

# Local services for young people leaving care

## Children's Social Care

Plymouth City Council



[www.plymouth.gov.uk](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk)

Department for  
Children's Services

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01752 305141

# Local services for young people leaving care

## Welcome to Plymouth City Council's Care Leavers Service

This section explains everything you need to know about the help and support available from Plymouth City Council Children's Services to young people leaving care. It will help you to make the most of the services available to you so that you can make the most of your independence.

*"Being a care leaver doesn't necessarily mean you have to change the way you are and what you do. It just means that you'll get all the help and support you need to ensure you have a better life.*

*You can still go out and enjoy yourself because that's your right. There are thousands of young people who are care leavers and many have benefited from what they have achieved."*

*(Care Leaver's comment)*



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# Care Leavers fact sheet

This fact sheet lists all the important information and numbers you need if you want to contact the Care Leavers Team or if you have a problem you'd like to talk about. You may wish to keep this handy in case you need to refer to it.

## Who can you talk to?

If you ever need to talk to someone, the Care Leavers Team is there to listen. Where possible, your first point of contact should be your Personal Advisor. You may wish to write their name and contact number in the space below:

My Personal Advisor is.....

If you can't reach your Personal Advisor or you would like to talk to someone different in the Care Leavers Team, please use the numbers below and someone will help you.

## Opening hours and numbers to call:

Days	Times	Who	Number to call
Monday to Friday	9am to 5pm	Care Leavers Office hours	01752 305141
Monday to Friday	5pm to 12 midnight	Out of hours for Care Leavers	01752 305141
Saturday + Sunday	2pm to 12 midnight	Out of hours for Care Leavers	01752 305141

- If you would like to contact the Service Manager of the Care Leavers Team, his name is Richard Porter and he can be reached on 01752 308886
- You can email the Care Leavers Team at [care.leavers@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:care.leavers@plymouth.gov.uk)
- Or you can visit or write to the office at:  
Care Leavers at Ballard House  
Plymouth City Council, Plymouth PL1 2AA

## Talking to someone different

If you would like to speak to someone that doesn't work for the Care Leavers Team, contact the Customer Relations Team by:

Writing to: Customer Relations Team  
Children's Social Care Services  
Plymouth City Council  
Plymouth  
PL1 2AA

Calling: 0800 0681249  
or 01752 307034

Faxing: 01752 307330

Emailing: [complaints.social.services@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.social.services@plymouth.gov.uk)

## Thinking about your future?

Everyone has to think about the future. Things like jobs and training, money, relationships and health worry us all. This booklet has been designed to help you think about all these things, to find the best people to discuss all the options and to make sure your rights are protected. This is particularly important if you have been in care and are now thinking about what happens next.



# Introduction – meet the Care Leavers Team

The Care Leavers Team is here to help you make the move from living in care to living an independent adult life.

The Care Leavers Team is part of Plymouth City Council's Department for Children's Services and was set up in October 2001 after a change in the law. This change meant that better support would be given to young people leaving care and 16 and 17 year olds still in care.

Today, this means that you have more rights to housing, more help with education and training, and the support of the Care Leavers Team to help you leave care and live independently.

## Your rights when you leave care

The Children Act 1989 and the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 give you certain rights as a young person leaving care. These laws say that if you have been looked after, for example, in a residential children's home or a foster home, the Children's Council social care services must provide you with:

- A Young Person's Adviser
- A Pathway Plan – which maps out your hopes for the future
- Contact to make sure that somebody keeps in touch with you
- Financial support to help your plans come into being
- Access to your records

These services are designed to help you and you are entitled to make use of them to plan your future. Under the law you are entitled to receive this help until you are 21 (or 24 if you are in full time education).

## Care Leavers mission statement

The Care Leavers Team believes in equal opportunities in everything we do and will not unfairly discriminate against anyone. We accept all young people for who they are and try to help and support you to achieve your aims and goals in life without judging you and with understanding, respect and commitment.

We aim to be honest and open and to deliver a service that will enable young people to succeed and grow within society.

## Respect for you

Your personal adviser, young person's adviser and all other staff from education, social care, housing departments, leaving care services and the Connexions service must take into account such things as your religion and culture when they are working with you. They must offer advice, support and assistance to you regardless of your race, religion, gender or sexuality.

### Your Rights

- The right to be helped by Children's Services if you are in need of help and support
- The right to healthcare and education
- The right to protection if you are being or have been mistreated or harmed
- The right to see what is written about you
- The right to have contact with family and friends
- The right to complain
- The right not to be punished in unacceptable ways when you have been sent to live away from home

## What do we do?

Our aim is to assist and befriend – that means you're not on your own. The level of help and support you get from us depends on how long you have been in care. This will be talked about later in this section, but for now here are some of the things we can help you with:

- For young people under 18 who live independently, it is our responsibility to pay you regular cash as well as provide extra money to meet your needs as described in your Pathway Plan (which is explained later)
- We will help you to find somewhere suitable to live, so that you can learn to live independently
- We can help you to get the education, training or employment you want to prepare you for a successful adult life
- We are able to offer advice and point you in the right direction if you run into problems

We use Personal Advisors and Pathway Plans to help us provide you with a good service that meets your needs. These are explained in detail in the following pages.



