

OFFERING YOU HELP AND SUPPORT

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“PREPARATION
FOR INDEPENDENCE
AND ADULT LIFE”



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FOREWORD

As the Children's Commissioner for Wales, I hear about lots of good practice across Wales where young people leaving care have support and are given lots of help to gradually move from the care system into independent adult life or to access education and training. But I also hear from others who say they feel a bit lost at this time and don't have all the information and help they want and need.

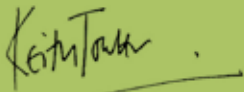
Leaving care isn't just the single step of moving from a residential unit or foster carer's house to live on your own. It is a gradual process which can begin any time from 16 to 18 when you and your social worker and other people involved in your life think about what would be the best options and start to prepare and plan and work towards your independence and adult life.

You might want to go to college or university or get a job. You may want to move to live in a flat on your own, you may want to stay with your foster carer and begin to pay them some rent or move into supported accommodation. Whatever happens you have a right to help and support throughout the process.

I have spoken to a number of groups of looked after children and care leavers and they have told me that the information they receive varies quite a lot and they are not always sure what they are **entitled to**¹ and what to expect as they approach age 16.

Because not all young people across Wales receive the same support and information, I have decided to produce this planner. I'd like to say a big thank you to all the young people who have helped us develop this work and also to the professionals who have contributed to it.

I hope that you will find it useful to work through this planner and find out what you are entitled to and who should be helping you.



Keith Towler, Children's Commissioner for Wales

¹ **Entitled to** – means you have a legal right or a just claim to receive or do something.

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INTRODUCTION

HOW TO USE THIS PLANNER

This planner is designed to give you some help and advice as you start to think about leaving care. This isn't a book you have to read from cover to cover but you may find it helpful to work through step by step and ask the questions on each page and make your own notes. There are tabs so you can just look up a particular topic if you want to.

There are both online and paper copies of this planner. In the online copy on our website – www.childcomwales.org.uk/myplanner you can click on the links which will take you to a lot more information. In the paper copy all the contact details, phone numbers and web addresses are in the last tab **Other places to go for help.**

If you're not getting what you need then stop and ask for help. At lots of points we will say who should be there to help you but remember at any point if you need additional help, are stuck or want to tell us anything please get in touch.

We have a team of advice officers who are available 9-5 every week day. You can contact them in a number of ways.

FREE PHONE: 0808 801 1000

FREETEXT: 80800 – START TEXT WITH COM

Calls to this number don't show up on phone bills

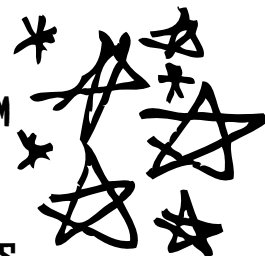
EMAIL: ADVICE@CHILDCOMWALES.ORG.UK

WRITE: CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER FOR WALES

FREEPOST RRGL XLYC BHGC, SWANSEA SA7 9FS

If you have any difficulty reading this then please get in touch with us.

Remember it's free to access the internet at any library and there are lots of youth info shops and drop in centres where you can use computers.



This Planner isn't instead of your **Pathway Plan**² or instead of talking to people who are there to help you but you can use it to help you get the best advice and support you can.

Along the way we may advise you to ask someone for help. If you don't want to talk to the person we suggest and would rather speak to someone else, that's fine. Please don't go without the help and support you need and remember you can always get in touch with the Children's Commissioner for Wales' team.

IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU!

It's your life and it is important that your opinions, ideas and views are at the heart of all discussions and plans about YOUR future.

The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a list of **rights**³ for all children and young people all over the world. This is what it says about your views:

“ YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO SAY WHAT YOU THINK SHOULD HAPPEN WHEN ADULTS ARE MAKING DECISIONS THAT AFFECT YOU, AND TO HAVE YOUR OPINIONS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT ”
– ARTICLE 12

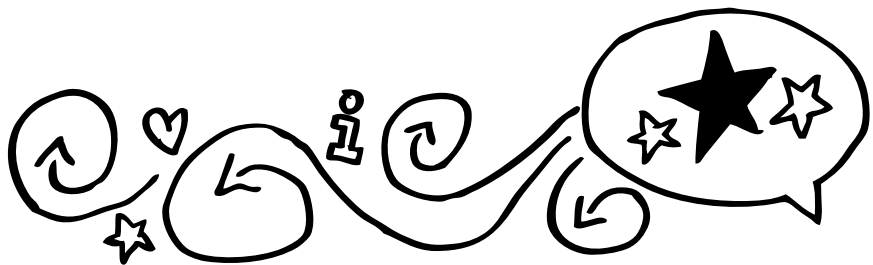
Look at our website for a full list of these rights:
www.childcomwales.org.uk/en/rights/



WHAT WE DO

THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER FOR WALES works to make sure that children and young people are safe from harm and that as many people as possible know about children's rights. Here are some of the things we do for Wales' children and young people:

- Telling everyone, including children and young people, about the Commissioner and about children's rights.
- Meeting with children and young people and listening to what they have to say about issues that affect them.
- Talking to children and young people about the Commissioner's work, what else they think he should do and how he should do it.
- Looking at the work of organisations like local authorities and health trusts to see if they are thinking about children's rights.
- Telling people who can make a difference what children and young people think is important and how to improve things.
- Giving advice and information to children and adults who contact the Commissioner's team.



² A Pathway Plan is follow-on from your Care Plan once you are 16. It should start at your LAC review after your 15th birthday and is both an assessment and a forward plan. See page 6 for more info.

³ Rights are what you are entitled to, needs are what you require. Governments do not have a duty to meet your needs but they do have a duty to respect your rights and help you to know about them and claim them.

SOME LEGAL STUFF

Leaving care should never be a sudden and rushed process. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 says that the local authority that is responsible for you has to help and support you through this process and stay in touch with you. There is a lot more information about how this should happen in this planner.

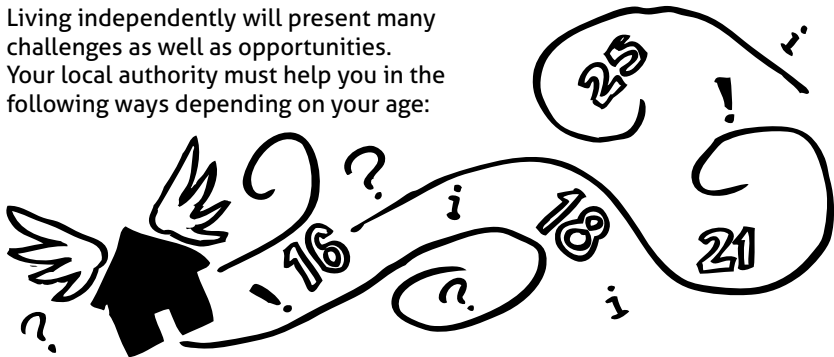
You are **eligible**⁴ for help and support if:

- * You are 16 or 17 and you are in care and you have been in care for at least 13 weeks since you turned 14.

If you have been in care for less time than this you will still be able to get some support.

