are covered by Regulations 42, 43 and 44 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. |
|   | **Relevant Young People**They are aged 16 or 17 and are no longer Looked After, having previously been in the category of Eligible Young Person when in care (that is, they have been Looked After for a period, or periods, totalling at least 13 weeks starting after their 14th birthday and ending at least one day after their 16th birthday). However, if after leaving care, a young person returns home for a period of 6 months or more to be cared for by a parent and the return home has been formally agreed as successful, they will no longer be a "Relevant Young Person".A young person is also "Relevant" if, having been in care for three months or more, he or she is then detained after their 16th birthday either in a hospital, remand centre, young offenders' institution or secure training centre. There is a duty to support Relevant Young People up to the age of 18, wherever they are living.The statutory definition and requirements to stay in touch with the young person, undertake a needs assessment (unless this was done when the young person was 'Eligible'), prepare and keep the Pathway Plan under review, appoint a Personal Adviser (unless this was done when the young person was 'Eligible') and provide accommodation and assistance to meet their needs in relation to education, training or employment are covered by Regulations 4 to 9 of the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010. |
|   | **A Young Person Discharged from Being Looked After**Any decision to cease looking after a child aged 16 or 17 who is Looked After other than by virtue of a Care Order, must be approved by the Director of Children's Services. The Director must be satisfied that:* The child's wishes and feelings have been ascertained and given due consideration;
* The child's Independent Reviewing Officer has been consulted;
* The child's relatives have been consulted, where appropriate.
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|   | **Former Relevant Young People**They are aged 18 or above and have left care having been previously either "Eligible", "Relevant" or both. There is a duty to consider the need to support these young people wherever they are living.The statutory definition and requirements to stay in touch with the young person, keep the Pathway Plan under review, continue the appointment of a Personal Adviser and provide financial assistance near where the young person is employed or seeking employment/to enable the young person to pursue education or training are covered by Regulations 4 to 9 of the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010.If the Former Relevant child pursues higher education in accordance with their Care Plan, there is a duty to pay a higher education bursary.To the extent that the Former Relevant child's welfare requires it, 'other assistance' must be provided which may be in kind or, in exceptional circumstances, in cash.These duties continue until the former relevant child reaches 21.  |
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|   | **Qualifying Young People**They are aged 16 and over and under the age of 21, and:* Subject to a Special Guardianship Order (or were when they reached 18) and were looked after immediately before the making of that Order;
* At any time after 16 (but whilst still a child), were (but no longer are) looked after, accommodated or fostered.

'Looked after accommodated or fostered' includes:* Looked After by a local authority;
* Accommodated by or on behalf of a voluntary organisation;
* Accommodated in a private children's home;
* Accommodated for a consecutive period of at least 3 months (including even before the child was 16) by a Health Authority, ICB or Local Authority (providing education), in:
	+ A care home;
	+ Independent hospital;
	+ National Health Service trust or Foundation Trust.
* Privately Fostered - but do not qualify as Eligible, Relevant or Former Relevant.

Where a local authority looked after, accommodated or fostered a young person, and they are deemed as Qualifying for advice and assistance, the local authority has a duty to take reasonable steps to contact them with a view to advising and assisting them.This includes financial assistance in relation to expenses incurred in living near the place where the young person is, will be, or is seeking work or where they will be receiving education or training; or where the person is in full time further or higher education, is under the age of 25 and qualifies for advice and assistance, or would have done if they were under 21, assistance in relation to securing vacation accommodation (see [**Section 11, Qualifying Young People**](https://wirralchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_leaving_care.html#qualify)). |

**3. Expectations and Corporate Parenting**

3.1 Expectations

The aim of the Leaving Care Services is to support care leavers so that they can live successful independent lives. Each care leaver will reach that point at a different age and there should be no assumption that all care leavers will require statutory support until up to age 25.

