

LEAVING CARE LOCAL OFFER & ENTITLEMENTS



A GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE 2026-2027

Entitlements

You are an
Eligible Care
Leaver if:

- You are currently looked after; and
- Aged 16 or 17; and
- You have been looked after for a period of 13 weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks) which began after you reached 14 and ended after you reached 16.

You are a
Relevant Care
Leaver if:

- You are no longer being looked after by the Local Authority but you have been 'Eligible'; and
- Aged 16 or 17 years old;
- Immediately before being detained or in hospital you were 'Eligible' OR
- Lived for continuous period of 6 months or more with parent, someone with parental responsibility and where those arrangements break down.

You are a
Former
Relevant Care
Leaver if:

- You are aged between 18 and 25 years and have been a Relevant or Eligible child before turning 18.
- If your case was closed in agreement with yourself between the age of 21 and 25 years and you want to have your case re-opened.
- If you are in an agreed programme of education or training that ends after your 25th birthday.

You are a
Qualifying
Care Leaver if

- You are at least 16 but under 21 **and**:
- You were looked after immediately prior to the making of a special guardianship order which was in force when you reached 18; or
- If at any time after you reached the age of 16 you are no longer looked after, accommodated or fostered; or
- You were privately fostered and assessed to be in need.
- As a Qualifying Care Leaver you are able to access advice and assistance based on a needs assessment completed by the Leaving Care Team.

INTRODUCTION

This leaflet tells you about all the support that is available to you as a care leaver. We know that it's a big step moving on into adulthood. We want to make sure that you feel supported and know who to go to for advice and help.

Our Care leavers have helped us to design this leaflet and we will continue to listen to your views to make sure that the services we offer are what you need. If you want to get involved in our care leavers forum so you can have your say, please speak to your Personal Adviser about this.

To be able to get the support detailed in this leaflet, you must have been in care for at least 13 weeks between the ages of 14 and 16 (including your 16th birthday) or for 13 weeks after your 16th birthday. Page 2 sets out the different types of status for care leavers, but don't worry if you don't understand them – just ask your Personal Adviser!

This leaflet and all the information you need about our offer for care leavers is available on our website: www.stockport.gov.uk/careleavers

or you can ask your Personal Adviser to give you a copy and talk to you about it.

The rest of this booklet tells you about your entitlements as follows:

- The role of your Personal Adviser and how they can support you;
- Our offer of support from a Personal Advisor continues up to 25 years – your Personal Adviser will talk to you about this before you turn 21 years.
- How your Pathway Plan works and how important it is for you to be actively involved in it – it is **your** plan!
- What your rights and entitlements are as a care leaver, including financial information;
- How we can support you with all areas of your life, including Accommodation, Education, Training and Employment, Health and Wellbeing, your Relationships and Finances – more details on all this are available on online on our website www.stockport.gov.uk/careleavers
- Useful contacts and services that offer further support, including information about Pure Insight, a local charity that provides a mentoring scheme and other emotional support services for care leavers in Stockport: www.pure-insight.org.uk

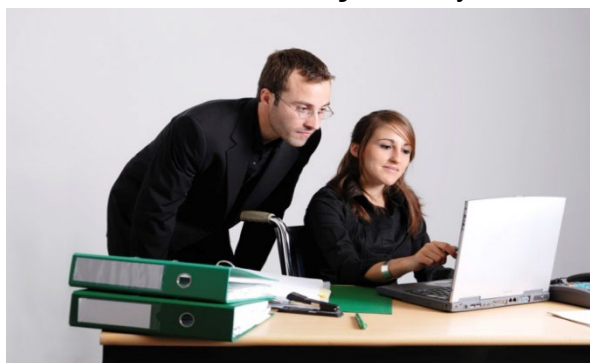
SOCIAL WORKERS AND PERSONAL ADVISERS



As an **Eligible** Care Leaver, you will have a **Social Worker** from Stockport Council's **Children Social Care**. They will be your main worker and be responsible for your pathway plan. They will support you until you are 18 and become **Former Relevant**. At 16 years you will also be introduced to a named **Personal Adviser** from the Leaving Care Team who will work alongside your Social Worker. They will work together to support you in preparing for your transition to adult

life. Your Personal Adviser will then take over as your main worker when you leave care at 18 years and become a **Former Relevant** Care Leaver.

