

Leaving Care?

Lost?



Your
step by step
guide to leaving care



DHSSPS

Department of Health, Social Services
and Public Safety
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk



Listening • Learning • Changing



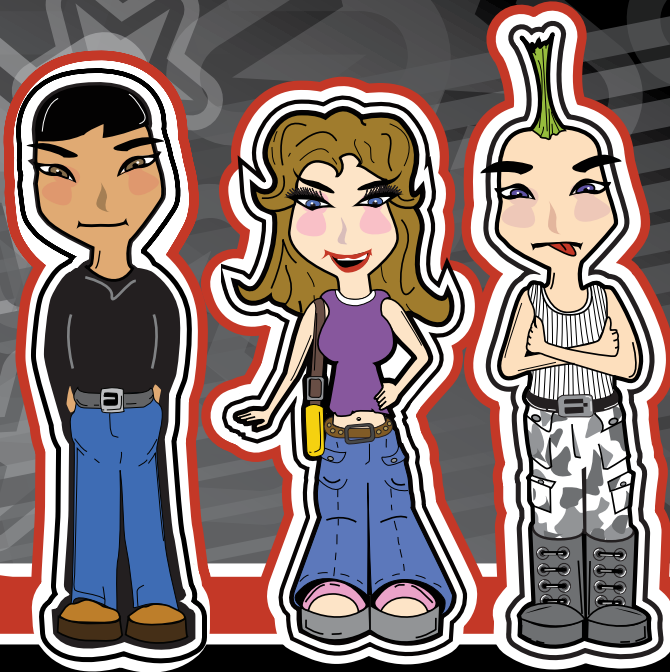
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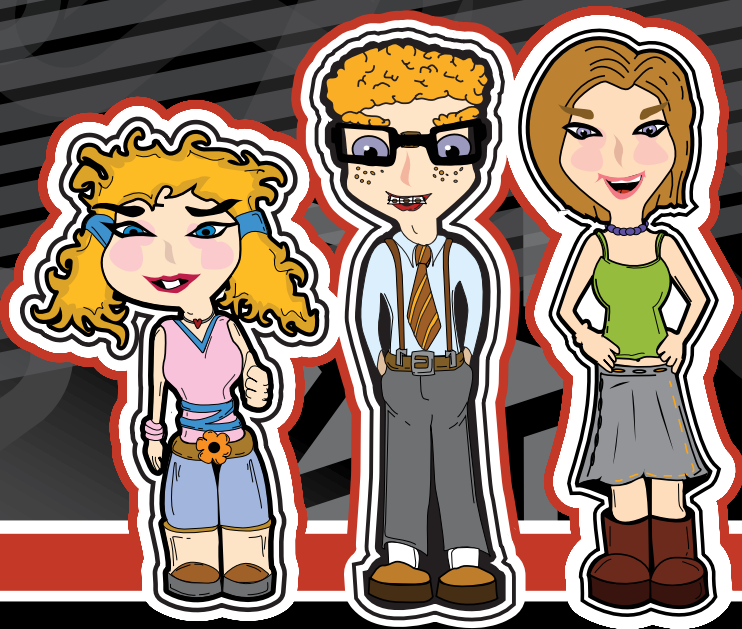


Hey!

**We're the Young Reps,
a group of young volunteers,
who represent the views
of care experienced young
people within VOYPIC.**



We wrote this guide because we thought it was important to help you understand the new services that you are entitled to when leaving care under a new piece of legislation called the Children (Leaving Care) Act (NI) 2002.



WHAT IS THE CHILDREN (LEAVING CARE) ACT (NI) 2002?



On 1st September 2005 the Children (Leaving Care) Act (NI) 2002 came into force. This new piece of law or "Act" provides young care leavers with more help and support than before.

The purpose of the Children (Leaving Care) Act (NI) 2002 is to improve the life chances of young people living in care as they make the move to independent living.

The main aims of this new law are to:

- Make sure that you don't leave care until you are ready
- Improve the preparation and planning you receive before you leave care
- Make sure you have better support when you leave care
- Improve financial support for you.



FACT

Every year around 200 people leave care in NI.

FACT

Care leavers generally leave care between 16 and 18. The average young person leaves home at 22.

FACT *

Care leavers experience greater disadvantage in relation to housing.

FACT *

As few as 40% of care leavers receive formal preparation for leaving care.

FACT

Young people in care tend to do poorly at school and so may face difficulties getting a job later in life.

Young people in care need support to realise their dreams and should get the same life chances as other young people who have not been in care.

* (left) 'Promoting Independence', Social Services Inspectorate Report, 2000

* (right) 'Meeting the Challenge', 1996, John Pinkerton and Ross McCrea

HOW WILL THE ACT AFFECT YOU?

This Act will affect you if you leave care after 1st September 2005. Depending on your age and circumstances you will fall into a certain group or category. They are:

Eligible: Young people aged 16 or 17 who have been in care for 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who are still 'looked after children'.

Relevant: Young people aged 16 or 17 and who have left care (i.e. you are no longer under a Care Order or accommodated).

