

Leaving Care Service and Entitlements:

**a**  
**guide**  
**for**  
**young people**



#I4046618

## What's it about?

This guide has been created by young people who are either living in care or are now Care Leavers. It is full of information that we think you will need when moving on from care and the service you will receive.

### You are an Eligible Care Leaver if:

- You are currently being looked after; and
- Aged 16 or 17; and
- You have been looked after for a period of 13 weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks) which began after you reached 14 and ended after you reached 16.

### You are a Relevant Care Leaver if:

- You are no longer being looked after by the Local Authority but you have been 'Eligible'; and
- Aged 16 or 17 years old.

### You are a Former Relevant Care Leaver if:

- You are aged 18 years or above, and either have been a Relevant or Eligible child when under 18.
- You are under 25 years old.

### You are a Qualifying Care Leaver if:

- You are at least 16 but under 25; and
- You were looked after immediately prior to the making of a special guardianship order which was in force when you reached 18; or
- You were privately fostered and assessed to be in need.
- As a qualifying Care Leaver you are able to access advice and assistance based on a needs assessment completed by leaving care team. The Looked After Thoroughcare Team (LATC)

## The Charter for Care Leavers

This contains a number of promises that Darlington Borough Council has made to make sure that all children and young people receive all the help and support they need when leaving care and beyond.

You can find a copy of the Charter on the Children and Care Council Website:

[http://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/550240/Charter\\_for\\_Care\\_Leavers\\_App\\_2.pdf](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/550240/Charter_for_Care_Leavers_App_2.pdf)

If you feel that a promise is not being kept, you can speak to your Social Worker or Personal Advisor or get in touch with an advocate or the participation worker.

## Social Workers and Personal Advisors.

As an **Eligible** care leaver you will have an allocated **Social Worker** from Darlington's Looked After Through care Team. Your Social Worker will hold case responsibility and will be responsible for the preparation of your Pathway Plan. You will remain allocated to your social worker until you are 18 or your Looked After Child status ends (whichever comes first).

At 15 ½ years old you will be allocated a **Personal Advisor**. Your Personal Advisor work alongside you and your **Social Worker** and will assist in the preparation of your **Pathway Plan**. Your **Personal Advisor** will provide you with advice, guidance and support regarding:

- Accommodation.
- Education, Training and Employment.
- Health and Development.
- Independent Living Skills.
- Identity and culture.
- Family and Social Networks.



When you reach 18 years old and become former relevant your Personal Advisor will take over responsibility for your Pathway Plan, and you will no longer have a Social Worker.

You should expect to see your Personal Advisor at least every 8 weeks, however you may need to see them more often.

## Pathway Planning

We will prepare a **Pathway Plan** for all **Eligible, Relevant** and **Former Relevant** young people. Your Pathway Plan will replace your Care Plan from the age of 16 years. Your Pathway Plan is about your needs and what we all need to do to ensure your successful transition to adult life.

### How will I be involved?

We aim to fully involve you in the development of your **Pathway Plan**. You will be offered support from your **Social Worker** and **Personal Advisor** to express your wishes and views for your **pathway plan** review meeting.

### Who else will be involved?

With your agreement, we will seek the views from our partner agencies when completing your **Pathway Plan**. This may include Housing, Education, Benefits, Health and Youth Offending Service to ensure we all work together to provide you with clear and consistent advice and support. This can also include someone who looks after to you and knows you the best.

### What will be included in my Pathway Plan?

- Accommodation.
- Education, Training and Employment.
- Health and Development.
- Independent Living Skills.
- Family and Social Networks.
- Hobbies/ Social/ Leisure.
- Financial support.
- Ethnicity, Culture and Identity.
- A Contingency Plan. To make sure you have a 'back-up' plan.

### When will my plan be completed?

Your initial Pathway Plan will be completed before you are 16 years and 3 months old. If you are over 16 when you are first accommodated then this will be within 3 months of the date of you being accommodated.