If you are a child in our care supported by the **Children with Disability Team** your Social Worker will support your transition to Adult Services. At 16 years the Leaving Care Team will introduce you to your named **Personal Adviser** who will work alongside your Social Worker. Your **Personal Adviser** will take over responsibility for the preparation of your Pathway Plan when you leave care at 18 years and become Former Relevant and will continue to work closely with Adult Services.



PATHWAY PLANNING

We will prepare a Pathway Plan for all Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant young people. From the age of 16, your Pathway Plan replaces your Care Plan and becomes the main plan for the support you need as you move towards independence. It is based on your individual needs, goals and aspirations, and sets out what support will be provided, who will provide it, and what we will all do together to help you make a successful transition into adult life.

How will I be involved?

For your Pathway Plan to work well, it needs to be based on an up to date assessment of your needs and the goals you want to achieve. It will set out the support available to help you reach your aspirations and make a successful move into adult life.

We want you to be fully involved in developing and reviewing your Pathway Plan. Your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will support you to share your views, wishes and feelings, and make sure your voice is heard during your Pathway Plan review meeting. Together, we will discuss what is important to you, what support you need, and any changes that may help you achieve your goals.

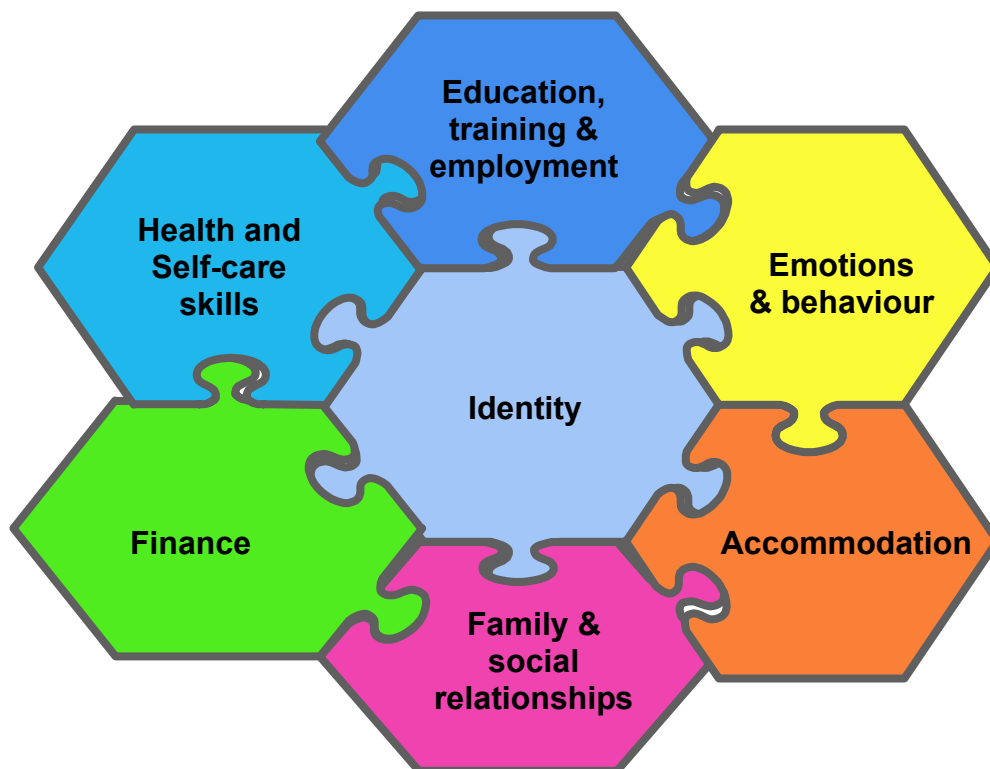
Who else will be involved?

With your agreement, we will ask other professionals and services involved in your life to contribute to your Pathway Plan. This helps us make sure you receive the right support and that everyone is working together to help you achieve your goals.

This may include Housing Services, Education, Training and Employment providers, Benefits services, Health professionals. By working together, we can provide you with joined-up support, clear information, and consistent advice to help you as you move towards independence.

What will be included in my pathway plan?

The following diagram sets out some of the areas covered in your plan;



**family and social relationships includes family time with your brothers, sisters and family that are important to you*

When will my plan be completed?

