



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2017-0215, 15 November 2017

General Debate on the Department for Work and Pensions support for care leavers

Summary

This Commons Library Debate Pack briefing has been prepared for a General Debate on the Department for Work and Pensions' support for care leavers which will take place at 3pm on Thursday 16 November 2017. This debate was agreed by the Backbench Business Committee and will take place in Westminster Hall.

The Debate Pack contains background information on support for care leavers, as well as relevant parliamentary material and press articles, in addition to some suggested further reading which Members may find useful when preparing for this debate.

When making the case for a debate on this subject, Kelly Tolhurst MP said:

The application is for a general debate in Westminster Hall around care leavers and the role with the DWP. This is predominantly because Government will shortly be publishing advice to local authorities around the care offer that was part of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. It is quite important that we offer a challenge around some of the things that will be in that guidance, predominantly around accommodation costs for care leavers, also how universal credit will affect the youngsters. It is one of those debates that we had a little bit when we spoke about Act last year, but I believe there is far more to be done in this area and it would be a good opportunity to challenge the Minister on how meaningful this local offer will be for our looked-after children. It has cross-party support and there are many who have expressed an interest in wanting to take part.

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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Contents

1.	The Children and Social Work Act 2017	2
1.1	Who are care leavers?	2
1.2	Existing support for care leavers	2
1.3	The 2017 Act, including the local offer, and next steps	3
1.4	Statistics	5
1.5	The situation in the devolved administrations	6
2.	Care leavers and DWP benefits	10
2.1	Existing benefits	10
2.2	Universal Credit Children's Society report	13
3.	Housing	18
4.	Parliamentary material	22
4.1	Written Parliamentary Questions	22
4.2	Oral Parliamentary Questions	35
4.3	Debates	36
5.	Press articles	37
6.	Press notices	38
7.	Further reading	39

1. The Children and Social Work Act 2017

Local authority support for care leavers is a devolved matter; this section concerns England, although the policies of the devolved administrations are set out in section 1.5.

1.1 Who are care leavers?

As the Children’s Commissioner for England explains:

Leaving care means that you are between 16–18 and have previously been in care, but are no longer legally “looked after” by your Local Authority Children’s Services. You don’t have to leave care when you’re 16.¹

Children are “looked after” by a local authority if they are either subject to a care order, or provided with accommodation by a local authority for a continuous period of 24 hours or more.

1.2 Existing support for care leavers

As the Department for Education (DfE) has noted, prior to 2000 there was no statutory framework in place for care leavers; instead, each local authority determined the level of support that it would provide. As a consequence, “with no nationally-set expectation about what was an adequate level of support, many care leavers received only minimal assistance”.

Starting with the *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000*, legislation was introduced to provide support for young people leaving care:

- *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000* – introduced requirements on local authorities to: “assess the needs of the young person once they left care; appoint a Personal Adviser for them; and develop a pathway plan. This support was available to care leavers up to age 18, or to age 21 if the young person was in education”.
- *Children and Young Persons Act 2008* – “required local authorities to provide assistance to care leavers in education (including a £2,000 bursary for those in higher education); and extended support from a Personal Adviser to age 21 for all care leavers; and to 25 if they remained in education”.
- *Children & Families Act 2014* – the “Staying Put” policy was legislated for, requiring local authorities “to support young people to remain with their former foster carers to age 21 where both the young person and carer want the arrangement to continue”.

In addition to the existing “Staying Put” policy, the DfE has made a commitment to introduce a similar approach for those young people in care in residential care (children’s homes), to be called “Staying Close”, which will “enable young people to live independently, in a location

¹ Children’s Commissioner for England, [Leaving Care](#), webpage accessed on 9 November 2017

close to their children’s home with ongoing support from that home”.² No date has been set for its introduction.³

The DfE also noted that in 2013 it published the “first cross-government care leaver strategy”, and that in 2014 the new inspection framework for children’s social care introduced a specific judgement on the quality of leaving care support.⁴

1.3 The 2017 Act, including the local offer, and next steps

In July 2016, the DfE published [Putting Children First](#) which set out the government’s reform programme for children’s social care in England over the following five years. Later that month, [Keep On Caring – Supporting Young People from Care to Independence](#) was published, setting out “specifically and in more depth what it means to put care leavers first”.⁵

The *Children and Social Work Act 2017*, namely sections 1 to 3, “provides the legislative framework to support a programme of reform in children’s social care set out in the Government’s July 2016 policy paper Putting Children First”.⁶ The DfE explained that:

The Act sets out a framework of corporate parenting principles that overlay these existing responsibilities towards looked after children and those leaving care to make clear what it means for the authority as a whole to act as a good parent. It also requires local authorities to publish their offer of support to young people leaving their care [i.e. the local offer], and removes the requirement for certain care leavers to be in education and training in order to obtain support from a personal adviser and get other help from the local authority. This is part of a wider programme of work to support care leavers.⁷

In terms of the “local offer”, under section 2 of the Act local authorities “must publish information about (a) services which the local authority offers for care leavers as a result of its functions under the Children Act 1989; (b) other services which the local authority offers that may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living”. The definition of care leavers for section 2 was set out in subsection 7.⁸

² Department for Education, [Keep On Caring – Supporting Young People from Care to Independence](#), July 2016, p38, para 3.46

³ [PQ 106317 14 October 2017](#)

⁴ Department for Education, [Keep On Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence](#), July 2016, pp9–10, paras 1.1–1.3

⁵ Department for Education, [Keep On Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence](#), July 2016, p4

⁶ [Children and Social Work Act 2017–EN](#), para 2

⁷ [Children and Social Work Act 2017–EN](#), para 4

⁸ Care leavers in respect of the local offer are defined as:

- ‘eligible children’,
- ‘relevant children’,
- ‘persons under 25 who are ‘former relevant children’ and
- those who qualify for advice and assistance under section 24 of the *Children Act 1989* [i.e. those aged between 16 and 21 and subject, or previously subject, to a special guardianship order having previously been looked after by a local

The Act states that “services which may assist care leavers” for these purposes include “health and well-being; relationships; education and training; employment; accommodation; [and] participation in society”.⁹

The additional support provided for in the Act was generally welcomed: for example, the Alliance for Children in Care and Care Leavers expressed its support for them during their passage through Parliament, but called for them to be strengthened.¹⁰ Regarding the local offer, the Alliance noted that:

Care leavers often tell us that they do not know which services they are entitled to or how to access them. The duty on local authorities to consult and provide a “local offer” is important, but it will not address the problem of service availability, which means that young people’s needs are not being met.¹¹

In October 2017, the DfE launched a [consultation](#) on the provisions in sections 1 to 3 of the Act, seeking views on draft statutory guidance in regard to corporate parenting and the extension of the personal adviser duty, as well as on an illustrative local offer for care leavers and accompanying guidance on the local offer.¹²

On the local offer, Annex B of the consultation noted that:

When developing their local offer, local authorities are required to consult with relevant persons which would include care leavers and organisations or people that represent care leavers. Local authorities should consider how best to engage and consult with as many of their care leavers as possible. It will be good practice for local authorities to work effectively with their care leavers to co-produce a local offer that is meaningful and reflects the needs, views and wishes of the care leavers they are responsible for. It may also be useful for Personal Advisors to seek the views and ideas of the care leavers that they support and work with on a regular basis.

It added that the “Government’s expectation is that the local offer should be available within six to nine months of commencement” of section 2 of the Act and that it would be good practice for local authorities to review the local offer every year.¹³ An [illustrative local offer](#) was also published by the Government alongside the consultation document.

authority, or under 21 and at any time after reaching the age of sixteen but while still a child was, but is no longer, looked after, accommodated or fostered]. For definitions of the first three terms above, please see the Child Law Advice’s webpage, [Services for children leaving care](#).

⁹ More detailed information on the provisions of the Act in respect of looked after children can be found in the Library briefing paper, [Children and Social Work \[HL\] Bill 121: analysis for Commons Report Stage](#).