You do not have to leave care at 16 and even when you are 18 you do not have to be completely independent if you do not want to. You may need to change where you live (if for example you are in a residential unit that cares for young people up to 16) but changing accommodation like this does not mean you have left care. You still have access to lots of help and support until you are at least 21 and up to 25 if you are in full time education.

Living independently will present many challenges as well as opportunities. Your local authority must help you in the following ways depending on your age:



AGED 16-18

- Make sure your Pathway Plan is in place by your 16th birthday. A **Pathway Plan** is a follow on from your Care Plan once you are 16. It should start at your LAC review after your 15th birthday and is both an assessment and a forward plan. There's more info about this in Tab 2.
- Do an assessment of your needs.
- Make sure you have enough money to live on.
- Provide a personal advisor – this is some one to help you through the whole process who is not your social worker.
- Make sure you have somewhere to live.

AGED 18-21

- Keep in touch with you and provide support through a personal advisor.
- Help you with costs of education, employment and training.

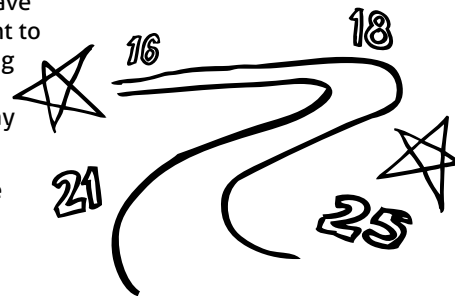
AGED 21-25 AND IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Help for 18-21 year olds (as above) continues if you are still in education or training.
- Make sure you have somewhere to stay in the holidays if you are in higher education.

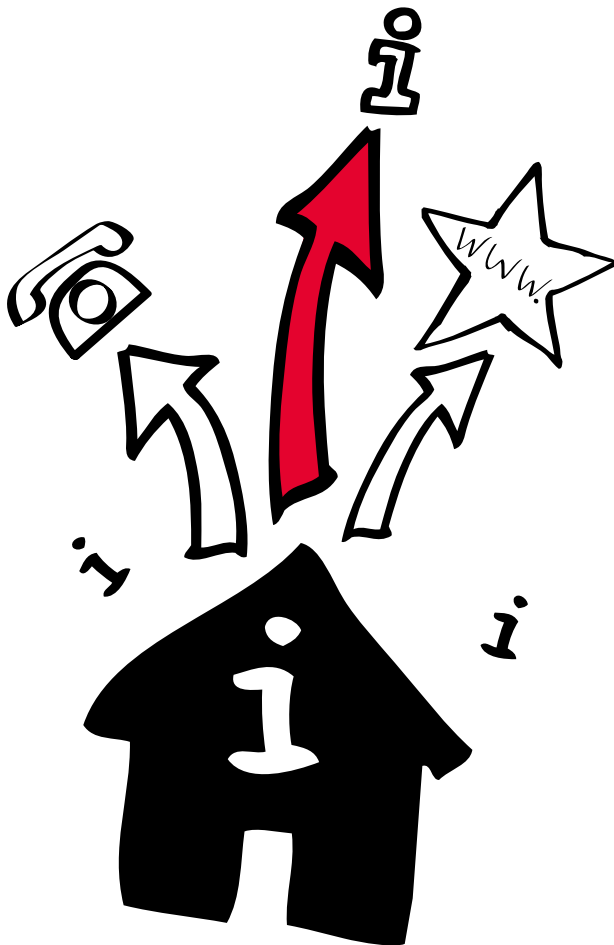
NEW RULING DUE OUT IN 2011 – WATCH OUR WEBSITE FOR DETAILS

- If you are between 18 and 25 and have already left care but decide you want to go on to further education or training you can get back in touch with the leaving care team, get a new Pathway Plan (education).

All the things mentioned in this list are explained in the rest of this planner.



⁴ Eligible means – that you meet the requirement to get a service





RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS

YOUR RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS AS A CARE LEAVER



This whole planner is about what should happen to you as a looked after young person preparing to leave care. This list is a summary of your rights and entitlements within the whole process.

There is much more detail in the tabbed sections that follow – so read those as well.

A right is a something that you can expect to receive. You don't have to earn it or win it. The rights and entitlements listed below are things that the government has committed to provide for you as a care leaver. This might be because there is an Act of Parliament⁵ or because they have signed an agreement with lots of other countries promising to do their best for children and young people⁶ or because it is a government policy⁷.

All the rights and entitlements we talk about here are yours if at 16 or 17 you are in care and have been in care for at least 13 weeks since you were 14 years old. If you are 15 and will still be in care at 16 this also applies to you.

That's a bit of legal stuff and may sound a bit complicated. If you're not sure, talk to your social worker.

You should get everything you're entitled to – wherever you live and it shouldn't matter which local authority is looking after you.

This planner has lots of information to help you. Some of the things we talk about aren't rights – for example – it is **NOT** currently a right to have a passport paid for by the local authority but some are willing to help you with this so information on this is in the planner but it's not in the list of rights and entitlements.

⁵ Such as The Children (Care Leaving Act) 2000 or the Children Act 1989

⁶ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989

⁷ Towards a Stable life and Brighter future 2007 – Welsh Assembly Government

AS A LOOKED AFTER YOUNG PERSON PREPARING TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY YOU HAVE A RIGHT:

- To say and to have your views listened to at every stage of planning to live independently.
- To stay in care until you are 18 if you want to.
- To make a complaint if you are unhappy about any service or treatment you have received.
- To have your needs assessed.
- To have adults do what is best for you.
- To extra help and support if you have special educational needs.
- To a Pathway Plan that is reviewed at least every year.
- To have a personal advisor to help you as you follow your Pathway Plan (this should be someone different to your social worker).
- To an advocate who can help you to speak up for yourself and make sure you get your views heard.
- To come back into care until you are 18 if you change your mind.
- To have your accommodation provided and paid for until you are 18.
- To have help and support to find accommodation until you are 21.
- To have help to learn the skills you need to live independently.
- To get support from the local authority and for them to stay in touch with you until you are 21 (25 if you are in further education).
- To receive a Leaving Care Grant to help set up your own home.
- To be treated with dignity.
- To be encouraged to go as far as you can with your education.
- To extra financial help to enable you to stay on in education.
- To good health care and to be registered with a doctor and dentist.
- To have your culture and your family background respected.
- To contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales to ask for help and advice.





SOCIAL SERVICES AND PATHWAY PLAN

HELP AND SUPPORT FOR YOU



While you have been looked after you will have known some people whose job it is to help and support you.

All young people in care have a social worker. Write their contact details here:

MY SOCIAL WORKER:

You may also want to note the contact details of the **leaving care team leader** in case you can't always reach your own social worker.

TEAM LEADER:

Just before you reach age 16 you should also have a **personal advisor** (sometimes called a pathway advisor or mentor) whose job is to make sure you get the practical help and advice you need. Your personal advisor is there to help you to work step by step through preparing to leave care and should be a different person to your social worker.

HAVE YOU MET YOUR PERSONAL ADVISOR?