Although each young person will be different, it would be expected that support for care leavers will taper away over time, in recognition of their growing maturity and independence:

* For care leavers aged 16 and 17, the local authority is under an absolute duty to accommodate them, which does not apply once the young person reaches age 18;
* For care leavers aged 18 and up to 21, there is a proactive duty on the local authority to keep in touch with care leavers (section 23C(2) of the Children Act 1989 Act), which does not apply to care leavers aged 21 or over, irrespective of whether those young people are already entitled to support because they are in education or training, or those who are covered by the new duty. Although there is no requirement to proactively keep in touch with all young people aged over 21 up to age 25 throughout the year, the duty (under the Children and Social Work Act 2017) requires local authorities to make care leavers aware that they can continue to request Personal Adviser support as soon as possible after they turn 21; and on at least an annual basis thereafter. This applies regardless of whether a care leaver may have earlier declined the offer of Personal Adviser support. This requirement recognises that care leavers' circumstances may change and confirms that all care leavers are entitled to Personal Adviser support at any time up to age 25. Sending a birthday card to care leavers, for example, presents an ideal opportunity to remind the young person of their entitlement to Personal Adviser support if they need it, through to age 25;
* For care leavers aged 21 or over, the duties introduced through the Children and Social Work Act 2017 - to assess care leavers' needs, and develop and keep under review a Pathway Plan - apply only where the young person requests support.

3.2 Corporate Parenting

The corporate parenting principles apply only to local authorities. Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children should nevertheless ensure that relevant partners understand how they can assist local authorities and apply the principles in relation to the services those partners may provide. 'Relevant partners' include local policing bodies and Chief Officers of Police, local probation trusts and the National Probation Service, youth offending service, Integrated Care Boards, NHS England, schools and educational institutions.

See also: [**DfE, Prevention of Homelessness and Provision of Accommodation for 16 and 17 Year Old Young People Who May be Homeless and/or Require Accommodation**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/provision-of-accommodation-for-16-and-17-year-olds-who-may-be-homeless-and-or-require-accommodation).

3.2.1 Corporate Parenting Principles

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 set out seven principles for Corporate Parenting:

* To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people.
* To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
* To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
* To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
* To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.
* For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
* To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

See [**Applying Corporate Parenting Principles to Looked-after Children and Care Leavers - Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-corporate-parenting-principles-to-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers).

**4. Local Offer**

All local authorities must publish up-to-date information about the services it offers for care leavers and other services which may assist care leavers in, or preparing for, adulthood and independent living. The local offer should cover health and well-being; relationships; education and training; employment; accommodation; participation in society. This information should also include how relevant services that can be accessed by its partner agencies and include District Councils where relevant. See here for [**Wirral’s Local Offer**](https://localofferwirral.org/). (PLEASE LINK UPDATED LOCAL OFFER)

**5. Leaving Care Assessment of Need**

All young people - Eligible, Relevant or Former Relevant - must receive a multi-agency assessment of their needs as to the advice, assistance and support they will need when leaving care.

The young person's social worker will be responsible for coordinating the Needs Assessment.

This assessment should be completed no more than 3 months after the young person's 16th birthday or after the young person becomes Eligible or Relevant if this is later. The timetable must take account of any forthcoming exams and avoid disrupting the young person's preparation for them.

The young person's Care Plan together with information from the most recent Assessment will form the basis of the Needs Assessment.

The young person's social worker will be responsible for recording the assessment information and conclusions as well as the outcome of any meetings held. The young person must be invited to any meetings held in connection with the assessment.

The Needs Assessment should take account of the views of the following:

1. The young person
2. The parents
3. The current carer
4. The school/college and the education service
5. Any Independent Visitor
6. Any person providing health care or treatment for the young person
7. The Personal Advisor
8. Any other relevant person including, in the case of a young person with special needs, a representative from Adult Services
9. A care leaver's needs in relation to their status as a victim of trafficking or an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child must be considered when the local authority is preparing an assessment of needs. Also, to require that, where a child is a victim of trafficking or an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child, the local authority must consider whether their related needs are being met when reviewing the child's pathway plan (see amended Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010).