¹⁰ Alliance for Children in Care and Care Leavers, [Second Reading Briefing – Children and Social Work Bill \(House of Lords\)](#), pp1–4

¹¹ As above, p3

¹² Department for Education, [Corporate Parenting Principles: Local Offer; and extending Personal Adviser support to all care leavers to age 25 – Government consultation](#), 16 October 2017, p3

¹³ Department for Education, [Corporate Parenting Principles: Local Offer; and extending Personal Adviser support to all care leavers to age 25 – Government consultation \(Annex B – Local Offer Guidance\)](#), p2

The consultation will close on 27 November 2017, and the DfE has stated that the results of the consultation and the Department's response will be published in "winter 2018".¹⁴

The DfE stated that "it is anticipated that the duty for local authorities to publish a local offer will commence on 1 April 2018".¹⁵

1.4 Statistics

The number of children who ceased to be looked after fell for the first time in 2017 after rising steadily since 2008. There were 31,250 children who ceased to be looked after in 2017, a decrease of 2% on 2016.

The table below gives details of the reason why children ceased to be looked after.

CHILDREN WHO CEASED TO BE LOOKED AFTER BY REASON EPISODE CEASED										
Years ending 31 March 2013 to 2017, England										
	Number					Percentage				
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Returned home to live with parents or relatives	10,130	10,370	10,700	10,910	9,980	35.4%	33.9%	34.2%	34.3%	31.9%
Moved into independent living	3,920	3,700	3,720	4,150	4,550	13.7%	12.1%	11.9%	13.0%	14.6%
Adopted	4,010	5,060	5,350	4,700	4,350	14.0%	16.5%	17.1%	14.8%	13.9%
Adopted - application unopposed	2,150	2,660	2,850	2,430	2,180	7.5%	8.7%	9.1%	7.6%	7.0%
Adopted - consent dispensed with	1,860	2,400	2,500	2,270	2,170	6.5%	7.8%	8.0%	7.1%	6.9%
Special guardianship order made to former foster carers	1,600	1,750	1,660	1,970	1,970	5.6%	5.7%	5.3%	6.2%	6.3%
Special guardianship order made to other carers	1,180	1,610	1,900	1,890	1,720	4.1%	5.3%	6.1%	5.9%	5.5%
Residence order or child arrangement order granted	1,670	1,700	1,030	1,120	1,200	5.8%	5.6%	3.3%	3.5%	3.8%
Care taken by another LA	170	150	160	270	550	0.6%	0.5%	0.5%	0.8%	1.8%
Transferred to residential care funded by adult social services	540	570	600	590	550	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	1.8%
Sentenced to custody	370	640	560	500	410	1.3%	2.1%	1.8%	1.6%	1.3%
Age assessment determined child aged 18 or over	..	..	240	340	240	..	..	0.8%	1.1%	0.8%
Accommodation on remand ended	..	..	170	150	140	..	..	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%
Child moved abroad	..	..	70	80	80	..	..	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%
Died	60	50	50	40	40	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
Care ceased for any other reason	5,020	5,010	5,140	5,110	5,470	17.5%	16.4%	16.4%	16.1%	17.5%
Total	28,650	30,590	31,330	31,830	31,250	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: DfE Children Looked After In England and Wales, Table D1

The DfE also follow the destination of care leavers. The table below shows comparable figures from 2014 to 2017 on the accommodation of care leavers. The majority of care leavers are in independent living.

The impact of the "Staying Put" policy is apparent in the table as both the number and proportion of care leavers living with former foster carers has increased.

¹⁴ As above, p4

¹⁵ Department for Education, [Corporate Parenting Principles; Local Offer; and extending Personal Adviser support to all care leavers to age 25 – Government consultation](#), 16 October 2017, p7

CARE LEAVERS ^a NOW AGED 19, 20 AND 21 YEAR OLD BY ACCOMMODATION								
Years ending 31 March 2014 to 2017, England								
	Number				Percentage			
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016	2017
Independent living	10,700	10,310	9,830	9,600	39.3%	39.2%	37.3%	35.5%
With parents or relatives	2,690	2,940	3,050	3,200	9.9%	11.2%	11.6%	11.8%
Semi-independent, transitional accommodation	2,420	2,470	2,740	3,060	8.9%	9.4%	10.4%	11.3%
With former foster carers	960	1,200	1,600	1,940	3.5%	4.6%	6.1%	7.2%
Supported lodgings	1,390	1,460	1,370	1,300	5.1%	5.6%	5.2%	4.8%
Community home	910	980	1,090	1,230	3.3%	3.7%	4.1%	4.6%
In custody	850	950	1,020	1,030	3.1%	3.6%	3.9%	3.8%
Other accommodation	990	1,050	1,080	970	3.6%	4.0%	4.1%	3.6%
Foyers	460	520	510	620	1.7%	2.0%	1.9%	2.3%
Ordinary lodgings	560	470	550	550	2.1%	1.8%	2.1%	2.0%
Residence not known	220	240	220	380	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%	1.4%
No fixed abode/homeless	180	260	260	300	0.7%	1.0%	1.0%	1.1%
Emergency accommodation	110	110	80	110	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%
Deported	35	50	40	60	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Bed and breakfast	110	110	100	50	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.2%
Gone abroad	40	40	30	40	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
Information not known	4,560	3,140	2,770	2,590	16.8%	11.9%	10.5%	9.6%
Total	27,220	26,290	26,330	27,010	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

a) All children who had been looked after for at least 13 weeks which began after they reached the age of 14 and ended after they reached the age of 16

Source: [DFE Children Looked After In England and Wales, Table F2](#)

The majority of care leavers are not in employment, education or training as shown in the table below.

CARE LEAVERS ^a NOW AGED 19, 20 AND 21 YEAR OLD BY ACTIVITY								
Years ending 31 March 2014 to 2017, England								
	Number				Percentage			
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016	2017
Not in education, training or employment	10,320	10,340	10,460	10,870	37.9%	39.3%	39.7%	40.2%
In training or employment	5,500	6,070	6,420	6,670	20.2%	23.1%	24.4%	24.7%
In education other than higher education	5,080	4,820	4,800	5,090	18.7%	18.3%	18.2%	18.8%
Information not known	4,580	3,370	2,890	2,740	16.8%	12.8%	11.0%	10.1%
In higher education i.e. studies beyond A level	1,740	1,700	1,760	1,640	6.4%	6.5%	6.7%	6.1%
Total	27,220	26,290	26,330	27,010	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

[DFE Children Looked After In England and Wales, Table F1](#)

1.5 The situation in the devolved administrations

Wales

The duties on local authority social services regarding care leavers are set out in the *Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014* which came into force for most purposes in April 2016. The Act is supplemented by regulations, a code of practice and guidance.

Part 6 of the Act includes provisions around children and young people and section 104 of the Act sets out six categories of young people for the purposes of meeting their support needs when leaving care.

Care leavers are categorised according to age, history and current circumstances and the requirements for support are different for each of the six groups. In summary, local authorities are responsible for planning continuing care and support to all care leavers until they reach the age of 21 or, if they are being helped with education or training, to the end of the agreed programme of education or training (which can take them beyond their 25th birthday).

Support for care leavers may include financial support, providing or contributing to the cost of accommodation, support with education and training, and providing a personal adviser. Further information on the categories of care leaver and their support entitlements is provided on pages 80–86 of the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014 – Part 6 Code of Practice \(Looked After and Accommodated Children\)](#).

The Act requires that care leavers have a pathway plan to support the transition to adulthood. Pathway plans for all care leavers should address the young person's health and development; education, training and employment; contact with the young person's parents, wider family and friends; and financial capabilities and money management.

Under section 108 of the *Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014*, local authorities have duties towards young people in foster care who wish to continue living with their foster parents beyond the age of 18, including advice and other support to facilitate the arrangement. In Wales these arrangements are known as [When I am Ready](#) arrangements.

Scotland

A care leaver is entitled to support from the local authority if they leave care on or after their 16th birthday.

Continuing Care

Following the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*, care leavers are entitled to remain in the same care placement as when they were 'looked after.' The carer should receive the same financial support from the local authority as they did when the young person was looked after.

The upper age limit is being phased in over a number of years. In April 2015 the duty applied to care leavers until their 17th birthday. This is increased each year until, by 2019, it will apply to care leavers until their 21st birthday. Currently, it applies until their 19th birthday.

