**ADVICE GUIDE**

**Help and housing for care leavers**

**Housing help for 18 to 21 year old care leavers**

If you are aged 18 to 21, you can get help from both [Devon County Council’s Children’s services](https://www.standupspeakup.org.uk/care-leaver-2/) and Exeter City Council Housing Solutions service. You are automatically classed as being in ‘priority need’ until your 21st birthday, which means that the Housing Solutions service should help you find a place to live.

If you are aged 18 to 21 and spent at least one night in care when you were 16 or 17, you are automatically classed as being in priority need until your 21st birthday.

Children’s services can also help you by providing support and help with training and education.

If you are in full-time further or higher education, Children’s Services must find you somewhere to live during holiday periods if you need it.

**Corporate Parenting Duties**

Local authorities have duties and powers to assist young people who are leaving and have left local authority care. As a corporate parent to all children in care and care leavers all parts of a local authority, including a housing authority, must have regard to the need:

(a) to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;

(b) to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;

(c) to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;

(d) 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;

(e) to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;

(f) for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and,

(g) to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

[**Children and Social Work Act 2017 (Part 1, (1(a-g))**](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/cy/ukpga/2017/16)

**What to do if you are homeless or threatened with homelessness?**

If you are homeless or threatened with homelessness then is important to seek advice at the earliest opportunity.

Exeter City Council commissions [Young Devon](http://www.youngdevon.org) to provide a Young Persons Homelessness Prevention Service for 16, 17 Year olds and Care leavers.

Young Devon can chat to you before things get into crisis at home or in your current accommodation and you have nowhere to live. They can help mediate between you and the people you live with. You can then start to sort out the issues and remain at home or have a plan of action. Young Devon can also contact other services that may be able to help you find what you are looking for.

Young Devon can also:-

* Advice on accommodation options
* Managing your money
* Training on how to manage your own rented accommodation
* Help to make a claim at the Job Centre
* Help to identify appropriate accommodation.
* Access to a computer for accommodation search.
* Access to a washing machine and shower.

**Contact Homelessness Prevention Exeter**

**Tel: 01392 331666**

**Email:** **yes.exeter@youngdevon.org**

[**Address:**](https://www.google.com/maps/place/39%2BGeorge%2BSt%2C%2BExeter%2BEX1%2B1BA%2C%2BUK/%4050.719892%2C-3.535186%2C12z/data%3D%214m5%213m4%211s0x486da43aaf064993%3A0x924b762331f57327%218m2%213d50.7198922%214d-3.5351862?hl=en) **Yes Centre, 39 George Street, Exeter, EX1 1DA**

**If you are homeless outside of normal office hours (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm) or at the weekend then please contact Exeter City Council’s Out Of Hours Number:-**

**0845 351 160 for assistance**

**Priority need**

If you are aged 18 to 21 and spent at least one night in care when you were 16 or 17, you are automatically classed as being in priority need until your 21st birthday.

If you still have a Personal Adviser and are a Care Leaver over the age of 21 you may be in Priority need if vulnerable as a result of being a looked after child.

**What is a local connection?**

A young person owed leaving care duties under [section 23C of the Children Act 1989](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/23C) will have a local connection to the area of the children services authority that owes them the duties. If the children services authority is a county council and not a housing authority, the young person will have a local connection with every housing authority district falling within the area of the children services authority.