A decision not to include significant people must be recorded in the young person's file.

Young people with language or communication needs should be provided throughout the process with appropriate interpretation, translation or advocacy support.

Where the young person refuses to engage in the assessment process, this should be recorded, together with any actions taken to ascertain the young person's views.

All parties, including the social worker's manager, should sign the completed Needs Assessment Record. The young person should be provided with a copy in a format that is accessible to him or her within 2 weeks. The social worker is responsible for ensuring that the outcome of the assessment is explained to the young person.

The Needs Assessment will inform the development of a Pathway Plan which will be based on and include the young person's Care Plan.

Where the young person continues to be Looked After, the Placement Plan/Placement Information Record should describe what arrangements have been made within the placement to support the Pathway Plan.

When carrying out an assessment of needs, the local authority must determine whether it would be appropriate to provide advice, assistance and support to facilitate a Staying Put arrangement. Where they determine that it would be appropriate, and where the child and the local authority foster parent wish to make a Staying Put arrangement, then the local authority must provide such advice, assistance and support to facilitate a Staying Put arrangement. For further information see the [**Staying Put Procedure**](https://wirralchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_stay_put.html). (PLEASE LINK TO UPDATED DOCUMENT)

5.1 Needs Assessment for those aged 21 and up to 25

The government guidance [**Extending Personal Adviser Support to All Care Leavers to Age 25: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (February 2018)**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extending-personal-adviser-support-to-age-25) highlights that at this stage of their lives young adults needs will vary considerably. Some may need considerable continuing support with transition, whilst others will not take up the offer for continuing support. Therefore there should be a proportionate response, with some benefitting from a continued and full assessment of needs, whilst others who seek help for specific issues have a more focussed assessment which responds to their particular need and level of requested help (see [**Section 6.1, Pathway Planning for those Aged 21 and up to 25**](https://wirralchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_leaving_care.html#twenty1_5)).

For further information see[**Appendix 1: Needs Assessment and Content of Pathway Plans for Relevant and Former Relevant Children**](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/397649/CA1989_Transitions_guidance.pdf#page=21).

**6. Pathway Planning**

All young people will have a Pathway Plan in place within 3 months of becoming Eligible and, wherever possible, a Pathway Plan will be in place by the young person's 16th birthday.

The Pathway Plan will be based on and include a young person's Care Plan and any Personal Education Plan or Careers advice service will inform and complement the Pathway Plan.

Each young person will be central to drawing up their own Pathway Plan setting the goals and identifying how the local authority will help meet them, including any services being provided in respect of the young person's disability or needs arising from being in custody or because of entering the country as an unaccompanied asylum seeker. It should be written in a way that meets the needs of the young person, capturing their aspirations and key messages. Young people with language or communication needs should be provided throughout the process with appropriate interpretation, translation or advocacy support.

The Pathway Plan must clearly identify the roles of each person who has a part to play in supporting the care leaver.

The Pathway Plan should also include:

* The plan for the young person's continuing education or training when they cease to be looked after - where the young person is no longer of statutory school age, the Pathway Plan may need to incorporate the goals and actions that were previously included in the PEP.
* How the Responsible Local Authority will assist the young person in obtaining employment or other purposeful activity or occupation, taking into account their aspirations, skills and educational potential to improve their chance of employability.
* The financial support to be provided to enable the young person to meet accommodation and maintenance costs; taking into account their financial capabilities and money-management capacity, along with strategies to develop skills in this area.
* The nature and level of contact and personal support to be provided, and by whom, to the young person.
* Details of the accommodation the young person is to occupy (including an assessment of its suitability in the light of the young person's needs, recording the considerations taken into account in assessing that suitability).
* Details of the arrangements made by the Responsible Local Authority to meet the young person's needs in relation to their identity, with regard to their religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background.