While a young person is in continuing care, they are not entitled to aftercare support (see below)

Guidance on Continuing Care is available at:
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/11/4644/0>

Aftercare Support

Since April 2015, aftercare eligibility has been extended to cover all care leavers up to and including those people aged 25 where it previously only provided cover up to the age of 21

Where care leavers leave their placement, the local authority has duties to provide aftercare, depending on the young person's age:

- From their 16th to 19th birthday, a local authority must provide support where the care leaver's welfare requires it.
- From their 19th to 26th birthday, a care leaver can apply to the local authority for support. If the care leaver has 'eligible needs' which cannot be met any other way, then the local authority must provide support.
- From age 26 onwards, the local authority may continue to provide support.

The addition of support up to age 26 and the power to support after the age of 26 were made in 2015, when the relevant provisions of the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014* were brought into force.

Guidance on aftercare is available at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/11/7306/downloads>

Statistics

There were 4,602 young people reported to be eligible for aftercare services on 31 July 2016, of whom 34% were known to not be receiving aftercare. 50% of those receiving aftercare for whom their current activity is known were in education, training or employment. For the new 22+ group, most are not receiving aftercare.

In terms of living arrangements, the accommodation status was known of 3,052 of the 4,602 young people eligible for aftercare. Of these 3,052, the most common accommodation was being in their own tenancy (732), followed by living at home with their parents (549). A similar number were in supported accommodation (514). A further 125 were living with former foster carers and 84 were in residential care, and 125 were known to be homeless.

Statistics on care leavers are included in the children's social work statistics, available at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/03/6791/339814> and in additional tables at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/PubChildrenSocialWork/CSWSAT1516>

Relevant organisations

[Who Cares? Scotland](#)

[Throughcare and Aftercare Forum](#)

Care Review

The Scottish Government announced an independent 'root and branch review' of care in 2016. It is to be shaped by the experiences of young people in care, and is currently in the process of shaping the remit and scope. It is not yet clear whether or how much it will focus on care leavers. See: <https://www.carereview.scot/>

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, “Leaving and After Care services” are provided to young people who are leaving care and to support young people who have left care to improve their life prospects as they make the transition to independent living. Central to this are duties on the five Health and Social Care Trusts to assess and meet young people’s individual needs up to the age of 21 (or beyond if in education).

More detail is set out in the Department of Health’s [Children leaving care and aftercare](#) webpage.

2. Care leavers and DWP benefits

2.1 Existing benefits

Young people aged 18 and over – including those who have left local authority care – may claim benefits in their own right in the same basis as adults. 16-17 year olds can only claim benefits in very limited circumstances. Young people aged 16-17 who are “care leavers” – who have been looked after by a local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who left care on or after their 16th birthday – cannot usually claim Income Support, income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance or Housing Benefit. This is because the local authority remains responsible for meeting their needs for maintenance, accommodation and support. Care leavers aged 16-17 are not excluded from claiming Income Support or income-based JSA if they are a lone parent, or from income-related Employment and Support Allowance if they are sick or disabled. Housing Benefit cannot be paid however, even in these situations.

Income Support, income-based JSA, income-related ESA and Housing Benefit are being replaced by Universal Credit. With the roll-out of the Universal Credit “Full Service”¹⁶, more and more young people leaving care will find that making a claim for Universal Credit is their first experience of the benefits system.

2.2 Universal Credit

Universal Credit (UC) is replacing means-tested benefits and tax credits for working-age households, including single people and couples without children as well as families. It is payable both in and out of work. The “Full Service” – the final, digital version of UC available to all claimant groups – is being rolled out across the United Kingdom, but under the latest timetable UC will not have fully replaced “legacy benefits” – the benefits and tax credits UC is replacing – until March 2022.

In September 2017, the Department for Work and Pensions deposited in the House of Commons Library an updated version of its [Universal Credit Full Service Guidance](#), used by DWP staff. This includes a note on [Care leavers](#) (Version 5, last updated 24 January 2017) giving information on how UC affects care leavers and the additional support that should be available for this group.

For care leavers, the rules on eligibility for Universal Credit mirrors those for legacy benefits. The guidance explains that there are restrictions on entitlement for care leavers under 18, “for whom the local authority has continuing responsibility under the Children Leaving Care Act.” It adds:

A young person previously looked after by a local authority should be able to get a certain amount of on-going support after they

¹⁶ For further information on the roll-out of the UC Full Service and what it means to different claimant groups see Commons Library briefing CBP-8096, [Universal Credit roll-out: Autumn/Winter 2017](#).

leave care at age 16, in the same way as any other young person would be supported by their parents. This on-going support is provided by the local authority.

Nevertheless, some care leavers under 18 can qualify for UC, namely those who are themselves responsible for a child, and those with a limited capability for work or a limited capability for work-related activity. Any award would not however include a housing element.

The DWP's Full Service Guidance emphasises the "unusual position" of care leavers and the particular issues they face:

Care leavers are vulnerable young people who are in the unusual position of having the State as their parent. The vast majority of children enter care (either residential or foster care) for reasons associated with neglect and abuse and not through any action of their own, but their past experiences and their time in care can have an impact on their outcomes as adults.

Care leavers are more likely to be at risk of:

- poor educational outcomes
- unemployment
- homelessness
- drug and alcohol abuse
- offending
- mental health issues

The Government is committed to improving outcomes for care leavers and has introduced a number of measures to encourage them to engage in education and employment. Universal Credit supports care leavers by ensuring they have a claim for Universal Credit and access to the Work Programme immediately on day one of leaving care. This will ensure support is in place when leaving care.

The guidance goes on to outline "the support a care leaver can get whilst on Universal Credit" which includes:

- voluntary day one access to the Work Programme¹⁷ (claimants must be aged 18 to 21 and in the Intensive work search regime)
- advance claims to benefit, up to one month before their 18th birthday
- support for vulnerable claimants under Universal Credit, including day one access to Alternative Payment Arrangements and Personal Budgeting Support
- undertaking full-time non-advanced education whilst on Universal Credit
- exception to the seven Waiting days being applied for care leavers making their first claim for Universal Credit

¹⁷ New referrals to the Work Programme ceased from 31 March 2017, pending the introduction of its successor, the Work and Health Programme. In Scotland, responsibility for employment programmes for unemployed and disabled people is now devolved, following the *Scotland Act 2016*. The Work and Health Programme is not available in Northern Ireland.

(therefore entitled to benefit from the first day of their claim)

- access to hardship payments from day one of their sanction

The exemption from the seven “Waiting days” means that for care leavers, the **minimum wait** before their first payment of UC is **five weeks** instead of six weeks. However, the five week period **only starts once the claimant has completed a number of steps**. To get to this point, a claimant needs to create an online account and complete their registration, enter details of their circumstances including information on things such as housing costs, health conditions, work and education; provide bank, building society or credit union account details, accept their “high level” responsibilities for their claimant commitment, and make a formal legal declaration that the information they have provided is correct.¹⁸

The DWP guidance gives further information on advance claims for care leavers, on hardship payments, and on education and training:

Advanced claim for a care leaver

Care leavers can make an advanced claim to Universal Credit up to one month before their 18th birthday. These claims will not be submitted until the claimant’s 18th birthday but can be viewed and checked by agents. Local authority Care Leaver teams can assist young people to make their claim online and to book appointments.

A number of steps must be completed within the one month before the claim is submitted, to allow an immediate advance of payment request. This includes making a pre-claim appointment to:

- confirm the claimant’s identification
- confirm bank account details
- confirm the claimant is a care leaver (for example, written confirmation from the local authority on headed paper or by email, official paper work relating to the claimant being in care)
- book an Initial evidence and Commitment interview (on or as soon as possible after their 18th birthday)

Advanced claims for care leavers are processed by accessing the Instructions for advanced claims for Care Leaver (ALP).

The care leaver may bring a social worker or support worker with them to the pre-claim appointment.

The care leaver Single Point of Contact (SPOC) in each Jobcentre will support the care leaver throughout their claim. The SPOC will book additional appointments for the care leavers 18th birthday to complete the claim process.]

Hardship payments

Hardship payments are available as a safeguard to people who are subject to a benefit sanction. Claimants who are under 21 and who have left local authority care in the last three years are able

¹⁸ See Steven Kennedy and Richard Keen, [Universal Credit: how long are new claimants waiting?](#), Commons Library Second Reading blog, 30 October 2017

to apply for hardship payments of 60% of their normal benefit payment from day one of the sanction.