# What is a Personal Advisor?

You are not on your own... When the time comes for you to leave care or become more independent, you will be assigned a Personal Advisor. We call them PA's for short. PA's work for the Care Leavers Team and are there to give you advice and support.

Your PA can help you with lots of things in your life. The main things they will do are:

- Be involved in understanding your needs and preparing your Pathway Plan (which is explained later) so that you can get a good idea of what you want to do with your life and how you can achieve it
- Review your Pathway Plan at least every six months to help you to stay on track and achieve the things you want from life
- Negotiate for you with Plymouth City Council and other organisations to make sure you get the help and support you need, including cash

## Make the most of your PA – keep in touch!

The relationship between you and your PA is important. The better the relationship, the more beneficial having a PA will be to you. You can feel free to discuss your future with your PA, as they will be trained and skilled in helping you.

To make the most of your PA it is important to keep in touch! Your PA will stay in contact with you until you are at least 21, or 24 if you are in further education. You can agree the best way to keep in touch and how much contact suits you.

## Some top tips for independent living

Leaving care to start independent living can be a difficult time financially, especially if you are relying on benefits. To help you budget your money, here are money matters which you will need to take into consideration.

## Top budgeting tips

- Electric heating is usually more expensive than gas
- If you are working and receiving a wage, paying bills by direct debit will save you money as you will get a discount
- Buy your fruit, vegetables, some household goods and clothes from markets as this is usually cheaper than shops
- Look out for promotions at shops and supermarkets, e.g. 'buy one get one free' and note that some supermarkets are cheaper to shop in than others
- Buying a monthly/weekly travel card or oyster card works out cheaper than paying single fares, if you travel regularly
- If you need to phone abroad you can buy international phone cards which are much cheaper than using your land line. You can purchase them from most newsagents or internet shops

## Personal items for your leaving care survival kit

- Basic food pack (e.g. eggs, bread, milk)
- Household pack (e.g. loo rolls, dish cloth, washing up liquid)
- Toothbrush and other toiletries
- Local A-Z and guide to services/shops/community facilities
- Phone card (if no mobile)
- Hot water bottle
- Travel card
- Paper, envelopes and stamps
- Leisure card
- ID (e.g. birth certificate, NI number, passport, immigration papers)
- Address and phone book
- GP and dentist phone numbers and NHS card
- Bank details
- Emergency phone numbers
- Mobile phones can be a very expensive way of communicating unless you are texting. Try to keep your calls short and to a minimum
- Recipes/cookery book

# What is a Pathway Plan?

A Pathway Plan is your own individual plan all about you – no two Pathway Plans are the same.

When you are 16, you will be given a “needs assessment”. This means that someone from the Care Leavers Team or your social worker will take a look at your situation, your needs and what support you may need before reaching independence.

Your Pathway Plan follows on from your needs assessment and is a plan about your life now and your future. Your Personal Advisor or your social worker will want to visit you to talk about your hopes and ambitions and help you to decide what you might need in order to achieve them.

Your Pathway Plan will cover:

- What you want to do with your life
- Where you want to live
- What job you want to do and where you want to work
- What education or training you need
- What financial help you will need to achieve your ambitions
- Your health needs
- Who is around to support you
- Other things that are important to you

A Pathway Plan is about you and for you, so it makes sense that you should play a big part in putting it together. Your Personal Advisor will review your plan with you as your hopes, ambitions and circumstances change.

Your Pathway Plan is your first step towards adult life.

## More leaving care services

We want you to leave care with everything you need to cope with the wider world. You should not feel pushed into leaving care until you are ready. If you are staying on at school, going to college or starting a training scheme, you will not be disrupted at an important time. As well as the Care Leavers team, when you leave care there are many specialist Leaving Care Services in Plymouth designed to help you.

### Connexions Service

Connexions is an information, advice and support service for all young people aged 13-19, providing guidance on future education, training and work options, health, housing and money issues including social security benefits.

Connexions can also put you in touch with people in other organisations - for example colleges, schools social care, health, education, youth services, drug action teams, the Learning and Skills Council, employment services and job centres. See the 'useful numbers' page for their contact details.

### Education and Training

There is a wide range of education and training available to people over the age of 16.

Most young people either stay on at school or go to a local college of further education to study for A-levels or other types of qualifications. Some courses are traditional and academic, while others are very practical and a lot of time is spent in places of work. Your Connexions Adviser, along with careers staff in schools, will be able to help you decide which route is best for you.

The Connexions Service can help you choose the best education and training and give advice on funding, help with improving your basic skills, applying for courses or jobs, and training in interview techniques.

## Where would you like to live?

At this point in your life you may not be ready to leave care or have any clear ideas about where you would like to live or the type of accommodation that would be suitable for you.

That's okay...

You have choices and options that you can talk about with your Personal Advisor. Sometimes in an emergency situation, the accommodation that you are provided with may not be ideal, but is likely to be temporary and it's worth considering other options.