The Pathway Plan must address in particular:

* The young person's health and development building on the information included in the young person's Health Care Plan.
* Education, training and employment. The Personal Education Plan (PEP) should continue to be maintained while the young person continues to receive full or part-time education. Information within the PEP will feed directly into the Pathway Plan. Pathway Plans must have an explicit focus on career planning, taking into account the young person's aspirations, skills, and educational potential.
* Contact with the young person's parents, wider family including siblings and friends and the capacity of this network to encourage the young person and enable them to make a positive transition to adulthood.
* The young person's financial capabilities and money management capacity, along with strategies to develop the young person's skills in this area.
* Where relevant, immigration status should be included as a separate section on Pathway Plans. This will help to ensure that young people who have been granted Pre-Settled Status under the EU Settlement Scheme apply to convert this to Settled Status at the appropriate time. Each young person’s personal deadline for converting Pre-Settled into Settled Status is unique to them and contained in a digital format – it is important therefore that this is recorded and monitored by the local authority. Plans should contain clear information about what action needs to be taken by whom and when.

The Pathway Plan must identify contingency arrangements that will come into effect to support the young person if, for whatever reason, the planned arrangements are not realised.

The local authority should have a flexible approach to supporting young people; it should be borne in mind that it has a duty to accept young people aged 16 and 17 years back in to care if a young person's decision to move into semi-independent accommodation, leave care or decline leaving care services is then identified as premature.

A Financial Summary should be attached to the Plan, at the latest from the point where the young person leaves care.

Where a transfer from Children's to Adult Services will be required, the Plan should specify who has responsibility for giving notice to Adult Services and liaising with them to ensure a smooth transition.

The Designated Manager (Leaving Care) should approve and sign the Pathway Plan.

On completion and approval of the Pathway Plan, all parties involved including the young person should sign it.

A copy of the Financial Summary should be forwarded to the Finance Section who will process the necessary weekly payments.

The young person will be provided with a copy of the most up to date Pathway Plan and the contents must be explained.

Where agencies are contributing to the delivery of an individual young person's Pathway Plan, they should be provided with a copy of the relevant extract from the Plan relating to their contribution.

Information from the Pathway Plan should not be shared with other agencies or individuals without the young person's consent.

6.1 Pathway Planning for those Aged 21 and up to 25

The local authority is required to offer all care leavers a Personal Adviser up to the age 25 and apply the corporate parenting principles when continuing support is agreed or requested.

However, the duty at this stage of a young adult's life is seen as different from the age 18 - 20 in that it enables the local authority to offer support to some individuals who may need continuing support in the transition process. The level of support and intervention will vary considerably; many at this stage of their lives will not require, or want, ongoing help and will not have a Pathway Plan. However, for others:

* There may be multiple issues which will require a Pathway Plan being fully completed and regular contacts, planning/co-ordinating meetings with partner agencies, etc.
* Care leavers may have single or specific issues where they require support and guidance, e.g.
	+ Pregnancy or becoming a parent
	+ Release from custody
	+ Mental health issues
	+ Risk of homelessness
	+ Debt, including rent arrears
	+ For advice or guidance on commencing education or training
	+ For advice or support following experience of domestic or sexual violence/abuse.

Where care leavers require support with single or specific issues, the Pathway Plan should be completed only in the relevant part that reflects the issues being dealt with.

See also [**Section 9, Education, Training and Employment**](https://wirralchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_leaving_care.html#educ_train).

**7. Reviews of Pathway Plans**

The Pathway Plan must be reviewed at least every 6 months for care leavers up to age 21. Thereafter, until the care leaver reaches the age of 25, the issues that have arisen which affect the care leaver will dictate how often Pathway Plans will need to be reviewed and updated. However, as a minimum this should be at least every six months.

Reviews should take place more often if requested by the young person or the Personal Adviser or where there has been a significant change in the young person's circumstances.

The purpose of the review is to check that the goals and milestones are still right and that they are being met. All levels of support should be reviewed to ensure that they are adequate and delivered according to plan.

For an Eligible Young Person, the date for the first review of the Pathway Plan will be set to coincide with the young person's next Looked After Review after the Pathway Plan has been drawn up.

