



Care Leavers'
An ever growing union of care leavers
Association

Issue 3 June 2013

LEAVING CARE

*WE'VE BEEN
THERE...*

A Leaving Care Guide for
Young People leaving care,
created and written by people who have
been through care themselves



Hi Everyone,

This is the third issue of the Leaving Care Guide e-zine.

This issue, we are focusing on -

-Pathways plans and how to get what you are entitled to

- Education and Work Routes

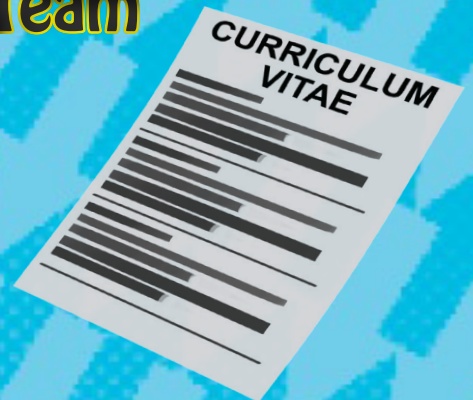
-Experiences of Care Leavers through education and work

-Tips and hints for leaving care from Care Leavers

Leaving Care Guide Team

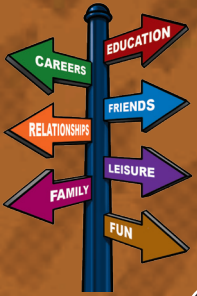


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A Quick Guide to Rights and Benefits

How old are you?

Aged 16-17

Were you in care on your 16th birthday?

Yes

Have you been in care for 13 weeks or more since you were 14?

Yes

Are you still in care?

Yes

No

Were you detained in the youth justice system or in hospital on your 16th birthday?

Yes

Were you on a care order?

Yes

Were you accommodated under section 20CA?

No

It seems that you are not clear about the contact you have with Social Services. Contact your Social Worker, or Voice on 0808 800 5792

No

You may still be entitled to services from Children's Services. You may qualify for 'advice and guidance' from your Local Authority

No

You may still be entitled to services from Children's Services. You may qualify for 'advice and guidance' from your Local Authority

No

Did you leave care after 1st October 2001?

Yes

No

Yes

You are what the Leaving Care Act calls a **"Qualifying Child"**. Children's Services must give you advice and support and must keep in touch with you.

Children's Services may also help you paying expenses related to with your education

You are what the Leaving Care Act calls an **"Eligible Child"**. This means that you are still a looked after child and Children's Services must meet all your looked after rights. As any looked after child, Social Services should pay, for example, for your accommodation and personal expenses, as well as the expenses related to your education. You also have additional rights once you become 16. Children's Services must:

- Carry out a needs assessment
- Prepare a Pathway Plan that meets the needs identified in the assessment and prepares you to live independently
- Review your pathway plan on a regular basis
- Appoint you a Personal Advisor

You are what the Leaving Care Act calls a **"Relevant Child"**. The law says that Children's Services must make sure your rights are met. They must:

- Carry out a needs assessment
- Prepare a Pathway Plan that meets the needs identified in the assessment and prepare you to live independently
- Regularly review your Pathway Plan
- Provide you with a Personal Advisor
- Give you somewhere suitable to live
- Give you weekly money which must not be less than you would have got on benefits (you can't claim benefits unless you are disabled or a lone parent)
- Give you money or pay for things for you to help you furnish your accommodation
- Pay for other things to meet your specific needs which are set out in your Pathway Plan

You are what the Leaving Care Act calls a **"Child in Need"**. Children's Services must make sure your rights are met. They must:

- Review your needs
- Continue to provide you with services
- Pay for your education
- Help you with your education
- You can't claim benefits unless you are disabled or a lone parent

Were you in care on your 16th birthday?

Yes

Were you in care for 13 weeks or more since you were 14?

No

Yes

Did you leave care after 1st October 2001?

No

You are what the Leaving Care Act calls a **"Child in Need"**. Children's Services must make sure your rights are met. They must:

Guide to your Entitlements



are you?

Aged 21-25

18-21

your 16th birthday?

Are you in Education or Training?

Yes

No

Were you in care on your 16th birthday?

Yes

No

Were you in care for 13 weeks or more since you were 14?

Yes

Did you leave care after 1st October 2001?

Yes

No

You are not entitled to help from Children's Services. If you are disabled or have other special needs you may be entitled to services from Adult Services. You may need to contact your local Benefits Agency and Housing Department. There are some organisations that might be able to help you.

No
You are not entitled to help from Children's Services. If you are disabled or have other special needs you may be entitled to services from Adult Services. You may need to contact your local Benefits Agency and Housing Department. There are some organisations that might be able to help you.

Some important information if you are reopening your case after the age of 21

Section 23CA of the 1989 Childrens Act requires that a young person previously eligible for leaving care services resuming programmes of education or training after the age of 21 are entitled to continuing support from a (Personal Advisor) allocated from their responsible authority".

"In this context, the definition of a programme of education or training must be interpreted broadly.

For example, this might include options such as:

- Completion of a basic skills course, so that the young person has the numerary and literacy skills needed to compete in the jobs market
- Take up of a course of further education
- Take up of a university place
- Support to enable the young person to complete a recognised postgraduate qualification
- Or participation in vocational training and apprenticeships".