Your first Pathway Plan will usually be completed around your 16th birthday. If you become a child in our care, after the age of 16, your Pathway Plan will be completed within three months of the date you come into our care.

What about changes to my plan?

Your Pathway Plan will then be updated and reviewed at least every 6 months or within 28 working days of any significant change such as a change of address or if you request a review meeting. Your Pathway Plan will be written and available at your review meeting chaired by your **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)**, under the age of 18, and by a **Pathway Plan Reviewing Officer** over the age of 18.

CARE LEAVER ENTITLEMENTS

The following figures are accurate as of 6th April 2026 and may be subject to change and will be reviewed annually.

Education Employment and training (EET)

Stockport Virtual School offers comprehensive Education, Employment and Training support for young people aged 16 to 25 working closely with colleges, sixth forms and training providers to help care experienced young people successfully progress into education, employment and adulthood. Volunteering and work placements through initiatives such as Jumpstart and Stockport Supported Apprenticeship Scheme are financially incentivised.

The Trailblazer Scheme is a partnership with SMBC and Stockport Homes to provide a 5 month paid placement in a local Stockport business or company to help care experienced young adults secure sustainable employment, develop professional skills and successfully transition into their chosen careers.

Former Relevant Care Leavers attending an agreed university course will receive a **Higher Education Bursary of £2000 per course**, the payment of which to be agreed with you in your Pathway Plan. As part of this, you will be supported by one of our Education Careers Advisers, to look at your education plan. Further assistance may be provided towards essential books and materials whilst studying.

Former Relevant care leavers will also be entitled to **52-week university accommodation costs**, if required, on an agreed course. These costs will be in line with the local housing allowance rates in the area where you live. Your PA will be able to offer advice about this.

Qualifying care leavers attending an agreed course at university will be entitled to a needs assessment that may include financial support with vacation payments at **£100 per week** and **£2000 Higher Education Bursary for the course**.

On graduation, all care leavers will receive a **Graduation Gift of £100**.

(This support can also extended to postgraduate courses).

Digital Support

Starting Point provides a practical digital inclusion offer for care leavers, helping young people access the devices, connectivity, skills and confidence they need to use technology independently for everyday life, education and employment.

A member of the Starting Point team will be at the Care Leavers Hub every Thursday afternoon, providing flexible one-to-one digital support.

The offer includes:

- **Free mobile data** – access to the National Databank, providing free SIM cards and mobile data for people who cannot otherwise afford to stay connected.
- **Affordable internet** – advice on broadband deals, social tariffs and ways to reduce the cost of getting online.
- **Devices** – access to the DigiKnow Device Hub, with smartphones, Chromebooks and tablets available subject to availability. We can also provide advice on affordable devices available locally, including refurbished laptops with Microsoft Office from around £60.
- **Digital skills support** – practical help with staying safe online, searching and applying for jobs, using benefit calculators, applying for housing online and accessing other essential online services.
- **AI skills and qualifications** – access to free Google AI Professional Certificate courses to build skills for future learning and employment.
- **Volunteering and development** – opportunities to train as a Volunteer Digital Champion, with ongoing support and continued professional development.

Celebrations

We want to recognise and celebrate important occasions in your life and provide support with some of the additional costs that can arise throughout the year.

Eligible care leavers will receive allowances through their carers to help cover costs including birthdays, religious holidays and festivals, clothing, and holidays.

Relevant and Former Relevant care leavers aged 18 to 21 will receive an annual personal budget of **£315** towards religious holidays and festivals, clothing, and holidays.

This annual budget is made up of:

- **£25 for your birthday**
- **£25 for religious holidays and festivals**
- The remaining **£265** will be planned with you and your Personal Adviser to make sure it is used in a way that best supports your individual needs and circumstances.

Former Relevant care leavers aged 21 to 25 who continue to be supported by a Personal Adviser, or who remain in touch with us, will receive:

- **£25 for their birthday**
- **£25 for religious holidays and festivals**

Eligible, Relevant and Former Relevant care leavers will receive a **New Parent Allowance of £150**.

Eligible, relevant and former relevant care leavers can be supported to learn to drive. This includes a contribution for up to 10 driving lessons, and the cost of your practical driving test, and a contribution for up to half the cost of a second test if needed.