Therefore if your children services authority was Devon County Council it is your decision which of the 8 local Authority Districts that make up ‘New Devon’ that you can approach for assistance. These are:-

* [**East Devon District Council**](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk)
* [**Exeter City Council**](http://www.exeter.gov.uk)
* [**Mid Devon District Council**](http://www.middevon.gov.uk)
* [**North Devon District Council**](http://www.northdevon.gov.uk)
* [**South Hams District Council**](http://www.southhams.govuk)
* [**Teignbridge District Council**](http://www.teignbridge.gov.uk)
* [**Torridge District Council**](http://www.torridge.gov.uk)
* [**West Devon Borough Council**](http://www.westdevon.gov.uk)

**Housing help for 21 years old and above care leavers**

Under the Homelessness Reduction Act **all** Local Authorities in England, have duty to provide advice and assistance if you are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

If you are a former Care leaver and over the age of 21 then a Local Authority may offer you a duty of accommodation if they deem that you are in priority need. For example, this may be the case if you:

* are vulnerable as a result of having been in care
* haven't had a stable home since you left care
* have ongoing physical or mental health issues

If you are in full-time further or higher education and you have nowhere to stay outside term time Devon County Council’s Children’s services must also find you somewhere to live.

**Exeter City Council’s Housing Solutions Service**

**Tel: 01392 265726**

**Email:** **Housing.advice@exeter.gov.uk**

[**Address**](https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Exeter%2BCity%2BCouncil/%4050.7247836%2C-3.5266321%2C17z/data%3D%213m1%214b1%214m5%213m4%211s0x486da43de24bf82b%3A0x78760224c529bb80%218m2%213d50.7247802%214d-3.5244434)**: Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter EX1 1JN**

**Help for all care leavers**

**Devon County Council’s role**

As a care leaver you should continue to receive help and advice from Devon County Council until your 21st birthday, or 25th if you are still in education or training.

Children’s services can help you by providing assistance with education and training until your 25th birthday. Your personal adviser should still keep in touch and should go over your pathway plan with you to see how you are getting on (there is more information about personal advisers further down).

Ask Social Services to help you if you need support to continue with your education or find training or employment. They may be able to help with the cost of living near your college, training centre or workplace.

If Devon County council are the authority that last looked after you then they remain responsible for you even if you move to a different area. The council must continue to give you any help you need, even if you move to another area.

**Personal adviser**

Before you leave care you're given a [pathway plan](https://www.standupspeakup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Who-Cares-Trust-Pathway-Planning.pdf) setting out what support you might need to live independently.

You're given a personal adviser whose job it is to make sure that you claim everything you are entitled to. They can help you with application forms for housing, benefits, and education and/or training courses. They should also help you with learning life skills, like how to budget.

The [Childrens and Social Work Act 2017](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/cy/ukpga/2017/16) places additional responsibilities on Local Authorities to provide access to Personal Advisers up until your 25th birthday (except where the young person no longer wants a Personal Adviser) even if you are not in full time education.

The support provided by Personal Advisers should be based on the needs of the young person as set out in their statutory Pathway Plan.

**Suitable accommodation for young care leavers**

If you are a Care Leaver and under the age of 18 then Devon County Council has a responsibility to provide you with suitable accommodation.

Any accommodation Devon County 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.

Use [Shelter's directory](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness) to find your local Shelter advice centre.

**Benefits for care leavers over 18**

When you turn 18 you are entitled to claim benefits. For more information on financial entitlements for care leavers please go to the following link: <https://www.standupspeakup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Who-Cares-Trust-Finanace-Factsheet.pdf>

From September 2018, when [Universal Credit](https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit) goes live in Exeter it is likely that Universal Credit will replace some of your individual benefits with a single payment that considers all your financial needs.

**Single room rate**

Usually if you are aged under 35 and you rent from a private landlord, the maximum Housing Benefit you can get is the same rate you would get for renting a single room in a shared house.

But if you've been in care, this doesn't apply until you turn 22, and you will be entitled to the [Local Housing Allowance](https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx) for a One Bedroom Self Contained property in the area which you are looking to live.

There is a maximum amount that you can be paid, which depends on the area you live in.

**Extra help for moving into a new place**

If you are a care leaver moving to a new place, you may be entitled to a budgeting loan to help pay for any rent in advance, moving expenses or household items. Most people who have been on income support or jobseekers allowance for at least 26 weeks can apply.

These loans are paid back through deductions from your benefits.