"The duties of the local authority continue for as long as the young person continues to pursue the agreed programme of education. The local authority's duties are as set out in the re-instated pathway plan".

If you wish to carry on education at Level 3 or 4 and are 24+ you can apply for an Advanced Learning loan at <https://www.gov.uk/advanced-learning-loans/overview>

what the Leaving Care Act calls a "Former Relevant" Child. Children's Services still have duties towards you. They must:

your Pathway Plan

continue to provide you with a Personal Advisor

for the things set out in your Pathway Plan

to help you to stay on in education by paying towards the costs of your tuition and having a place to stay (they will expect you to get a student loan if you are at university)

you can also claim benefits, the same as any other young person.

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What's a Pathway Plan...?

“Pathway Plans help you plan out your future and should state how your local authority will support you to achieve your aims.”

Key Facts:

A Pathway Plan must be completed at **LEAST** every 6 months from 15 to the age of 21, or 25 if you are in Education or Training

Many young people leave care without the support they are entitled to and then find it difficult to access suitable housing, education and employment.

You should decide what aims you want in your Pathway Plan, your key worker will then discuss and plan how you will be supported and the best steps to achieving in what you want in life

It is a legal document, which protects your plans for the future.

You can plan for things that you may not wish to do now, but might want to do in the future. For example, going to college or university.

If you plan ahead, if things don't quite go to plan..You will have some kind of back up

If it's not written in your pathway plan, you may struggle later on to get the support you need

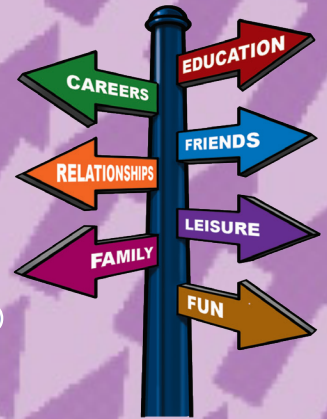
You can request your pathway plan at any time – however you should receive a copy every time a new one has been completed

Costs to remember:

- Tuition/course fees
- Exam and registration costs
- Accommodation costs (including holiday periods)
- Living costs e.g. Food, bills
- Travel costs to and from your course/training
- Books and equipment inc. uniform
- Childcare costs
- Costs for trips or work experience included in your course/training.
- Costs for applying to college and university. This includes costs to get to Open Days and interviews and also the cost of applying through UCAS.

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“Your pathway plan is a legal document and should protect your plans and also be flexible enough to deal with things that you didn't expect to happen.”



“Make sure that your Pathway Plan includes agreed information about costs for your future education and training and how your local authority will support you. Your pathway plan is a legal agreement between you and your local authority”



Sometimes Pathway Plans don't work..!

It's sometimes hard to plan for the future when you do know what you want in life, never mind when you don't. Pathway plans are designed to help give you at least a basic direction in life.



Times when Pathway Plans don't work

- You don't get on with your support worker/social worker
- You are unsure about your future so don't know what to plan for
- You don't feel ready to leave care, so don't want to plan for it
- It is rushed, as its 'just another form to fill in'
- You don't fill out a pathway plan because you haven't seen your worker in a long time
- You live out of the area of your Local Authority and you don't see or speak to your support worker on a regular basis
- You don't know what you are entitled to from your local authority and other places

“Don't panic, you can request a new worker if you believe they are not supporting you properly. You can also gain outside Advocacy from the Independent Reviewing Officer or there are a number of charities who can help with issues too!! If you are legally entitled to support, make sure you get it!! If you are away from your local authority you can request for your case to be transferred to the Local Authority you are living in”

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Education...What's the point?



When life has its ups and downs, it is difficult to find time or even be bothered about achieving educationally. Below are some negative thoughts of school and other education provided by young people in care or care leavers and advice from care leavers who went through the same thing.

“My residential home was rubbish and I hated everyone there..they didn’t seem bothered if I went to school or not.. so I didn’t go”

School was the one place I could escape to when life just wasn’t going well..no one was bothered if I succeeded or not, and thought I would fail so I did my work to prove them wrong. I didn’t always get the best grades but I got enough to get a job and make my own life! Push yourself for yourself - You are amazing!

“The kids in school and teachers treat me differently because I am in care”

I went through the same thing, my teachers ignored me in class and kids would bully me because of my mum.. I had enough at 17 and went to college instead where I didn’t tell anyone apart from the people who helped me.. I got a D*D*D* in my BTEC and felt in control for the first time in my life!

“The lessons in school are boring, and I won’t need to know the stuff when I leave.. so what’s the point!?”

I hated Geography and had to do coursework on a trip I never even went on...I still do it though so I didn’t fail.. It is hard to concentrate on a subject when you find it boring..but my advice is that, to make a life for yourself, things like GCSE’s are key. Once you get past school you get a lot more choice. I went to college when I was done with school and I was able to study something that I actually liked!! I studied Uniformed Public Services and got to spend a week at the Army and go up in a Puma helicopter!!

“I have been to so many placements and schools.. I never caught up and just failed everything”

At college you can study key skills and GCSE’s alongside courses. If you are aged 16-19 there is a bursary that will help with costs of the course as well!! It’s never too late to go back.. I went back to college at 21 after leaving school at 17 with nothing, having a baby boy at 19, and now I am at uni.