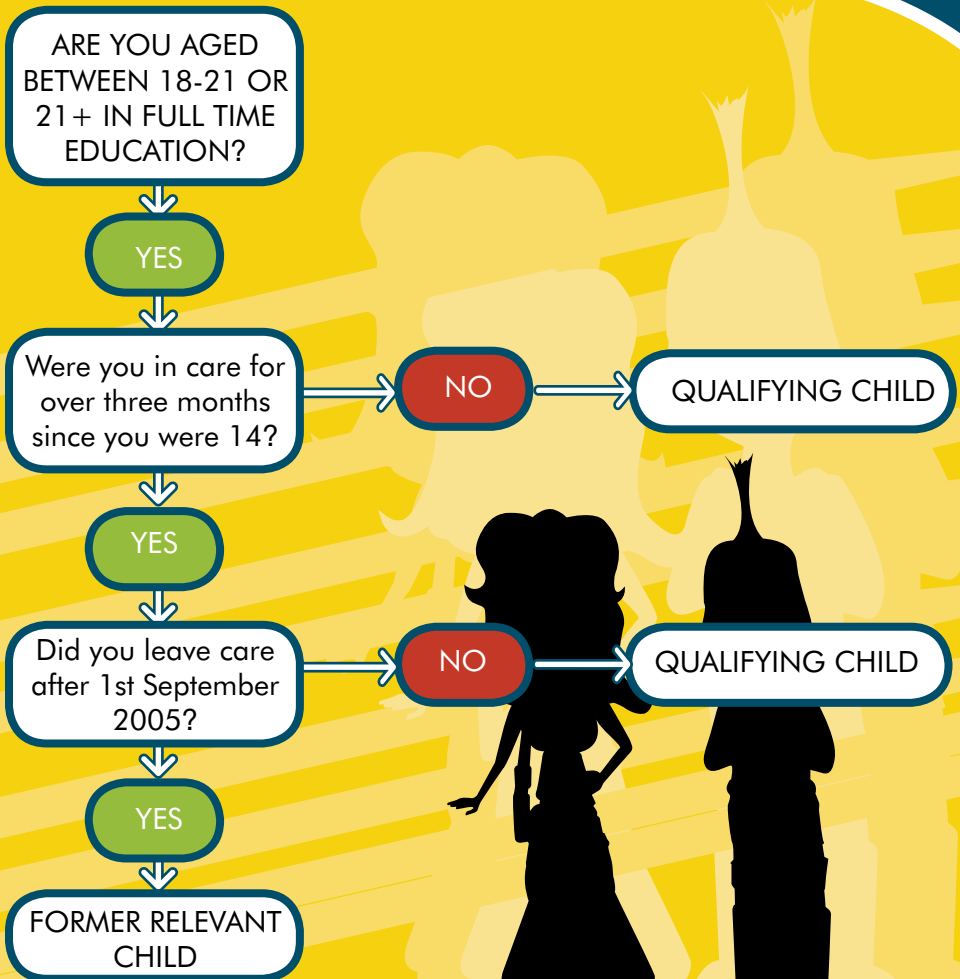
To find out what category you are in, use these diagrams.



Former relevant: Young people aged 18-21 who have been an 'eligible' or 'relevant' young person.

Qualifying: Any young person (including those who do not fall into any of the 3 categories above) aged under 21 who leaves care after the age of 16.

Depending on the category you are in, you are entitled to certain things.



HOW TO PREPARE FOR LEAVING CARE

Remember, leaving care does not always mean that you have to leave where you are currently living. For example, if you are living in foster care and even though you cease to be a looked after young person, you may continue to live with your carers!

Why do I need preparation?

Care leavers come from many different types of backgrounds and circumstances, and so may need different levels of support from a wide variety of people.

The more prepared you are to leave care the more successful your move will be and the more confident you will become.

What preparation will I get?

Your preparation for leaving care should help you build good relationships, develop self-esteem and help you to learn and develop the skills needed for independent living. You should also be involved in the decisions made about your future and you can do this by taking part in your planning and review meetings.



Who Will Help You:



There should be a formal means of making sure that your Trust continues to take your thoughts into account. Where necessary the thoughts of your parents or foster parents should also be heard.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR LEAVING CARE

Preparation for leaving care must begin before you move out.

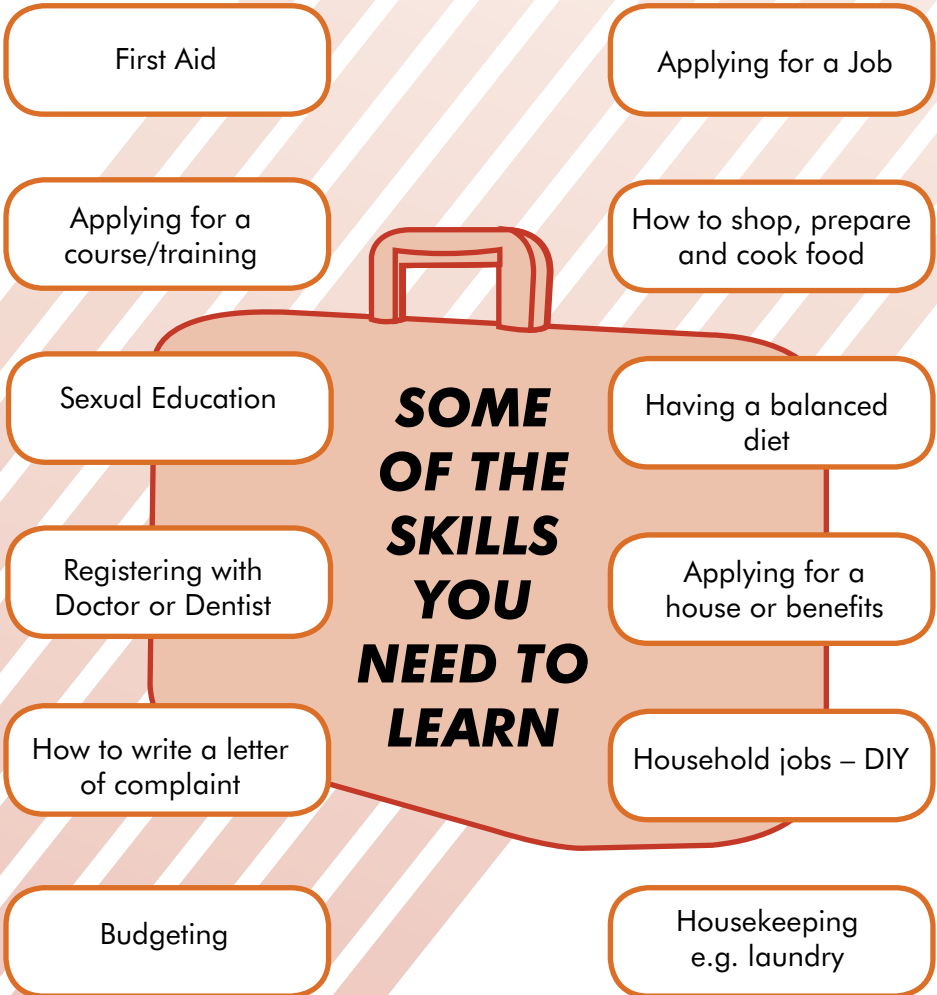
There are three important things you may need help with before you leave care:

