

# Care Leaver

**5** Minute Facts

## What is it?

**A care leaver is someone between the ages of 16 and 21, (and up to the age of 25 if still in full time education or needs help accessing education or training), who has spent time in the care of the local authority as a child or young person but has now left that care. They may have left care before or after their 18th birthday. For more information see the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.**

To be a care leaver, they must have spent at least 13 weeks (continuously or in total since the age of 14) and at least one day following their 16th birthday being cared for by the local authority. They may have lived in foster care, residential care or in a kinship (family and friends) arrangement. The care may have come about through a legal order such as a Care Order or through a voluntary arrangement under S20 Children Act 1989.

### What support are care leavers entitled to?

There are three categories of care leaver: Eligible, Relevant, Former Relevant and Qualifying. Leaving Care status and entitlement to support and services depend on how long they were in care and at what point in their life they left care. Local authorities must plan for looked after children to provide the support they need in their transition to adulthood. See Planning Transitions to Adulthood for Care Leavers Guidance. More information about the categories and Leaving Care status is available from the National Care Advisory Service (NCAS). Also see Bolton Leaving Care Team and You giving information about Care Leavers' rights and entitlements.

Support can include: provision of a social worker, financial assistance, help with accommodation, benefits and budgeting advice, help to develop independence skills, support with education, employment and training and support to access health services.

The support needed is set out in a Pathway Plan developed with the young person, the social worker and others involved in the plan. This is reviewed at least every six months but can be reviewed earlier if there is a significant change in circumstances or the young person requests a review.

### What do we have in Bolton for care leavers?

In Bolton we have a range of services for care leavers provided by the local authority, health and third sector agencies. These include:

**Pathway Planning and coordination of support** — When the young person is 15 and seven months a worker from the Leaving Care Team will be allocated to draw up a Pathway Plan with the young person. From age 16 the case will be transferred to a social worker in the Leaving Care Team who will support the young person in their transition to adulthood. They remain in regular contact with care leavers, make sure they have a plan relevant to them, live somewhere that is suitable and safe and ensure they are helped into education employment or training.

**Accommodation** — Care leavers who have been living in fostering placements now have increased access to 'Staying Put' arrangements where they stay living with their foster

# Care Leaver

**5** Minute Facts

carer following their 18th birthday. Additionally Bolton has a wide range of 16+ supported accommodation to meet the varied needs of care leavers. This covers the spectrum of 24 hours highly staffed provision to supported lodgings or flats with floating support. At 18+ care leavers are given the opportunity to have "Priority Status" for social housing when ready to move into their own tenancies.

**Education, employment and training** — Care leavers have targeted advice, information and guidance to support them into the right choices. Connexions advisors are based in schools to give that advice initially and care leavers up to age 19 not in education employment or training are allocated a named Connexions worker. They will be supported with careers, college and university guidance, information about apprenticeships, traineeships and practical advice and support. A Preparation for Work Scheme is offered which provides bespoke packages for individual young people to help build their employability skills.

Bolton convenes a multi agency NEET panel supporting care leavers in education, employment and training.

**Health** — Health providers work in partnership with care leavers and with their social workers and other relevant practitioners to ensure they access the right health services to meet their needs. The Parallel is a young persons' health centre where care leavers can be given prioritised attention regarding their health needs.

An emotional health practitioner is based within the Leaving Care Team to act as a bridge to mainstream mental health services, undertake individual assessment and direct work and offer consultation for social workers to help meet the emotional health needs of care leavers.

**Financial advice** — Bolton has a Money Skills team which provides individual advice and group work or training to help with financial management. There is a dedicated worker on the team who can offer specific individual or group work with children and young people.

**Benefits advice** — There are two named Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) workers linked to the Leaving Care Team who offer advice and support to care leavers and social workers to ensure that full access to all possible benefits and entitlements is facilitated.

## Key contacts and for more information...

Head of Service Looked after Children and Leaving Care Tel: **01942 634530**

[Catch 22 - National Care Advisory Service \(NCAS\)](#)

[Care Leavers Association](#)

[HM Government Care Leavers Strategy 2013](#)

The [Care Leavers' Charter](#) outlines principles and promises for Care Leavers.

**All the local info I need  
is just a click away!**



[www.mylifeinbolton.org.uk](http://www.mylifeinbolton.org.uk)

**Bolton  
Council**