“I am bullied everyday, so I skip school a lot.. no one seems to care or be bothered”

This is something that needs to be brought up in a review meeting, if you don’t feel brave enough to speak up you can get advocacy (someone to help you voice your issues) from charities like VOICE YP (voiceyp.org) People do care.. It’s just sometimes hard to see them when you are being bullied.. I skipped most of my first year at high school because I was bullied.. It wasn’t until I spoke to someone about it that things started to change.

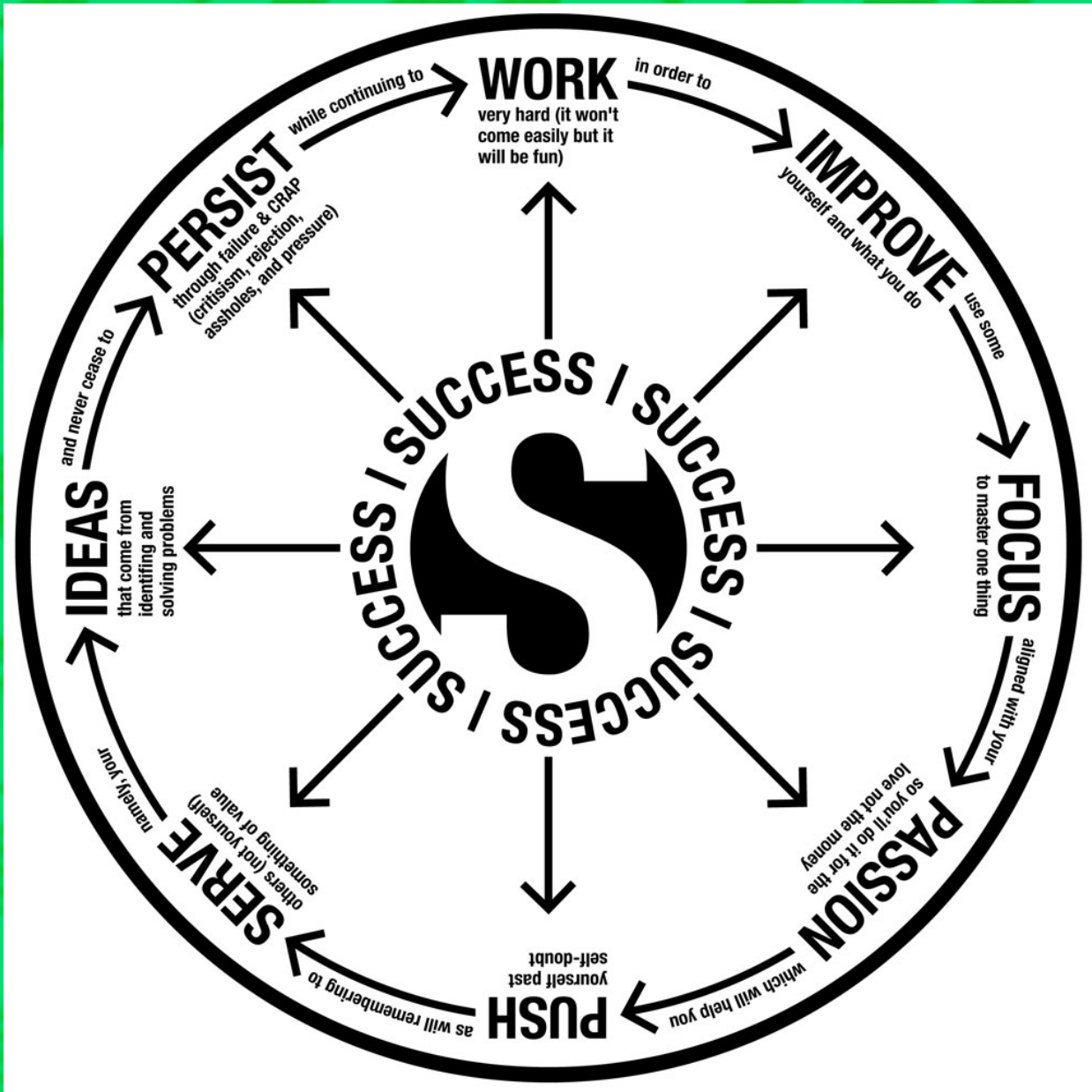
“I want to go to college and university, but I don’t have a clue how to get there or what I need.. I don’t think I can afford it once I move out of my foster home!!”

If you are 17 or over you should have a leaving care worker, and they should be helping you plan all this in your Pathway Plan. If you don’t have these then speak up and make sure you get one! You have legal entitlements, if you don’t know them you can find them out online or from the Care Leavers Association - Care-leavers.com or NCAS - Leavingcare.org

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Success Circle

Use the Circle below to give yourself some direction if you are feeling low or lost about what step to take next in life



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What education should I have and what do I need to succeed??

“Knowledge will bring you the opportunity to make a difference.”