1. Helping you to keep in contact and maintain relationships with others.
2. Helping you to build upon your self-esteem.
3. Learning day-to-day practical skills and how to manage money.



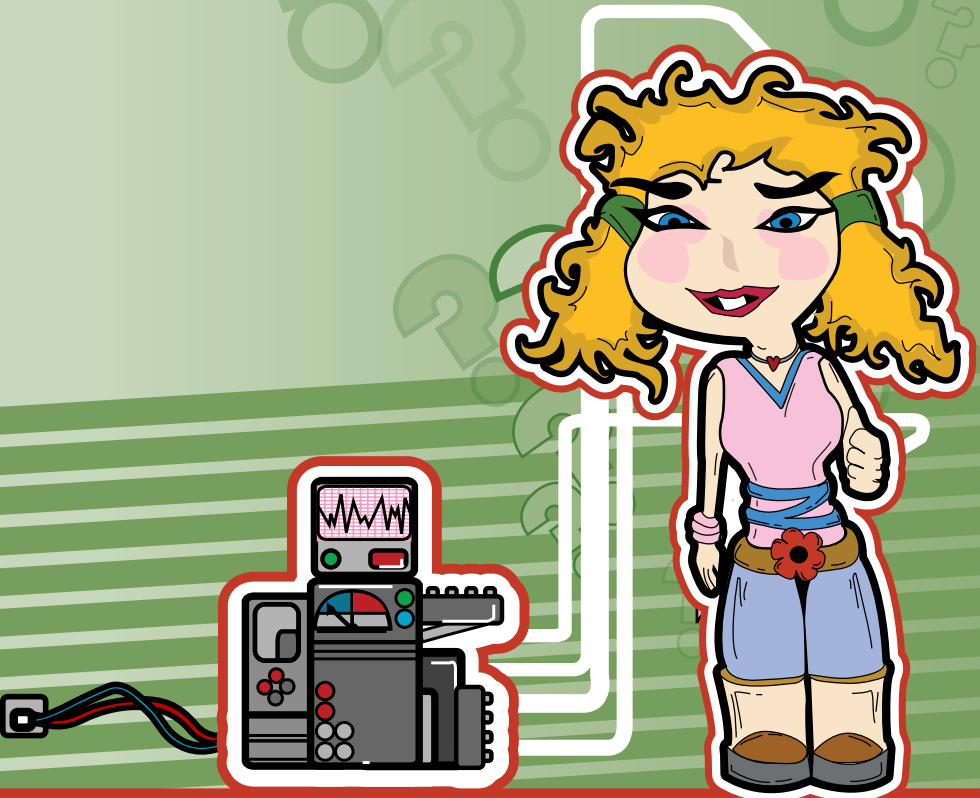


You will need to learn financial skills and practical day-to-day skills. These include:



WHO GETS WHAT?

Depending on what category you are in you are entitled to a range of services.



Types of young people with care experience	What you are entitled to
Eligible Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the services and provisions you are entitled to while 'looked after' (e.g. Clothing allowances, birthday/Christmas gifts) • A Needs Assessment • A Personal Adviser • A Pathway Plan
Relevant Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Needs Assessment • A Personal Adviser • A Pathway Plan • Support with somewhere to live • A personal allowance • Support with goals set in the Pathway Plan e.g. education and training • Your Trust keeping in touch with you
Former Relevant Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Personal Adviser • A Pathway Plan • Support with getting and maintaining a job • Support with education and training • Personal support • Holiday accommodation if in higher education or residential accommodation for further education • Your Trust keeping in touch with you
Qualifying Young People Over 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entitlements of leaving and aftercare under the previous system • Contact with your Trust as required or as seen as necessary by the Trust • Support with full time education or training until the age of 24 • Holiday accommodation if in higher education or residential accommodation for further education