For a Relevant Young Person, the date for the first review will, if possible, be set at the last Looked After Review before the young person ceases to be looked after and in any case within six months of becoming a relevant young person.

For a Former Relevant Young Person, the date for the first review will take place within six months of the young person's 18th birthday.

Whilst the young person is Eligible their Independent Reviewing Officer will chair reviews or support the young person to chair.

Otherwise, the Team Manager of the Leaving Care Service or their nominee will chair the Pathway Plan reviews or support the young person to chair.

The review immediately prior to the young person's 18th birthday will agree how future reviews will be conducted, including whether they will involve face to face meetings, and this will be recorded by the Chairperson. In all cases, even when no formal review meetings are held, the Team Manager of the Leaving Care Service will retain a monitoring role, at six monthly intervals, to check the progress of the Pathway Plan.

Other participants at reviews should include the young person, Personal Adviser, the social worker (if the case is still allocated) and any other significant person.

The young person's expenses (travelling and subsistence) in attending the review will be met by the local authority.

If the Relevant Young Person or Former Relevant Young Person moves to supported accommodation, the Local Authority must:

1. Arrange a review 28 days (or as soon as practicable thereafter) from the time the accommodation is provided; and
2. Determine at what intervals (not exceeding six months) subsequent reviews will be carried out;
3. Reviews should be brought forward where there is an assessed risk that a crisis may develop in a young person's life, for example:
	* Where a young person has been charged with an offence and there is a possibility of their being sentenced to custody, which will risk losing their accommodation.
	* Where a young person is at risk of being evicted from their accommodation or otherwise threatened with homelessness.
	* Where professionals are concerned about the parenting capacity of a 'Relevant' or 'Former Relevant' young person with there being a possibility that their own child may need to be the subject of a multi-agency safeguarding plan.
	* Where a young person requests a review.

Matters to which the Local Authority is to have regard in determining suitability of accommodation (under Schedule 2 to the Care Leavers Regulations 2010 and Schedule 6 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010):

1. In respect of the accommodation:
	1. The facilities and services provided
	2. The state of repair
	3. The safety
	4. The location
	5. The support
	6. The tenancy status
	7. The financial commitments involved for the relevant young person and their affordability.
2. In respect of the Relevant young person:
	1. Their views about the accommodation.
	2. Their understanding of their rights and responsibilities in relation to the accommodation.
	3. Their understanding of funding arrangements.

It is good practice for a review to be held within 28 days of any change in the care leaver's accommodation.

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| **Note**: Bed and Breakfast Accommodation is not considered as suitable accommodation other than in exceptional circumstances. On such occasions:* The placement should be limited to two working days;
* The Local Authority provides appropriate supervision and contact with the young person.

7.12, DfE The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations - Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers |

Where a Relevant or Former Relevant Young Person enters custody, pathway planning must continue. The young person must be visited on a regular basis, and it is good practice for the first visit to take place within ten working days. The role must not be fulfilled by a YOT worker. The Local Authority must liaise with the YOT or the National Probation Service to support the young person emotionally, practically, and financially while in custody. A review of the Pathway Plan should be carried out at least a month before the young person's release to give sufficient time to plan for their resettlement, including identifying suitable accommodation where the young person's placement had to be given up or has been lost and identifying who will collect the young person and the sources of support after his or her release.

In the event of a Relevant or Former Relevant Young Person breaking off contact and/or not engaging with the agreed support and advice being offered, a review of the Pathway Plan may take place by telephone, e-mail or letter, if agreed in advance by the Chairperson and the Personal Adviser. In these circumstances the Personal Adviser will attempt to negotiate a revised plan that is acceptable to all parties (see [**Section 8.1, Keeping in Touch**](https://wirralchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_leaving_care.html#keeping)).

Where contact is lost, the emphasis of the Pathway Plan Review will switch to record how attempts will be made to re-establish contact and these efforts will be reviewed within the established system.