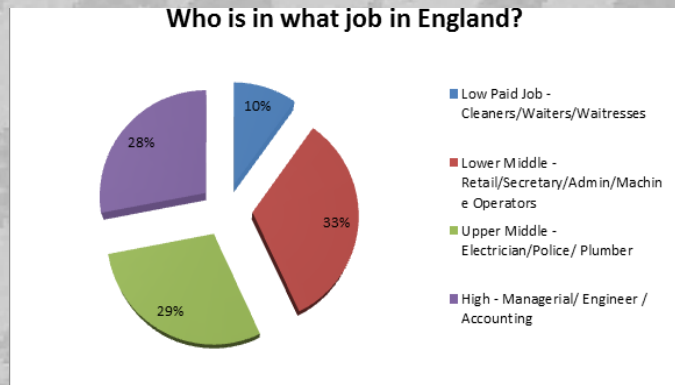
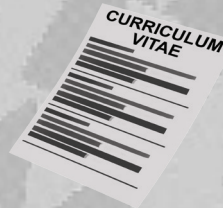
What education and qualifications you need in life depends on what you want to do in the future and what kind of lifestyle you want to live.

Although there are some basic level qualifications that you need as a starting point!!

Generally you need at least your Maths and English Level 2 (GCSE's or Key Skills)

The type of job you have, and how much you earn changes what you can and can't afford and what kind of lifestyle you can live. Better Qualifications generally means a better job and more money for you to spend,

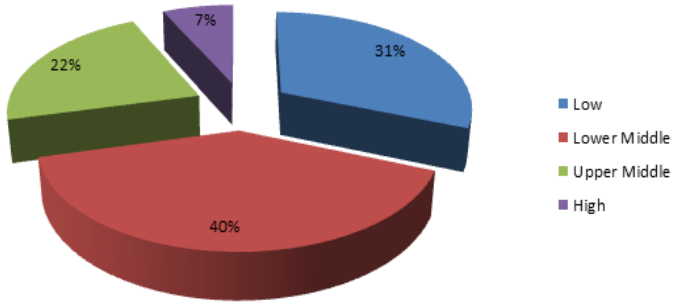
We have provided some charts that show what kind of jobs people in England have, with what qualifications they hold and what wage people are receiving with their qualifications *.



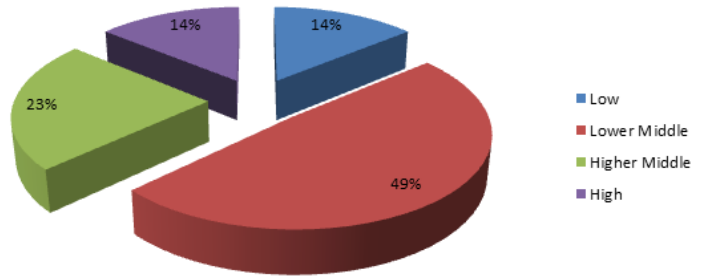
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*Statistics provided by Office of National Statistics 2011.
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/index.html>

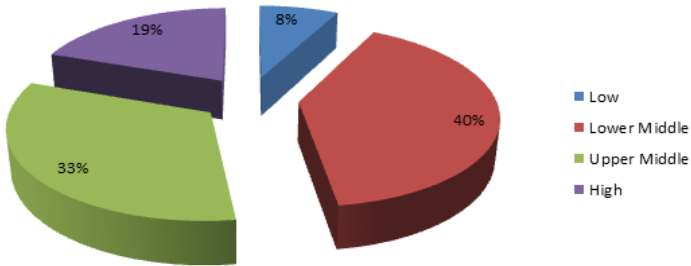
No Qualifications



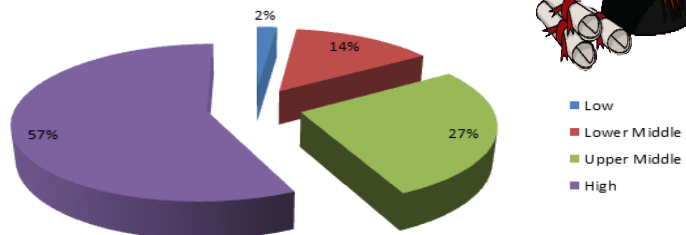
GCSE's



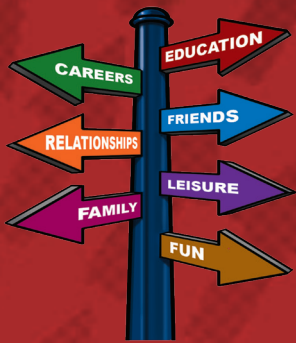
A Level



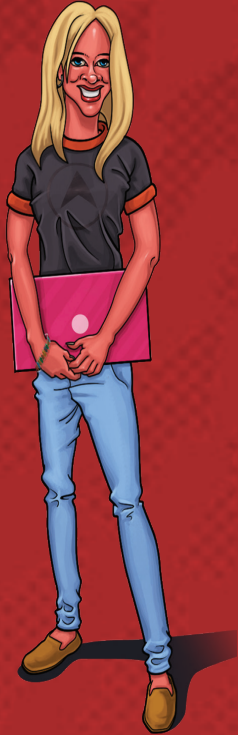
Degree or more



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“ Legally, you need to be in education or training until you are 17. Any older than that, and its your choice... However to get help from your local authority and other funding, getting up to level 4 qualifications, its best to get them before or while you are 19. Trust me it makes life a lot easier.



