

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.



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

You will get most help from social services if you are a 'former relevant child'. This means you must have spent at least 13 weeks in care between your 14th and 18th birthdays, with at least one day being while you were 16 or 17. Being in care includes living with a foster family, or with a family member, after being placed there by social services.

Pathway plan

You should 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'. Social services should keep your plan up to date and give you a personal adviser until your 21st birthday, or until your 25th birthday if you ask for this, or until your education or training ends if that is later.

If you don't know who your personal adviser is, contact the social services who looked after you. Or, ring [Coram Voice](tel:08008005792) for advice on freephone number **0808 800 5792**

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:

Paying for rented accommodation

You can normally claim housing benefit (HB) or universal credit (UC) to help pay for rented housing. After your 25th 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.

Staying put

If your foster family agree, you could continue to live with them. Social services should provide advice, assistance and support to ensure this arrangement works.

Applying to the council as homeless

If you apply to the council's homelessness team because you are homeless, the council must create a personalised housing plan (PHP) for you. Your PHP lists the steps that you and the council will take to help you find suitable accommodation. If you are in 'priority need' (see below), the council must find you somewhere to live while the steps are taken. This might be in a hostel, but it must be suitable for your needs.

You are in priority need as a care leaver if you are 18, 19 or 20 and spent 24 hours or more in care while you were 16 or 17. Care leavers aged 21 or over may also be in priority need.

If you are still homeless after the steps in your PHP have been taken, and if you are in priority need, the council may have to provide you with longer-term housing.

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.

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.

Further advice

You can get further advice from [england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice](https://www.england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice), local Shelter advice service or local Citizens Advice. If you have nowhere to sleep tonight, are at risk of harm or losing your home within the next 2 months, call Shelter Helpline on **0808 800 4444** for advice and information on your options.*

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