Accommodation and Housing

Stockport Homes Group and the Leaving care team have a joint working protocol that supports care leaver in securing and maintaining their own home.

- You can register for a home with Stockport Homes with the support of your Personal Adviser, and see available properties by visiting the [Homechoice website](#).
- The size and type of home you can apply for will depend on the ages and relationships of the people within your household. Our [Allocations Policy](#) explains the process of deciding what size and type of home you are eligible to bid for.
- You choose up to 3 properties each week that are suitable for you. We call this 'bidding', and you can do this through the [Homechoice website](#).
- We start advertising properties 00:01 Friday to 23:59 Tuesday.

There are provisions in the allocations policy to assist care leavers , such as enhanced points for leaving supported accommodation and an extra 20 points for former relevant care leavers who have 25 housing need points.

If you are at risk of homelessness in Stockport, please speak to your PA as soon as possible. They will arrange an appointment with Stockport Homes to explore ways to help you remain safely housed. The support available will depend on your individual circumstances. For example, if you are currently living with family or friends, mediation may be offered to help maintain the arrangement and prevent homelessness. Other support includes tenancy Support if you are struggling to manage your tenancy, and our Safer Neighbourhood Officers, if there are difficulties in the local community.

We also have a Prevention Fund that may be able to help with rent in advance and/or a deposit for a private rented tenancy. This support is intended to help you access suitable alternative accommodation where appropriate. Any assistance will be assessed to ensure the tenancy is affordable and sustainable, and the funding provided will need to be repaid to Stockport Homes through agreed monthly repayments.

Financial Literacy, Money Management and Entitlement

We know that managing money can feel challenging, especially when you are living independently for the first time. As a Stockport care leaver, you can access advice and support from your Personal Adviser to help you understand budgeting, saving, banking, bills, benefits, debt, and managing everyday living costs.

Financial planning can form part of your Pathway Plan to help you build confidence and develop the skills needed for independent living. Support is also available through organisations such as Citizens Advice, the Money Advice Service, and Pure Insight, while your Personal Adviser can help you access any financial entitlements, benefits, setting-up-home grants, and other assistance you may be eligible for.

Our aim is to ensure you have the knowledge, skills, and support to make informed financial decisions and achieve long-term financial wellbeing.

Setting Up Home Grant

Relevant and Former Relevant Care Leavers may access a **Setting up Home allowance up to £3000** to help furnish your independent accommodation. From the 1st April 2023, the Setting Up Home Grant increased to £3000 for those taking on their first tenancy. Your Personal Adviser will support you to access this. Your Personal Adviser will also support you to make an application for additional support for a white goods pack.

Separated Young People

For **Former Relevant** separated young people we will:

- Support with living expenses whilst you are waiting on a decision from the Home Office regarding your claim for Asylum - **£78.13 a week**. (Equivalent of Universal Credit).
- Pay for any culturally specific items on a needs lead basis - for example, helping you to practice your religion.
- Pay for a Travel document if successful in your claim for asylum.

Eligible or Relevant in Custody

If you are an **Eligible or Relevant** care leaver aged 16 or 17 years old in custody or on remand you will receive **£10 per week**.

Your social worker will support you to maintain contact with those people who are important to you, and finance this where required.

Former Relevant in Custody

If you are a **Former Relevant** in custody, aged 18 to 25 years, you can receive financial support up to £25 per month to enable you to keep in contact with those people who are important to you.

If aged 18 to 21 you can also continue to access your personal budget (as long as you are in contact with your PA).

If you are aged 18 to 25, whilst in custody, you will be entitled to up to £150 to support you with buying essential items, such as appropriate clothing for your release. This will be accessed through your personal adviser.

You may also be entitled to access your savings from when you were a cared for child, and if so, you will be supported to access these by your personal adviser.

If you are aged 18 to 25 on your release, your personal adviser can support you to access a free phone if needed, and a free 6 month sim card. This is to ensure you can stay connected to important people.

If you're aged 18 to 25, on your release, if you need to claim universal credit, your personal adviser can help you access up to 5 weeks of bridging payments whilst you wait for the first payday of universal credit, or return to employment.