When you start planning to move on, you will probably discover that finding a home of your own is not that easy and you may not be able to get exactly what you want straight away. When you update your Pathway Plan your Personal Advisor will help you decide what sort of accommodation suits you best and will do what they can to help you find it. You will probably want to think and talk about some of the following with your Personal Adviser.

### Staying on with carers

Some young people stay on with their foster carers as lodgers where that suits everybody. If you decide to leave school and become a lodger in your foster carer's house when you are 18, you will be living there as a paying guest and may have to claim social security benefits to pay for your rent, your food and your keep.

If you decide to stay on with your foster carers then you can put off taking up your Leaving Care Grant until you need it. If you are in full time education (such as A levels), you can stay in your foster home after your 18th birthday and up until you start college or university, if this is what you want.

## Going back to live with your family

Some young people might consider returning to live with their mother, father or other members of their family. If you decide to do this you may find that things have changed since you last lived there. Your Personal Advisor will give the advice and support you need to handle the change and make the right decision.

The Social Security benefits system works differently for young people depending on whether or not they are living with their parents or close family. You will need to get advice on this.

If you decide to try living with your family then you can put off taking up your Leaving Care Grant until you need it.

## Supported lodgings

If you are not too confident about living by yourself or with other young people, or you don't feel ready to budget your money and cook for yourself, then living in someone's house as a lodger may be the answer for you. Some people rent out a room or rooms in their house to bring in a little extra money. You must remember that as a lodger you are living in another person's house as a paying guest, and that person can ask you to leave if things go wrong. If you decide to move into lodgings then you can put off taking your Leaving Care Grant until you need it.

Only people who have been trained and assessed to make sure they are suitable provide supported lodgings. You will get your own space and food so you'll be independent, but support will be on hand if you need it. In return you will be expected to pay your carer £20 per week from your personal allowance or Job Seekers Allowance for the cost of your "keep".

## Supported housing

If being a lodger doesn't suit you but you still feel you need a bit of help with managing the bills and generally looking after yourself, supported housing might be the answer.

There are different types of supported housing (often referred to as shared housing). It can be anything between two people sharing a maisonette, to 40 people sharing a large house. You have some independence but there are staff around to help you out, as well as the company of other young people. You will have your own bedroom but share the kitchen, bathroom, television rooms and so on.

Your Personal Advisor will help you decide if this sort of housing is for you and can give you information about the schemes in your area. These include providers such as the Foyer Project, Stoneham and some Housing Association Schemes. With these, you would be provided with either an individual room or flat, or a flat to share with another tenant.

### **Bed and breakfast**

In bed and breakfast accommodation you will be provided with a bedroom and breakfast each morning. You should not consider this as a long-term option, as it's quite likely you would not be able to stay there during the day.

### **Halls of residence and vacation accommodation**

This would only be an option if you were planning to attend higher education. During term time you would share a flat or house with up to ten other students, but you would have your own bedroom and possibly your own bathroom. This would be paid for from your student loan although other help may be available from the Care Leavers Service. Speak to your Personal Advisor for more information.

### **Independent accommodation**

This includes lodgings, bed-sits and flats where you would be living independently without any "live-in" support. Accommodation can be rented either by private landlords, the Council or Housing Associations.

## Tips on what to look for in your accommodation

When you receive an offer of housing it would be worth looking out for the following

- Any damp?
- Broken windows?
- Is the gas working?
- Is there electricity?
- Is there hot water?
- Is there any heating?
- Do you have to share kitchen/bathroom?

You have a right to ask about your neighbours. Once you sign a tenancy agreement, you will be responsible for the property while you are living in it.

## **Do not sign a Tenancy Agreement until you are sure**

Independent accommodation is a long-term or permanent option, where at the age of 18 you will become the named holder of the tenancy. Before you are 18, the Council holds your tenancy on your behalf because you cannot by law hold a tenancy agreement until you are 18. We call these 'Training Flats', which are explained in a moment.

It's important that you realise that in all independent accommodation you are responsible for buying your food, and in most cases you will be responsible for paying your bills such as your water, gas and electricity bills. The Care Leavers Service will ensure wherever possible that prepayment meters and water meters are fitted.

## **Training flats**

If you are 16-18 years old then you could move into a training flat. This is when the Council holds a tenancy agreement on your behalf and helps you to get used to living independently. You should have support, advice and guidance while living in a Training Flat. We will ask a Tenancy Support Worker to help you develop independence

skills. The support worker may be a member of staff from The Leaving Care Service or from an independent service. Whoever it is, their role and the work they will be undertaking with you will be fully explained to you. This could be budgeting (paying your bills), helping you maintain your property, helping you to cook healthy cheap meals or whatever else is identified by you and your social worker.

## **Housing association/council housing – over 18's**

Council or housing association accommodation is likely to be a self-contained flat. Although you can choose the area you want to live in, you will not be able to choose exactly which flat you get. Your rent will be relatively cheap, you will be able to stay there as long as you want and you may have the chance to move into a bigger place later on.