**For those aged 21 and up to 25** the frequency of contact between Personal Advisers and care leavers will vary depending on the nature of each individual's circumstances (see [**Section 6.1, Pathway Planning for those Aged 21 and up to 25**](https://wirralchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_leaving_care.html#twenty1_5)).

Where a Pathway Plan is amended because of a review, the Personal Adviser will amend the Plan. Any necessary approval to the amended financial arrangements will be sought from the Designated Manager (Leaving Care). Once the changes are approved, the Personal Adviser will send a copy of the amended Plan to the young person, the Chairperson and the Designated Manager.

**8. Personal Advisers**

The Personal Adviser acts as the young person's principal source of contact in any matter relating to the Pathway Plan and is accountable for the effective implementation of the Plan (see also [**Section 8.1, Keeping in Touch**](https://wirralchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_leaving_care.html#keeping)). All care leavers (including those who live out of authority) should be made aware of their entitlement to a Personal Adviser up to age 25.

The Personal Adviser will ensure the co-ordination of other agencies and individuals identified in the Pathway Plan and 'act as a focal point' to make sure the young person has access to the appropriate services, including those provisions to enable them to develop some financial management capability.

The Personal Adviser is seen as a 'function' rather than a specific person and the local authority should consider delegating it wholly or partially to the best person able to carry out the role out (see [**Part 3, Regulation 8 of The Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010**](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/2571/pdfs/uksi_20102571_en.pdf)).

The Personal Adviser should be someone who is best able to engage with the young person and motivate them to take up, and best make use of, the services that are available and provided.

It would be good practice where possible and appropriate for the Personal Adviser to maintain the same person from 18 years from when they were an Eligible or Relevant child. However, this will not always be possible, although the Personal Adviser should have the necessary skills and experience to carry out the function. The transfer of the role should be undertaken in a planned and managed way.

When allocating a Personal Adviser to an individual young person, consideration must be given to the wishes of the young person and to issues of gender, race, religion, linguistics, disabilities and equal opportunities. The assessment of need and a judgment as to who is most appropriate to fulfil the role of Personal Adviser will influence the choice and allocation of worker.

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| When a care leaver moves to new accommodation, and the accommodation is unregulated / comes under Section 23B and 24B of the Children Act 1989, the Personal Adviser must see them at that accommodation:* Within 7 days of the and the accommodation is unregulated / comes under Section 23B and 24B of the Children Act 1989;
* Subsequently before the Pathway Plan is reviewed (see [**Section 7, Reviews of Pathway Plans**](https://wirralchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_leaving_care.html#reviews));
* At subsequent intervals of not more than 2 months.
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On each visit, the Personal Adviser must consider whether the accommodation continues to be suitable for the young person.

The Personal Adviser must maintain a written record of their contacts with the young person, monitoring the effectiveness of services in preparing the young person for a time when they will move to greater independence or when they cease to be looked after.

The Personal Adviser will take responsibility for initiating the review of the Pathway Plan and for recording its outcomes.

Care leavers between the age of 21 and under 25 who, following a discussion with their Personal Adviser, wish to continue to receive support, or those who return later during this period, will have an entitlement to resume support from a Personal Adviser previously responsible for their leaving care support.

Depending on the level of their needs, the Personal Adviser's role is expected to reduce over time and become focussed on specific issues with an emphasis on enabling the young adult to take increasingly more responsibility - signposting them to other agencies for information and guidance, including further education and training.

Personal Advisers should apply professional judgement when deciding what level of needs assessment is appropriate.

In all cases where support continues to be offered and provided at this stage, a record should continue to be made be made setting out the issues discussed, and details of any support that the local authority has agreed to provide, so that it can be demonstrated what action they have taken in response to the young adult's request for support.

8.1 Keeping in Touch

It is the role of the Personal Adviser to keep in touch with the young person, and to remain informed as to the young person's progress. However, when the young person becomes 'Former Relevant' this may become more of a challenge and will be dependent on the wishes and needs of the individual care leaver.