### What about changes to my plan?

Your plan will then be reviewed and updated at least every **6 months** or within 28 working days of any significant changes to your plan such as a change of address.

## Care Leaver Entitlements

The following figures are accurate as of the 1st August 2017 and may be subject to change and will be reviewed annually.



### Living Allowance:

Eligible and Relevant Care Leavers living independently will receive Living Allowance of **£57.90 per week**. This can be in cash or in kind (for example food, utilities to the value of up to £57.90) and can be paid into your bank, if assessed as suitable for you.

Your Personal Advisor will support you to access advice and, if eligible, claim benefits before your 18th birthday to allow your claim to be processed.

### Accommodation:

Relevant Care Leavers cannot claim Housing Benefit, and the Looked After Through Care Team will pay your rent for you. This will be up to the level of housing benefit you would be able to claim when you turn 18. This is currently £75 per week.

You will be supported to access the **Bond Scheme** in Darlington if you are required to provide a bond for your accommodation (relevant for privately rented properties).

You maybe be able to ask for financial support during the winter months for your gas and electricity bills.

As a care leaver living independently in Darlington you will not be required to pay council tax until your 25th birthday.



## Setting up Home Allowance:

If you are Eligible, Relevant or Former Relevant Care Leaver and living independently, you are entitled to up to £2000 for items to set up your home.

Your personal advisor will help you to budget to make sure you spend it appropriately, this will include holding some back for future spending.

Your setting up home allowance will be held by the Looked After Through Care Team and your social worker or personal advisor will be able to support you to buy items such as:

<input type="checkbox"/> tv licence	<input type="checkbox"/> cutlery	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> tv	<input type="checkbox"/> dining table	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> tv stand	<input type="checkbox"/> chairs	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> aerial	<input type="checkbox"/> sofa	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> extension	<input type="checkbox"/> carpet	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> washing machine	<input type="checkbox"/> coffee table	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> fridge	<input type="checkbox"/> curtain poles	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> freezer	<input type="checkbox"/> curtains	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> cooker	<input type="checkbox"/> lamp	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> microwave	<input type="checkbox"/> bed	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> kitchen	<input type="checkbox"/> wardrobe	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> utensils	<input type="checkbox"/> mattress	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> bin	<input type="checkbox"/> bedding	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> toaster	<input type="checkbox"/> bedside table	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> pots & pans	<input type="checkbox"/> quilt	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> kettle	<input type="checkbox"/> chest of drawers	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> cups	<input type="checkbox"/> ironing board	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> iron	<input type="checkbox"/> bathroom items	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> glasses	<input type="checkbox"/> contents insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Accommodation Options in Darlington:

### 'Staying put' (suitable for 18-21 year olds)

If you and your foster carers agree you can stay living with your foster carer after you turn 18 and up until you turn 21. You will be required to contribute £20 per week towards living costs and claim housing benefit if you are entitled to this.

### Supported Lodgings (suitable for 16-21 year olds)

In Darlington we have a number of supported lodgings providers who could provide you with a room within their home, you will be expected to contribute £20 per week towards living costs and claim housing benefit if you are entitled to this.

### Kensington Gardens (Aspirations Care) (suitable for 16-18 year olds)

This is a three bedroomed house in central Darlington, with staff on hand to offer you support in developing your independent living skills. Each young person has their own bedroom and access to shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. This option is for 16-18 year olds who are ready to move into semi-independent accommodation. You are expected to purchase your own food/toiletries shopping.

### Taster Flats (suitable for 16 – 18 year olds living in foster care or residential children's home)

If you, your social worker and personal advisor agree that you are ready to have a 'taste' of independence you will be offered a 6 week period in one of our taster flats. In order for you to have this opportunity you will have to show that you are able to complete tasks such as food shopping, cooking, cleaning and laundry tasks. Once you have had your 'taste' you will return to your foster care or residential placement.