Write their contact details here:

MY PERSONAL ADVISOR:

CONTACT DETAILS:

Your personal advisor will help make sure that your **PATHWAY PLAN** is followed.

Action Point If you are 16 and you haven't met your personal advisor ask your social worker about it or call our helpline on 0808 801 1000.

When you are thinking of leaving care, good support and advice is really important as you begin to make some serious decisions. Write the names and contact details of people who should be there to help you here:

MY FOSTER CARER:.....

MY RESIDENTIAL CHILD CARE WORKER:.....

MY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S NURSE:

MY INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO):

AN ADVOCATE is someone who helps young people to speak up for themselves, or presents their views for them. Some young people find it difficult to speak up for themselves when they need to talk to people in authority.

An advocate will help you to have a say when decisions are being made about your life.

Advocacy is about advising, assisting and supporting young people to make informed choices. All looked after children and young people have the right to an advocate. Your local authority must provide you with an advocate if you want one.

Write your advocate's details here:

MY ADVOCATE:.....

Action Point If you don't have an advocate but would like to have one, ask your social worker. If you find it difficult to get an advocate call our helpline on 0808 801 1000.



AN INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO)

All local authorities have to appoint an Independent Reviewing Officer to chair the review meetings of all looked after children and care leavers. They should meet with you before the meetings and are responsible for making sure the Care Plans and Pathway Plans are carried out. They are someone who is not from social services who is there to make sure that you are treated well and fairly and are listened to.

IT'S NOT WORKING FOR ME!!

You may sometimes feel that things are not going well and you need to tell someone who can help put things right. You can contact the complaints officer in your local authority (sometimes called a customer relations officer). You can also tell these people about anything that you think was good or helpful so they can make sure other young people get that help.

COMPLAINTS OFFICER:

If you don't know any of the people listed in this section, ask your foster carer or your social worker.

WHEN SHOULD I LEAVE CARE?



DO I HAVE TO LEAVE AT 16?

One of the most important decisions you will have to make is **when** to leave care. You can leave care when you are 16 if you want to but you should think very carefully about this decision. If you leave care you will be looking after yourself, doing things like cooking, cleaning, laundry and paying your own bills.

If you choose to leave care before age 18 and things don't work out you can come back into care. Your social worker or personal advisor would be able to help you with this. You might not be able to return to exactly the same foster carer or unit that you were in previously but your social worker will be able to advise you.

WHAT IS A PATHWAY PLAN?

This is a very important document that will help you prepare to leave care and become independent. It also acts as a checklist for all the things that you need. It is a way for you to have a say about your life and future. It will help you to talk about and plan things such as school, college, university, health, family, documents, money, skills and where you'll live.



A Pathway Plan is a follow-on from your Care Plan once you are 16. Planning for leaving care should start at your Looked After Child Review (LAC Review) after your 15th birthday. Your social worker should assess your needs and write your Pathway Plan, along with the leaving care team. You and others (like your social worker, carer and your personal advisor) will agree what goes in your plan. Your plan will include things like where you'll live, your education or training, information about jobs, your money, any cultural needs, your health and your lifestyle.

It should be looked at (reviewed) every 6 months (more often if you need) and this review will be instead of your LAC Review. It is your plan and it should be a growing and changing document that helps you and makes sure you get the help and support you need over the next few years.

It's really important that your Pathway Plan is as detailed as possible as it will be important in getting grants or funding. e.g. if you think you may want to go to university it's important to make sure that this is written in your plan.

I HAVE A COPY OF MY PATHWAY PLAN: YES NO

I HAVE READ AND AM HAPPY WITH MY PATHWAY PLAN: YES NO

Action Point If you're 16+ and you haven't seen your Pathway Plan or you are unhappy with it, contact your social worker immediately. If you want help to do this ask your advocate, foster carer or residential child care worker or call our helpline 0808 801 1000 or text 80800 start your message with COM.

In this planner we will be looking at lots of the things that should be included in your Pathway Plan. We'll discuss when things should happen and where to go for more information if they don't. This can help you to ask the right questions and make sure things happen when they should.

MONEY STUFF

If you decide that you want to live on your own you will get some money (called a Leaving Care Grant) from social services. This money will help you to buy some of the things you need in a new home. You should ask your social worker when you will get this and how much it will be.

I WILL GET MY LEAVING CARE GRANT ON:

IT WILL BE THIS MUCH £

You may also be able to get other support, such as a bus pass and money off leisure activities when you have left care. You should ask your social worker what is available in your area.

The Welsh Government announced recently⁸ that a new **transition to adulthood grant** for looked after children will soon be paid. This will be a one off grant which will be given to all looked after children who are between the ages of 16 and 18, as they leave care. Look on our website for details of when this will happen.

Learning to manage your money is a really important skill and your personal advisor should help you. For more information on money skills see the section on **Independent living skills** (Tab 7).



⁸ announcement by Deputy Minister for Children in November 2010

MEMORY BOX AND PERSONAL BELONGINGS

During your time in care you or your carer may have been adding to a memory box. This could be an actual box where photos and souvenirs have been stored or an electronic record of some important events and people. When you have a new home you may want to have these personal belongings with you, such as photos of your family, school certificates. If you don't have these things yourself or you don't know if this has been kept for you talk to your social worker or foster carer who may be keeping these safe for you.

I KNOW WHERE MY MEMORY BOX AND PERSONAL BELONGINGS ARE: YES NO

I WILL BE ABLE TO HAVE THEM WHEN I LEAVE CARE: YES NO

LUGGAGE

Some young people have had to use black bin bags to move their clothes and possessions when they move and they have told us that this makes them feel not valued or respected.

I HAVE SOME BAGS OR CASES THAT I CAN USE: YES NO



Action Point If you haven't got proper bags you should speak to your social worker, personal advisor, foster carer or residential child care worker about getting some luggage, like a sports bag or a suitcase. If you want help to do this, call our helpline 0808 801 1000.



EDUCATION

HELPING YOU DO THE BEST YOU CAN



SCHOOL

You should already have a designated person in school who is there to help and support you. This could be a teacher or another person in the school. They are responsible for writing your Personal Educational Plan (PEP) and making sure everything happens. Your educational plan should help you to do the best you can in school and you should have a say in it.

MY DESIGNATED PERSON IN SCHOOL:

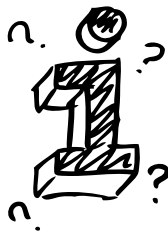
You may decide to stay on at school after age 16, attend college, training or get a job.

If you are carrying on with full time education your designated person has an important role in supporting you if you're staying in the same school or going to a new school or college.

CAREERS ADVICE

You should have met a careers advisor in Year 9 at school.

I HAVE SPOKEN TO A CAREERS ADVISOR: YES NO



MY LOCAL CAREERS WALES OFFICE NUMBER:

You can also get information from **Careers Wales** online. There are links on our website and in the **JOBS** section in Tab 8 **Other places to go for help** at the end of this planner.

Careers Wales can offer advice on your future – help with choosing courses, work and apprenticeships as well as learning, skills and qualification options after 16.