To qualify for Council or housing association accommodation, you will need to put your name on a list. Your PA will show you how to do this.

## **Damage to accommodation**

When looking for accommodation it is important that you note any deliberate damage to accommodation, as this is potentially a criminal offence, could result in a police investigation. Deliberate damage will place you at risk of losing your accommodation. Money could also be deducted from your leaving care grant to cover any damages.

## **What if I don't want to live in Plymouth?**

If you don't want to live in Plymouth when you leave care, you need to talk to your social worker as soon as you know this might be something you want to do. They can find out what will be available in the area you want to move to. They will make contact with the local Care Leavers Team, but it is not always possible to get you the same service as you would have in Plymouth. It depends on where you are and how much time there is to make plans before you know where you going to live.

We will try to find a way of getting you in touch with support people in the area you want to move to. Plymouth's Care Leavers Team will be on the end of a phone for advice. They won't be able to visit you as often if you move too far away, but it should be at least every six months. You will still get the same financial help as you would if you were still in Plymouth.

## Homeless?

If you are homeless then you should seek advice immediately. You can either go to Plymouth City Council's social care services or Housing Department. They should be able to provide you with temporary housing while they look into the reasons why you are homeless and whether they can give you more permanent housing. The addresses and phone numbers of these services are listed in the telephone directory or you can ask your Personal Advisor.



## What about cash?

In most cases if you are under 18 years of age, it is the Care Leavers Team's responsibility to provide you with regular money to live on, as well as extra money for your additional needs. The amount of cash you receive is worked out using national guidelines.

Name of category	Who fits into this category	What you get if you are in this category
<b>Eligible young person</b>	16 or 17 year olds who remain looked after and have been in care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 (the 13 weeks don't have to be continuous).	If you are an Eligible young person and are still being looked after, Plymouth City Council must continue to pay for your needs as they did when you were younger. You will not receive benefits from the Care Leavers Team until you move to an independent living situation or become "Relevant" (see below). Plymouth City Council must also pay your housing costs and weekly money, although this may go straight to your carer.
<b>Relevant young person</b>	16 or 17 year olds who had left care after 1 October 2001, but have been in care since their 16th birthday and for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14.	If you are a Relevant or Eligible young person living independently or semi-independently, you may be entitled to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing costs</li> <li>• Personal allowance</li> <li>• Education training top-up</li> <li>• Leaving Care grant</li> <li>• Starting work, training or college (up to £269 one-off payment)</li> <li>• Higher education – £250 per year</li> <li>• Birthday and festival allowances - £240 per year</li> <li>• Social and leisure - £254 per year to be agreed by your PA</li> <li>• Travel costs by way of a free bus pass</li> <li>• Other allowances as detailed in your Pathway Plan</li> </ul>

Name of category	Who fits into this category	What you get if you are in this category
<b>Former relevant young person</b>	18-21 year olds who were an eligible or relevant child. This includes young people over 21 who are in education or training for as long as agreed in their Pathway Plan.	If you are a former Relevant young person, you are entitled to assistance with education and training. You are also entitled to assistance in general and the Care Leavers Team has a duty to provide housing costs for vacation accommodation if you are in higher education or residential further education.
<b>Qualifying young person</b>	Any young person under 21 (or under 24 if they are in education or training) who is no longer looked after, accommodated or privately fostered after the age of 16.	If you are a Qualifying young person you may receive assistance in education or training and in general. The Care Leavers Team also has a duty to provide housing costs for vacation accommodation if you are in higher education or residential further education. You will probably be eligible for benefits such as housing benefits.

## How will I be paid?

You are encouraged to set up a bank account or another account able to receive payments by BACS transfer. This means that payments from us will go directly into your bank account – normally on Fridays. Alternatively, we can give you cheques for you to pay in at a particular post office.

## **Leaving care set-up grants**

Plymouth City Council will help you financially when you set up home for yourself by offering you a leaving care set-up grant. This is to make sure you have all the essential things you need. If you can claim a community care grant (see page 16) you will be expected to do so.

Your Personal Advisor will assess your needs and what resources you already have before applying for a grant for you. If you move into furnished accommodation before eventually moving into unfurnished accommodation, you will be able to apply for funding at each stage.

When you shop for the things you need, your PA will help you spend your money wisely. Your grant will cover everything you need to set up home but please don't expect expensive luxuries! When you update your Pathway Plan, your PA will help you decide what sort of accommodation suits you best and what things you will need to help you get settled.

## **Social Security benefits**

You may be entitled to social security benefits, so make sure your social worker or Personal Adviser looks at your situation and advises you about what you can claim.

## **Job Seekers Allowance**

If you are over 18 and not working more than 16 hours each week or studying full time, you may need to claim Job Seekers Allowance while you are looking for work. Go to your local One Office, which is usually in your local Job Centre. You will be given a form to fill in and may be asked for other information such as pay slips if you have been working. You will also have an interview in which you will be asked about what type of work you are looking for.

The rules for claiming job seekers allowance are complicated; so ask your social worker or Personal Adviser to explain them to you and how to go about claiming.

