

# Southampton City Council Care Leavers' Entitlements 2017

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Care Leavers' Entitlement  
2017**

**TEN THINGS THE LAW SAYS YOU ARE  
ENTITLED TO**

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## TEN things the law says YOU are entitled to when leaving care...

### 1. An Assessment of Your Needs

You have a right to have your needs assessed before you leave care to make sure that you leave:

1. at a time that is right for you
2. knowing what support you will be getting and,
3. understanding what your options are if things don't work out for the best

For many young people, it is important to know that you can stay in care up until you are 18, unless you agree that you are ready to leave before.

### 2. A Pathway Plan

You will have a Pathway Plan, started sometime after your 15th birthday (but definitely before you are 16 years 3 months old!), that you have helped to put together and agree with. This will make clear the help you will be getting in preparing to leave care and what support you will receive after you have left.

This will say how Southampton City Council will help you achieve the things you want in life (such as a place of your own, educational achievement, having your own money to spend, going on a training course or getting the job that you want). This is very important to you, as your Pathway Plan says exactly what help you should be getting before, during and after you leave care. Once agreed, it will to be kept to by all those who have signed it, and it will be reviewed every 6 months or if you have a significant change in your situation. As part of your Pathway Plan, you will be supported to meet your education, training and employment needs and wishes. We have Personal Advisers, City Deal employment workers and a careers advisor to support you in succeeding with your plans.

When the time comes for you to leave care, you should be able to look after yourself, keep yourself healthy, continue with your learning, enjoy and achieve things in life, stay in touch with family and friends, and be confident about who you are.

We will continue to offer you help and support until your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday and you will be very welcome to ask for additional advice or help, although we are not able to offer financial support.

### 3. A Personal Adviser

Southampton's children's social services will make sure that you have a Personal Adviser when you turn 18, generally they are in the Pathways team based at Church View, 28-29 St Marys Street. It is their job to keep in touch with you, check that you are alright and help you in getting what you need. They will make sure that your Pathway Plan is followed, reviewed and

kept up to date until you are ready to live independently, generally when you are 21-24 years old.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 a change in the law has meant that all care leavers up to the age of 25 are entitled to request support. Support may then be provided on a needs assessed basis. This does not detract from our duty to support care leavers up to the age of 25 who tell the council they have returned, or want to return, to education or training.

#### 4. A Place to Live

Southampton City Council must make sure that you have somewhere 'suitable to live'. This means that it has to be right for you and, above all, safe. It is important that wherever you prefer to live, you make sure that Southampton City Council puts this into your Pathway Plan. You can decide to return home if this is what you and your family wish. We have a range of accommodation options including 'Staying Put' with foster carers, supported lodgings, supported housing etc.

In deciding whether accommodation is suitable for a care leaver to live in, Southampton City Council must take into account the care leaver's wishes and feelings about their accommodation, as well as whether the accommodation suits the care leaver's needs and what the landlord is like ('Young People's Entitlements', Department for Education).

If Southampton City Council arranges accommodation for a care leaver, we must do a review after the care leaver has lived there for 28 days – and at least every three months after that. The personal adviser must visit in the first week, at least every two months after that and, also, before each review of the Pathway Plan ('Young People's Entitlements', Department for Education).

#### 5. Financial Support

Until you are 18, Southampton City Council will provide you with an allowance to meet your living costs and needs. This may include food, clothing, travel, hobbies and for your accommodation. We have to make sure that you are not any worse off than if you were on benefits. Once you are 18, if not in employment or full-time education, you can claim benefits. However, Southampton City Council will continue to give you financial help (for example towards the costs of your education and training), if that is what we have agreed to do. In order that Southampton's children's social services keep to their promises, we will make sure that all agreed support is written into your Pathway Plan.

A Higher Education Bursary is paid to all eligible care leavers. A new 16-19 Bursary scheme began from the start of the 2011/12 academic year so Looked after young people and care leavers are guaranteed a £1,200 bursary if they stay in full-time education (and £2,000 if going to university, paid in 4 instalments of £500). Young people should get in touch with their education provider (that is school or college) to find out how to claim the bursary. For advice speak to student support services or your tutor, or go to [www.direct.gov.uk/16-19bursary](http://www.direct.gov.uk/16-19bursary) ('Young People's Entitlements', Department for Education).

Southampton City Council allocates a setting up home allowance of £2000 for its care leavers. This is crucial in helping young people establish their identity and independence and should be used to ensure that they have appropriate equipment and household items to set up safe,

secure and stable accommodation. The amount of £2,000 I was agreed by young people at regional meetings for Chairs of Children in Care Councils. ('Young People's Entitlements', Department for Education). The £2000 is overseen by your Personal Adviser and is generally spent bit by bit as you move through accommodation options as your housing needs change.

## 6. Maintain Relationships

Your Personal Adviser will help you to keep contact with relatives and also friends that you have met whilst in care. If you would like more information about finding friends that you met whilst in care why not visit [www.careleaversreunited.com](http://www.careleaversreunited.com)

## 7. Involvement in Decisions

You have a right to be involved in all decisions about your life, including such things as when you leave care, where you go to live and what support you receive. No decisions should be made without consulting with you first, unless they need to be made in an emergency situation that can't wait for your input. Working with your Personal Adviser to produce your Pathway Plan is a good way to make sure you are involved in your decision making, so we'd really suggest that you take up that opportunity.

## 8. To have Your Say If You Are Not Happy About Something

Although you have left care you are still entitled to let Southampton's children's social services know and, if necessary, complain if you are not satisfied with the support you are getting. You will find complaints forms in Church View reception, or you can complete a complaints form on [our website](#). You can also talk to your Personal Adviser about it if you are happy to do so.

**REMEMBER:** You also have the right to have an advocate to help you do this. This will be provided through No Limits.

## 9. To See Your Files

The law says that you have a right to see information written that is about you. This includes social services files and many young people would like help in getting access to these. Your Personal Adviser will know how to go about this so they can help you understand the process you will need to follow to achieve it. You are also able to apply for a subject access request on [our website](#).

## 10. To Know About Services You Can Use

You have a right to be told, and given information telling you, about all the services that you are entitled to access once you leave care (for example, children's social services, health, further and higher education courses, housing advice). Ask your personal advisor for further information.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

If you would like more information about any of your entitlements when leaving care contact any of the following organisations or visit their websites:

- Office of the Children's Rights Director (Tel: 0800 528 0731, website: [www.rights4me.org](http://www.rights4me.org))
- A National Voice (Tel: 0161 237 5577, website: [www.anationalvoice.org](http://www.anationalvoice.org))
- Who Cares? Trust (Tel: 0207 251 3117, website: [www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk](http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk))
- Care Leavers' Association (Tel: 0161 275 9500, website: [www.careleavers.com](http://www.careleavers.com))
- Children's Legal Centre (Tel: 01206 877 910, website: [www.childrenslegalcentre.com](http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com))
- National Leaving Care Advisory Service (Tel: 0207 840 5620, website: [www.raineronline.org](http://www.raineronline.org)) or
- Voice (Tel: 0207 833 5792, website: [www.vcc-uk.org](http://www.vcc-uk.org))