

Help and housing information for care leavers

If you are a care leaver you may be able to get housing and other help from the Council. The help you get mainly depends on your age.

Key advice

- Staffordshire County Council's Children's Services team is responsible for finding you somewhere to live until you turn 18
- If you are a 18, 19 or 20 year old homeless care leaver, the Council's housing advice service must help

Housing help for 16 and 17 year olds

If:

- you have already left care, and
- you have spent a total of at least 13 weeks in care since the age of 14, and
- part of that time in care was while you were 16 or 17

You will be able to get help including somewhere to live from Staffordshire County Council's children's services. It doesn't matter if those 13 weeks were not all at the same time.

You have different rights if you have spent less than a total of 13 weeks in care, or you want to leave care before your 16th birthday.

If you are threatened with homelessness and are working with a social worker make them aware and they will be able to provide relevant advice and assistance.

Financial support for 16 or 17 year old care leavers

Most 16 or 17 year old care leavers are not eligible for benefits. The Children's Services department of Staffordshire County Council will help you by:

- providing housing or helping you find and keep your own place
- supporting you financially by paying you enough for your rent, food, bills, travel costs
- for education and training, clothing, pocket money and childcare if you need it
- giving you any other support you need, such as help with continuing your education, finding work or dealing with personal problems

You can usually only claim benefits if you are a 16 or 17 year old care leaver and you are also a single parent or unable to work because of a disability or illness.

Find out more about benefit rules from Turn2Us www.turn2us.org.uk

Housing help for 18 to 21 year old care leavers

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 a care leaver aged 18 to 21 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Housing Advice team can help you find a place to live.

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.

Financial support for care leavers over 18

When you turn 18 you are entitled to claim benefits. You should be able to claim Universal Credit if you need to.

Housing help for 21 years old and above care leavers

Some older care leavers can get accommodation from the homelessness prevention service if they 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 slept on the streets in the past

If you are in full-time further or higher education and you have nowhere to stay outside term Time, Children's services must also find you somewhere to live.

Other support for care leavers aged 18 to 24

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

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.

Help for all care leavers

The County Council's role

The County Council that last looked after you remains responsible for you even if you move to a different area.

Personal adviser

Before you leave care you're given a pathway plan setting out what support you might need to live independently. [Find out more about pathway plans, leaving foster or local authority care here](#) *(insert hyperlink)*

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. Your personal adviser should stay in contact with you and provide ongoing support and help until you turn 21 or until your 25th birthday if you are still studying full time. Get advice if you don't have a personal adviser. You may be able to get one even if you didn't get one while you were still in care.

Suitable accommodation for young care leavers

Any accommodation the Council provides should be suitable for you. You may get a place in a hostel or a self-contained flat. 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.

Single room rate

Usually if you are aged under 35 and you rent from a private landlord, the maximum Housing Benefit or Universal Credit 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. You should be entitled to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit even if you have just spent one night in care. There is a maximum amount that you can be paid, which depends on the area you live in. [The maximum rates of entitlement are available here.](https://www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk/article/967/Local-Housing-Allowance-LHA-rates) (insert hyperlink <https://www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk/article/967/Local-Housing-Allowance-LHA-rates>)

Extra help for moving into a new place

If you are a care leaver moving to a new place, you can get a setting up home allowance (also known as a leaving care grant) to help you buy essential things when moving into your own home. Speak to your personal adviser about this.

You may be entitled to a [budgeting loan](https://www.gov.uk/budgeting-help-benefits) (insert hyperlink <https://www.gov.uk/budgeting-help-benefits>) 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.

Help and advice for homeless care leavers

Most young people who have been in care are entitled to help if they become homeless. The help you are entitled to usually depends on your age and personal circumstances.

Where a care leaver is aged under 21 and normally lives in a different area to that of a local authority that owes them leaving care duties, and has done for at least 2 years including some time before they turned 16, the young person will also have a local connection in that area.

Get advice if you become homeless.

Staffordshire County Council (up to 18 years) – Families First and First Response **Email:** frist@staffordshire.gov.uk **Phone:** 0800 1313 126
Out of Hours Emergencies Phone: 0345 604 2886

[NYAS \(National Youth Advocacy Services\)](https://www.nyas.net) (insert hyperlink <https://www.nyas.net> here) provide advocacy for the following groups of children and young people. The service is available for care leavers up to the age of 25. **Email:** help@nyas.net
Phone: 0800 808 1001

[Coram Voice's](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk) (insert hyperlink <http://www.coramvoice.org.uk>) provide advocacy services to young people and children

Search the [Homeless England directory](https://www.homeless.org.uk/search-homelessness-services) (insert hyperlink <https://www.homeless.org.uk/search-homelessness-services>) to find hostels, emergency and longer term accommodation, day centres and services in your area.

Use [Shelter's](http://www.shelter.org.uk) (insert hyperlink <http://www.shelter.org.uk>) website or call Shelter's free housing advice helpline on 0808 800 4444 to find services near you.