Careers advisors aren't the only people who can help you think about and plan your future. You can also talk to other people such as your teachers, your personal advisor or carer about your options and how to find training.

Make sure that what you want to do is written in your Pathway Plan. This makes sure that you get the support you need to make it happen.

DISABLED STUDENTS

If you have a disability, your social worker from the disability team will be preparing a transition plan and this will be included in your Pathway Plan.

SKILL is a national bureau for students with disabilities. They can provide help and advice. Contact details are on our website or see the **EDUCATION** section in **Other places to go for help** (Tab 8) and at the end of this planner.

Before you decide which college or university to attend after school, it may be worth while talking to student services in your chosen college to ensure they can meet your needs. It is important to tell the college about your disability when you are applying.

AFTER SCHOOL: FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

If you go to college or university you should get lots of help and support. Doing a college or university course could make an enormous difference to the type of job and opportunities you can apply for in the future.



Action Point If you are thinking about going to college (further education) or university (higher education) make sure that this is noted in your Pathway Plan. This is important to make sure you get funding and support.

If you don't feel you are being encouraged or supported to carry on with your education please talk to your social worker or contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales' free advice line on 0808 801 1000.

There are grants available to all young people but as a looked after young person there are extra grants you may receive. Colleges and universities have student services who are experts in this area and also have an understanding of some of the extra challenges that you face entering college as a looked after young person.

It may be an idea to contact your local college and arrange to speak to student services even if you are just considering your options.



The **Frank Buttle Trust** set up the Quality Mark in 2006 in recognition of higher education institutions that go that extra mile to support students who have been in care. When you see this logo it means that the college or university will work hard to help and support you and that they have some understanding of the difficulties that may face care leavers. All Welsh universities already have this mark and colleges are beginning to apply. Look on our website for an up to date list.

EDUCATION AND BENEFITS

Your Pathway Plan should include details of any benefits that you may be entitled to but here is an idea of what's out there: You can also look up **EDUCATION** in **Other places to go for help** (Tab 8) for more information.

16-18 YEAR OLDS

If you stay on at school past 16, you may be entitled to an **Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)**. EMA is a scheme providing young people with an incentive to continue in education after age 16. You could get up to a maximum of **£30** per week (which is paid fortnightly) if you have good attendance and meet your targets. (EMA is not counted when other benefits you might be getting are being worked out).

Care leavers over 18 may be able to claim Income Support and Housing Benefit if they are studying below degree level. You will have to be enrolled or accepted onto the course before your 19th birthday and can receive this benefit until you turn 21.

Single parents and sick and disabled young people can sometimes continue to claim income based benefits whilst studying full-time in further education, even if they start the course after their 19th birthday.

18+

The Assembly Learning Grant for Further Education Scheme – ALG (FE) – is to encourage people aged 19 or over and living in Wales to continue with their education. The **Assembly Learning Grant (FE)** is a payment of up to £1,500 if you are studying full time and up to £750 if you are part time⁹. It is dependent on your household income.

If you decide to go to university you can get student loans and grants.

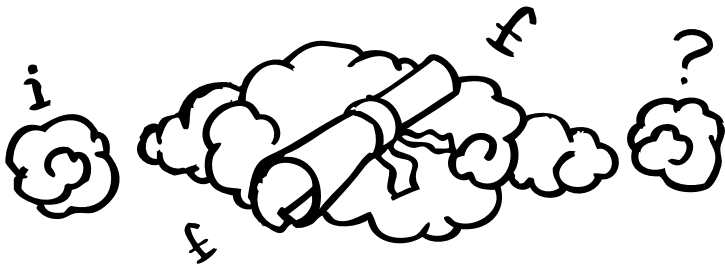
Student Finance Wales manage the application process for these loans and grants. See www.studentfinancewales.co.uk or call **0845 602 8845** or look up **EDUCATION** in **Other places to go for help** (Tab 8) at the end of the planner.

You probably won't get any other benefits when you're at university; however, if you are studying part-time and on a low income, are a parent yourself or a student with disabilities you may still be able to claim some benefits.

Local authorities usually provide extra financial support to help you to carry on in higher education¹⁰. This has varied from one local authority to another but new Welsh Government legislation due in March 2011 will mean that all local authorities have to pay a **Higher Education Bursary** of £2,000 to care leavers doing a higher education course. They also should pay for accommodation during holidays.

Other new legislation, soon due to be passed, will mean that if you have left care but are still under 25 and you decide you would like to go to college or university you can get back in touch with the leaving care team. They will do a new Pathway Plan for your education and provide help and support. Look on our website for updates.

Talk to your personal advisor to find out more or ring your local authority and ask to talk to someone about student finance.



⁹ Figures correct as at January 2011

¹⁰ Degree level education



HOUSING

MAKE YOUR MOVE A SUCCESS!



Getting the right place to live is really important to make sure you are safe, healthy and have good opportunities. If you are under 18, social services must make sure that you have a place to live. You should have a say in this.

This is perhaps one of the biggest things you have to sort out as you leave care and this is why there is lots of help and support available for you. The options available in your area may affect your choice of when you want to leave care.

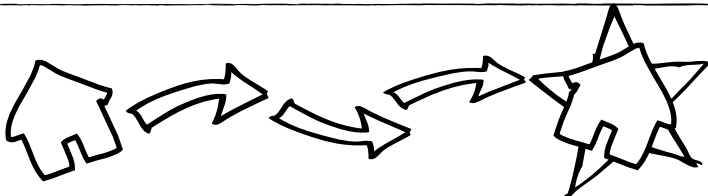
Unfortunately there are quite a large number of care leavers who end up in B&Bs or even homeless which is why it is so important that you do not rush into this decision and that you plan well and get the practical and financial help you need to make your move a success.

Look at the table at the end of this section to make sure you are getting the help and support you are entitled to.

Many local authorities have agreements between social services and the housing department and have workers who are experts in sorting out housing for young people. This might be a housing social worker or a housing officer within the local authority's housing department with responsibility for young people.

Find out the name of the person responsible for helping you with your housing. If you don't know, ask your social worker or personal advisor or ring your local housing department.

MY HOUSING CONTACT:.....



The law¹¹ does not say you have to live in any one particular type of housing but it does say it would be inappropriate for 16 and 17 year old care leavers to live completely independently with no contact or support.

Here are some of the possible housing options – remember there is a lot of variety across Wales so it's very important to talk to your social worker who will know what the local options are.

SUPPORTED LODGINGS: This type of accommodation allows you to be semi-independent. You will be living with other young people, with adult support to learn and develop independent living skills. This type of accommodation is usually for a limited length of time as it is meant to help you on the way to becoming fully independent. You may have to be in college or working to live in supported lodgings. This may be funded directly from social services if you are under 18 or with housing benefit if you are over 18.

FOSTER PLACEMENT CONVERSIONS: This means that you remain in your placement but it is no longer foster care as you now pay your own rent but your carer will help you to become more independent.

PRIVATELY RENTED: You can rent accommodation from a private landlord. You will usually have to pay a bond or deposit to the landlord. This option may not be available to you if you are living on benefits.