## **Housing Benefit – to help pay your rent**

If you are over 18 and not working, or working but on a low income, then you may be able to claim Housing Benefit. Local councils pay Housing Benefit to people who need help to pay their rent. It is paid by cheque every four weeks, normally directly to your landlord. If you are a council tenant then your Housing Benefit will be paid straight into your council rent account.

Sometimes Housing Benefit does not cover all the rent you have to pay. This may be because extra items such as food, lighting and fuel are included in your rent, or it may be because you are living somewhere that is bigger than you need. If Housing Benefit does not cover all your rent, ask your Personal Adviser for advice, as it is possible to get extra Housing Benefit in certain circumstances.

## **Income Support – to help pay your living costs**

You may be able to claim Income Support to cover your living costs if you are unable to work for any of the following reasons:

- Illness
- Disability
- You are a lone parent who is not working, or who is working less than 16 hours a week
- You are on a course of non-advanced education (up to A-level or equivalent)
- You are on a training scheme run by the Learning and Skills Council

You will need to contact your local Job Centre to get the forms you need to claim Income Support.

## Disability Living Allowance

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a benefit you may be able to claim if you have an illness or disability that means you need help with getting around or with your personal care. Your illness or disability may be physical or due to problems that you have with your mental health or a learning disability. You can claim DLA even if you are working full time or are a full time student. The forms are very complicated and you should ask your Personal Adviser or social worker to help you fill them in.

## Community Care Grants

If you are entitled to Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance and are leaving care, or have recently left care, and are setting up home then you may be able to claim a Community Care Grant to buy things such as bedding, pots and pans and furniture. You may also be able to claim for items that would help you to stay in your present home. You can claim a Community Care Grant from the Department of Work and Pensions.

To receive a community Care Grant you must be:

- Receiving Income Support or
- Receiving Income Based Job Seekers Allowance, or
- Likely to receive one or other of the above benefits within six weeks of your application for a Community Care Grant

The Department of Work and Pensions considers each application for Community Care Grants individually, so you need to include as much information on your application form as possible. You will need to give details of the following:

- What you need to buy
- Why you need it
- What will happen to you if you do not get it

## Extra help

Young people can also receive free prescriptions, dental and optical treatment, although you may have to contribute to this if you work. You will need to fill in a form called HC1 which you can get from your PA.

A **crisis loan** of up to 50 per cent of your personal allowance is available in a crisis situation only. You will have to pay this back from your future personal allowances at a maximum of £5 per week. You can only have one crisis loan at a time.

A **crisis grant** of up to £100 is available to cover emergency situations. This does not have to be repaid, but you will need to negotiate it with your PA.



# What if I want to go into higher education?

The Care Leavers Team is committed to supporting you while you are studying at University.

We have a duty to make sure you have suitable accommodation during vacation periods and financial support throughout your course of study.

Support would usually end on your 21st birthday, but if you started a university course before this then we can support you until you are 24.

The number and nature of university courses vary, as do the costs associated with the course itself, the cost of local accommodation and daily travel costs to and from university. The costs described in this folder are the minimum that you might need. You will need to include the actual costs in your Pathway Plan and agree them with the Manager of the Care Leavers Team.

Our expectations are that:

- Tuition fees will be met by the Local Education Authority
- You will use three quarters of the student loan (currently £3,000)
- You will not be required to work during term time
- You will seek employment during vacations

If you take up a course of higher education, you can expect to receive:

- A grant of £260 every academic year for buying books and equipment
- A weekly personal allowance of £46.85 per week. You will receive this throughout the year, or just during term times if you are in full-time work during vacation periods

## **Your allowances 2007/8**

Personal allowance  
= £46.85

Education reward  
= £17.00

Starting work/  
education/training  
= £269.00

- Accommodation costs for vacation periods
- If you are at university outside of Devon and Cornwall, costs for travelling to and from university at the beginning and end of term
- A student railcard or coach card
- The training incentive (currently £16.50 per week – payable throughout the year, or just during term times if you earn more than £57.75 per week from vacation employment)
- A deposit for term time accommodation if needed (the deposit must be returned to Plymouth City Council when you move out)
- A suitable computer and associated hardware (specialist software will need to be purchased via a grant for books and materials)

## Extra information

Dependent on your living arrangements, you may need to buy items such as bedding, crockery etc. This should come from your leaving care grant.

You will need to work with your Personal Advisor to draw up a budget to ensure that you can meet your essential day-to-day living costs from the funds that are available to you.

You should also be aware that extra funding may be available from the university bursary fund. To find out more, contact the welfare service or access officer at your university.

The equipment allowance is a minimum payment, and some courses require students to purchase extra materials and equipment. The Manager of the Care Leavers Team can agree for extra money to be made available for this.

If you have a dependant then your Local Education Authority will pay 85 per cent of the cost for registered childcare. You will also get a Parents Learning Allowance of up to £1,300 per year, and in most cases will be eligible for income support during the summer vacation. You are also likely to qualify for extra help from the university such as an Access to Learning fund.