Education and training for care leavers

Former care leavers aged 18 and above are able to undertake full-time non-advanced education while on Universal Credit. During this time they will move to the No Work Related Requirements regime.

Non-advanced education is any qualification up to A Level, or equivalent. A young person with no parental support will be able to qualify up to age 21, or the end of the academic year in which they reach age 21 (or the end of the course if earlier).

During the summer vacation, claimants will be allocated to the Labour Market regime based on their individual circumstances (as if they were not in education or training).

Children's Society report

In August 2017, the Children's Society published a report, [Claiming after care: Care leavers and the benefits system](#), which sets out the findings from research into care leavers which involved, among other things, looking at case studies from practitioners, a focus group with Jobcentre Plus staff who engaged regularly with care leavers, and analysis of data on outcomes from the Work Programme and on benefit sanctions. The report builds on other existing research undertaken by the Children's Society.¹⁹

The report states:

Care leavers and our practitioners tell us that their experiences of the welfare system and JobCentre Plus are not always happy ones. Care leavers can often face delays in payment, sanctions, and must make difficult decisions between taking up education and employment opportunities. Unlike other claimants, they must also maintain good relationships with both their personal adviser and their work coach in order to make a claim, because of the many interdependencies between JobCentre Plus and their local authority as their corporate parent.²⁰

The report includes the results from an analysis of data on participation in the **Work Programme**, intended to explore how effective the programme was in promoting positive outcomes for care leavers. It comments:²¹

After a participant has spent a minimum amount of time gaining experience with their provider, a job outcome payment is made to that provider. The response from the Department revealed that amongst all of the groups for which data is collected, care leavers' outcomes were particularly poor. Overall, they were around half as likely to spend the minimum amount of time gaining work experience within a 12 month period than peers aged 18-24 claiming Job Seekers' Allowance. Based on this data, it is clear that the work programme did not operate effectively for care leavers as a group.

¹⁹ See [A National Offer for Care leavers](#), December 2016; and [The cost of being care free](#), September 2016

²⁰ Children's Society, [Claiming after care: Care leavers and the benefits system](#), August 2017, p2

²¹ Ibid., p4

	Job outcomes as a % of referrals	
	2014	2015
All claimants	17.7	20.9
JSA 18 to 24	24.1	26.6
JSA 25 and over	21.7	24.3
JSA and Prison Leavers	11.5	12.6
All self-identified Care Leavers	10.0	13.5
JSA Ex-Incapacity Benefits	16.6	21.7
ESA Volunteers	5.7	8.1

Analysis of **Jobseeker's Allowance sanctions** data for the six months ending in September 2016 found that:

- Care leavers were three times more likely to be sanctioned than their peers (18-24 year olds) claiming benefits and five times more likely than the general population of adult claimants.
- Only 16% of care leavers challenged their sanction, compared with 19% of 18-24 year olds and 24% of the general population of adults claiming JSA.
- However, care leavers who challenged their sanction were more likely to be successful – 86% had their sanction decision overturned, compared with 79% of 18-24 year olds and 78% of the general population of adults challenging a sanction.

The Children's Society argues that its findings should be used "to inform the design and implementation" of the new **Youth Obligation** which was introduced in April 2017. Under the Youth Obligation, all new UC claimants aged 18-21 are allocated to either an "Intensive Work Search" or a "Light Touch" regime, from day one of their claim. Participants receive "intensive support to help find employment or apprenticeship quickly."²²

The Children's Society report comments:

The Youth Obligation combines aspects of both the current sanctions regime and the Work Programme. Its increased conditionality and accelerated move of claimants into some form of work runs the risk of replicating the worst parts of both the predecessor policies.

If the Youth Obligation is to prove a success, it must be changed to overcome these flaws. Given their vulnerability, it is essential that sanctions are not applied to care leavers without contact first being made with their personal adviser.

²² [DWP, Universal Credit Full Service Guidance: Youth Obligation](#), Version 2, 4 May 2017

The intensive activity period also gives cause for concern. If care leavers are forced to enter this period too soon, or if they are unable to pause it once in progress if it becomes unmanageable they are likely to fail, and instead of moving them closer to work it may actually make work seem a lot further away or more difficult and risk demotivating care leavers.

Many of these potential problems can be avoided by reducing the consequences of sanctions on care leavers. We would recommend that the early warning system should always be used when a care leaver is at risk of being sanctioned. Work coaches should also be required to make contact with the care leaver's personal adviser before applying a sanction, and sanctions should not be applied above the levels set for 16 and 17 year olds.

Finally, thought should be given to the design of the intense activity period for vulnerable young people like care leavers. The ability to 'pause' the period should be made available to young people so they know that, if necessary, they can take a break without being penalised whilst they attend to other issues going on in their lives.²³

The report sets out five key recommendations, focusing on DWP and Jobcentre Plus staff:

Changing the nature and use of sanctions

The early warning system for sanctions should always be applied to care leavers. Work coaches should contact a care leaver's personal adviser before applying a sanction. When applied, sanctions should not be applied above the levels set for 16 and 17 year olds so that the financial burden is lessened and the sanction is lifted immediately when the care leaver re-engages and meets their claimant commitment.

Improved Entitlements

Care leavers should be eligible for the full Universal Credit Standard Allowance from the age of 18. The Shared Accommodation Rate Exemption should be extended to 25 years of age. The Severe Disability Premium should be carried forward from legacy benefits into Universal Credit so that care leavers with disabilities are supported to move into independent living.

Reducing the risk of debt whilst waiting for the first payment

Instead of offering an Advance Payment to care leavers - a form of loan which alters future payments and makes budgeting more difficult - care leavers should receive an 'Advance Grant' based on their maximum entitlement at the point of making their claim, whilst waiting for the first payment of their first claim.

Do not make care leavers the go-between

Where a care leaver's claim has administrative or technical problems which require solving, care leavers should not be passed from pillar to post. Personal Advisers should be able to be listed as a designated person to assist in a care leaver's claim and joint protocols between the local JobCentre Plus and the local authority should be put in place so that professionals working with a young person can contact each other.

Changing attitudes

²³ [Claiming after care: Care leavers and the benefits system](#), p6

The Department for Work and Pensions should produce training materials to change attitudes towards care leavers among job centre staff and increase their knowledge about how to support them. JobCentre Plus should explore ways to allow care leavers to participate in how local services are structured and how they are better supported into work.

In addition, the Children's Society identifies a number of other measures that could improve the relationship between care leavers, work coaches and personal advisers:

Recommendations for the Department for Work and Pensions

- DWP should introduce an apprenticeship bursary, similar to the higher education bursary, to support care leavers during the first year of their apprenticeship. This would provide better financial support, ensure better long-term employment prospects and provide increased parity between academic and technical education routes.
- DWP should bring forward the marker for care leavers under Universal Credit. Currently, care leavers can be flagged on the legacy benefits system if they tell their work coach they are leaving care but this is not yet available on Universal Credit. The marker should be as robust as the current marker for those leaving prison.
- For their first claim, care leavers should always have the option to have their housing element/housing benefit of their claim paid direct to the landlord communicated to both themselves and their personal adviser.
- DWP should further explore the early warning system for care leavers at risk of a sanction to see if it reduces the levels of sanctioning.
- DWP should produce a resource to help personal advisers better understand Universal Credit and the ways in which it can be tailored to meet the needs of care leavers.

Recommendations for JobCentre Plus staff

- JobCentre Plus and local authorities should establish joint protocols to allow personal advisers and work coaches to contact each other when a care leaver misses an appointment or appears to be struggling financially.
- JobCentre Plus staff should be encouraged to contact care leavers in a variety of ways, including text, in order to simplify communication.
- JobCentre Plus should proactively approach their local authorities to see if a service level agreement like a joint protocol would improve ways of working.

Recommendations for local authorities

- Local authorities should provide comprehensive training for their personal advisers on Universal Credit.
- Local authorities should establish service level agreements, like a joint protocol, with their local JobCentre Plus in order to allow better information sharing and in order to make it easier for professionals to help solve technical and administrative issues in a care leaver's claim.

- Local authority staff should be encouraged to contact care leavers in a variety of ways, including text, in order to simplify communication.