A route back for the young person to seek support in the future should be kept open and communicated, for example by sending a birthday card, appropriate festive greeting, letter or a leaflet on how to get in touch in the future, including a link, or details, as to how to access the Local Offer. Also ensuring that the young person receives any circulated information about services or events in which they may have an interest.

It should be explained to them that they will be supported to overcome any difficulties they may be experiencing. Where appropriate they should be advised that they can return to education or training up to age 25 if this is their wish. (All young people who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) should be encouraged to take up this offer of support).

Although there is no requirement to proactively keep in touch with all young people aged over 21 up to age 25 throughout the year, there is a duty which requires local authorities to make care leavers aware that they can continue to request Personal Adviser support when the person turns 21, and on at least an annual basis thereafter.

Touch is considered a vital role within the Care Leavers service, and current expectations are that this will be completed as a minimum of every 56 days, and will be in a format agreed between the PA and young person, e.g. phone call, text message, e-mail or in person.

As with any other circumstance involving vulnerable people, the local authority will need to assess the balance between the risk of harm to the individual, and the rights and freedom of care leavers to choose their own lives and lifestyles. In some situations, the Personal Adviser may continue monitoring the welfare of the care leaver, and take appropriate action if necessary (as might be expected to occur in the case of any vulnerable adult that comes to the attention of the local authority).

**9. Education, Training and Employment**

9.1 Planning for Education, Training and Careers

Care leavers must be provided with access to high quality information, advice, and guidance to inform their plans in order to progress into continuing education, training or employment. How this will be met should be included in the Pathway Plan. They should be offered work experience and other opportunities to allow them to test their career aspirations and needs. Career planning tools should be used to inform Pathway Plans.

The local authority should make every effort not to disrupt a young person's education during their key stage 4 years, both in terms of their school and care placement unless the circumstances clearly require this (see also [**Education of Children with a Social Worker, Looked After and Previously Looked After Procedure, Avoidance of Disruption in Education**](https://wirralchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_educ_lac.html#avoid)).

Placement arrangements for young people considering attending university, from their 18th birthday to the point they commence higher education courses, must be addressed and agreed well in advance of their 18th birthday. Plans need to be made for the vacation breaks. The local authority should not move a young person participating in a course of education during the academic year after their 18th birthday.

9.2 Care Leavers Continuing in Education

Where young people are continuing with an education or training course beyond their 21st birthday, the practical and financial support being provided must continue to be set out in their Pathway Plan.

Pathway Plans must set out accommodation arrangements, including financial arrangements during term time, short vacations and the long summer vacation.

9.3 The 16-19 Bursary Fund and Higher Education Bursary

The 16-19 Bursary Fund helps 16–19-year-olds continue in further education, where they might face financial barriers to participation such as the cost of transport, food or equipment. Young people in the defined group include those in care and care leavers. See the [**Department for Education website - The 16-19 Bursary Fund**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-education-financial-support-for-students).

The Higher Education Bursary is for care leavers in higher education.

**10. Young People Resuming Education or Training After 21**

The definition of a programme of education or training must be interpreted broadly. For example, this might include options such as: completion of a basic skills course, so that the young person has the numeracy and literacy skills needed to compete in the jobs market; take up of a course of further education; take up of a university place; support to enable the young person to complete a recognised postgraduate qualification; or participation in vocational training and apprenticeships.

Care leavers will need support and guidance to help them think about and plan their return to education or training, consider all aspects such as financial support and the impact on their housing or benefits.

Where a care leaver requests this support, an assessment should be made to assess the appropriateness of the education or training course and how it will help them to achieve their ambitions. The Personal Adviser should meet with the care leaver and based on the assessment of their needs and the suitability of the course, update the Pathway Plan. The plan must have a specific focus on the support that the care leaver will need to be able to meet the education or training goals agreed. The plan should reflect the agreed educational outcomes for the young person and the type of support the young person will require. This assessment should draw on the information about the young person's skills and capabilities which will have been set out in Pathway Plans up to age 21. The extent of practical and financial assistance provided will depend on the assessment of the young person's needs and will reflect the type of course, whether it is full or part time and the young person's existing income.