# Employment

If you are seeking a well-paid job you are likely to have to apply in writing and usually provide a curriculum vitae (CV). This is an account of your education, qualifications, previous jobs and anything that makes you suitable for the post. Both the application and the CV need to be compiled carefully and it is advisable that they are typewritten.

You can find advertisements for job vacancies in local and national newspapers, available to read in libraries as well as at your local job centre. Job vacancies are also advertised on many organisations' websites.

**New Deal** is a Government programme that aims to give unemployed people, including young people aged 18-24 years old who have been on job seekers allowance for six months, the help and support they need to get into work. Everyone on New Deal gets a personal adviser who is their point of contact throughout the programme.

For further information on New Deal, call 0845 606 2626, 7am-11pm, seven days a week or text phone 0845 606 0680, 7am-11pm, seven days a week.

## Connexions Direct

Offers advice on education, careers, housing, money, health and relationships for 13-19 year olds in the UK. Support is also offered up to the age of 25 if you have learning or other disabilities.

Connexions advisers are available 8am-2am every day. Free helpline (from landline): 080 800 132 19, or email (via the website). Calls from a mobile are charged but if you do ring on your mobile, they will call you back. If you email, you will be replied to within 24 hours. [www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk)

## **Employment for asylum seekers and refugees**

As an asylum seeker you are not now entitled to work in the UK or undertake vocational training unless and until the Home Office grants you a positive decision on your asylum case.

If you have refugee status, exceptional leave to remain, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave you can work in the UK as soon as you have a positive decision from the Home Office but you must first apply for a National Insurance number. This includes the right to participate in vocational training schemes. Details of these are available from your local Jobcentre Plus.

## **Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities**

53 New Broad Street, London EC2M 1SL.

Tel: 020 7448 5420 (voice), 020 7374 6684 (text)

Email address [info@eopps.org](mailto:info@eopps.org) - [www.opportunities.org.uk](http://www.opportunities.org.uk)

A national charity helping all people with disabilities and medical conditions find and retain work.

## **Shaw Trust**

Free helpline: 0800 085 1001

Email: [stir@shawtrust.org.uk](mailto:stir@shawtrust.org.uk) - [www.shaw-trust.org.uk](http://www.shaw-trust.org.uk)

Supports thousands of disabled and disadvantaged people across the UK to achieve their personal development and employment aims.

## **Minimum wage**

In the UK there is a minimum hourly wage and employers are not allowed to pay you less. For more information about the minimum wage, you can visit [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk). If you have any questions about the minimum wage or believe that your employer has paid you below the minimum wage, you can call the minimum wage helpline on: 0845 6000 678.

## **National Insurance number (often called a NINO)**

Once you reach the age of 16 and you want to start a new job or start claiming benefits, you will need a National Insurance number. You pay National Insurance contributions (NICs) to build your entitlement to certain social security benefits, including the state pension. You apply through your local Jobcentre Plus, Jobcentre or social security office who will arrange to interview you. For further information visit [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

## **Under-18s**

You can work full-time at 16 but by law there are some places that you cannot work.

You need to remember that you cannot work full-time until the last Friday in June – even if you have turned 16 before this. You are entitled to get the national minimum wage at 16.



# Health

Finding your local doctor, dentist, opticians and pharmacies  
Search online at [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) or [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) or call NHS Direct 0845 46 47. They provide a confidential translation service.

## Registering with a doctor

The NHS is required by law to give you registration with a doctor in your area. If you cannot find a doctor who will accept you, telephone your local Health Authority and they will allocate one for you.

To register with a doctor, visit the reception staff at the doctor's surgery or clinic in your area. Ask them if they are able to take you on their register. If you wish, you can register directly with a woman doctor, or with a group practice that includes a woman doctor. If the doctor accepts you as a patient, you will be asked to fill in a registration form. After a few weeks you will get a medical card, which you should keep in a safe place.

All of the services provided by the NHS are confidential but your doctor will keep a record of medical information about you. You have a right to see your medical records but there may be a charge for this.

If you find that you are not happy with your doctor, you have the right to register with another doctor. To change your doctor, you can go to any other doctor's surgery in your area and ask to register. You do not have to explain your reasons for changing.

## Alternative medicine

Alternative or complementary medicine – such as acupuncture, homeopathy and herbal medicine- is available in most parts of the UK. However, you will probably have to pay for treatment as it is not often available on the NHS. You can find out information about complementary medicine and the names of registered and qualified practitioners in your area by contacting:

### **The Institute for Complementary Medicine (ICM)**

PO Box 194, London SE16 7QZ.

Tel: 020 7237 5165

Email: [info@i-c-m.org.uk](mailto:info@i-c-m.org.uk) - [www.i-c-m.org.uk](http://www.i-c-m.org.uk)

## Emergency treatment

You can get free emergency treatment from the **Accident and Emergency (A&E)** department at any general hospital. You do not have to be registered with a GP to use the A&E service at hospitals.

## Sex and sexual health

**Some staff at The Care Leavers Service are trained to give out condoms, which are free. Please speak to your PA or our duty worker.**

If you are under 25, contact **Brook's Young People's Information Service** at Ask Brook or ring their helpline on 0800 0185 023 (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm).