3. Housing

Local authorities' duties to homeless care leavers

It is widely accepted that experience of the care system puts an individual at a higher risk of homelessness. For example, 10% of the rough sleepers seen by outreach workers in London over 2016/17 had had experience of the care system.²⁴

In England, local authorities have a statutory duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless care leavers aged 18-20 (section 189 of the *Housing Act 1996*, as amended). When the *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017* comes into force in England, expected to be April 2018, the definition of 'local connection' for care leavers will be amended to ensure that a young homeless care leaver will have a local connection in the area where they were looked after or, if different, the area where they normally live and have lived for at least 2 years, including some time before they reached the age of 16. The aim of this change is to make it easier for care leavers to get assistance in the area where they feel most at home. There will also be a new duty on certain specified public authorities to notify a local housing authority if they become aware of someone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness (with the individual's consent).

Housing policy is devolved and different approaches have been adopted in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

- The *Housing (Wales) Act 2014* places a duty on local authorities to assist unintentionally homeless persons of between 18 and 20 years' of age who were "looked after, accommodated or fostered at any time while under the age of 18" (section 70).
- In Scotland, there is a statutory duty on local authorities to find permanent accommodation for all applicants who are unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- In Northern Ireland there is no specific reference to a duty to assist homeless care leavers but there is a duty, under the *Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988* to assist "a young person who satisfies the Executive that he is at risk of sexual or financial exploitation."

Despite these statutory duties, there is concern that local authorities do not always carry out an effective assessment of a care leaver's needs. The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Ending Homelessness published a [report](#) in July 2017 which questioned the degree to which authorities were declaring care leavers to be 'intentionally homeless', i.e. to have made themselves homeless and, therefore, not owed a full rehousing duty. The APPG also raised issues about the suitability of the accommodation into which care leavers were being placed.²⁵ The *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017*, with its focus on the prevention of homelessness and the introduction of personalised plans for each

²⁴ [CHAIN Annual Bulletin 2016/17](#)

²⁵ APPG, [Homelessness prevention for care leavers, prison leavers and survivors of domestic violence](#), July 2017

eligible applicant irrespective of priority need or intentionality, may overcome some of these issues. Local authority assessments (in England) will have to include:

- the circumstances that caused the applicant to become homeless or threatened with homelessness;
- the housing needs of the applicant including, in particular, what accommodation would be suitable for the applicant and any persons with whom the applicant resides or might reasonably be expected to reside (“other relevant persons”); and
- what support would be necessary for the applicant and any other relevant persons to be able to have and retain suitable accommodation.

The APPG recommended:

- National Government should abolish intentionality for care leavers aged 18-25.
- Local authorities should use their existing powers to exempt care leavers from council tax until the age of 25.
- National Government should exempt all care leavers from the Shared Accommodation Rate up to the age of 25 (see below).
- The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) should conduct a review of the 2013 allocation guidance. The particular concern here was how restrictions on local connection might impact on care leavers. The *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017* will address this issue for homeless care leavers (see above).²⁶

Local offer for care leavers: accommodation

As previously noted (see section 1.3), the *Children and Social Work Act 2017* places a duty on local authorities in England to publish information on the services offered to assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living. These services are referred to as ‘the local offer’ and can include access to accommodation.

Paying for housing

The Children’s Society’s report [Claiming after care: Care leavers and the benefits system](#) (August 2017) notes that care leavers are “more likely to experience homelessness” and goes on to focus on current aspects of the financial safety net for housing costs which can make securing affordable housing particularly difficult for this group.

Supported housing: this sort of accommodation is suitable for care leavers who may need additional support before moving towards independent living. Supported housing is expensive as the rent reflects the additional services and support provided. The Children’s Society notes that it can be difficult for care leavers in supported housing to save up sufficient money for move-on accommodation, e.g. for a deposit.²⁷ There is some concern in the sector following the Government’s announcement that short-term supported housing,

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ [Claiming after care: Care leavers and the benefits system](#), August 2017, p9

including that provided for vulnerable young people, will be funded in England via local authorities from 2020:

...provision will be commissioned at a local level, funded locally through a ring-fenced grant, and underpinned by a new local planning and oversight regime. All the funding for housing costs (including rent and eligible service charges) that were previously met from Housing Benefit, will instead be allocated to local authorities to fund services that meet the needs of their local areas. This will give local authorities an enhanced role in planning, funding and commissioning short-term supported housing in their area. It will entirely remove short-term supported housing from the welfare system (Housing Benefit and the housing element in Universal Credit). However, an individual's entitlement for help with their housing costs (through Housing Benefit or the housing cost element of Universal Credit) will be unchanged.²⁸

Commentators have said that this approach will result in a lack of long-term security in the sector:

The government's suggested approach to dealing with 'short-term' supported housing will mean no security within the sector and lead to fewer providers investing and building new and additional accommodation going forward.

"The sector will now be dependent on short-term grants and living under the threat of the ringfenced funding being lifted at any time, as it was in the past with supported people funding."²⁹

Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR): the SAR limits the amount of Housing Benefit a single person can claim to the equivalent of the cost of a room in a shared house for claimants under 35 years of age. There is an exemption for claimants under the age of 22 who were formerly in social services care. This allows care leavers some leeway to become settled and move into work, or establish links whereby they could share accommodation with others. The SAR originally applied to single claimants up to age 25 but was extended to under 35-year-olds in January 2012. The exemption was **not** extended to care leavers aged over 21. The Children's Society has lobbied for the exemption to be extended to care leavers aged up to 25:

If they do not downsize to a shared room they are likely to struggle financially and, particularly if they are in education, the need to move home could be extremely disruptive.

Throughout the passage of the Children and Social Work Bill we lobbied for the Shared Accommodation Rate exemption to be extended to the age of 25.³⁰

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate freeze: Most tenants in private rented housing who are in receipt of assistance with their housing costs receive the Local Housing Allowance. The LHA can cover all or part of a claimant's rent. The LHA is paid at a flat rate based on the lowest 30th percentile of market rents for a particular size of property (up to a maximum of 4 bedrooms) within a Broad Market

²⁸ DCLG, [Funding supported housing](#), 31 October 2017, para 57

²⁹ *Inside Housing*, "Homelessness and women's refuge providers slam government funding plans", 31 October 2017

³⁰ [Claiming after care: Care leavers and the benefits system](#), August 2017, p10

Rental Area. The exact amount of LHA a claimant receives depends on their personal circumstances – it is a means tested benefit. LHA rates have been frozen since April 2016 and will remain so for four years up to and including 2019/20.³¹ It is argued that the freeze is resulting in a growing gap between private sector rent levels and LHA rates which, in turn, is making accessing private rented accommodation difficult for benefit recipients. This was referred to by the National Audit Office in their report on [Homelessness](#) (September 2017):

Changes to Local Housing Allowance are likely to have contributed to the affordability of tenancies for those on benefits, and are an element of the increase in homelessness. Since 2011, the Department for Work & Pensions has introduced a series of welfare reforms, including capping and freezing Local Housing Allowance. These reforms have been designed to reduce overall welfare spending and to provide incentives for benefit recipients to take up employment. They have reduced the amount of household income that it is possible to derive from benefits where the Local Housing Allowance applies. At the same time, rents in the private rented sector in much of the country — London in particular — have increased faster than wage growth. All of these factors appear to have contributed to private rented properties becoming less affordable, which in turn is likely to be contributing to homelessness caused by the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy.³²

Entitlement to the housing element of Universal Credit for 18 to 21-year olds: care leavers are exempt from the changes which came into force in April 2017 to exempt certain young people from entitlement to the housing element of UC.

³¹ There is some allowance for increases in the most expensive rental areas.

³² [HC 308](#), Session 2017-19, para 11

4. Parliamentary material

4.1 Written Parliamentary Questions

- [Council Tax: Care Leavers](#)

Asked by: Loughton, Tim | **Party:** Conservative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of exempting care leavers under the age of 25 from paying council tax.

Answering member: Mr Marcus Jones | **Party:** Conservative Party |

Department: Department for Communities and Local Government

The Government is committed to assisting care leavers. It has given councils the flexibility to support vulnerable groups, including care leavers, to help manage their council tax bills. We wrote to all councils in 2016 to remind them of the powers they had under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to support vulnerable groups. A number of councils have already taken the decision to support care leavers through an exemption or discount on their council tax bills.

