

Factsheet 6

Leaving or recently left care?

Your local council must support you until you're 21. When you leave care there will be a meeting to help you work out what you're going to do next. If you have already left care, and had spent a total of at least 13 weeks in care since the age of 14, and part of that time was while you were 16 or 17, you will be able to get help, including somewhere to live, from your local council. It doesn't matter if that 13 weeks was not all at the same time.



You have different rights if you have spent less than a total of 13 weeks in care, or you want to leave care before your 16th birthday.

If you spent at least one week in care between the ages of 16-17 you are automatically classed as a priority.

Age	What happens
16	You'll be given a plan to help you make the transition from care to independent life
18	You're no longer in care when you turn 18 but your council must still provide you with some support, e.g. a personal adviser or plan
21	You'll get help and advice from the council until you're 21 (or longer if you're still in education or training)

What Social Services must do to help you

They must:

- give you a personal adviser who stays in touch with you once you've left care
- carry out an assessment to find out what advice and support you need - they must also prepare a plan to make this happen (called a 'pathway plan')
- make sure you've got somewhere to live and enough money (until you turn 18)

Social Services will remain responsible for supporting you even if you move to a different local authority.

What you can do to plan ahead

Before you leave care you should have a 'statutory review meeting' to discuss your future. At this point – or after if it has happened – you should ensure that you are getting and engaging with support to plan you move on options for when you leave care. Accommodation can be secured in many forms such as supported accommodation, shared houses, studio or flats, private renting, social renting, or student accommodation if you intend to go on to University. It is important that you are proactively planning before any support you receive from Social Services comes to end and should give you time to secure appropriate accommodation.

You may have a particular type of accommodation in mind that you want but it is important that you keep your options open as some may take longer to secure than others for example those with waiting lists. You might also be limited on choice due to your finances so it is important that you maximize your income and that you are comfortable budgeting the money you have.

Financial support for 16 or 17-year-old care leavers

Most 16 or 17-year-old care leavers are not eligible for benefits. The social services department of your local council must help you by:

- providing housing or helping you find and keep your own place
- supporting you financially by paying you enough for your rent, food, bills, travel costs for education and training, clothing, pocket money and childcare if you need it
- giving you any other support you need, such as help with continuing your education, finding work or dealing with personal problems



You can usually only claim benefits if you are a 16 or 17-year-old care leaver and you are also a single parent or unable to work because of a disability or illness.

[Find out more from Turn2Us about benefit rules for care leavers.](#)

Financial support for 18+ care leavers

You will be able to apply for housing benefit and income benefits if you are on a low income. Income benefits can be applied for online or by phone.

[You can find out more information from Gov.uk](#)

You should be entitled to claim the 1 bed local housing allowance rate for private renting if you are under 22 but this will still depend on your income.

It is important that in all cases you act fast and make sure you claim any benefits – housing, income or other – as soon as possible as it is not always possible to back date claims and some claims are paid in arrears meaning that you could have a wait. Speak to your Personal Adviser for more information.

Accommodation for young care leavers

Any accommodation the council provides should be suitable for you. You may get a place in a hostel or a self-contained flat.

It is unlikely, but in some cases you could be offered a place in a children's home or foster care.

Ask your personal adviser to help you if you have problems in your accommodation.

Get advice immediately if you're placed in bed and breakfast accommodation or any other unsuitable accommodation.

Looking for affordable private rented accommodation

This is likely to be your fastest solution to securing somewhere to live in the local area. Finances are often the biggest barrier so make sure you have followed the advice above and if you are still struggling you might need to look in more affordable areas of the country.



Applying to the Council's Housing List

If you are not already registered on your local Council's Housing List you should apply as soon as possible. If your local Council is in Kent you can apply online through the Kent Homechoice website at www.kenthomechoice.org.uk. You generally have to have a local connection to the area you are applying to for social housing and you will be asked to provide evidence in connection with your application, which will include proof of identification and local connection to the area at the very least. If you are not on the housing list you cannot be considered for Council housing or Housing Association properties.

For more information on the ways to secure private rented accommodation and how to apply for Social Housing see factsheet 'Housing Advice in the Folkestone and Hythe District'

Help and advice for homeless care leavers

Get advice if you become homeless or as soon as you can after being asked to leave. Make sure you have checked all this information before you leave care.

- check whether social services and/or the housing department should help you
- ask what sort of accommodation and support social services normally provide in your area – this will give you an idea of what you can expect
- make sure you are claiming all the benefits you are entitled to
- ask what longer term housing options are available in your area and give you an idea of how much it might cost
- ask to be put in contact with specialist support organizations or local schemes that can help you raise a deposit or find a suitable place to live