For information on key sexual health issues any time of day or night, call their 24-hour information line 020 7950 7700.  
[www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk)

## Young Parents

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) provides information on becoming a parent and help with childcare costs.

[www.fathersdirect.com](http://www.fathersdirect.com) provides general information on the rights of fathers.

## Help with alcohol problems

**Drinkline** free helpline: 0800 917 8282, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Offers advice, information and support to individuals concerned about their own or someone else's drinking. Note: Drinkline uses Language Line, the telephone interpreting service.

## Help for drug users

**FRANK** – the national drugs helpline

Free helpline (from landlines): 0800 77 66 00 (24 hours a day, seven days a week).

Email: [frank@talktofrank.com](mailto:frank@talktofrank.com) - [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

Free confidential information and advice for drug users and people who care about them. Note: Frank uses Language Line, the telephone interpreting service. The site includes an A-Z of drugs.

## Under 18s

You can get free NHS dental treatment. Your local Primary Care Trust will be able to help find a dentist that accepts NHS patients, or you can search for NHS dentists online at the website listed on page 28.

## Sexwise

[www.ruthinking.co.uk](http://www.ruthinking.co.uk) Helpline: 0800 28 2930, open 7am-12 midnight everyday. Provides information on contraception, safe sex, relationships and puberty. Allows you to search for services anywhere in the UK.

# What if I'm not happy with the service?

## Complaints, compliments and comments

We believe everyone has the right to express their views and make complaints, suggestions or compliments about the services we provide. We see your feedback as a way of improving the quality and effectiveness of our services, so we're always ready to listen.

We hope that most things you are concerned about can be settled by speaking to the person you normally deal with, but if you would like to talk to someone different then you can contact the Customer Relations Team. Your enquiry will be taken seriously and dealt with under formal complaints and comments procedures.

## Contact details

To make a comment, complaint or compliment, you can contact the Customer Relations Team by:

Writing to: Customer Relations Team  
Children's Social Care Services  
Plymouth City Council  
Plymouth  
PL1 2AA

Calling: 0800 0681249  
or 01752 307034

Faxing: 01752 307330

Emailing: [complaints.social.services@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.social.services@plymouth.gov.uk)

## Useful numbers A to Z

<b>B</b>	Benefits emergency (out of office hours)	01426 956070
<b>C</b>	Care Leavers Team	01752 305141 or 01752 346984 (out of hours)
	CLIP (Care Leavers Independence Project)	01752 213231
	Child benefit agency	0870 1555540
	Childline	0800 1111
	Children's tax benefits	0845 3001036
	Child Support Agency (child maintenance)	0845 7137000
	Citizen's advice bureau	01752 207088 or 01752 242400
	Connexions	01752 207700
	Council tax enquiries	01752 309424
	Cumberland centre (for minor injuries)	01752 566636
<b>D</b>	Derriford Hospital	01752 777111
	Devon and Cornwall police (not emergencies)	0870 5777444
	Devon Youth Association	01752 691511
	Disability benefit line	0800 882200
	Disability information and advice centre (DIAC)	01752 201065
<b>F</b>	First Devon and Cornwall	0845 6001420
<b>G</b>	GUM clinic (sexual health and family planning)	01752 763910
<b>H</b>	Harbour Centre (drug and alcohol related problems)	01752 267431
	Homelessness department	01752 304062
	Housing/council tax benefits	01752 304889
<b>J</b>	Jobseeker direct	0845 6060234
<b>L</b>	Library information	01752 305932

<b>N</b>	National rail enquiries	0845 7484950
	NHS Direct (non-urgent medical enquiries)	0845 4647
	NHS dental helpline	0800 4585813
	NHS smoking helpline	0800 1690169
<b>P</b>	Plymouth Citybus	01752 222221
	Plymouth College of Further Education	01752 305282
	Post Office enquiries	0845 7223344
<b>R</b>	Racial Equality Council	01752 312640
	Refuge (help with domestic violence)	0870 5995443
<b>S</b>	Samaritans	01752 819004
	Sexual Health Advice for Everyone (SAFE)	01752 566633
	Shelterline (free phone)	0808 800444
	Social Security Offices (advice and update on benefit claims)	
	– Crownhill	01752 761600
	– Durley House	01752 272000
	– Social Services (advice and assessment helpline)	01752 308600
	South West Water	0800 1691144
<b>T</b>	Tourist information	01752 304849
	Transco (for gas emergencies)	0800 111999
	Travel line	0870 6082608
<b>W</b>	Western National Buses	01752 222555
	Women's Refuge	01752 562286
<b>Y</b>	YMCA	01752 604455
	Youth Advice Centre	01752 698402
	Youth Offending Team (YOT)	01752 306191
<b>Z</b>	The Zone (formerly Youth Enquiry Service)	01752 206626

# Other useful Information

## Top information websites for young people

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) - a Government database

[www.thesite.org](http://www.thesite.org) - YouthNetU

[www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk) - The National Youth Agency

## Youth magazines

Who Cares? (free to download)

[www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk](http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk)

Ruckus (free to download)

[www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk)

## Organisations working for and with young care leavers

Do you want to tell us about a problem you have? Is there a change you think should be made for young people? Do you have a story that you think other people would like to hear? If so, be heard.