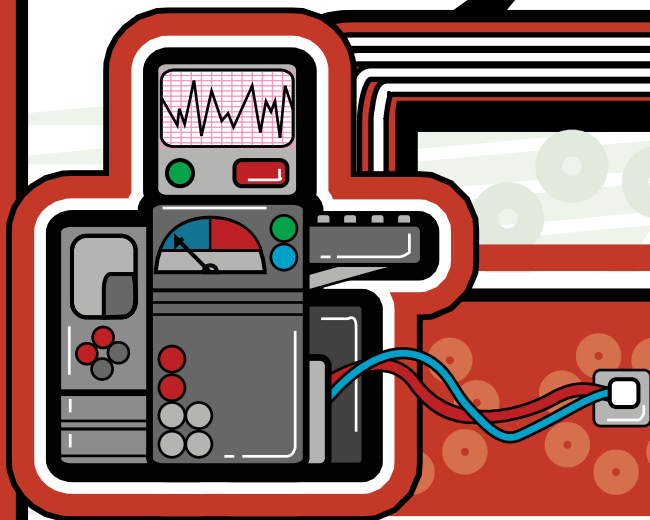
WHAT IS A 'NEEDS ASSESSMENT'?

A Needs Assessment is a task that is carried out to assess your needs and requirements before you leave care. It is undertaken to make sure that you have the appropriate support and services to meet your needs, e.g. education, training or employment needs. It is an opportunity to look at what is happening with you now and what you might need or want for the future. A Needs Assessment is the starting point for completing your Pathway Plan which will explain how your needs should then be met.

(See page 18 for more information on Pathway Plans)

When does it take place?

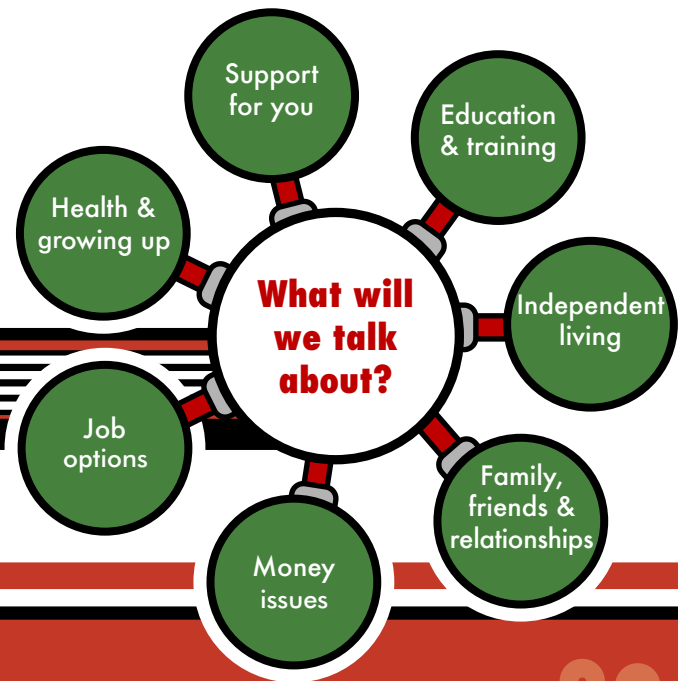
It must be completed within 3 months of your 16th birthday, although it may happen earlier. There are special circumstances where this assessment might be delayed or postponed for a period of time, for example, if you are in the middle of exams.



Who will do your Needs Assessment?

Your Social Worker will take responsibility for starting and making sure that the assessment is done but your wishes and feelings should be listened to and considered throughout the process. Your Personal Adviser may also take part in completing your assessment with you, but there are other people whose views may also be taken into consideration, for example:

- **Other people who are important to you**
e.g. youth worker, mentor
- **People connected to your education**
- **Health professionals**
- **Parents**
- **Carers**

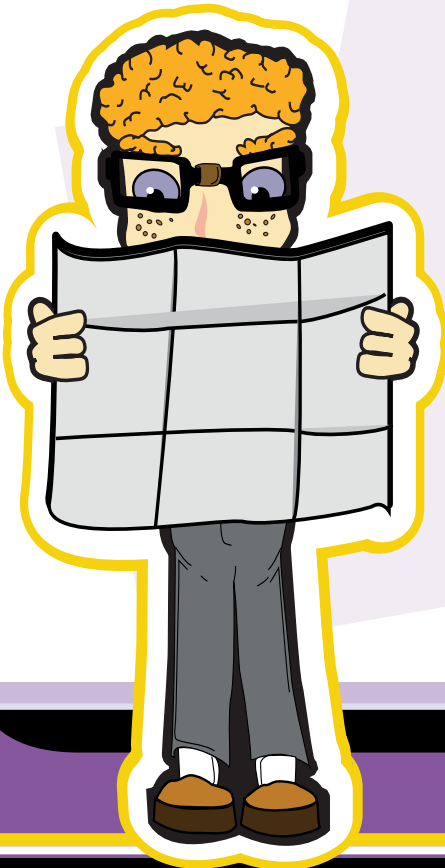


YOUR VIEWS

Your assessment is all about you and your future. So if you're not happy or feel that it is not meeting your needs you can speak to your Personal Adviser or Social Worker.

WHAT IS A PATHWAY PLAN?

Your Trust and Personal Adviser will help you prepare a Pathway Plan as soon as an assessment of need is completed.



The Pathway Plan is different to your Care Plan in that it prepares for your future in much more detail. Your plan will be your own and it will be flexible, suiting your needs and giving you room to breathe as your needs and plans may change. You will have a copy of your plan and will have a say as to who else gets a copy.

What will my Pathway Plan include?