At college or school you can apply for the 16-19 bursary, which is £1200 a year to help with costs of course/travel etc... Care Leavers are eligible, but you need to remember to apply. Your Social Worker/School or College can help you apply. More info can be found on the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund>”

Can be studied at college

Apprenticeships

Anyone in England can apply for an apprenticeship if they're:

- 16 or over
 - Eligible to work in England
 - Not in full-time education
- First search for a vacancy on the Apprenticeships website, then register on the site and apply. <https://www.gov.uk/apprenticeships-guide/applications-and-qualifications>

Apprenticeships take between 1 and 4 years to complete depending on their level.

Work and study

Apprenticeships combine practical training in a job with study.

An apprentice:

- Works alongside experienced staff
- Gains job-specific skills
- Earns a wage
- Studies towards a related qualification (usually 1 day a week)

Levels of apprenticeship

There are 3 levels in England:

- Intermediate – equivalent to 5 GCSE passes
- Advanced – equivalent to 2 A level passes
- Higher – lead's to NVQ Level 4 and above or a Foundation Degree

Qualifications

Apprenticeships can lead to:

-National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at Level 2,3,4 or 5

-Functional Skills qualifications, e.g. in Maths, English or ICT

-A technical certificate, such as a BTEC or City & Guilds Progression Award

-Knowledge-based qualifications, such as a Higher National Certificate (HNC), a Higher National Diploma (HND) or a Foundation degree

Education, Work and “I just want to”

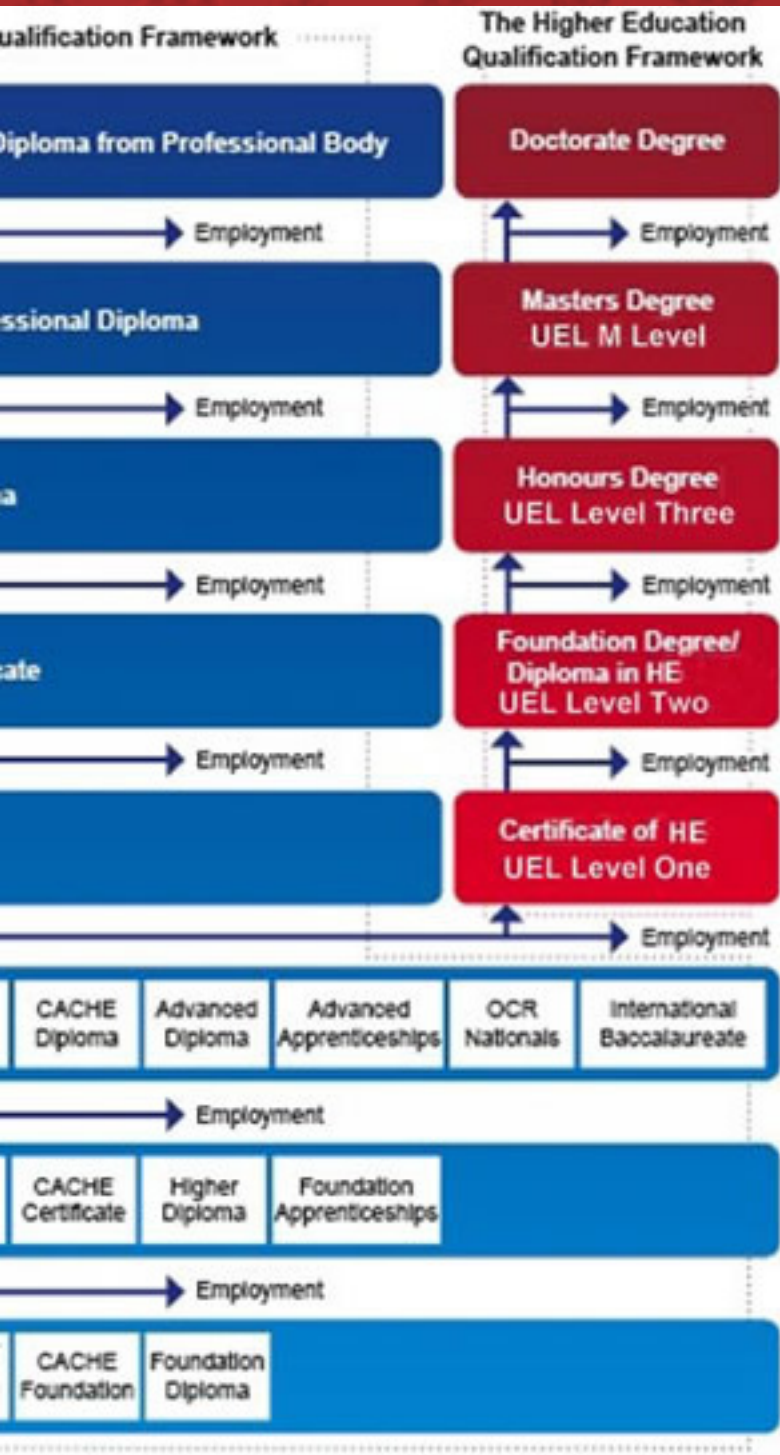
What are your ()
Use the chart below to help you find ()
available and where ()



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and Training Routes .. to earn money!!”

life aspirations?
figure out what qualification’s are
they can be studied.