**11. Qualifying Young People**

Services for Qualifying Young People will be determined by an assessment of need carried out by the Leaving Care Team, if requested by the young person

The support offered, which could be financial, will focus upon helping the young person to manage and cope in the community and to manage the transition to adulthood. Attempts will be made to ensure that they are able to access suitable accommodation and maintain social and family links.

Where necessary, in addition to support, practical help should be offered to the young person. This could include helping to acquire basic living skills and consideration of health needs and choices. Where necessary, links will be made with other services and assistance can be provided when he or she has to have contact with other agencies. Advice and support should also be offered in relation to employment, training and educational opportunities.

Local authorities should also set out what assistance can be provided to young people who are 'Qualifying' as a result of being looked after immediately prior to becoming subject to a Special Guardianship Order or subject to a private fostering arrangement. Local authorities will need to be clear about which local authority is responsible for the provision of services to qualifying young people.

The young person's social worker should also help to identify, secure and pay for vacation accommodation, for those qualifying young people who have accessed higher education, or residential further education courses.

Approval for the provision of such financial support must be sought by the young person's social worker by making a written request to the Designated Manager (Leaving Care).

The request should specify the type of financial support sought, the reason for the request and the total cost involved.

**12. Where Care Leavers Live or Move to a Different Local Authority Area**

Where a care leaver resides in a different local authority area, the local authority must seek to ensure that a service is provided that is commensurate with the service which he or she would receive if he or she had remained resident in the area.

Whenever possible, plans for movement of care leavers to a different local authority area must be discussed and the level of service provision agreed with the host authority concerned prior to the move taking place.

All care leavers should be advised on how to access care leavers' services if they move to a different local authority area and need assistance. The advice provided should be in written form.

With young people moving to other authorities, a discussion and joint meeting between the respective Leaving Care Teams must be arranged.

**13. Staying Put**

A Staying Put arrangement is where a young person who has been living in foster care remains in the former foster home after the age of 18.

For a young person living in foster care, the first Looked After Review following their 16th birthday should consider whether a Staying Put arrangement should be an option.

For further information see the [**Staying Put Procedure**](https://wirralchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_stay_put.html).

**14. Access to Records**

Over the course of their lifetime, people who have spent all or part of their childhood and adolescence in local authority care may want to access information about this period in their lives. There can be a range of reasons why people who have left care want to do this, including curiosity about why they came into care; what happened and when; a need to make sense of difficult memories and life events; to clarify disparate explanations; a desire to trace family members; seeking medical information in reference to hereditary illness/disease and also to obtain photos/certificates. For information on access to records by care leavers, see [**Access to Records / Subject Access Requests Procedure, Applications by Care Leavers**](https://wirralchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_access_to_recs.html#app_care_leavers).

**Appendix 1: Needs Assessment and Content of Pathway Plans for Relevant and Former Relevant Children**

[**Click here to view Appendix 1: Needs Assessment and Content of Pathway Plans for Relevant and Former Relevant Children**](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/397649/CA1989_Transitions_guidance.pdf#page=21).

**Further Information**

Legislation, Statutory Guidance and Government Non-Statutory Guidance

[**Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations - Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers**](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/397649/CA1989_Transitions_guidance.pdf)

[**Care Leavers' Charter**](http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childrenincare/a00216209/care-leavers-data-pack)

[**Extending Personal Adviser Support to All Care Leavers to Age 25: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extending-personal-adviser-support-to-age-25)

[**Applying Corporate Parenting Principles to Looked-after Children and Care Leavers - Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-corporate-parenting-principles-to-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers)

[**Joint Housing Protocols for Care Leavers: Good Practice Advice (DfE and MHCLG)**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers/joint-housing-protocols-for-care-leavers-good-practice-advice)

[**Local Offer Guidance: Guidance for Local Authorities**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-offer-guidance)