- Your accommodation - your rights and housing options
- Education, training or employment needs and any financial or practical help you're entitled to
- Relationships with family and friends
- Any practical skills you need and how to get them
- Any personal support you need
- Your Personal Adviser and the people who will help and support you will be named.

Your Trust and Personal Adviser will help along the way and ensure you get the best help and support.

Part of your Pathway Plan will include a back-up plan (contingency) so it isn't the end of the world if things don't work out as planned.

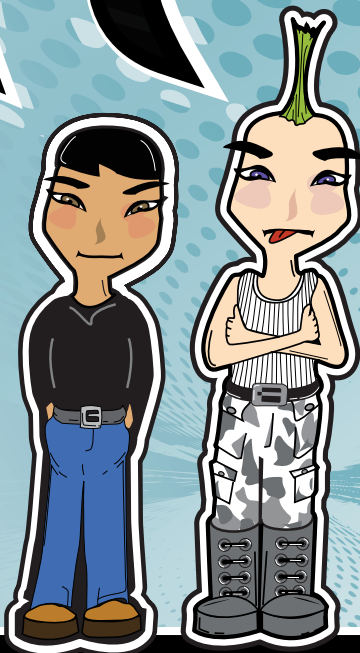
Your plan will be reviewed by you and your Personal Adviser and Social Worker every 6 months and changes will be made if needed.

WHAT IS A PERSONAL ADVISER?

Your Personal Adviser is someone who is there specifically for you, to offer you advice and guidance when developing your Pathway Plan. Your Personal Adviser is someone who is there for you to provide support and help to improve your circumstances and opportunities in life.

Who is my Personal Adviser?

Your Personal Adviser is someone that you can have a trusting relationship with, that can carry out the role to a high standard and is committed to your well being and to supporting you into adulthood. When you reach a stage of becoming involved with the Leaving and After Care Team in your area, you should be given the opportunity to talk about who will be your Personal Adviser.





Account should be taken of your views and preferences about who you would like to take on this role as it maybe someone you choose such as your teacher, youth worker, foster carer or social worker. All Personal Advisers will be supported and trained by their Trust.

What do they do?

- Work alongside you and other professionals in relation to your assessment and Pathway Plan
- Provide you with advice and support
- Help you make decisions about your future in relation to education/health/ living arrangements/job
- Work with other services that you need in order to help and support you
- Keep in contact with you regularly to see how you are progressing and ensure your Pathway Plan is meeting your needs
- Assist you with managing your money and budgeting.

Contact

Your Personal Adviser may keep in contact with you on a regular basis by letter, phone, email or face-to-face contact. However, the amount of contact depends on your needs and the support you need as highlighted in your Pathway Plan.

Remember

Your Personal Adviser will give advice and try to support you in every aspect of your Pathway Plan so if you have a problem or want to discuss issues about your Pathway Plan, tell your Personal Adviser.

WHAT ARE THE NEW FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS?



Under the new Act young people aged 16 or 17 who have left care can no longer receive Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance or Housing Benefit. Instead your Trust must meet the costs of your accommodation and give you a personal allowance. This will be outlined in your Pathway Plan.

Care leavers aged 16 and 17 who are lone parents or who have a disability can claim Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance, but your Trust will have to meet your housing costs.

If you are 18+ and a Former Relevant Young Person you are entitled to receive the appropriate supports from the Social Security Agency. You may also receive some assistance from your Trust based on your assessed need.

For Qualifying Young People the primary income support role remains with the Social Security Agency. However your Trust may also give financial assistance depending on your assessed need.

All of your financial details should be outlined in your Pathway Plan.

Budgeting

Learning to look after your money is an important part of leaving care and you will probably have to open a bank account. If you find it difficult to manage your money your Leaving & After Care Team will help you work it out or if necessary handle payments on your behalf.

What your Trust may provide based on your needs:

- Some travel costs
- Education/educational materials
- Costs associated with special needs
e.g. pregnancy or disability
- Child care
- Clothing
- Contact with family or other significant relationships
- Religious/cultural needs
- Counselling
- Hobbies/holidays/sporting activities.



CARE LEAVERS AGED 16-17 (RELEVANT YOUNG PEOPLE)



When you leave care you will need different types of support e.g. accommodation, personal support and finance.

Until you are 18 years old your Trust must make sure you are in "suitable accommodation". This is a place to live which is right for you and which is safe and secure. Your own views should be taken into account.

Different housing options may include:

- Staying on at your current placement
- Supported housing
- Floating support schemes
- Foyers
- Your own tenancy.

All of these might not be available in your area but your Personal Adviser can assist you – the option that is right for you will be included in your Pathway Plan.

Personal support can include:

- Drop-in-centres
- Out-of-hours or outreach support
- Mentoring and befriending schemes
- Life skills training
- Listening ear
- Planned, regular contact with your Personal Adviser.

Any support you need should be included in your Pathway Plan.