Universal Credit

Eligible and Relevant care leavers living independently will receive a **16+ maintenance allowance of £78.13 per week** (Equivalent to the Universal Credit (UC) rate)

Your Social Worker or Personal Advisor will support you to access advice and claim benefits the month before your 18th birthday. Once you turn 18 you will be financially supported while you wait for your 1st payment.

If you are responsible for a child or have a health condition that affects your ability to work, you may be able to earn a certain amount before your Universal Credit is reduced. This is called your **work allowance**. For 2025/26, the work allowance is **£411 per month** if your Universal Credit includes housing costs, or **£684 per month** if it does not. For every £1 you earn above your work allowance, your Universal Credit is reduced by **55p**.

What is included in the Setting Up Home Grant?

Your **Setting Up Home Grant** will be held by the Leaving Care Team and your Personal Adviser will be able to support you to purchase items that you may need to live independently, for example:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| • TV & TV licence | • Wi-Fi | • tv stand / wall mount | • aerial / extension |
| • washing machine | • fridge/fridge freezer | • ovenware & dishes | • chopping boards |
| • laundry basket | • tea, coffee & sugar pots | • mixing bowl & measuring jug | • mop & mop bucket |
| • clothes airer | | | • brush & dustpan |
| • bin | • sieve | • cooker* | • kitchen utensils |
| • microwave | • kettle | • dining table/chairs | • toaster |
| • pots, pans & trays | • plates | • cups | • glasses |
| • cutlery | • tea towels | • washing up bowl | • dish drainer |
| • sofa | • coffee table | • lamps & shades | • carpet |
| • mirror | • clock | • curtains or blinds | • curtain rails |
| • bed base & mattress | • bedside table | • iron & ironing board | • wardrobe |
| • chest of drawers | • pillows & cases | • duvet & bedding | • bath towels |
| • shower curtain | • bath mat | • soap dispenser | • Contents Insurance |

*Gas or Electric with connection with a certified fitter

What help can I get for Education, Employment and Training?

As a Child in Our Care, you will have support from a Young People's Education, Careers and Advice Worker (ECAW), who will help you with your education, training and career goals.

When you reach the age of 16, you can also access support from our specialist Careers and Education Adviser, who can provide information, advice and guidance about education, training and employment opportunities. This service is available until you are 21 years old. If you are aged 21 or over, there are a number of local organisations that we work closely with who can continue to offer careers advice and support. Your Personal Adviser can talk through the options with you and help you make contact with the service that best meets your needs.

To help you achieve your goals and reach your full potential, you will also have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) while you are a Child in Our Care. Your PEP will be reviewed regularly to make sure it continues to reflect your needs, strengths and aspirations. The information within your PEP will help to inform your Pathway Plan, which will be reviewed at least every six months to make sure the support you receive remains right for you.

If you need a laptop, specialist equipment, or materials to support your education, training or employment goals, this should be recorded as an identified need within your plan. Your Social Worker or Personal Adviser can then request support on your behalf. All requests will be considered individually, taking account of your circumstances and the support needed to help you achieve your goals.

From your 16th birthday, you will receive your National Insurance Number. We will also support you to obtain important forms of identification if you need them, such as a birth certificate, passport, or, from your 17th birthday, a provisional driving licence.

How can you help me find somewhere to live?

As part of preparing for adult life and greater independence, we will talk with you about your accommodation options and help you plan for where you would like to live in the future.

Your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will support you throughout this process, including helping you to complete housing applications, attend housing interviews, and access the 16+ Accommodation Panel, in line with your wishes, needs and the goals set out in your Pathway Plan.

We will also support you to make a Housing Benefit claim where appropriate, or to access Local Housing Allowance if you are living in private rented accommodation. We want to make sure you understand the options available to you and have the support you need to secure and maintain suitable accommodation.

Our aim is to work alongside you, helping you make informed choices and develop the skills, confidence and knowledge needed to successfully manage your home and live independently.

It is important to be aware that young people under the age of 35 are normally only entitled to housing costs equivalent to the cost of a room in shared accommodation. However, care leavers aged 18 to 25 are usually entitled to the one-bedroom rate, which can provide additional support when accessing suitable accommodation. Your Personal Adviser can help you understand what you may be entitled to and support you with any claims.