06 Nov 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 110957

Date tabled: 01 Nov 2017 | **Date for answer:** 06 Nov 2017 | **Date answered:** 06 Nov 2017

- [Unemployment: Young People](#)

Asked by: Austin, Ian | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many young people are or have been in care were unemployed (a) nationally and (b) in London in each of the last five years.

Answering member: Mr Robert Goodwill | **Party:** Conservative Party |

Department: Department for Education

I am sorry, but the department does not collect data on young people who are in care and who are unemployed.

For care leavers, the department collects information on their activity on or around their birthday, which includes whether they were not in education, training or employment.

Due to changes in the cohort for whom data was collected, figures for 19 to 21 year olds are available from the year ending 31 March 2014. Information on care leavers aged 17 and 18 years old was collected for the first time for the year ending 31 March 2016 and is published as experimental statistics.

Figures are provided in the table below.

Number of care leavers aged 19 to 21 years old who were not in education, training or employment^{1, 2}

Years ending 31 March 2014 to 2017

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Numbers				
England	10,250	10,340	10,460	10,870
London	1,940	1,930	1,930	2,120

Source: SSDA903

- 1 Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10.
- 2 Care leavers are defined as children who had been looked after for at least 13 weeks which began after they reached the age of 14 and ended after they reached the age of 16. Figures exclude children who were looked after under an agreed series of short term placements, those who have died since leaving care, those who have returned home to parents or someone with parental responsibility for a continuous period of at least 6 months and those whose care was transferred to another local authority.

Experimental statistics**Number of care leavers aged 17 and 18 years old who were not in education, training or employment^{1, 2, 3}****Years ending 31 March 2016 and 2017**

	2016	2017
Numbers		
England	3,060	3,290
London	600	680

Source: SSDA903

- 1 Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10.
- 2 Figures are experimental statistics to reflect we believe information was not reported for around 11% of 18 year old care leavers in 2016, the first year. Users should be cautious interpreting these figures.
- 3 Figures exclude children who were looked after under an agreed series of short term placements, those who have died since leaving care, those who have returned home to parents or someone with parental responsibility for a continuous period of at least 6 months and those whose care was transferred to another local authority.

03 Nov 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 109957

Date tabled: 26 Oct 2017 | **Date for answer:** 30 Oct 2017 | **Date answered:** 03 Nov 2017

- [Children in Care](#)

Asked by: Lord Watson of Invergowrie | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they intend to bring into force sections 1 to 3 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 (corporate parenting and care leavers).

Answering member: Lord Agnew of Oulton | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

The Government intends to bring sections 1 to 7 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 into force on 1 April 2018.

26 Oct 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL1989

Date tabled: 12 Oct 2017 | **Date for answer:** 26 Oct 2017 | **Date answered:** 26 Oct 2017

- [Universal Credit: Care Leavers](#)

Asked by: Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effect of the roll-out of universal credit on care leavers.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

As we continue to deliver the full Universal Credit service, with its expanded claimant base, we are continually reviewing and refining the way in which we work with vulnerable people, including care leavers.

DWP supports care leavers by creating an entitlement to Universal Credit immediately on day one of leaving care, including exemption from serving seven waiting days at the beginning of their claim. Care leavers also have day one access to Alternative Payment Arrangements and Personal Budgeting Support.

Staff in our jobcentres work with local authority leaving care teams and other organisations which support young people.

Research and analysis relating to care leavers on Universal Credit forms part of the Department for Work and Pensions' on-going programme of Universal Credit evaluation.

13 Sep 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 9665

Date tabled: 08 Sep 2017 | **Date for answer:** 13 Sep 2017 | **Date answered:** 13 Sep 2017

- [Care Leavers](#)

Asked by: Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the annual cost is of the Government's policy Staying put, arrangements for care leavers aged 18 and above to stay on with former foster carers.

Answering member: Mr Robert Goodwill | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

In the year ending 31 March 2016, there were 1,230 care leavers who had ceased to be looked after from a foster placement on their 18th

birthday and were still living with their former foster carers aged 19 or 20.

Experimental statistics¹ show that in the year ending 31 March 2016 there were 1,440 similar care leavers aged 18 who were living with former foster carers.

These figures and related information can be found in Tables F1b and F1d in the statistical first release *Children looked after in England including adoption: 2015 to 2016* at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2015-to-2016>.

The Department for Education is providing £22.85m to local authorities to fund Staying Put arrangements during 2017-18. The new care leaver strategy, *Keep on Caring*, published in July 2016 at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keep-on-caring-supporting-young-people-from-care-to-independence>, confirmed that we will continue to provide funding to local authorities to implement Staying Put through to 2019-20.

- Information on 18 year old care leavers was collected for the first time in 2016. Analysis suggests that some local authorities have not provided data for around 11% of all 18 year olds. Therefore this data has been published as experimental statistics and should be treated with caution.

12 Sep 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 9411

Date tabled: 07 Sep 2017 | **Date for answer:** 12 Sep 2017 | **Date answered:** 12 Sep 2017

- [Care Leavers](#)

Asked by: Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many care leavers have (a) started a university course, (b) began an apprenticeship, (c) enrolled on a further education course and (d) gained employment in (i) full-time or (ii) part-time work in the last 12 months.

Answering member: Mr Robert Goodwill | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

I am sorry, but the department does not collect data on the number of care leavers starting education, training or employment during the year.

The department collects data on the number of care leavers who are in higher education, other types of education, or training or employment on or around their birthday for care leavers aged 17 to 21 years old, but does not provide information on when the care leaver started the activity. Figures for the year ending 31 March 2016 can be found in tables F1a and F1c of the statistical release *Children looked after in England including adoption: 2015 to 2016*. These are available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2015-to-2016>.

20 Jul 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 4789

Date tabled: 13 Jul 2017 | **Date for answer:** 18 Jul 2017 | **Date answered:** 20 Jul 2017

- [Care Leavers](#)

Asked by: Lord Hylton | **Party:** Crossbench

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many young people have left local authority care in each of the last 10 years; and whether they intend to recommend that local authorities treat them as a priority category for social housing.

Answering member: Lord Nash | **Party:** Conservative Party |
Department: Department for Education

The number of young people who left local authority care in each of the last 10 years, is [provided in the table attached](#).

In 2012, the Department for Communities and Local Government issued statutory guidance for local authorities on social housing allocations. The guidance makes clear that those leaving care should be treated as a priority group for social housing. In addition, care leavers aged 18-21 are an identified priority need group in homelessness legislation.

In 2014, we introduced the 'Staying Put' duty, which requires local authorities to support young people in foster care to remain with their former foster carer(s) until age 21. We have also made a commitment to introduce 'Staying Close', which will provide many of the benefits associated with Staying Put for young people leaving residential care.

28 Mar 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL6041

Date tabled: 14 Mar 2017 | **Date for answer:** 28 Mar 2017 | **Date answered:** 28 Mar 2017

- [Housing Benefit: Young People](#)

Asked by: Healey, John | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of ending the automatic entitlement to housing benefit for 18-21 year-olds on costs for local authorities.

Answering member: Caroline Nokes | **Party:** Conservative Party |
Department: Department for Work and Pensions

This policy affects Universal Credit recipients only. There is no direct effect on local authorities.

Vulnerable groups, including care leavers, carers, victims of domestic violence and those unable to live with their parents will be protected as will those working sixteen hours a week or more.

13 Mar 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 66598

Date tabled: 06 Mar 2017 | **Date for answer:** 08 Mar 2017 | **Date answered:** 13 Mar 2017

- [Social Security Benefits: Care Leavers](#)

Asked by: Field, Frank

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many young people leaving care have had their benefits sanctioned or suspended in each of the last five years for which data is available.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The information requested in respect of care leavers is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

20 Feb 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 63643

Date tabled: 08 Feb 2017 | **Date for answer:** 20 Feb 2017 | **Date answered:** 20 Feb 2017

- [Care Leavers: Mental Health](#)

Asked by: Mearns, Ian | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions her Department has had with the Department of Health about improving mental health outcomes of care leavers.