ACCREDITED LANDLORDS: These landlords provide privately rented accommodation with no additional support but they have been assessed by the local authority as landlords who will provide a reasonable standard of property and treat you fairly.

APPROVED LANDLORD SCHEME: In this scheme landlords provide extra support to you in private rented accommodation. This extra support helps you to live independently. Sometimes landlords help with skills such as managing money, keeping your home in a good state or making and keeping appointments.

HOUSING ASSOCIATION PROPERTIES: Housing associations usually provide reasonably priced property to rent privately.

FOYERS: Foyers provide accommodation for young people usually linked to education, training or employment.

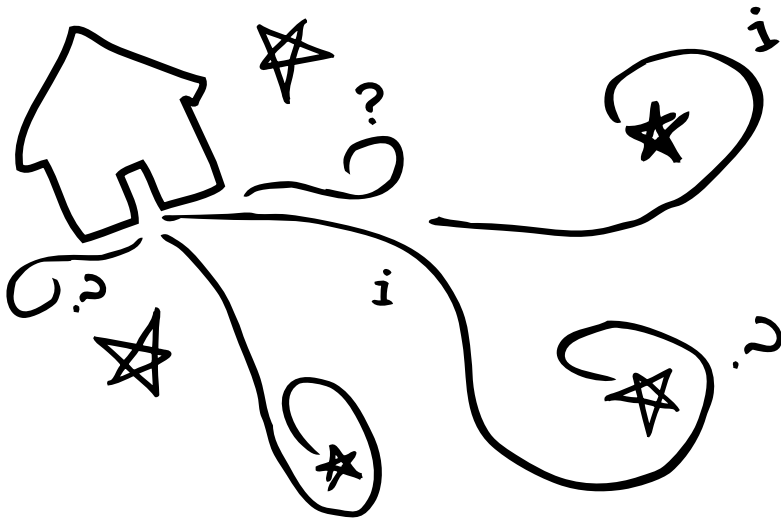
BED AND BREAKFAST: This should only ever be in an emergency and is not a long term option. If you have been in B+B for more than a few days please seek advice from your social worker or personal advisor.

HOSTELS: Hostels provide temporary accommodation. They usually contain some shared facilities and can be for a specific group e.g. homeless over 18s. A hostel would not necessarily provide support and should not be a long term option.

Note: Some of the housing options above are short term and you need to work with your social worker or personal advisor to look for long term solutions.

LEAVING CARE GRANT (SETTING UP HOME ALLOWANCE)

See Tab 2 on **Social Services and Pathway Plan**. There are some links to housing associations and some emergency advice lines in the **HOUSING** section in **Other places to go for help** (Tab 8) at the end of this planner.



¹¹ Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 guidance

SOME HOUSING STUFF

This summary table¹² may help you to work out if you are getting all the help you are entitled to with your housing and costs:

IF YOU:	THE LOCAL AUTHORITY SHOULD:
ARE STILL IN CARE and aged 16 or 17 (and have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pay your accommodation, personal and education related costs.
ARE A CARE LEAVER and aged 16 or 17 (and have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrange suitable accommodation and pay for furnishings.• Provide an allowance. You can't claim benefits unless you are disabled or a lone parent.• Pay for any additional costs set out in the Pathway Plan (this is why it's so important to include everything in your plan).• Keep in touch with you.
HAVE LEFT CARE and are aged 18 to 21 (or have not finished an agreed programme of education or training)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contribute to the costs of support set out in the Pathway Plan.• Contribute towards the costs of education and vacation accommodation.• Keep in touch with you.
ARE A YOUNG PERSON UNDER 21 (or under 24 and in education or training) who was no longer looked after, accommodated in another setting or privately fostered after the age of 16.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give advice and support.• Keep in touch.• May also help with paying expenses related to your education.

¹² based on table in Journeys to Home: Care Leavers' successful transition to independent accommodation www.leavingcare.org/data/tmp/5730-11765.pdf



HEALTH

BE HEALTHY

You should be supported to register with a family doctor¹³ and a dentist.

It is your social worker or personal advisor's job to make sure you are registered with a doctor and a dentist.

It is important not to leave registering with a GP until you need medical help.

If this hasn't happened for you and you want more information and details visit the health section in our online planner where you will find lots of links to help you or go to the **HEALTH** section in **Other places to go for help** (Tab 8) at the end of this planner.

FAMILY DOCTORS (ALSO CALLED GPS OR GENERAL PRACTITIONERS)

You should be able register with any GP surgery in your local area providing they have spaces available.

I AM REGISTERED WITH A GP: YES NO

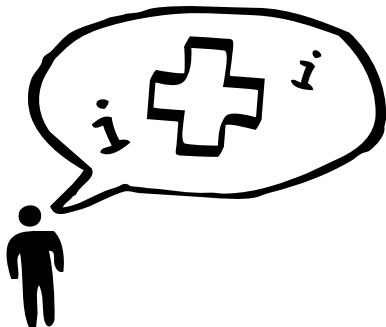
Write the surgery contact details here and the out of hours contact number:

DOCTOR'S NAME, ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER:

.....

.....

OUT OF HOURS EMERGENCY NUMBER:



¹³ A family doctor is also called a GP (General Practitioner) and is based in a local surgery

DENTIST

Some dentists offer treatment under the NHS, some offer private treatment and some offer a mixture of both. Some private dentists also offer insurance policies to cover the cost of your treatment. When looking for a dentist it is worth trying to find an NHS dentist because it will be cheaper than using a private dentist – but this can be difficult in some areas.

DENTIST CONTACT DETAILS:

Go to the **HEALTH** section in **Other places to go for help** (Tab 8) at the end of this planner for more information on how to find a dentist.

OPTICIANS

You don't have to register with an optician but it is always a good idea to have regular eye tests. Your eye test and glasses may be paid for by your leaving care team up to age 21. Ask your social worker for more information.

HEALTH COSTS

It is free to visit an NHS doctor both in a local surgery and in a hospital. Some people choose to pay for private treatment so that they get treated faster. Dentists often charge for treatment but it is much cheaper if they are NHS dentists and you may be able to get help with these costs. If you are aged 16 or 17 and supported by a local authority because you recently left care, you are entitled to full help with health costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme. This includes things like dentists, money for glasses and travel to medical appointments. Ask your social worker for an HC1 (SC) claim form or use the link on our website or at the end of the planner.

SEXUAL HEALTH

You can attend any GP surgery for sexual health issues and emergency contraception (you don't have to be registered there). You can also go to a sexual health clinic for information, advice and treatment. You can search for a sexual health clinic from links on our website or in the **HEALTH** section the end of this planner in **Other places to go for help** (Tab 8) or call NHS Direct on 0845 4647.

PRESCRIPTIONS

If your GP prescribes medication you should take the prescription to any pharmacy to get the medicine. You will not have to pay as prescriptions in Wales are free for everyone.

OTHER HEALTH CONCERNS

Many things affect your health such as smoking, drinking alcohol, using non prescription drugs as well as poor eating habits and anxiety and stress.

