

Advice Guide

Help and housing for care leavers 18+

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Housing help for 18+ care leavers

Depending on your age and circumstances, you could get help from the council with your accommodation and finances, as well as advice on how to live independently. 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.

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.

1. What will happen when I leave care?

In preparation for leaving care you should have produced a pathway plan. This is a document you should 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.

This should be reviewed every 6 months, or whenever there's a big change in your life.

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 for advice on freephone number 0808 800 5792.

2. What if I was 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.

3. How can someone help me find somewhere to live?

After you're 18, the council still have to help you plan where you're going to live. They may also pay you some money towards your living arrangements.

This support can continue until you finish your education or training, or until you're 21 if not. You'll get help with somewhere to stay outside of term time if you need it because your usual accommodation is unavailable. Your housing options include:

Paying for rented accommodation

You can normally claim housing benefit or universal credit to help pay for rented housing. After your 25th birthday, Housing Benefit or Universal Credit 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.

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.

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: [Devon's Local Offer to Care Leavers – Finances - Children In Care and Care Leavers - Children In Care and Care Leavers \(standupspeakup.org.uk\)](http://standupspeakup.org.uk)

4. What help can I get if I am a care leaver with Devon County Council?

If you are someone who was placed in care by Devon County Council 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.

You can still access support from the duty Personal Adviser until you are 25 regardless of your education or employment status. The Exeter Permanence and Transitions Duty number is 07581 156261.

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.

5. What happens if I am being threatened with homeless/ I am homelessness?

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

Exeter City Council commissions [Young Devon](#) to provide a Young Person's Homelessness Prevention Service for 16, 17 year olds and Care leavers up to 25.

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 help with:-

- Advice on accommodation options
- Managing your money
- Training on how to manage your own rented accommodation
- Making a claim at the Job Centre
- Identifying appropriate accommodation
- Access to a computer for accommodation search
- Access to a washing machine and shower. There isn't a washing machine or shower at the Exeter YES, but we can sometimes provide food for young people. There is a shower at the Newton Abbot YES Centre though
- Support you to access advocacy services

Contacts details for Young Devon Homelessness Prevention Exeter

- **Tel: 01392 331666**
- **Email: yes.exeter@youngdevon.org**

Address: Yes Centre, 39 George Street, Exeter, EX1

6. What happens if I apply to the council as homeless?

As a care leaver aged between 18 and 20, you'll be in [priority need](#) for emergency housing from the council's housing department if you're facing homelessness.

This applies even if you spent as little as 1 night in care when you were 16 or 17.

You could also be in priority need if you're 21 or over. This could be because you:

- are vulnerable as a result of being in care
- have mental or physical health problems
- have slept on the streets in the past
- are pregnant

- have a dependent child

If you're a 16 or 17 year old care leaver and are homeless, the council will refer you to social services.

A young person owed leaving care duties under [section 23C of the Children Act 1989](#) will have a local connection to the area of the children services authority that owes them the duties. 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](#)
- [Exeter City Council](#)
- [Mid Devon District Council](#)
- [North Devon District Council](#)
- [South Hams District Council](#)
- [Teignbridge District Council](#)
- [Torridge District Council](#)
- [West Devon Borough Council](#)

Contact details for Exeter City Council's Housing Solutions Service

Online: [Contacting us for housing advice - Exeter City Council](#)

Address: Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter EX1 1JN

Tel: 01392 265726

**If you are homeless outside of normal office hours
(Monday-Friday 9am-5pm, excluding bank holidays)
or at the weekend then please contact**

Exeter City Council's Out Of Hours Number:-

01392 265147 for assistance