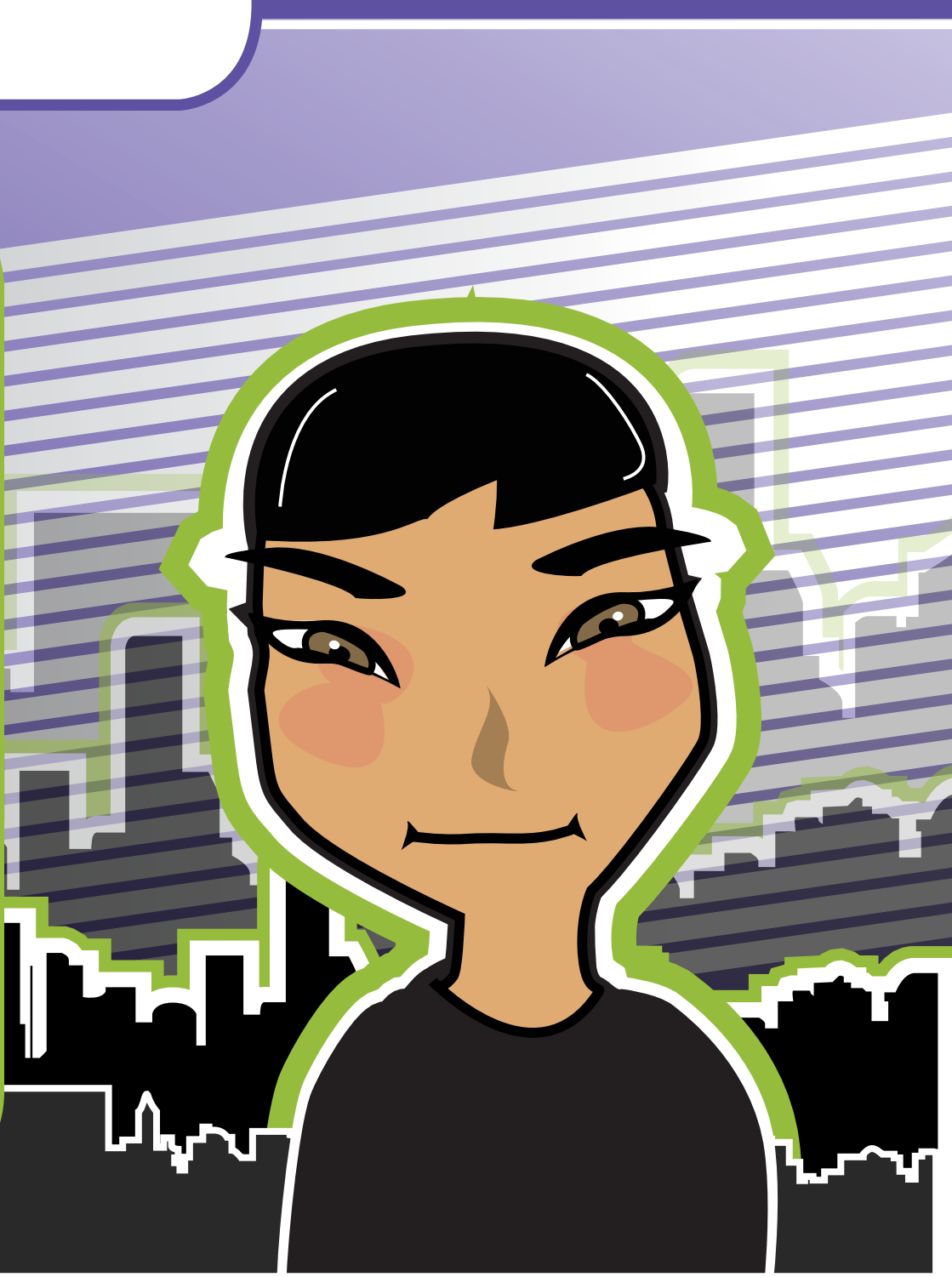
After you turn 18 years old your Trust does not have to provide accommodation or a personal allowance but should provide help to you in ways you have agreed in your Pathway Plan. They should continue to help you with your education, training and work. This could mean help to buy books, equipment or clothing, travel costs and fees.

What happens when you're 18?

Your Trust will still provide you with help. If you are not in full-time employment or study your Personal Adviser will help you make a claim for Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance. You will also be entitled to claim Housing Benefit.

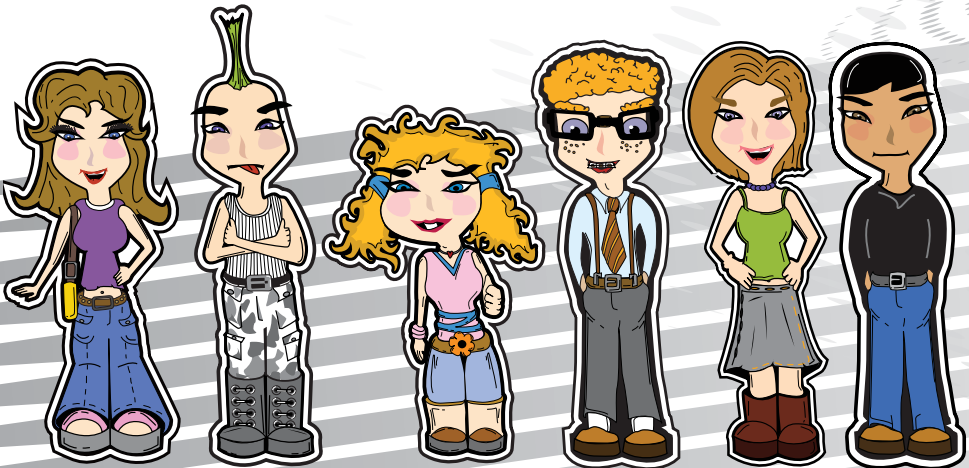
Your Trust should also:

- Provide you with a Personal Adviser
- Review your Pathway Plan regularly
- Keep in touch
- Assist with the costs of education and training.