Answering member: Edward Timpson | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

Care leavers' experiences before care mean that as a group they have poorer outcomes than other young people. While the Department does not collect data on the relationship between mental health needs and outcomes, our cross-government care leaver strategy, published in July 2016, is based around five issues care leavers identified as barriers to success, including improved access to health support. We also know from our consultations with care leavers that they often find it difficult to access the right mental health support when they leave care which impacts on other areas of their lives. This includes their engagement in education, employment and training.

The Department of Health is represented on a senior Whitehall officials group on care leavers. The Department is working closely with the Department for Health, NHS England and the Expert Working Group to develop the scope of the mental health assessment pilots announced by Lord Nash on 23 November. No decisions have yet been made on the precise scope of the pilots and whether they will cover children in care and care leavers. The terms of reference of the Expert Working Group to develop mental health care pathways for looked after children

explicitly include care leavers. We will act on the findings from the Expert Working Group and the mental health assessment pilots.

11 Jan 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 58380

- [Children in Care](#)

Asked by: Ashworth, Jonathan | **Party:** Labour Party · Cooperative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what support his Department provides for care leavers after they become 18.

Answering member: David Mowat | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department of Health

The Government recognises that care leavers have an additional need for support during their transition to adulthood and we are committed to working across Government Departments to support them.

That is why the Government published its refreshed care leaver strategy Keep on Caring in July 2016. The Department of Health is one of the eight Government Departments contributing to the strategy, which will deliver the additional support that care leavers need to make a successful transition to adulthood.

The Department of Health and Department for Education have also established an Expert Working Group to produce care pathways, quality standards and models of care for looked-after children and care leavers who need emotional and mental health support. We expect the group to report in October 2017.

09 Jan 2017 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 58076

Date tabled: 16 Dec 2016 | **Date for answer:** 09 Jan 2017 | **Date answered:** 09 Jan 2017

- [Children in Care](#)

Asked by: Soames, Sir Nicholas | **Party:** Conservative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to support people leaving care.

Answering member: Edward Timpson | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

In July 2016, we published the refreshed cross-government care leaver strategy 'Keep on Caring'. It set out the five outcomes that we want to achieve for care leavers, that they: are better prepared to live independently; are supported to access education, employment and training; experience stability and feel safe and secure; have good health and wellbeing; and achieve financial stability. 'Keep on Caring' is

available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keep-on-caring-supporting-young-people-from-care-to-independence>

Through the Children and Social Work Bill we are introducing a set of corporate parenting principles that will govern how local authorities deliver services to children in care and care leavers, placing a new requirement on local authorities to consult on and publish their local offer for care leavers; and we are extending the role of the Personal Advisor to age 25 for all care leavers.

In addition, we are developing the Care Leaver Covenant to encourage the whole of society to support care leavers. We have also announced plans to pilot Staying Close, as an alternative to Staying Put for young people leaving residential care; and we will develop Social Impact Bonds focused on supporting care leavers into education, employment and training.

05 Dec 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 55519

Date tabled: 29 Nov 2016 | **Date for answer:** 02 Dec 2016 | **Date answered:** 05 Dec 2016

- [Housing Benefit: Social Rented Housing](#)

Asked by: Lammy, Mr David | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of extending the shared accommodation rate to social rented housing on levels of homelessness among people under 35, in light of the Government's decision to exempt single under 35 year olds from the shared accommodation rate in supported accommodation but not in general needs social rented housing.

Answering member: Caroline Nokes | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Full impact and equality impact assessments will be undertaken in due course.

It should however be noted that a number of exemptions to the shared accommodation rate already exist for the under 35s in the private rented sector and, as a minimum, they will be brought forward in relation to general needs housing in the Social Rented Sector. The exemptions are:

- Those with children or non-dependents;
- Care leavers until the age of 22;
- Certain homeless people;
- People over 25 leaving prison where their housing has been arranged under the Multi Agency Public Protection (MAPPA)
- Those requiring overnight care or for HB are in receipt of the severe disability premium; or receive the middle or higher rate of disability living allowance or the daily living component of a personal independent payment (or the armed forces

independence payment and no one receives carers allowance in respect of them). Therefore only those that fall out of these exemptions i.e. young people who are able to work and around a third of ESA/LCW/LCWRA who are not on Severe Disability Premium/PIP daily living component will be impacted.

16 Nov 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 52328

Date tabled: 08 Nov 2016 | **Date for answer:** 14 Nov 2016 | **Date answered:** 16 Nov 2016

- [Children and Social Work Bill \(HL\)](#)

Asked by: Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what consultation her Department has undertaken with (a) children, (b) social workers and (c) charities and professional organisations in the social work sector on the drafting of the Children and Social Work Bill; and if she will publish evidence of that consultation.

Answering member: Edward Timpson | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

The measures in the Children and Social Work Bill are the result of substantial research, engagement, and consultation with the children's social care sector and the children and young people it serves. This includes:

- published reports on social work education by Sir Martin Narey and David Croisdale-Appleby, and on local safeguarding by Alan Wood. All of these draw on extensive interviews and consultation with key organisations and practitioners;
- regular engagement with social work managers and frontline social workers by the Chief Social Worker for Children and Department for Education officials;
- policy briefing and development sessions with a range of sector organisations including NSPCC, BASW, Barnardo's, ADCS, ADASS, Unison, LGA, individual social work employers, and the Alliance for Children in Care; and
- a series of consultation events with children in care and care leavers.

Our key policy documents – Putting Children First; Keep on Caring; and Adoption: A vision for change – provide additional supporting evidence and set out our wider reform programme for children's social care. These can be found through the following links:

Narey review of social work education:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-the-education-of-social-workers-consistently-effective>

Croisdale-Appleby review of social work education

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-work-education-review>

Wood review of local safeguarding

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wood-review-of-local-safeguarding-children-boards>

Putting Children First

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/putting-children-first-our-vision-for-childrens-social-care>

Keep on Caring

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/535899/Care-Leaver-Strategy.pdf

Adoption: A vision for Change

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-a-vision-for-change>

08 Nov 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 51872

Date tabled: 03 Nov 2016 | **Date for answer:** 08 Nov 2016 | **Date answered:** 08 Nov 2016

- [Children in Care](#)

Asked by: Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking in collaboration with other government departments to promote the financial stability of care leavers.

Answering member: Edward Timpson | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Education

My Department continues to work with colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to consider whether there is any benefit to care leavers from extending the exemption to the 'shared accommodation' rate to age 25. We have also invited the Children's Society to share some real-life case studies to illustrate the impact of moving to the shared accommodation rate.

With regard to wider financial help, care leavers are entitled to a range of support including a Higher Education Bursary, DWP benefit support when returning to non-advanced education through the second chance learning scheme, and day one Universal Credit and hardship payments when sanctions have been applied.

'Keep on Caring' provides more detail on the support available and the areas where we are continuing to work with other Government departments. It is available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/535899/Care-Leaver-Strategy.pdf

08 Nov 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 51720

Date tabled: 02 Nov 2016 | **Date for answer:** 04 Nov 2016 | **Date answered:** 08 Nov 2016

- [Children in Care: Social Security Benefits](#)

Asked by: Hayes, Helen

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications from care leavers identified through the self-identified marker used by his Department as being between the ages of 18 and 25 submitted a request for reconsideration or appeal of a sanction decision between October 2015 and March 2016.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The information requested in respect of care leavers is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

02 Nov 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 50582

Date tabled: 26 Oct 2016 | **Date for answer:** 28 Oct 2016 | **Date answered:** 02 Nov 2016

- [Children in Care: Social Security Benefits](#)

Asked by: Hayes, Helen

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many care leavers identified through the self-identified marker used by his Department as being between the ages of 18 and 25 had their (a) jobseeker's allowance and (b) employment and support allowance sanctioned between October 2015 and March 2016.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The information requested in respect of care leavers is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

02 Nov 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 50581

Date tabled: 26 Oct 2016 | **Date for answer:** 28 Oct 2016 | **Date answered:** 02 Nov 2016

- [Children in Care: Social Security Benefits](#)

Asked by: Hayes, Helen

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many care leavers aged between 18 and 25 as identified through the self-identified marker used by his Department had their sanctions overturned or

reduced on reconsideration or appeal between October 2015 and March 2016.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The information requested in respect of care leavers is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

02 Nov 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 50579

Date tabled: 26 Oct 2016 | **Date for answer:** 28 Oct 2016 | **Date answered:** 02 Nov 2016

- [Children in Care](#)

Asked by: Hayes, Helen | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to page 19 of the Children's Society Report entitled the cost of being care free: the impact of poor financial education and removal of support on care leavers, published in 2016, what plans he has to better protect care leavers.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

We are grateful for this report focusing on care leavers from the Children's Society, and for their recommendations, which we will consider as part of our continuous review of sanctions policy to ensure the process functions effectively and fairly. I can assure you that where we identify an issue, we act to put it right.