“If you think you might want to go to university at some point in the future, make sure that you put it in your Pathway Plan, and talk to your social worker/key worker about how you will be supported. You are legally entitled to a £2000 bursary from your LA if you go to university. Most LA’s offer more funding than this, but make sure you find out and get it agreed on as funding changes all the time!!”



Can be studied at university

Can be studied at school

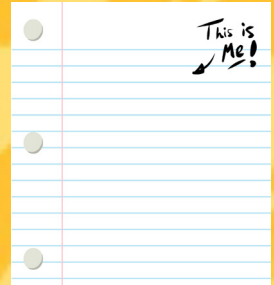
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Care Leaver Leaving Care Experiences

We ask those who have been through it...

How good was your Pathway Plan?

Were your educational needs included?



"My Pathway Plan was generally done very well, due to the efforts of one particular worker who taught me my rights and advocated on my behalf. Once I had the knowledge I then ensured that the authority's responsibility as a corporate parent was fulfilled, including outlining support that would be provided to assist me in education." - Chris H (aged 27)

"I can remember discussions surrounding education in my Pathway Plan. However, my social worker failed to complete the plan. It wasn't until I was 21 and had finished my undergraduate degree that I saw my Pathway Plan in writing after it was completed by my leaving care worker. I feel that if the pathway plan was there it would have helped me realise my rights and entitlements. Unfortunately there were things I was entitled to that I didn't receive simply because I was not aware of them. It wasn't until I did some research and challenged it that I got the things I was entitled to." - Chris A

"I am not sure what a Pathway plan is...?" Annie - 18

"I wasn't aware of pathway plan. I was quite a troubled child so maybe I chose not to attend, pay interest, but the Local Authority did push me hard into education. I never did mainstream school, and was educated on site, achieving 3 GCSE's" Chris D (aged 23)

"I don't really remember my pathway plan. I am pretty sure that the educational plan would have been based around my hairdressing apprenticeship as that's what I was doing around the time of being a care leaver." - Jeannie (aged 25)



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What is your experience of education?



“Education for me has always been a safe stable influence on my life. I have always had a thirst for knowledge. I have been supported very well throughout my educational career, particularly by Sheffield Hallam University. I have a degree in computer science from The University of York and a Graduate Diploma in Youth and Community Work from Sheffield Hallam University.” - Chris A

“When I finished school I studied for a BTEC National Diploma in Public Services at a local college (with the view to joining the police). The course was 2 years and I passed successfully. I then studied for a Foundation degree in Public services at another local college. This meant I could continue working part-time in a call centre which helped me pay the bills. Another 2 years went by and I passed. I decided to top-up the foundation degree so did a further year of study. The final year had to be completed at Plymouth University. I continued working in the call-centre and would commute down to Plymouth and stay with a friend. I managed to complete the degree and receive a Bsc (Hons) in Public Services, grade 2:1. PROS: Meet new people, make new friends, increases knowledge, understanding and confidence. Increases your employment prospects. CONS: Debt, essay writing, exams, hours in the library, library fines (make sure you renew your books!), stress, pressure. But it’s all worth it in the end!” - Chris A

“My experience in education has been brilliant because the support has been outstanding and there’s always been a designated person I can speak to. I have just finished my A-Levels and will be going to university in September. The only con was that I felt awkward explaining my situation to most teachers.” - Annie

“I received quite a good education, always praised for what I did and pushed to achieve more, as they had high expectations that I could achieve” - Chris D

“My experience of education when I was of school age was ok, I did enjoy going to school but mostly to get away from the stresses of home life. When I eventually went into care aged 15 I found it harder and harder to concentrate on school and after the death of a boyfriend I dropped out without gaining any qualifications. I did go to a grammar school though which was a positive, but I never really felt I fitted in with the articulate people there.

Coming back into education as an adult I appreciated it more and wanted to get good results, gaining an A in my English GCSE. I didn’t really know what I wanted to do then but felt I wanted to do something meaningful with my life and felt I was clever enough to do so. I was able to work out my qualities and interests within my first year of college and eventually decided to study media at university.” - Jeannie

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What support from School/Local Authority have/ did you receive?

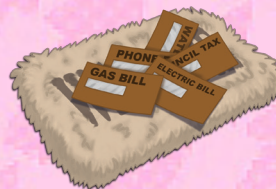
**“I was very lucky – as is always the case with those who succeed – to have a good supporting system surrounding my education. This included fantastic social workers, foster carers and also a teacher who took on the role of a designated teacher before anyone had even thought of the role!
I must note that my Local Authority were very ‘generous’ (for a corporate parent) in their package of support providing me with 50% of my student loan as a grant and also a new laptop when I went to University.”
- Chris H**

“Annual bus pass provided during my time at college - massive help! I received Education Maintenance Allowance (Now 16-19 Bursary) during college, again helpful. Bursary from Local Authority for university and incentive money for continuing in education.” - Chris A

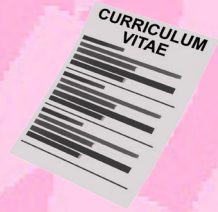
“I have been very lucky with my support network as it is very big and my social worker and YPA is brilliant. However, some of the systems my local authority used, I believe are messed up and I have put in a complaint against them” - Annie

“Support from LA was good on education side of things, always pushed hard, not so good with everything else.” - Chris A

“When I was 16 I met my son’s dad and this led me to push myself away from the professionals I was working with (social worker), so I don’t feel I really got any support. When I got into university I was told of a bursary that I might have been entitled to, so got back in touch with the Plymouth Local Authority and have received support in getting a laptop.” - Jeannie



What is your experience of work?