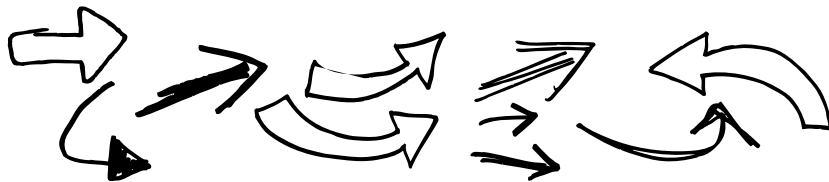
Your doctor and the other professionals in your doctor's surgery (such as the nurses) are there to give you help and advice on a lot more than illness and your GP is often the person you need to see to get referred for additional or specialised help like physiotherapist, nutrition, weight loss.

For example: If you want to give up smoking your GP can prescribe nicotine patches, even if you are under 18.

You can find out more information from links on our website or look in **Other Places to go for Help** (Tab 8) at the back of the planner to find lots of useful information for young people.

NHS DIRECT: 0845 4647

You can call NHS Direct Freephone number for advice on any health issues. If they are unable to give you advice over the phone they may advise you to contact your local GP.

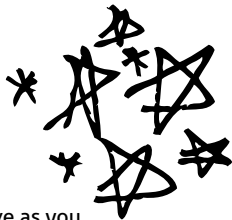






IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

YOUR IDENTITY AND RECORDS



There are a number of documents that you will need to have as you live more independently.

Find a safe place to keep all your important documents together so you always know where to find them and they can't get lost or stolen. They are valuable as they can prove your identity and it can be expensive to replace them.

It's also a good idea to keep a separate record of some numbers in case you do lose the original documents and need to get new copies. You can use this section to note some of your numbers.

BIRTH CERTIFICATE

You need your birth certificate as proof of identity and you will need it to get other documents such as a passport.

Social services should have a copy of your birth certificate that they are keeping safe for you. If this is not available it is really important that you make sure your social worker helps you to get a copy. You should be given a copy of your birth certificate when you need it.

If you need to get your own copy later you will need to know your place of birth and your parents' names. You can contact the registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages in the county where you were born or it may be possible to do this online. Look in the **DOCUMENTS** section in **Other places to go for help** (Tab 8) at the end of the planner. You will have to pay for a replacement certificate.

NATIONAL INSURANCE NUMBER

If you've got your number write it here:

It should look something like this: **AB 12 34 56 B**

Most young people receive their National Insurance (NI) number automatically when they are about 16. If you don't have one, talk to your social worker and ask them to apply on your behalf. It should take about 6 weeks. There is a link on our website and at the end of this planner giving updated information to social workers about making this application.

PASSPORT

If you are over 16, have you got a full, adult passport?

I HAVE A PASSPORT: YES ■ NO ■

You don't have to have a passport but it is an extremely useful document to have.

It isn't just about going on foreign holidays. A passport is accepted by lots of companies and organisations as a way of proving who you are and your entitlement to work. It makes a lot of sense for you to get this document before you leave care if you can. This will also mean that you **may** have help and financial support to get it.

A local authority does not have to pay for your passport but some will. It's worth asking.

Social services can apply for a passport for a young person where they have parental responsibility otherwise consent would need to be obtained from your parent. This is because all under 18s applying for a passport need someone to give consent.

Anyone who is 16 or over will need to apply for a full adult passport and may need to attend an interview to prove who they are.

If you are over 18 you can apply for your own passport. This costs £77.50¹⁴ and usually takes about 6 weeks. Go to our website for more information on applying for a passport.



NHS MEDICAL CARD

You should already be registered with a doctor and dentist and you will have a NHS number. If you know it, write it here:

It's not a problem if you can't find it or have lost your card.

An NHS medical card is issued when you first register with a GP. It contains your NHS number and other information such as your name, address, date of birth and details of your GP practice or doctor. If you change your GP you will be asked for your NHS medical card.

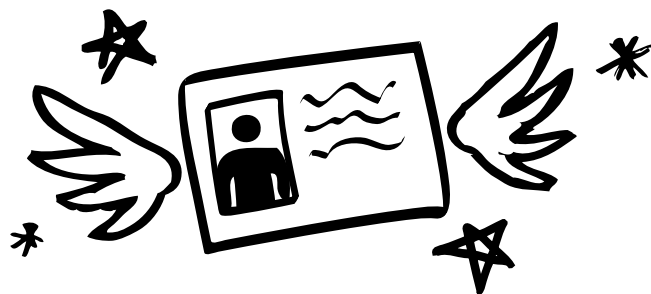
Links to more information are on our website.

DRIVING LICENCE

Once you are 17 you can apply for a driving licence and some local authorities may help to pay for your licence or driving lessons so it's worth asking.

You will need a provisional licence before you can begin to learn to drive. Currently this costs £50 (correct January 2011). The forms (D1) can be picked up from main post offices or from your local DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) office.

Links to more information are on our website or look up the **DOCUMENTS** section in **Other places to go for help** (Tab 8) at the end of this planner.



¹⁴ Correct as at January 2011





INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF



Lots of the topics we've covered already are part of independent living skills and you may be surprised by how much is involved in looking after yourself.

You don't have to be completely on your own and if you are finding things difficult you should always have someone to turn to for help. This does not have to be someone from the local authority. Who would that person be for you?

Also the local authority have a responsibility to stay in touch with you until you are 21.

Here is a brief checklist of just some of the things that will become your responsibility when you are living on your own:

Tick the boxes below if you are confident you can do these things or use this list to talk to your carer or personal advisor about any more help you need.

- CLEANING** – hoovering, mopping, dusting, cleaning the kitchen and bathroom
- LAUNDRY** – washing, drying, ironing and looking after your clothes, bedding and towels, sewing on buttons
- COOKING, PLANNING HEALTHY MEALS AND SHOPPING**
- BUDGETING AND MANAGING MONEY** – making sure you have enough money for rent, food, bills, clothes and fun
- KEEPING HEALTHY**
- BASIC DIY** – changing light bulbs, hanging up pictures
- BASIC FIRST AID**
- WHAT TO DO IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF EMERGENCY**
- FORM FILLING**
- MAKING AND KEEPING APPOINTMENTS**



If you are unsure about some of these things ask your personal advisor, foster carer or residential child care worker if you can have some help to learn these skills.

FINDING A JOB

You should have already had some advice from your careers advisor and personal advisor but they can also help you if you need advice about:

- Applying for a job.
- Finding out about an apprenticeship, training or volunteering.
- Filling out application forms.
- Help writing your CV.
- Preparing for an interview.

Links to more information are on our website or in the **JOBS** section in the **Other places to go for help** (Tab 8) at the end of this planner.

MONEY

If you decide that you want to live on your own, you will get some money (called a Leaving Care Grant) from social services. See also social services section (Tab 2) in this planner Setting up home from scratch can be very expensive and may cost more than the grant you will be given.

When you have moved in to your own place you will have to pay all sorts of things that you haven't had to think about before such as rent, council tax, electricity and gas bills. You will need to manage your money to make sure that you have enough to pay all your bills and for other things like food, clothes and to top-up your phone.



