So let’s start on your journey to independence

A guide to accommodation options for young people leaving care
Contents

Welcome .................................................... 1
Context ....................................................... 1
Accommodation options ................................. 2
  • Supporting People
  • Residential
    (after your 18th Birthday)
  • Returning Home
  • Securing your own tenancy
  • Staying Close
  • Floating Support
  • Staying Put
  • Semi Independence
  • Shared Housing
  • Training Flats
  • Supported Lodgings
  • Private Rented

Let’s start planning your journey ............ 7
  • Let’s start thinking about what
    options might suit you
  • Option 1
  • Option 2 (back up plan)
  • Option 3

What next: .................................................. 14
  • Let’s just record some dates to remind us
  • Next date to review booklet
Welcome

As part of our commitment to you we want to make sure that as you grow and develop within our care, you receive the right advice and information you need. This includes preparing you for the next steps, and supporting you from the age of 16 years to start thinking about your journey to independence.*

This booklet has been developed, to help you consider and review your current independence skills, your aspirations as well as to give you information about what accommodation options are available.

It creates a space for you to think about, record and review what options you think might work for you.

We know this is a lot of information to take in, and it can be a little daunting to be thinking about moving on to independence. So with this in mind we have tried to break things down into different areas, with an easy to follow process for you to complete in a timely manner that suits you.

And finally at the end of this booklet are some examples as to how you might want to share your options with your Social Worker, Personal Advisor/Leaving Care Worker and other professionals. It is really important that your ideas, options and aspirations are recorded within your Pathway Plan. It’s easy, you don’t have to complete it all at once, and things may change over time but it’s really good to have a plan.

Chris Spencer
Director of Children’s Services

Context - Why do I need a Pathway Plan?

When you reach 16
Your local Council must write a ‘Pathway Plan’ when you reach 16 (like the one shown right) which helps you prepare for leaving care and says what support you should get.

It must include plans for your:

• health
• education, training and development
• contact with family
• financial management
• accommodation

Your Personal Advisor/Leaving Care Worker must take part in any Pathway Plan reviews until you’re 21 (or up until your 25th birthday if appropriate). Your plan must be reviewed:

• every 6 months at least;
• if you ask for one;
• if your Personal Advisor/Leaving Care Worker or the Council asks for one.

*Please be assured this does not mean you need to leave your current home at 16 - it’s just about taking time to plan for your move nearer your 18th birthday.
Platform of accommodation options:
Let’s start by looking at the different types of accommodation

We aim to develop a complete platform of accommodation options for care leavers and young people who are preparing for their transition to leave care, this is just a visual picture as to what the platform would offer, it is not exclusive and will develop overtime. As you go through this guide, we will explain more about all the options.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation/support</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting People: Accommodation Based Support services</td>
<td>Accommodation Based Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting People: Community Based Support services</td>
<td>Community Based Support: Community Based Support Services support people in any form of accommodation and across a continuum of need from early intervention and prevention through to intensive support for people in crisis/high level and complex need.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staying Put</td>
<td>For young people settled in foster placements who wish to remain living with their foster families after their 18th birthday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staying Close</td>
<td>For young people settled in a residential placement, to be supported by the residential provider to live in Semi-Independent Accommodation close to the residential home.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Floating Support</td>
<td>Outreach support where young people have a tenancy, but need additional support as part of their transition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semi-Independent Accommodation</td>
<td>This can be a shared house or solo accommodation where staff are readily available to offer advice and support as you further develop your independent living skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared Housing</td>
<td>Young people live in a shared house or house of multiple occupancy with limited staff support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private Rented</td>
<td>Young people may choose to rent from a private landlord.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training Flats</td>
<td>Usually a block of single flats, with 24 hour staff support, these are used for young people to develop their independence skills as a pathway to their own tenancy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported Lodgings</td>
<td>This is a room within a family home, for young people to stay with some support from the family to develop their independence skills (not a foster placement)</td>
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Supporting People:
There are a range of supported accommodation options which can offer different services and varying levels of support.

- **High support** - independent units or bedrooms with shared kitchen and living areas. Residents must commit to continuing support from a key worker, possibly daily. Staff will also be on site throughout the day and most of the night.

- **Medium support** - this could involve sharing a flat with others, with a key worker visit once a week, and other staff available on site during the day, but not necessarily overnight.

- **Lower support** - here, a young person would live alone in their own flat and be visited regularly by a key worker.

**Residential (after your 18th Birthday)**
This would be where you might want to stay at your current residential home after your 18th birthday which could be for a number of reasons.
An example could be:
- You need to complete your exams or education and moving out would be too disruptive – you might just want to delay your move until these are completed.
- You come into care very late (eg 17yrs) and need more time to settle - in order to understand what your needs might be for independence.
- You might want more time to develop your independence skills before moving on.
These are just a few examples; there are many other reasons why this might be the right option for you.