“During the second year of my degree I was a special constable for Avon and Somerset Constabulary. This gave me hands-on experience and I hoped this would increase my chances of getting in. When I graduated it was announced the police would have to make cuts and impose recruitment freezes. Not ideal! I continued working in the call centre until I got the opportunity to work with care leavers/young offenders. Initially I was offered a 10 hour sessional contract but after 3 months I was given a full-time position with the company. When I graduated I applied for a position to study for a Masters Degree in social work at the University of Plymouth. To my delight, after interview, I was accepted. I am currently in my first year of study and I'm on placement working for Action for Children. Hopefully I can pass all the coursework etc and qualify as a social worker. I want to work with children in and leaving the care system and try to make a difference.”
Chris A

“Throughout my life I have had many jobs; taxi driver, cold caller, insurance customer service, project lead, LILAC assessor, bar worker, admin worker, delivery van driver, graduate intern. It is strange as you get older (yes.... I'm knocking on a bit these days) you find that strange skills and information you have picked up along the way can aid you in future roles. I feel that compared to my peers I have always had a better understanding of professional working, multi-agency working, committee servicing, meeting conduct and public speaking. These are skills I picked up from my care experience and all the professionals that worked with me when I was younger. These skills do give me an advantage in the employment market. I am now a Graduate Intern based in Student Services within the Faculty of Development and Society at Sheffield Hallam University. My job is to work on projects that enhance the student experience, increase employability in the cohort and increase student voice. I also volunteer with the pre-enrolment team working with them to increase contact with Care Leavers to advertise some of the fantastic support packages and projects that are in place here at Sheffield Hallam University.” - Chris H

“I've only now started my new job so don't really have much to say about it, although I did feel very uncomfortable when the manager asked me in front of everyone how my application, bank details and provisional had different addresses so I just laughed. Last year I volunteered in an orphanage in Argentina for two weeks. The experience was an absolute eye-opener, amazing! The best experience I have ever had in my life. Don't get me wrong, it had its ups and downs (missing a flight, being absolutely petrified to fly across the world on my own and crying on the way home but overall it was such a life changer and it's something I want to do for the rest of my life and plan to go back to Argentina to see the kids againI am volunteering again this year but I have not found out where yet!” - Annie

“I have had a lot of low paid jobs, not a lot of qualifications. All dead end jobs, warehouse, cleaner, valet etc. I did 18 month voluntary at CLA and now I am employed part-time, while building my work experience and C.V” - Chris D

“I have never really had a job apart from when I first left school. I was an apprentice hairdresser for 8 months which I did enjoy but felt I could do something more challenging. I did end up going off the rails for a bit but when my son was born it encouraged me to get back into education and do something with my life. I have done some student ambassador work with university and I have found this very rewarding as it has given me the confidence to feel accepted and able to help others. I am currently doing a work placement with an alcohol service in Sheffield where I am helping to edit the content of their website. This is also very rewarding as it again makes me feel needed, confident and more professional.” - Jeannie

Hints and Tips from the Care Leavers who contributed to this guide

Ask questions, the only stupid questions are those not asked. Speak to other care leavers, students, staff. Find out what your entitled to and make sure you get it! If it's in black and white you should be getting it. Don't be afraid to challenge decisions, it's your life so it's important those decisions are the right ones for YOU. - Chris A

As a care leaver I would say I never really knew what I wanted to do at age of 15 so I would encourage and advise care leavers to be aware of their interests and qualities and use them to help decide what you would enjoy doing as well as be capable of doing. -

Take advantage of the Local Authority before they leave and make sure they get all the support they're entitled too and more! Also stick with education so all us care leavers can break the 'kids in care' stigma! - Annie

"My advice to Care Leavers – understand your rights. It is, in my opinion, the single most important thing for any Care Leaver. Once you understand your rights, fight for them, do not take no for an answer and ask your corporate parent 'Would this be good enough for your own children?'. As practical as that advice is, I would also say dream. Young people from care are some of the most disadvantaged in society, we are unfortunate, we have been treated badly. These are the messages you have been given your entire life, my message would be that I have never met such passionate, intelligent, resilient, inspiring and brilliant young people than those who have been in care. Know you are brilliant, remind yourself of it daily. You can achieve anything you set your mind to." Chris H

Take what you can while its there. Once Services cease its where the hard bit starts, try and prepare yourself. Make sure you have plans in place and you have researched all your options. - Chris D



LEAVING
CARE

NEXT ISSUE!

What would you like covered in the next issue of 'Leaving Care - We've Been There'?

What are the issues that affect you? What do you want and need to know more about to feel better prepared for leaving care? How do you feel about being a care leaver? Do you want to meet other care leavers and share experiences?

Contact us and you might be in the next guide!!

There are lots of ways you can get involved!