BANK ACCOUNT

Learning to manage money is a really important life skill and having a bank account is a big part of this. Most employers pay wages directly into a bank account and it is also the main way to receive benefits and grants.

You may also want to open a separate savings account. You can put aside a small amount each week or month and it will build up over time. This might mean that you can buy something outright and not have to take out a loan or get into debt. With loans you usually pay interest (some extra on top of the money you have borrowed). This costs you a lot more in the long run and many people run into serious debt by taking out loans.

If you don't have a bank account and you are 16, ask your social worker to help you open one.

See www.whataboutmoney.info for more information on money for young adults.

I HAVE OPENED A BANK ACCOUNT: YES NO

There are also advice leaflets produced by banks – you could ask for one when you open a bank account. Your personal advisor or foster carer should also help you with some money management, life skills and practical tips.

I HAVE HAD ADVICE ON MANAGING MY MONEY: YES NO

I FEEL I WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE: YES NO

CREDIT UNIONS

These are different to banks and offer a convenient way to save and the opportunity to access low cost loans and a range of other services. Look on our website and/or in the **MONEY** section in **Other places to go for help** (Tab 8) at the end of the planner for links to your local credit union.

DOOR STEP LENDERS AND "LOAN SHARKS"

Don't be tempted to borrow money from anyone going door to door offering a loan. Loan sharks seek out people on a low income and even though it may seem like a quick solution to a problem or a way to pay for something like Christmas presents it is never a good option. They are seeking to take advantage of vulnerable people and you will end up paying back much more money than you borrowed in the first place. Lenders often use violence and threats to get their money back. There is a number to report loan sharks to stop more people becoming victims. Look in the **MONEY** section in **Other places to go for help** (Tab 8) at the end of the planner.

BENEFITS

On the whole you will not be able to claim benefits when you are 16 or 17 because your local authority is responsible for supporting you. This may be slightly different for young parents and disabled young people.

After 18 the local authority may still give further financial support, but like all young people you would get your income from work, education grants and, if you are eligible for benefits, you are expected to claim these to help support yourself.

If you are unemployed over 18 you may be able to claim Jobseeker's Allowance if you are: available for and actively seeking work, or working or studying for less than 16 hours per week on average.

This information is from The National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) leaflet **Know your Rights, Know your Benefits** – A guide for young people in and from care.

Follow the links from our website or look in the **MONEY** section in **Other places to go for help** (Tab 8) at the end of this planner for more information.

It is important to get individual advice about benefits because everyone's circumstances are slightly different so visit your Jobcentre or Citizens Advice Bureau for advice on benefits and employment. Your social worker could help you contact Citizens Advice or a welfare rights worker.

BUDGETING

You may find the following simple budget planner useful to help you manage your money. There are lots of online options too if you prefer to do this electronically. Look at our website or in the **MONEY** section in **Other places to go for help** (Tab 8) at the back of this planner for suggestions.

A budget means that you note down how much money is coming in and what you need to spend on essentials such as rent and council tax and other normal spending such as clothes and a bit on your social life. It is a good way to make the most of what you have and make sure that your money lasts until your next payment and it can stop you running up unintended debts.

Have a go at filling in the table below. You can then add up all you have coming in and then add up what all your spending comes to. If there isn't enough to cover your expenses you may have to cut down on some non essentials to make sure you have enough to live on.

MONEY COMING IN EACH WEEK	HOW MUCH	MONEY GOING OUT EACH WEEK	HOW MUCH
WAGES		RENT	
GRANT		COUNCIL TAX	
BENEFITS		FOOD	
OTHER INCOME		ELECTRICITY	
		GAS	
		WATER	
		PHONE	
		TRAVEL	
		TOILETRIES	
		SAVINGS	
		GOING OUT	
		CLOTHES	
TOTAL		TOTAL	

TRANSFER THE TOTALS:

TOTAL IN	
TOTAL OUT	
HOW MUCH IS LEFT	

If you are struggling to manage or are getting into debt - get some advice straight away; don't wait until it becomes a massive problem. Talk to someone and get the support you need. For more detail on benefits and money ask your personal advisor or visit your local **Citizens Advice Bureau**. You can get information online or find your local advice office at www.adviceguide.org.uk/wales.htm

STAYING SAFE

Here are a few things to think about to make sure that you keep yourself safe both in your home and when you're out and about. Lots of them may seem obvious but it's better to be safe than sorry.

- Make sure your windows are closed and your doors are locked if you are going out.
- Make sure that all candles or cigarettes have been put out properly before you go to bed.
- Always ensure that your cooker is turned off when not in use.
- It would be a very good idea to have a free home fire safety check from the fire service. This is very easy to arrange by ringing this freephone number 0800 1691234. The check is free and you can get free smoke alarms, fire blankets and carbon monoxide alarms.
- Don't invite someone you don't know very well back to your home.
- Always keep your bank card pin number secret.
- When answering the door to utility companies (e.g. gas meter reading) always ask to see the callers ID. If they can't show you don't let them in.
- Take money out of the Cashpoint during the day if you are planning to go out in the evening.
- Make sure you have enough money so that you can get home at the end of the evening.
- If you are out at night, stick to main roads and well lit, busy areas.
- Stay with friends and don't walk home alone or with someone you don't know.
- Don't show off your valuables when you are out in public.



STAYING SAFE ONLINE

It's really important that you keep yourself safe when you're online.

Here are some useful safety tips:

SIGNING UP ONLINE Many websites ask you to register online before you can join and may ask you to enter personal information such as your name, telephone number, age, address. Please think carefully before you enter this information and make sure that it is a website belonging to a real company.

KEEP IT PRIVATE Always use a nickname when you register on a website or social networking site. Be careful not to give out your full name, address, mobile phone number or photographs to people online. Always make sure you choose the option to keep your profile private otherwise you don't know who could be looking at your webpage. Always keep your passwords private (even from your friends).

WHO'S WHO? You can't always be sure that whoever you talk to online is who they say they are or the age they say they are. Arranging to meet someone you have met online can be dangerous. Make sure you only meet them when a friend of yours can be present and in a public place. Always make sure someone else knows where you are going and who you are meeting.

WHAT'S IN YOUR INBOX? Opening emails and attachments from people you don't really know or trust can get you into trouble – they may contain viruses or nasty messages. If you are unsure about any email (even from a friend) scan it with antivirus software before you open it or just delete it.

IS IT TRUE? Just as someone online may be lying about who they are, any information you find on the internet may not be reliable. Just because it's on the internet does not mean it's true!

SPEAK UP Tell your social worker or personal advisor if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried. Report inappropriate or nasty messages to whoever runs the website.

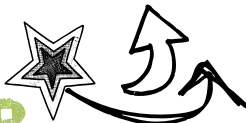
DON'T FORGET You don't just use the internet through a computer so remember the same safety tips when you are using the internet through your mobile phone or games console.