QUALIFYING YOUNG PEOPLE

If you don't fall into any of the 3 categories (eligible, relevant or former relevant) and if you left care after the age of 16, you are still entitled to advice and help until you are 21 years old. Your Trust has a duty to advise and befriend you if you have been accommodated by the Trust or a voluntary organisation.



Based on an assessment of need:

- Your Trust may give you assistance.
This may be in kind (not cash) or in special cases, cash
- Your Trust must also keep in touch with you as appropriate to make sure that it is delivering on its duty to advise and befriend you
- Your Trust may also assist you by helping you with expenses in relation to education, employment and training
- Your Trust may continue to meet your expenses if you are in full time education until you are 24 years old and has a duty to provide you with holiday accommodation
- You will be able to claim Income Support and Job Seekers Allowance but your Trust may also offer you financial support if you have particular needs.

YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

If you have a disability you might have particular needs. It is essential to ensure that your needs are met when preparing you for leaving care and providing you with after care support.

For the purpose of this guide a young person with a disability is someone with a physical and/or sensory impairment and/or learning difficulty.

Special Educational Needs

Your Trust has a duty to help the Education and Library Boards with providing services for you if you have a Special Educational Needs (SEN) statement.

Housing Needs

Your Trust will also need to work with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) to help meet your accommodation needs.

Fact

The Trust must consider what help they can offer you in preparing to leave care and providing after care support.

If the Trust considers that you have a disability, they must assess your needs, before you leave full-time education, to decide what services they can provide.

The Trust should also provide communication support for all young people who require it. This could be, for instance, textphones or interpreters.

Transition to Adult Services

The move from child to adult health services is not always easy but your Trust should help you with this. Your Pathway Plan should make sure any extra needs you have are met.



MOVING TO INDEPENDENCE AND ADULTHOOD

This path shows the journey you will take through leaving and after care.

At age 15 yrs

Starting to think about what will happen when I leave care.



At age 16 – 17 yrs (Eligible Young Person)

Depending on what I need, I may have a range of people involved in my life.

My Social Worker has responsibility for me but I also get support from a Personal Adviser.

My Social Worker will start helping me find out what I need for my future and with my Personal Adviser start to write my Pathway Plan.

I will get to know my Personal Adviser. They will:

- Make sure that I have a Pathway Plan
- Provide me with advice and support
- Keep in touch with me.





If I leave care at 16 or 17 yrs

I become a Relevant Young Person. If I say goodbye to my Social Worker, I will have a named After Care Worker and my Personal Adviser.



18 – 21 yrs

(up to 24 yrs if in education)

I am a Former Relevant Young Person and will still have my Personal Adviser and an After Care Worker, if I need them.

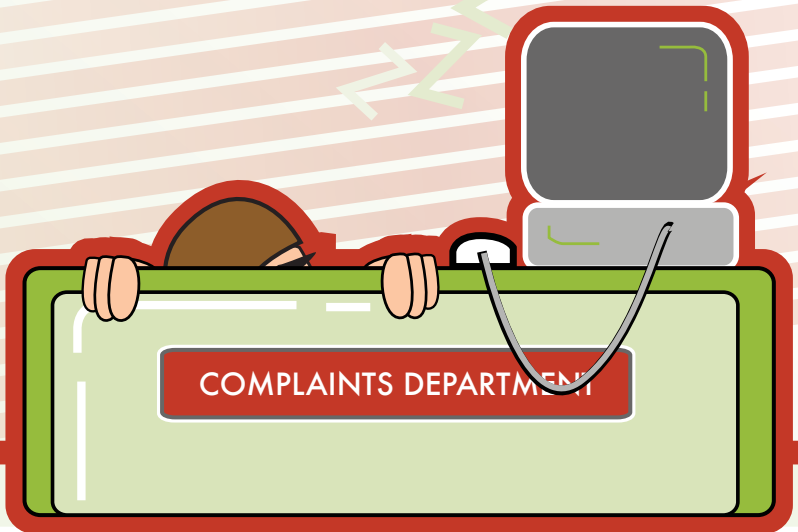


HOW DO YOU MAKE A COMPLAINT?

Under the new Act your Trust should have a system for dealing with any complaints you may have.

You can complain if you think your Trust has not prepared you for leaving care, or they have not given you enough support. The Trust's complaints system should be clear and easy to understand.

If you make a complaint to your Trust they must try to resolve it with you within 14 days. Your Personal Adviser can support you through this process.



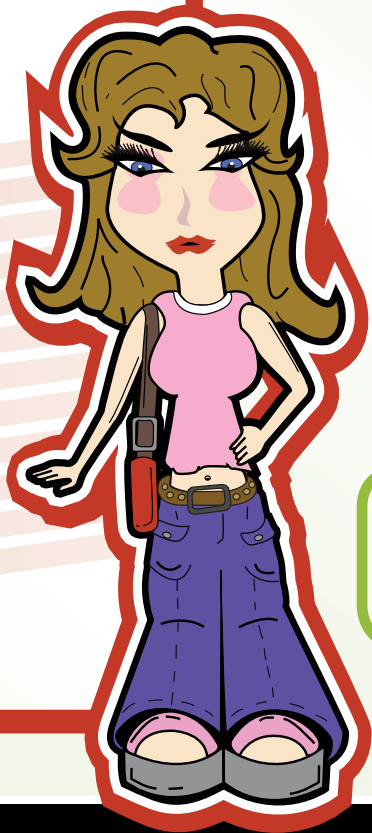
Your complaint should be resolved as quickly as possible and informally.