### Contact:

The Office of Children's Rights Director

St Nicolas Building, St Nicolas Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE11NB

Freephone: 0800 528 0731

Email: [theteam.rights4me@csci.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:theteam.rights4me@csci.gsi.gov.uk)

[www.rights4me.org](http://www.rights4me.org)

You can also email the Children's Rights Director direct (see address on website).

Works with young people in care and those who have left or are about to leave care.

## **A National Voice**

Central Hall, Oldham Street,  
Manchester M1 1JQ

Tel: 0161 237 5577

Email: [info@anationalvoice.org](mailto:info@anationalvoice.org)

Is run by young people from care and is for anyone in or from the care system.

London Office address:

ANV, c/o Voice, Unit1, Pride Court, 80-82 White Lion Street,  
London, N1 9PF

Tel: 020 7833 9863

## **The Who Cares? Trust**

Promoting the interests of children and young people in public care.

Kemp House, 152-160 City Road, London, EC1V 2NP

Tel: 020 7251 3117

Email: [mailbox@thewhocarestrust.org.uk](mailto:mailbox@thewhocarestrust.org.uk)

[www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk](http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk)

## **The Care Leavers Association**

St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester M12 6FZ

Tel: 0161 275 9500

Email: [info@careleavers.org](mailto:info@careleavers.org)

[www.careleavers.com](http://www.careleavers.com)

A membership organisation run by care leavers for care leavers which aims to end the economic and social disadvantage of those who were in care.

## **Rainer**

[www.rpsrainer.org.uk](http://www.rpsrainer.org.uk)

A national organisation working with under-supported young people, including young people who have been involved with the criminal justice system, are in or leaving care, homeless, young parents or facing a serious lack in education or employment prospects. To find a service in your region, click on 'our services' online.

## **The Prince's Trust**

Head Office, 18 Park Square East, London NW1 4LH

[www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk) (a multi lingual site)

Free helpline: 0800 842 842 and you will be put in touch through to The Prince's Trust office in your area.

Helps young people through training, skill building, business loans, grants, personal development and study support outside school.

They also provide mentoring support for young care leavers.

## **Refugees and asylum seekers**

Refugee Council, Head Office, Panel of Advisers for Unaccompanied Refugee Children, 240-250 Ferndale Road, London SW9 8BB

London advice line: 020 7346 6777 available Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 10am – 1pm and 2pm – 4pm;

Wednesdays, 2pm to 4pm.

[www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

## **Welsh Refugee Council**

Phoenix House, 389 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 1TP

Tel: 029 2048 9800

Email: [info@welshrefugeecouncil.org](mailto:info@welshrefugeecouncil.org)

[www.welshrefugeecouncil.org](http://www.welshrefugeecouncil.org)

Provides advice, support, casework and advocacy for asylum seekers and refugees. They have a translation service and offices in Newport, Swansea and Wrexham

## **[www.carelaw.org.uk](http://www.carelaw.org.uk)**

An information site for young people in care in England and Wales. It covers many topics, from your rights in care to what happens when you leave care. It also explains how the law is different if you are 'accommodated' as opposed to being under a care order.

If you want to talk to someone to help you understand your rights, call **Voice**, a national charity that works with young people to speak up for them and support them in improving their lives.

Voice, Head Office, Unit 4, Pride Court, 80-82 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF. Free helpline: 0808 800 5792

[www.voiceyp.org](http://www.voiceyp.org)





## Young people's comments

*"Leaving Care workers do a fantastic job, helping thousands of us people through our lives whatever state we're in. All the workers will go out of their way to do/get the best for us and you can't do any better than that... They do all they can to help you, support you through thick and thin."*

*"You can tell them most of your problems/issues – they will keep things to themselves unless you give them permission to pass on what you say to them... We trust them so much because of who they are – loyal, honest, friendly, trusting, hard working, supportive, kind and funny."*

*"Being a Care leaver doesn't necessarily mean you have to change the way you are and what you do. It just means that you'll get all the help and support that you need to ensure that you have a better life."*

*You can still go out and enjoy yourself because that's your right. There thousands of young people who are care leavers and many have benefited from what they have achieved."*

*(Care Leavers comments)*

If you would like a copy of this section of the folder in another language, large print, Braille or audio format, please telephone 01752 307329.

[www.plymouth.gov.uk/careleavers](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/careleavers)

To request further copies of this leaflet, please call: 01752 305141

You can also see this information on Plymouth City Council's website under the children's social care section by logging onto the address below:

Department for Children's Services  
Plymouth City Council  
Civic Centre  
Plymouth  
PL1 2AA

Tel 01752 305141  
Fax 01752 308717  
Email [care.leavers@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:care.leavers@plymouth.gov.uk)  
[www.plymouth.gov.uk](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk)