OTHER PLACES TO GO FOR HELP

PLACES TO GO FOR HELP



If there is no phone number listed below it is probably because the number depends on where you live. If you don't have computer access you can contact our advice line and we will find a local number for you. Any other problems getting the information or help you need, get in touch with us and we'll try our best to help:

CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER FOR WALES HELPLINE

Email: advice@childcomwales.org.uk

Free phone: 0808 801 1000

Free text: 80800 – start message with COM

ADVICE AND HELP:

CHILDLINE

www.childline.org.uk

Phone: 08001111

CITIZENS ADVICE

You can get information online or find your local advice office.

www.adviceguide.org.uk/wales.htm

CLIC ONLINE

Lots of information and advice for young people in Wales with links to loads of other useful sites.

www.cliconline.co.uk

MEIC –24 hour Advocacy helpline for anyone up to 25

www.meiccymru.org

Email: help@meiccymru.org

Phone: 080880 23456

Text: 84081

THE SITE

Advice, information and support for young people.

www.thesite.org



LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND FOSTERING ORGANISATIONS:

FOSTERING NETWORK

www.fostering.net/wales

Phone: 02920 440940

NATIONAL CARE ADVISORY SERVICE

Information and advice on leaving care.

www.leavingcare.org

Email: ncas@catch-22.org.uk

Phone: 0207 336 4824

VOICES FROM CARE

www.voicesfromcarecymru.org.uk

Phone: 029 2045 1431

DRUG AND ALCOHOL:

DAN 247

www.dan247.org.uk

Freephone: 0808 141 0044

Or text DAN to 81066

Also look at the general sites above such as [CLIConline](#) or [thesite](#) for info and help.

EDUCATION:

STUDENT FINANCE

Student Finance Wales has the information and forms you need to apply for EMA, ALG and university and higher education grants loans and bursaries.

www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Phone: 0845 602 8845

UNIVERSITY SUPPORT

Visit this NCAS website to find the details of the people who can help care leavers at each UK University.

www.leavingcare.org/?page_ID=100028

CLIC ONLINE

www.cliconline.co.uk/en/info/money/money-while-you-learn/higher-education-welsh-assembly-government/

www.cliconline.co.uk/en/info/education/

SKILL.ORG – DISABLED STUDENT HELP

www.skill.org.uk

Helpline: 0800 328 5050

(Tuesday and Thursday)

HEALTH:

NHS DIRECT

www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

Phone: 08454647

FINDING A DOCTOR, DENTIST ETC

Find your nearest doctor, dentist, sexual health clinic, emergency contraception or support group.

www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/localservices/

HEALTH COSTS

For a leaflet on health costs in Wales.

www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Documents/HealthCosts/HC11W.pdf

Apply for a free European Health Insurance Card for free or reduced cost emergency treatment when travelling in Europe:

<https://www.ehic.org.uk/Internet/home.do>

Phone: 08456062030

HOUSING:

This is not a complete list just some examples of possible place to go for advice:

SHELTER CYMRU

www.sheltercymru.org.uk

Freephone: 0808 8004444

Phone: 0845 075 5005

HOUSEMATE

Part of Shelter Cymru. Access to emergency advice.

www.housemate.org.uk/en/home/

CLWYD ALYN HOUSING

Housing association working in North Wales providing supported lodging and foyers and private properties to rent.

www.clwydalyn.co.uk/favicon.ico

Phone: 01745 536800

GRŴP GWALIA

Provider of social housing and care services in south and mid Wales including foyers.

www.gwalia.com

Phone: 01792 460609

LLAMAU

Housing related support for 16-25 year olds.

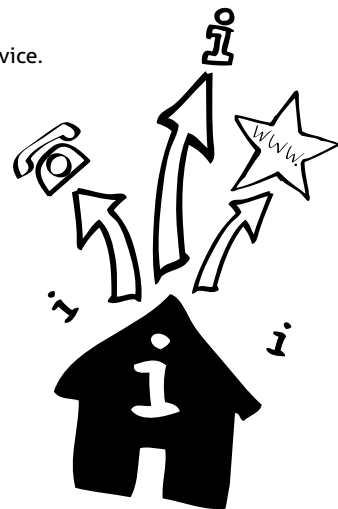
www.llamau.org.uk

Phone: 029 2023 9585

HOME FIRE SAFETY CHECK

Free Home Fire Safety Check from the fire service.

Freephone: 0800 1691234



DOCUMENTS:

APPLYING FOR A PASSPORT

www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Passports/index.htm

APPLYING FOR A BIRTH CERTIFICATE

www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/faqs-order-online.asp

NATIONAL INSURANCE NUMBER FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

www.hmrc.gov.uk/ni/intro/number-child.htm

APPLYING FOR A MEDICAL CARD

www.direct.gov.uk/en/HL1/Help/YourQuestions/DG_10015151

DRIVING LICENCE

The forms (D1) can be picked up from main post offices or from your local DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) office. Or alternatively you can download the forms from the DVLA's website www.dvla.gov.uk

JOBS:

CAREERS WALES

www.careerswales.com
Helpline: on 0800 100 900

JOB CENTRE

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

JOB SEEKERS

www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/Jobseekers/index.htm

WHAT ABOUT MONEY

www.whataboutmoney.info/step_by_step_guides/finding_a_job/finding_a_job_wales

CLIC ONLINE

www.cliconline.co.uk/en/info/employment-training/getting-a-job/where-to-look-for-jobs/

MONEY:

Free information and advice about money for young people.
www.whataboutmoney.info/
Phone: 0300 500 5000

Have a look around this website for info on budgeting, benefits and finding a job.

BUDGETING AND FINANCIAL HELP

www.whataboutmoney.info/spending_money/budgeting/

MONEYMADECLEAR

www.moneymadeclear.org.uk

CREDIT UNION

Find more information and your local credit union.
www.walescoop.com/en/site/findacu48bf.html?UID=1ales
Co-operative Centre

BENEFITS

Know your rights Know your benefits (NCAS leaflet) www.leavingcare.org/data/tmp/6189-13107.pdf

www.whataboutmoney.info/getting_money/benefits/

Also look at the general help websites such as Citizens Advice and CLIC online.


LOAN SHARK HOTLINE

www.stoploansharks.direct.gov.uk/index.html
Confidential hotline number:
0300 123 3311

MY CONTACTS

JOB TITLE	NAME	NUMBER
SOCIAL WORKER		
PERSONAL ADVISOR		
DESIGNATED TEACHER		
INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER		
ADVOCATE		
CAREERS ADVISOR		
LAC NURSE		
STUDENT WELFARE OFFICER		
HOUSING OFFICER		
INDEPENDENT VISITOR		
CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER FOR WALES HELPLINE		Free phone: 0808 801 1000 Free text: 80800 start message with COM

OTHER CONTACTS	NAME	NUMBER

We know that you will have questions that we haven't included in this planner. There are some questions that people have already asked us on our website so it's worth checking to see if the answers are already there. Go to: www.childcomwales.org.uk/myplanner and click on "FAQs" Otherwise call and ask us and we'll try our best to help. We'll keep adding new information to our website. 

NOTES
