

Help for care leavers 18+

This factsheet looks at your housing options and the support you can get from social services if you have spent time in care.

You will get most help from social services if you are a 'former relevant child'. This means you were in care on your 16th birthday, and spent at least 13 weeks in care between your 14th and 18th birthdays. Being in care includes living with a foster family, or being placed by social services with a family member.

Pathway plan

You must have a pathway plan. This is a document you have created with your social worker that shows how you will move to independent living. It should clearly say:

- how social services will support you
- what other support is available
- what will happen if things don't go according to the plan.

It should include where you will live, what money you will live on, and a plan for your education, training or employment. Social services must review your plan every six months and amend it if your needs change.

Personal adviser

Your pathway plan should tell you who will help you after you leave care. This is your 'personal adviser'. Your personal adviser should keep in touch with you until you are 21, or until you finish your education or training if that is after you turn 21.

If you don't know who your personal adviser is, contact the social services who looked after you. Or, ring Coram Voice for advice on freephone number **0808 800 5792**

If you return to education after age 21

You must be given a personal adviser and pathway plan if you agree with social services to start a course of education or training between your 21st and 25th birthdays.

In care for less than 13 weeks

If you spent less than 13 weeks in care, or if you returned home successfully when you were 16 or 17, you won't have a pathway plan or personal adviser. However, social services must still advise you, and may give you assistance in exceptional circumstances, such as buying you items you need.

Finding somewhere to live

Social services don't usually provide you somewhere to live after you turn 18, but they must plan what will happen with your housing. Your housing options include:

Staying put

If your foster family agree, you could continue to live with them. Social services will pay them an allowance until you are 21 to provide you with 'supported lodgings'.

Applying to the council as homeless

If you apply to the council's homelessness team as homeless, you are in 'priority need' for housing if you are 18, 19 or 20 and spent 24 hours or more in care when you were 16 or 17. You might also be in priority need if you are 21 or over. If you are in priority need, the council must find you somewhere to live while they consider your application. This might be in a hostel, but it must be suitable for your needs. Your pathway plan should say what kind of accommodation you need.

If your homeless application is successful, the council must provide you with suitable longer-term temporary accommodation until it can offer you somewhere permanent. The council must also put you on its 'waiting list' (or 'housing register') for a council or housing association place.

Going on the waiting list

Every council has its own way of deciding who will get a council or housing association home. You may get some priority for social housing as a care leaver. Get advice on this.

Paying for rented accommodation

You can normally claim housing benefit (HB) or universal credit (UC) to help pay for rented housing. After your 22nd birthday, HB or UC will only pay for a room in a shared house unless your landlord is the council or a housing association, or you have a dependent child. Go to [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) to see what you are entitled to.

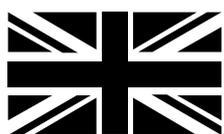
Vacation accommodation for students

Social services must usually help you if you are in full-time higher education and have nowhere to live in the vacation periods.

Further advice

You can get further advice from Shelter's free* housing advice helpline (**0808 800 4444**), a local Shelter advice service or local Citizens Advice office, or by visiting [shelter.org.uk/advice](https://www.shelter.org.uk/advice) or [adviceguide.org.uk](https://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

*Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks.



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Shelter

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Note

Information contained in this factsheet is correct at the time of publication. Please check details before use.