

Practice guidance for support to former relevant care leavers over the age of 21.

This guidance is written in accordance with the Children and Social Work Act 2017 which extended Local Authority duties in respect of care leavers up to the age of 25.

When a young person reaches 21 years of age, they should keep an allocated worker until at least a month after their birthday in order to ensure they continue to not require support and to comply with the government reporting requirements of the SSD903 reports.

Under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 the Local Authority duties are extended to in respect of care leavers up to their 25th birthday.

Act Requirements:

For care leavers over the age of 21 the duties as set out in the Children Act 1989, to assess care leavers needs and develop and keep under review pathway plan-apply only where the young person requests it.

Care leavers reaching 21

At the last visit prior to the young person turning 21, the Leaving Care worker must ensure that the young person is given the opportunity to identify any support needs or areas of work they feel they may benefit from. If the young person is able to identify a need, and/or the Leaving Care Worker assesses a significant unmet need, then the pathway plan is to be reviewed and updated in order to reflect this with a decision on closure being made by the Team Manager or Senior Practitioner. Of course, the young person's views should be gained on their transition after 21 at an earlier and regular stage.

Care leavers are able to ask for support from a Personal Advisor up to the age of 25. Continued support for care leavers over 21 years of age, will then be agreed by the Team Manager, in conjunction with Leaving Care worker and of course, young person.

If after discussion the young person, alongside Team Manager, feels they do not require any support, they will be provided with the local offer and the post 21 letter as well as the leaving care email inbox details by the leaving care worker, should they, in the future wish to contact the Leaving care Service. A care leaver is able to contact the local authority at any point via the email inbox or any of the office numbers or addresses if they feel they require. Any future contacts after the young person has turned 21 will need to be recorded on the young person's case record using the *Care Leaver In Touch Age 21 to 24 Record*.

Levels of support post 21:

If a young person or another agency requests further intervention, a short assessment of needs will be undertaken using the *Care Leaver In Touch Age 21 to 24 Record*. Some care leavers may have low support requirements whilst others may present with high level need. There are three potential outcomes from this workflow step:

1. Brief Interaction Advice or Support Given, which may entail a review of one element of a Pathway Plan
2. Young person receives an allocated Leaving care PA to provide holistic support and update Pathway Plan. (likely a limited number of young people)
3. No further support required – contact closed

Contact between the worker and care leaver should be needs led and does not need to be every 2 months as in pre 21. An agreed level of contact should be set out by the Manager/Practice Supervisor. The pathway plan should be completed at least every 6 months but can be updated more regularly as required.

All agencies should make contact with the Leaving Care service if they have safeguarding concerns for a care leaver over the age of 21 years. This could include concerns around substance misuse, homelessness or significant or new mental health concerns.

Care Leavers in Higher Education will remain allocated to a leaving care worker until they have completed their studies. They will have a pathway plan reviewed every 6 months. Contact with the worker may be reduced to promote their independence.

Other support

As described in the Local Offer – consideration can be given to some basic funding or support in an emergency. And the views and experiences of Care leavers aged 21-25 are important in shaping the service and so involvement in the Care leaver council is valued.

Offering Local Authority Support to every care leaver on an annual basis:

The Local Authority has a duty to ensure all care leavers are aware on an annual basis that they can ask the Local Authority for further support.

The young person will be reminded that although they are de-allocated from their leaving care worker, they remain open to the service and they are encouraged to make as frequent contact as they feel they need, without impacting on their own independence skills.

At the point of de-allocation, the worker completes a *Care Leaver In Touch Age 21 to 24 Record* in order to generate the annual reminder. The date should be set for around the next birthday, even if this is less than 12 months since de-allocation.

Derbyshire Children's Services will send an electronic birthday and electronic Christmas card to all young people to their last known personal email accounts with a link to the Local Offer and contact details. Should Derbyshire be sure of the young person's address, cards and letters will be sent.

UASC

Practice relating to former UASC who become All Appeal Rights Exhausted are addressed within the Derbyshire Children's Services UASC policy. However, if a young person has a positive asylum decision, the above process and practice should be followed.