-Contact Carrie Wilson, the YPP Project Coordinator carrie.wilson@careleavers.com

-You can visit the CLA main website and become a member www.careleavers.com/membership

-Like our Facebook page [Care-Leavers-Association-Young-Peoples-Project](#)

-Follow us on Twitter [@CLA_YPP](#)

-Networking Project: a network of care leavers who meet at various locations across the country to share experiences and ideas. For more information please contact Darren

Coyne darren.coyne@careleavers.com

Organisations that can help you.

For more information on your rights and entitlements in care and leaving care contact:

- Office of the Children's Rights Director Tel: 0800 528 0731 www.rights4me.org

For information and advice around leaving care entitlements/ To get involved in lobbying and campaigning around leaving care contact:

- Care Leavers' Association Tel: 0161 236 1980 www.careleavers.com
- NCAS www.leavingcare.org

For information around the law and your entitlements contact:

- Children's Legal Centre www.lawstuff.org.uk Tel:0808 020 008

To get involved in lobbying campaigning around in Care issues contact:

- A National Voice www.anationalvoice.org Tel:0161 237 5577
- Who Cares? Trust www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk Tel:020 7251 3117

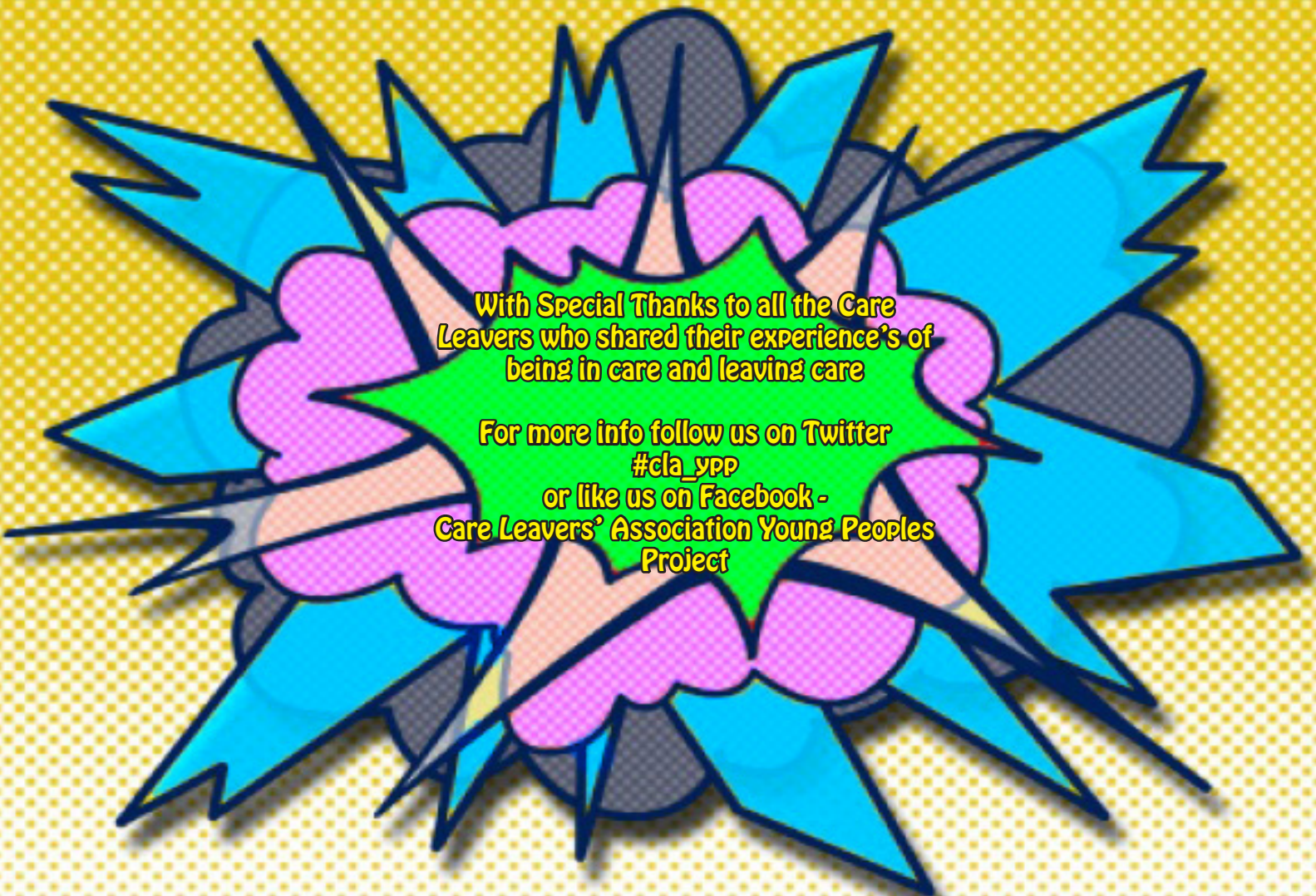
For an advocate to help you complain about something you are unhappy from your leaving care team or social services contact:

- Voice www.voiceyp.org Tel: 0808 800 5792

**LEAVING
CARE**

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With Special Thanks to all the Care
Leavers who shared their experience's of
being in care and leaving care

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Project

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