But if you are still not satisfied then the Trust Complaints Officer will get involved and your complaint will be dealt with formally under the complaints process.

Advocacy

Your Trust should allow you to have access to an independent advocacy service, to help you make a complaint in the first case or represent you at any stage in the complaint process.

You can get an advocate through VOYPIC, or your Personal Adviser or Carer.





USEFUL CONTACTS ...

LEAVING AND AFTER CARE SERVICES

Down Lisburn HSST

Leaving & After Care Team
TSL House
38 Bachelor's Walk
LISBURN
BT28 1XN
TEL: 028 9262 7400

Down Lisburn HSST

Leaving & After Care Team
Ward 25, Downshire Hospital
123 Ardglass Road
DOWNPATRICK
BT30 6RA
TEL: 028 4451 3937

Armagh & Dungannon HSST

Leaving & After Care Team
E. Floor, South Tyrone Hospital
Carland Road
DUNGANNON
BT71 4AU
TEL: 028 8772 2821

South & East Belfast HSST

Leaving & After Care Team
92 University Street
BELFAST, BT7 1HB
TEL: 028 9024 0255

Newry & Mourne HSST

After Care Services
Level 1, Drumalane Mill
The Quays
NEWRY
BT35 8QF
TEL: 028 3082 5000 (3) (5)

Ulster Community & Hospital Trust

BCM Quayside
16 South Street
NEWTOWNARDS
BT23 4JT
TEL: 028 9182 7783

North & West Belfast HSST

Leaving & After Care Team
89 Durham Street
BELFAST
BT12 4GE
TEL: 028 9032 5962

Homefirst HSST

Leaving & After Care Team
Magherafelt Family Centre
15 Fairhill
MAGHERAFELT
BT45 6BL
TEL: 028 7930 1771

Homefirst HSST

Leaving & After Care Team
40 Carnmoney Road
GLENGORMLEY
BT36 6HP
TEL: 028 9083 1444

Causeway HSST

Leaving & After Care Team
28 Portstewart Road
COLERAINE, BT52 1RN
TEL: 028 7035 8158

Foyle HSST

Leaving & After Care Team
3 Aberfoyle Terrace
Strand Road
LONDONDERRY
BT48 7NP
TEL: 028 7127 1732

Sperrin Lakeland HSST

Leaving & After Care Team
12 Homeview Terrace
OMAGH, BT79 0NS
TEL: 028 8224 3584

Craigavon & Banbridge HSST

Leaving & After Care Team
Unit 4, First Floor
Legahory Centre
CRAIGAVON, BT65 5BE
TEL: 028 3831 1450

MACS

1-5 Botanic Avenue
BELFAST, BT7 1JG
TEL: 028 9031 3163

Barnardo's Leaving Care

171 University Street
BELFAST, BT7 1HR
TEL: 028 9064 433

OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS

Voice Of Young People In Care (VOYPIC)

A regional charity providing advice and services for young people with an experience of care.

9-11 Botanic Ave
BELFAST, BT7 1JG
TEL: 028 9024 4888
www.voypic.org and
www.bawareofwatsncare.co.uk

Childline

Childline is a free Helpline for children and young people. Counsellors are available to help with any problems. This number is specifically for children and young people in care.

TEL: 0800 884 444
General Info TEL: 0800 1111

Samaritans

Samaritans is available 24 hours a day to provide confidential emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which may lead to suicide.

TEL: 0845 790 9090

Contact Youth Counselling Services

135-139 Ravenhill Road
BELFAST, BT6 8DR
TEL: 028 9045 7848



USEFUL CONTACTS ...

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

The Housing Centre
2 Adelaide Street
BELFAST
028 9024 0588
NIHE After Hours Emergency Repairs
Service Belfast 028 9024 6111
L/Derry 0845 650 4381

Childrens Law Centre

3rd Floor
Philip House
BELFAST
TEL: 028 9024 5704

Housing Rights Service

Free advice available 9.30am -
1.30pm Monday to Friday
10 -12 High Street
BELFAST BT1 2BA
TEL: 028 9024 5640
Benefit Enquiry Line: 0800 220674

CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAUX

BELFAST BRANCH
6 Callender Street, Belfast
TEL: 028 9050 3000

BANGOR BRANCH
Hamilton House
Hamilton Road, Bangor
TEL: 028 9127 0009

CARRICKFERGUS BRANCH
65 North Street, Carrickfergus
TEL: 028 9335 1808

GLENGORMLEY BRANCH
3 Ballyclare Road, Glengormley
TEL: 028 9084 4592

HOLYWOOD BRANCH
Queens Hall
Sullivan Place, Hollywood
TEL: 028 9042 8288

LARNE BRANCH
49 Victoria Road, Larne
TEL: 028 2826 0379

LISBURN BRANCH
50 Railway Street, Lisburn
TEL: 028 9266 2251

LONDONDERRY BRANCH
Embassy Street
Strand Road, Londonderry
TEL: 028 7136 2444

NEWTOWNARDS BRANCH
23 Regent Street, Newtownards
TEL: 028 9181 9257

ARMAGH BRANCH
9 McCrums Court
Armagh
TEL: 028 3752 4041

MY PERSONAL CONTACTS

MY SOCIAL WORKER'S NAME

ADDRESS

TEL NUMBER

EMAIL

MY PERSONAL ADVISER'S NAME

ADDRESS

TEL NUMBER

EMAIL

OTHER PERSONAL CONTACTS



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Voice of Young People in Care
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