### Gateway Assessment

Young people aged 16-25 who require accommodation not discussed above are required to attend a Gateway Assessment with the Darlington Housing Options Team, this assessment will look at needs and any risks, once completed you will be advised of your housing options they could include:

- Darlington YMCA (suitable for 16-25 year olds)

The Looked After Throughcare Team have 3 designated flats within this provision for care leavers, aged 16-25 years old. All flats have self-contained kitchen and bathroom facilities. There is support staff available 24 hours a day. The young people are required to pay £7.90 top rent per week, and purchase food shopping. Gas and Electricity use is also required to be paid.

- DISC supported living (suitable for 18-25 year olds)

In Darlington there are a number of shared houses, and single houses with floating support from DISC. You will be required to claim housing benefit if you are entitled to this and this will cover rent costs

Council Tenancy (suitable for 18 year olds onwards).

Once you turn 18 you will be able to register an online compass application, once complete you will be able to bid on council properties.

## Employment, Training and Education (ETE)

If you are living independently you could receive up to £250 per year as an incentive payment from the leaving care service for Education/Training/Employment. This can be used for materials/books directly related to your course. This can include work clothes or interview clothes.



## Further Education

The 16-19 bursary is guaranteed for care leavers aged 16-19. With your permission your social worker or personal advisor will confirm your care leaver status with the education or training provider. This bursary is up to £1200 per year of studies, the majority of providers pay this bursary in weekly instalments, they may however offer a travel pass, free meals or books and equipment.

If your training provider does not offer the 16-19 bursary the Looked After Throughcare Team will be able to offer the equivalent financial support. This must be included in your Pathway Plan.

## Higher Education

It is Darlington Borough Council's policy that Student Loans should be made full use of.

The Looked After Throughcare Team will pay £2000 to young people completing their course in full, as an incentive payment, this is paid in 3 instalments over the duration of the course.

Term-time accommodation costs will be paid for by the Looked After Throughcare Team

A weekly living allowance will be paid to the sum of **£57.90**.

You will be provided with a young person's railcard (if required) this must be utilised when booking termly transport back to holiday accommodation. The Looked After Throughcare Team will fund this transport 3 times a year (Easter, Summer and Christmas) and you will be expected to book tickets in advance to ensure an advanced purchase price is achieved.

Your Personal Advisor will support you to do this.

### Expectations:

- You are required to claim the student loan you are entitled to.
- You will not be required to work during your studies/term time.
- We would encourage you to work during holiday periods.
- You must notify your Personal Advisor of any changes to your studies, including any failed modules/year.



## Contact and Travel

If you eligible (living independently) or relevant under the age of 18, you will be financially supported to have contact with your family.

## Clothing

In Darlington, Eligible (if living independently) and Relevant young people up to the age of 18 will be provided with a clothing allowance in accordance to need. This allowance could be up to £500 per year if in ETE or £250 per year if not engaged in ETE.

## Special Events

In Darlington, if you are an Eligible (if living independently) or Relevant young person you will receive £75 per year for your birthday and £75 for Christmas/festivals. This is likely to be in the form of a voucher of your choice to be discussed with your personal advisor.

## Emergency Assistance

In an emergency situation you can access a food bank within Darlington on a daily basis, your personal advisor will be able to inform you of the location of these. Small emergency payments can be accessed where necessary, however you would be required to participate in budgeting work if this support is accessed. In Darlington we have registered with Fareshare and have the ability to provide food parcels as part of budgeting support.

## Health and Well-being



### Health Assessment

As long as you remain in care you will be requested to have an annual health assessment until you reach 18 years old. You will also be encouraged to attend dental, optician and any Doctor or Hospital appointments. Your Personal Advisor will support you to attend these.

### Health Passport

We aim to provide you with a Health Passport around your 16th birthday, this will be kept updated until your 18th birthday. It will contain your current GP, dentist, and optician details. Also included will be contact details for all local health services.

### Live Card

You are entitled to free access to leisure services within Darlington, including swimming and gym at The Dolphin Centre up to the age of 25. In order to access these services you will require a Live Card, if you do not have one of these please inform your social worker or personal advisor and they will make arrangements for you to be provided with one.