As a Former Relevant care leaver, you are entitled to a Council Tax exemption in Stockport up to your 25th birthday, meaning you will not have to pay Council Tax while living in the borough during this time. If you live outside of Stockport, please speak with your Personal Adviser, as many other local authorities also offer Council Tax reductions or exemptions for care leavers.

If your longer-term goal is to buy your own home, we can also support you to explore the options available. Your Personal Adviser can provide advice, information and guidance about saving for a deposit, improving your financial skills, understanding mortgages and accessing specialist support. We can signpost you to relevant organisations, independent financial advice services and home ownership schemes that may be available to first-time buyers. Where appropriate, your aspiration to purchase your own home can be discussed and recorded within your Pathway Plan, so that we can help you work towards this goal as part of your journey to independence.

We want you to feel safe, secure and supported in your housing journey, whether you choose to rent, stay in supported accommodation, live independently, or work towards owning your own home in the future.

Information about Benefits

All your benefit entitlements will need to be confirmed with the benefits agency and your Personal Adviser will be available to support you to attend appointments as required. You may wish to visit the Job Centre Plus Website - <https://www.gov.uk/find-a-job> - for further information.

What if I need to claim benefits?



Your Social Worker or Personal Adviser will be available to support you to access welfare benefit advice and to make a claim for benefits according to your specific circumstances. This is likely to be **Universal Credit**. You can apply online at www.direct.gov.uk



USEFUL CONTACTS

Leaving Care Team:	Stockport Family Central House Grand Central Square, Wellington Road South Stockport, SK1 3TA
Duty Mobile Number:	07773 127 768
Email:	Leavingcareduty@stockport.gov.uk
Website:	www.stockport.gov.uk/careleavers
Out of Hours Service:	0161 718 2118 (emergencies only)
Advocacy/Children's Rights and Independent Visitor Service:	
Coram Voice:	0808 800 5792
Website:	www.coramvoice.org.uk/
Pure Insight: Connecting Care Leavers	
Website:	www.pure-insight.org.uk/
Pure Insight services include a Mentoring Programme, weekly drop in Cafés, parent support groups, art groups and lots of participation activities including our Care Leaver Forum	
Housing:	
Stockport Homes HomeChoice Team:	0161 217 6016
Benefit Enquiry Line:	
Calling from a landline:	0800 328 5644
Calling from a mobile:	0800 328 5644
Or online at:	www.gov.uk/

USEFUL CONTACTS

Advice about getting ready for Universal Credit :	
Website:	www.gov.uk/universalcredit
Child Benefit:	0300 200 3100
<i>(for enquires on existing claims only, new applications need to be downloaded from internet or Child benefit packs are issued in the bounty bag by the midwife or while on the maternity unit)</i>	
Money Advice Service:	<i>for help with budgeting</i>
Website:	www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk
Citizens Advice Bureau:	
Website:	www.citizensadvice.org.uk
National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum:	
Website:	www.leavingcare.org
Email:	nlcbf@catch-22.org.uk
Landline:	020 7336 4800
Shelter:	
Website:	www.shelter.org.uk
Tel. No.	0808 800 4444
Refugee Action Manchester:	
Website:	www.refugee-action.org.uk
The Care Leaver Association:	
Tel. No.	0161 826 0214
Rees Foundation:	
Tel. No.	0330 094 5645
Website:	contactus@reesfoundation.org

COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

We want to know what you think about our services so that we can improve them. Your comments, good or bad, will help us to know how to change things for the better.

What if I want to make a compliment or complaint?

If you have something to say about leaving care services or if you are unhappy about something that is happening to you, this can usually be sorted out by speaking to someone you trust like your Social Worker, Personal Adviser, Key Worker or Carer. But, if they cannot put things right for you, then you can make a complaint in one of the following ways:

- Contact the Children's Rights Service on:
☎ Tel: 0808 800 5792 or www.coramvoice.org.uk

- Or write to us at;

Complaints Resolution Service
Services for People
3rd Floor Stopford House
Stockport
SK1 3XE
Tel 0161 474 3895 / 3898
talktous@stockport.gov.uk

LEGISLATION, GUIDANCE AND REGULATIONS

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and Regulations
- The Children Act 2004 and 2008
- National Standards for Leaving Care (March 2004)
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- The Children Act 1989 Planning transition to adulthood for care leavers Regulations 2010 revised January 2015
- Children and Social Work Act 2017