**Return home or to a family member:**
You may be in a position to consider returning home or to live with a family member. This may be something you have discussed with your Social Worker in the past.
Any agreement to return home would be with your Social Worker, and would include a package of support, for you and your family during this time of transition.

**Secure your own tenancy:**
From the age of 17 and a half you might want to consider applying to the local Housing department for a property for you to live in.**
If you are successful, then a package of support would be developed to enable you to have a smooth transition or moving-in period. This package of support will be reviewed regularly to make sure your needs are being met.

**A housing application can take time, and can be more complicated. If you’re applying for accommodation outside of your placing authority - it’s good to complete more than one option. Securing your own tenancy could be part of your accommodation pathway plan, rather than your first option.**
Staying Close

We are committed to offer all young people where appropriate leaving residential homes the opportunity to have a Staying Close plan. The aim of this is to give you the resources you need, and the best support possible as you move through your journey to independence.

With this in mind, Gloucestershire have developed a “Staying Close” model for young people moving on from their residential homes into independence. Our commitment is to offer Staying Close Arrangements to young people who:

- would like to move into a supported accommodation near to your residential home.
- are returning home to be with their family and the family live within the local authority where your residential home is located.

Staying Close Tool

Remember: this is about choosing the option that is right for you. It’s ok not to choose a Staying Close; you will still get all the support you need.

You have secured your own tenancy, within the same authority as your residential home. You can have support with a Staying Close Plan.

Supported accommodation

You are looking for supported accommodation near your residential home. We have developed a number of options – from shared houses from 2 - 4 young people or solo accommodation. Have a look at our ‘accommodation pathway’ to see how it all works.

Return Home

It’s been agreed for you to return home, if your family live within the same authority as your residential home. We can support you with a Staying Close Plan.

Own Tenancy

All Staying Close Plans have a support package - the staff who work with you now, will support you as part of your Staying Close plan. Have a think about who could be involved in your plan.

Residential 18+

As part of your independence plan, you will be staying in your residential placement post 18yrs.
Semi-independent accommodation gives care leavers the opportunity to learn independence skills to get you ready for your own tenancy. This can be in a shared house or solo accommodation. When you live in this kind of accommodation, you will have your own room but you may have to share other facilities such as kitchen and bathroom. There will be key-workers at the accommodation (who are on duty 24/7) who are there to work with you to achieve your independence goals. This might mean helping you learn to cook, budget, clean and make appointments.
Shared Housing

One option maybe that you live in a shared house were you would live with other people and, although there will be some staff support, this will be limited.

Training Flats

Living on your own can sometimes be challenging and for some young people, they may like to know what it is like before making that big step. That’s why we are offering a training flat where you have the opportunity to really taste what is means to live independently. Usually a block of single flats, with 24 hour staff support, these are used for young people to develop their independence skills as a pathway to their own tenancy.

Supported Lodgings

For the purposes of this guide, a supported lodgings service is characterised by the following features, all of which should be in place:

- The young person is aged 16 or over and would otherwise be homelessness
- The accommodation is a furnished bedroom in a domestic house, with use of WC, bathing, cooking and laundry facilities as a member of the household.
- The householder (referred to in this guide as the host) is resident full time in the property but pursues their own lifestyle (including daily routine, absence at work, holidays and weekends away)
- The householder provides a home-like environment and domestic routine consistent with the young person engaging in education, training or work, including the provision of some meals
- The householder establishes an appropriate and consistent personal relationship with the young person, including non-intrusive practical help and advice
- The support plan (agreed between the young person and the provider’s support worker) engages the host
- The support plan may engage mediation or family intervention services
- The support plan is developed with the young person to address the needs and aspirations identified with them in their assessment
- The support plan uses a multi-agency approach to address needs and aspirations across the Every Child Matters outcome areas including learning and work.

This definition is taken from: Making a difference “Supported lodgings as a housing option for young people”

Private Rented

Some young care leavers will want to choose to find their own tenancies in the private sector. This is normally called ‘Private Renting. Private accommodation is normally available through letting agents, local adverts or by word of mouth from someone you may know. This type of accommodation is where you rent a property, normally, from a private landlord. The rent is usually more expensive than social housing and you will generally have a 6 monthtenancy (short term lettings) which may be renewed or extended on a rolling basis, or you may get a ‘long term let’ place. Usually there is a deposit that needs to be paid up front to secure the accommodation and there will be either weekly or monthly Rent. If this is something you think you would like to explore, talk to your leaving care or social worker. Appropriate support services can still be put in place to help ensure the tenancy is sustained and help given to address any problems.
Let’s start planning your journey 😊
First let’s have a little bit of information about you - so we know it’s your plan:

Now let’s take all this information you have just heard and have a think about what options might suit you:

Name: ............................................................................
DOB: ....................................
Current Address ...................................................................................................................................................
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Use this space to write/draw what you liked about the different options and also what you felt might be more difficult or a challenge for you.
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So take some time to reflect and think about the different options.
Talk to your friends and people that are important to you - this will help you design the right journey for you.
You’re doing so well, sometimes it’s a bit scary to look at moving on, so it’s great that you’re taking the time to really plan for your independence.