For care leavers, as with other claimants, the sanctions process encourages them to prepare for or find work, by meeting their agreed commitments based on their individual circumstances and capabilities, as set out in their Claimant Commitment. This includes both mandatory and voluntary actions care leavers have agreed to undertake. The consequences and implications of not meeting any agreed requirement are clearly set out and explained to them.

A decision to apply a sanction is not taken lightly, and claimants are given the opportunity to provide a good reason for not complying before the decision is made.

Our primary goal is to help care leavers get into work wherever possible and they receive tailored, locally-appropriate employment support at the earliest opportunity to achieve this.

Care leavers, like all claimants, take ownership of planning how they will meet their requirements and ultimately secure employment. They will be supported by their Work Coach who will assist them in meeting their requirements through providing encouragement and direction, using a range of communication methods. Work Coaches support all claimants who require additional support to ensure that they fully

understand what they have been asked to do to enable them to access DWP benefits and use our services.

01 Nov 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 50036

Date tabled: 24 Oct 2016 | **Date for answer:** 26 Oct 2016 | **Date answered:** 01 Nov 2016

- [Social Security Benefits: Children in Care](#)

Asked by: Field, Frank | **Party:** Labour Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report by the Children's Society, The cost of being care free, published in June 2016, if he will take steps to provide additional protection for care leavers to reduce the number of benefits sanctions being applied to such people.

Answering member: Damian Hinds | **Party:** Conservative Party | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

Our primary goal is to help care leavers get into work wherever possible and our interventions are tailored to achieve this. Care leavers aged between 18 and 21 have the opportunity to join the Work Programme from day one of their benefit claim, so that they receive tailored, locally-appropriate employment support at the earliest opportunity. We also provide additional support, over and above the standard Jobcentre Plus offer, to young claimants, including care leavers, aged 18-24. Work Coaches tailor interventions to the needs of the individual to address a variety of barriers to work, including improving job search skills, referral to skills and other work-related training such as Traineeships, Apprenticeships and work experience.

We have safeguards in place for care leavers along with other claimants who may be considered vulnerable. Work Coaches support all claimants with complex needs, or who require additional support, to ensure that they fully understand what they have been asked to do to enable them to access DWP benefits and use our services.

Care leavers, like all claimants, take ownership of planning how they will meet their requirements and ultimately secure employment. They will be supported by their Work Coach who will assist them in meeting their requirements through providing encouragement and direction, using a range of communication methods.

19 Oct 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 48112

Date tabled: 11 Oct 2016 | **Date for answer:** 13 Oct 2016 | **Date answered:** 19 Oct 2016

- [Jobseeker's Allowance: Children in Care](#)

Asked by: Abrahams, Debbie

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in receipt of jobseeker's allowance had a self-identified care leaver marker used by his Department against their record in (a) October 2013 to March 2014, (b) April 2014 to March 2015 and (c) April 2015 to September 2015.

Answering member: Priti Patel | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The information is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

11 May 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 36731

Date tabled: 06 May 2016 | **Date for answer:** 11 May 2016 | **Date answered:** 11 May 2016

- [Children in Care: Social Security Benefits](#)

Asked by: Abrahams, Debbie

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many care leavers as identified through the self-identified marker used by his Department between the ages of 18 and 25 had their (a) jobseeker's allowance and (b) employment and support allowance sanctioned in 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Answering member: Priti Patel | **Department:** Department for Work and Pensions

The information requested in respect of care leavers is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

18 Apr 2016 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 32751

Date tabled: 08 Apr 2016 | **Date for answer:** 12 Apr 2016 | **Date answered:** 18 Apr 2016

4.2 Oral Parliamentary Questions

- [Technical Education](#)

Asked by: Baroness Eaton | **Party:** Conservative Party

I thank my noble friend for that Answer. Interpersonal skills are vital, but so too are the supportive relationships which can hone them. What are Her Majesty's Government doing to ensure that young people, including care leavers and young offenders leaving prison, who are often bereft of such skills, can enter the world of work with a network of supportive relationships behind them?

Answered by: Lord Nash | **Party:** Conservative Party

My Lords, through the Children and Social Work Bill we are extending the opportunity for support from a personal adviser to all care leavers to

the age of 25. We have introduced the “staying put” arrangements, which allow care leavers to continue with their foster parents until they reach the age of 21. We are also piloting the “staying close” scheme for those leaving residential care, and introducing compulsory relationship education in primary schools and a duty on secondary schools to teach relationship and sex education. Together with the MoJ and a partnership led by Achievement for All, we are improving support for young offenders with special educational needs.

05 Apr 2017 | Oral questions - 1st Supplementary | Answered | House of Lords | House of Lords chamber | 782 c1051

Date answered: 05 Apr 2017

4.3 Debates

- [Queen’s Speech](#) (HL Deb 19 May 2016 cc2-130) [this includes discussion on support for care leavers in the Children and Social Work Bill in cc30, 41, 50-2, 80, 90, 109, 119, and 129]

5. Press articles

[The evidence is clear – Universal Credit is pushing children into poverty](#)

The New Statesman, 8 November 2017

[Why are we so down on our care system? Foster parents gave me a happy home](#)

The Guardian, 19 October 2017

[I work for the DWP as a universal credit case manager – and what I've seen is shocking](#)

The Independent, 13 October 2017

[After care: 'I have no fall-back net' says Callum](#)

BBC News, 12 October 2017

[A BBC Scotland report about one care leaver in Scotland]

[Charities welcome council tax breaks for care leavers](#)

BBC News, 11 October 2017

[This is about the Scottish Government's recently announced policy targeted at people under the age of 26]

[It Should Be A Lifeline - But Too Often, Our Benefits System Is Failing Care Leavers](#)

The Huffington Post, 14 August 2017

[A piece written by the Policy Director for the Children's Society which outlines some of the findings of the report, [Claiming after care: Care leavers and the benefits system](#)]

[Care leavers' feedback has the power to change services](#)

The Guardian, 18 July 2017

[Leaving care - one teenager's disturbing story](#)

ITV News, 19 January 2017

6. Press notices

[Personal advisers may need to monitor vulnerable care leavers who decline new support right](#)

Community Care, 23 October 2017

[A piece highlighting certain points from [draft guidance](#) for consultation issued by the Department for Education]

[Care leavers risk homelessness as rents continue to rise](#)

The Children's Society, 13 October 2017

[The benefits system is letting down care leavers](#)

The Children's Society, 10 August 2017

[Homelessness among vulnerable groups being sidelined, says APPG](#)

Inside Housing, 18 July 2017

[A piece outlining a report published by the APPG for Ending Homelessness, which, amongst other things, focuses on care leavers]

[Making life a little easier for care leavers](#)

The Children's Society, 3 April 2017

7. Further reading

- Commons Library briefing CBP 8096, [Universal Credit roll-out: Autumn/Winter 2017](#)
- Commons Library briefing CBP 7800, [Children and Social Work \[HL\] Bill 121: analysis for Commons Report Stage](#)
- Department of Work and Pensions, [Universal Credit Full Service Guidance: Care Leavers](#) (version 5, last updated 24 January 2017) [[deposited in the House of Commons Library](#) on 14 September 2017]
- Department for Education, [Corporate Parenting Principles; Local Offer; and extending Personal Adviser support to all care leavers to age 25 – Government consultation](#), 16 October 2017
- APPG for Ending Homelessness, [Homelessness prevention for care leavers, prison leavers and survivors of domestic violence](#), July 2017
- The Children's Society, [Claiming after care: Care leavers and the benefits system](#), August 2017
- The Children's Society, [A National Officer for Care Leavers](#), December 2016
- The Children's Society, [The Cost of Being Care Free](#), September 2016
- Department for Education, [Keep On Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence](#), July 2016

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