

Fosterline Wales Factsheet

Care leavers - accommodation and support framework for Wales

Introduction

As foster carers you may be starting to embark on supporting young people as their Pathway Plans are being developed. This factsheet will give you more information about leaving care. This factsheet summarises the housing responsibilities, in regards to care leavers, of various agencies in Wales. There is a multi-agency framework for shared responsibility amongst public bodies, that recognises the continued vulnerability of many young people beyond the age of 18.

[Click here](#) for more information about the multi-agency framework

Recent legislative changes in Wales have led to a strengthening of duties on local authorities, to prevent, and address, homelessness more effectively. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to produce a joint strategy between housing and social services to address homelessness. This reinforces the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWA) requirement, that housing and social services work together to meet the needs of young people in care as they move to independent living. The statutory responsibility of social services to provide a pathway plan for all those leaving care – to facilitate their transition to independence – can now, where necessary, include a personal housing plan, which focuses specifically on their housing needs.

Part 6 of the SSWA and the Care Leavers (Wales) Regulations 2015 sets out various duties that local authorities have, towards young people in and leaving care, including those relating to accommodation. The duties differ depending on care leaver status (which is grouped into four categories), but the general requirements are that local authorities should:

- plan with young people and involve them in decisions
- avoid moving young people who are settled
- assess young people's needs and prepare them for any move
- ensure that the accommodation meets any needs relating to impairment
- consider education, training and employment needs
- where practicable, offer a choice of accommodation
- set up a package of support to go with the accommodation
- have a clear financial plan for the accommodation and a contingency plan.

The regulations and guidance also detail how the local authority strategy for care leavers should take into account:

- the diverse accommodation and support needs of care leavers
- the capacity to offer young people a degree of choice of accommodation
- existing and planned provision of safe, affordable accommodation
- gaps in provision
- priority setting
- the need for contingency arrangements.

The guidance from [SSWA Part 6 – Code of Practice](#) on looked after and accommodated children states that it is 'good practice for local authorities to commission a range of semi-independent and independent living options with appropriate support, for example, supported accommodation schemes, foyers, supported lodgings and access to independent tenancies in the social and private rented sectors with flexible support'. It also advises that 'provision and partnerships should be developed in such a way as to permit young people to move to other accommodation in a crisis, including returning to more supportive accommodation if appropriate'

16 and 17 year olds

16 and 17 year olds are currently defined in law as either 'eligible', which means that they should receive the support that comes with being looked after, or 'relevant' which means they are no longer in care but the local authority must: keep in touch; provide suitable accommodation and maintenance; provide continuous needs assessment and pathway planning; and help with education and employment.

A homeless 16 or 17 year old should be accommodated and become looked after; duties which are contained in SSWA.

Young people with additional needs

Young people with a learning or physical disability should be involved in early planning, for support to meet their needs after becoming 18. Duties under the SSWA mean that any young person who is likely to have care and support needs is entitled to an assessment. There should be no 'cliff-edge' in support when young people reach 18, as support from children's services must continue until adult services can take over.

Young people who have mental health needs should continue to receive health advice and services. The Welsh Government are committed to ensuring effective transition between adult and CAMHS services in the [Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan 2012-16](#).

Preventing homelessness

Foster carers need to know that care leavers can apply to their local authority as being homeless and should be considered to be in 'priority need' if they are aged 21 or under, and if they are over 21 they can continue to receive support if they are vulnerable, as a result of being in care. As long as the young person is not found to be 'intentionally homeless', accommodation should be provided under the homelessness duty.

Resources

Shelter

www.sheltercymru.org.uk

Housing Advice Helpline 0345 075 5005 9.30-4.00 Daily

Meic Cymru

www.meiccymru.org

Freephone 080 880 23456

LawStuff gives free legal information to children and young people.

<http://lawstuff.org.uk/>

Voices from Care

<http://www.vfcc.org.uk>

Children's Commissioner for Wales

Children & young people's free phone number: 0808 801 1000

Citizen's Advice Wales 03444 77 20 20

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/

Childline 0800 1111

www.childline.org.uk

Further Information

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, Section 75

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/section/75/enacted>

Legislation

Housing (Wales) Act 2014 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/7/contents>

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014: Part 6 Code of Practice (Looked After and Accommodated Children)

<http://gov.wales/docs/phhs/publications/160106pt6en.pdf>

The Care Leavers (Wales) Regulations 2015

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2015/1820/contents/made>

Welsh Government (2016) Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness, pp299-300:

<http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160324-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-allocation-of-accommodation-and-homelessness-en.pdf>

How The Fostering Network can help

The Fostering Network offers advice, information and support. Our expertise and knowledge are always up-to-date and available through our vital member helplines, publications, training and consultancy.

Advice

Fosterline Wales

Call us on 0800 316 7664 from 9.30am - 12.30pm Monday to Friday.

If you call outside this time, please leave a message and someone will call you back as soon as possible.

You can email us at:

fosterlinewales@fostering.net

Support and resources

Our website is an essential source of information, while our online community brings together foster carers for peer support and advice. You can login to share your experience and get advice from other foster carers. Our online community is a safe and secure area to discuss foster care matters.

thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

Training and consultancy

Wherever you are in your fostering career, as a foster carer, social worker or manager, The Fostering Network has a range of training designed to meet your development needs.

For more information contact our Learning and Development Manager, Sarah Mobedji at sarah.mobedji@fostering.net

About The Fostering Network

The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children to make foster care the very best it can be.

Contact

To find out more about our work in Wales, please contact:

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