Let’s start thinking about what options might suit you. Remember these are just options and ideas at this stage, things can change - which is a good thing. We want to make sure your journey is right for you.

There is no rush to complete this booklet all in the same day.
Option 1: Accommodation type

Location:
Consider if you are placed outside of your Local Authority - do you want to move back?

Education Employment or training:
Be sure to consider if you are in education, employment or training how or if this will continue past your 18th birthday. Will this affect which location you choose?
Well done you have just completed your first option - Now let’s just take some time to think “what if”? What if this plan is not possible (for any reason)? What would your backup plan look like?

Take some time to think about this and when you’re ready, complete Option 2 on the next page as your backup plan or second choice option.

Support and Activities:
Consider what support you might need, this needs to include evenings and weekends, as well supporting you to develop your independence skills like money management, running your own home etc.

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Anything else you would like to be considered, or things you’re not sure about.
Let us know here.
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Now let’s just take some time to think “what if”? What if this plan is not possible (for any reason)? What would your backup plan look like?
Option 2: Accommodation type

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*If you are not currently in education, employment or training but would like to be, speak to your Social Worker or Personal Advisor/Leaving care worker. They can help you look at what is available around the location you choose.*

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This is ‘fantastic’, we are nearly there – now the next section (Option 3) is completely up to you. **Would you like to develop another package?**

If you would, then please use the following pages. If not then just move on to the next section.

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**Support and Activities:**
Consider what support you might need, this needs to include evenings and weekends, as well supporting you to develop your independence skills like money management, running your own home etc.

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**Anything else you would like to be considered, or things you’re not sure about.**
Let us know here

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It’s good to have lots of options 🙂
Option 3: Accommodation type

Location:
Consider if you are placed outside of your Local Authority - do you want to move back?

Education Employment or training:
Be sure to consider if you are in education, employment or training how or if this will continue past your 18th birthday. Will this affect which location you choose?

If you are not currently in education, employment or training but would like to be, speak to your Social Worker or Personal Advisor/Leaving Care Worker. They can help you look at what is available around the location you choose.
Well that’s it, you have completed your options - don’t worry if it’s not completely sorted, there will be time to go through things again.

Support and Activities:
Consider what support you might need, this needs to include evenings and weekends, as well supporting you to develop your independence skills like money management, running your own home etc.

Anything else you would like to be considered, or things you’re not sure about.
Let us know here
What next:

We need to begin to share your options with your Social Worker, Personal Advisor/Leaving Care Worker and other key people. So how do we do this?

- When you next meet with your Social Worker or Personal Advisor/Leaving Care Worker, you might want to go through this booklet with them, so they understand what your journey to independence is beginning to look like.

- Ask your Social Worker, IRO or Personal Advisor/Leaving Care Worker for this document to be included at your next Pathway Plan meeting or review. This is so your options can be considered and recorded within your Pathway Plan.

- Share it with your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), book some time with them to go through this document in preparation for your next review meeting – they will be keen to know about your journey to independence. Ask your key worker, foster carer or home manager to help you book this appointment.

Now it’s a good idea to record some of these contacts, just to remind yourself of what you have done, monitor what responses you’ve received and the decisions that have been made.

Let’s just record some dates to remind us....

Discussion with my Social Worker (SW) or Personal Advisor (PA)/Leaving Care Worker (LCW):

Name of SW or PA/LCW: ...........................................................
Date: ................................................................. Time ......................

Your notes from this meeting:

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Action points:

What was agreed?
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Ask your key worker, foster carer or home manager to help you book this appointment.

It’s good to make notes.
Discussion with my Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO):

Your IRO’s name: .................................................................................................................................

Your notes form this meeting:

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Action points:
What was agreed?

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Date: ................................................................. Time: ........................................

Pathway Plan meeting or review

Date: ................................................................. Time: ........................................
Venue: .................................................................................................................................

Who was there?
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Your notes from this meeting:

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Action points:
What was agreed?

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Any other information or updates:

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Next Date to review this booklet:

Date:..................................................Time....................................................
Your signature:..........................................................
Key worker/Foster Carer/Home Manager signature:............................................

So we have done all we can at the moment, once your accommodation option has been approved, then things will begin to move forward, to make your plan become a reality.

Next Date to review this booklet:

Date:..................................................Time....................................................
Your signature:..........................................................
Key worker/Foster Carer/Home Manager signature:............................................

Date:..................................................Time....................................................
Your signature:..........................................................
Key worker/Foster Carer/Home Manager signature:............................................