



Help and housing for care leavers

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

Key advice

- Cumberland Council's Children's Services team is responsible for finding you somewhere to live until you turn 18
- If you are an 18, 19 or 20-year-old homeless care leaver, Cumberland Council Housing Options service must offer help

Housing help for 16 and 17 year old care leavers

The primary responsibility for a child in need who requires accommodation, including a 16 and 17-year-old who is homeless lies with the relevant children's services authority. The Children Act 1989 (section 20) places a duty on children's services authorities to accommodate a child in need, and in almost all circumstances a homeless 16-17 year-old would be a child in need.

Use Shelter's directory located at www.shelter.org.uk to find your local Shelter advice centre or Citizens Advice. This service is free and confidential.

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 Cumberland Council must 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 from Turn2Us about benefit rules for care leavers. Turn2Us can be located at 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, which means that the Housing Options Service should help you find a place to live.

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.

Benefits 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.

Other support for care leavers aged 18 to 24

As a care leaver you should continue to receive help and advice from Cumberland 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 pathway's adviser should 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 council's role

The council that last looked after you remains 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 setting out what support you might need to live independently.

Find out more from www.Gov.uk about pathway plans.

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 provided 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](#) to find your local Shelter advice centre.

Single room rate

Usually if you are aged under 35 and you rent from a private landlord, the maximum 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 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.

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.

You may be entitled to emergency housing from Cumberland Council's Housing Options Service, if you are in priority need.

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.

Help 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.

Care leavers under the age of 18

If you are under the age of 18, Cumberland Council's Children's services department is responsible for finding you somewhere to live.

21 years old and above care leavers

Some older care leavers can get accommodation from the Housing Options Service if we can show 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 slept on the streets in the past

Children's services can help you by providing assistance with education and training until your 25th birthday.

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.

What is a local connection?

A care leaver has a local connection to a local authority area where it owes them [duties as a former relevant child](#).^[29] This local connection category applies until the care leaver's 21st birthday or if they are pursuing a course of education set out in their pathway plan, until that course of education is finished. ^[30]

In non-unitary authorities, where social services are part of the county council but housing is the responsibility of the district councils, the care leaver has a local connection to all the district councils that fall within the area of the county council.

A care leaver also has a local connection to a local authority area in which they were normally resident for a continuous period of two years, at least some of which fell before their 16th birthday, as a result of being looked after by a local authority. This connection lasts until their 21st birthday.

Help and advice for homeless care leavers

Get advice if you become homeless.

An adviser can help you to:

- check whether Children's services and/or the Housing Options Service should help you
- tell you what sort of accommodation and support Children's services normally provide in Copeland – this will give you an idea of what you can expect
- tell you what longer term housing options are available in your area and give you an idea of how much it might cost
- put you in contact with specialist support organisations or local schemes that can help you raise a deposit or find a suitable place to live

Use Shelter's directory to find an adviser in your local area, or call Shelter's helpline on 0808 800 4444.