## Having my say!

### Children in Care Council

"Darlo Care Crew" is Darlington's Children in Care Council, a group of young people in care who come together regularly, to look at issues that affect children in the care of Darlington Borough Council. Working with the Council, you can help to develop services to make the lives of young people in care better

If you are interested in attending you can contact the Participation Officer, telephone 01325 406284.

### Leaving Care Forum

This is a group of care leavers in Darlington who are involved in the development of the service young people receive.

If you are interested in attending you can contact Advanced Practitioner, telephone number 01325 406284

### Access to records

You may want to access your case records in the future, support will provided to do so. In order to access your records a formal request is required and if you do via the Complaints and Information Governance Team, Town Hall, Darlington, DL1 5QT. Telephone number 01325 406777.

### Peer Mentoring

We offer a training program to care leavers who are interested in becoming 'peer mentors' to looked after children. As part of this role you will have the option to support residential trips and school holiday activities.

If this is something you are interested in you can contact the Participation Officer on 01325 406284

### How to make a complaint or compliment

You may wish to make a complaint or compliment a member of the team, this can be done via the Complaints and Information Governance Team. Telephone number 01325 406777.

### Advocacy Support

An advocate is independent person who can help you address any problems you have.

They can:

- Help you if you're not being listened to
- Help if you need some advice
- Can talk to your social worker or personal advisor for you
- Help you to put your views across

Advocates work for NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service), the contact details are included at the end of this booklet.

## Useful contacts

<b>Looked After Through Care Team</b>	01325 406284
<b>Emergency Duty Team</b> , out of hours support.	01642 524552
<b>Housing Options Team</b>	01325 406948
<b>Complaints and Information Governance</b>	<a href="http://www.darlington.gov.uk/your-council/data-protection-and-freedom-of-information/data-protection/">http://www.darlington.gov.uk/your-council/data-protection-and-freedom-of-information/data-protection/</a> 01325 406777
<b>Access to records</b>	<a href="http://www.darlington.gov.uk/your-council/data-protection-and-freedom-of-information/data-protection/">http://www.darlington.gov.uk/your-council/data-protection-and-freedom-of-information/data-protection/</a> 01325 406777
<b><u>Advocacy/participation</u></b>	
<b>NYAS</b> (National Youth Advocacy Service)	<a href="https://youngpeople.nyas.net/">https://youngpeople.nyas.net/</a> 0151 6498700
<b>Advocacy Together</b>	<a href="https://together-uk.org">https://together-uk.org</a>
<b>Darlo Care Crew</b>	Participation Officer, 01325 406284
<b>Childline</b>	<a href="https://www.childline.org.uk/">https://www.childline.org.uk/</a>
<b><u>Finances</u></b>	
<b>Universal Credit</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/">https://www.gov.uk/</a>
<b>Money Advice Service</b>	<a href="https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/">https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/</a>
<b>Citizen's advice Bureau</b>	0300 3301195
<b>Student Finance Direct</b>	<a href="http://www.studentsupportdirect.co.uk">www.studentsupportdirect.co.uk</a>
<b>Direct Gov</b>	<a href="http://www.direct.gov.uk">www.direct.gov.uk</a>
<b>Student Loans Company</b>	<a href="http://www.slc.co.uk">www.slc.co.uk</a>
<b>Aim Higher</b>	<a href="http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk">www.aimhigher.ac.uk</a>
<b>UNIAID Student Charity</b>	<a href="http://www.uniaid.org.uk">www.uniaid.org.uk</a>
<b><u>Health and Well-being</u></b>	
<b>SWITCH/NECA</b> (substance misuse services)	01325 267230
<b>CAMHS</b>	The Mulberry Centre, 0300 1239296
<b>Adult Mental Health Crisis Team</b>	01325 552230
<b>Gay Advice in Darlington (GAD)</b>	01325 252522