

# Support

# Every Step of the Way

End The Care Cliff report  
October 2024

**BECOME.**

THE CHARITY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE  
AND YOUNG CARE LEAVERS

## **About Become**

Become is the national charity for care-experienced children and young people. We put young people at the heart of everything we do, supporting them to get the help they need now and empowering them to bring about change in their own lives, the care system and society.

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“ —

Living alone has been very difficult. I was in a very dark place when I first left care and I'm terrified of being alone... If there's nobody to go home to it breaks me.

- Max, left care aged 17

## Introduction

**Every year, thousands of young people aged 18 or younger face a care cliff when leaving the care system, where vital support and relationships fall away, and they are expected to become ‘independent’ overnight.**

Whilst the average age that young people across England leave home has risen to 24, the majority of young people leaving care will be expected to live independently from a much younger age: becoming responsible for paying rent and bills, budgeting and managing a tenancy, at a time when they may be in the middle of studying or exams or starting employment or training, all without a family safety net to fall back on if things go wrong.

Forced to move out of their foster home or children’s home and into living situations which they are often not ready for is leading to a cycle of housing insecurity, inappropriate or unsafe living conditions, and high levels of homelessness.

To better understand the specific challenges that care-experienced young people face in accessing appropriate and secure housing, and the support available to them, we

carried out a series of semi-structured interviews and workshops with 33 care-experienced young people, and sent freedom of information requests to all tier-one local authorities and county councils in England. Our report is also informed by our analysis of Government statistics, the views and experiences of the care-experienced young people that we work with at Become; and insights gathered through the services that we provide, including our Care Advice Line.

There are examples of excellent practice across the country, where local authorities provide tailored support to young people leaving care. But we also found really worrying examples of young people facing a ‘double trauma’, feeling forced to leave care before they are ready and then feeling forced to move into inappropriate accommodation – disrepair and mouldy homes; being exposed to physical or verbal abuse; feeling unsafe in shared settings and being encouraged to present as homeless in order to secure housing.

The stories that young people shared with us detail their housing journeys after leaving care and are often punctuated by missed opportunities where improved planning, support or involvement in decisions at a key moment could have been transformational in providing them with the stable home and foundation that we all need as we move to adulthood.

### **But this can be fixed.**

With the right action now from national and local government, we can

### **end the care cliff**

and make sure young people leaving care have suitable housing options and the right support in place every step of the way.

“ ———  
The place I have now I didn't choose, the hostel support worker had chosen it and you get two options so if you don't like the first option then you get one more but you have to take it otherwise you have to wait longer.

- A care-experienced young person

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## Acknowledgements

To the young people who shared their experiences, stories, and creative ideas (including our cover report) and to our colleagues in Team Become for sharing their insights & knowledge.

This report was created in-house at Become.

## Key findings

### 1. Too many young people who have left care face homelessness. Young care leavers are nine times more likely to face homelessness than other young people.

- The number of young care leavers aged 18–20 approaching their local authority as homeless has increased by 54% over the last five years<sup>1</sup> and care-experienced young people are nine times more likely to face homelessness than other young people<sup>2</sup>
- Young people leaving care are being encouraged to present as homeless in order to secure housing, which may be part of the reason for the increase in statutory homelessness.
- Beyond these statistics are many more who are ‘hidden homeless’, sofa surfing or rough sleeping, who may be unaware of their rights and entitlements and haven't been in touch with their local authority for support.

“

They were using homelessness as a punishment for me going away and fulfilling self-development opportunities.

- Clara, moved into emergency accommodation after travelling for 8 weeks

### 2. Care-experienced young people are facing a ‘double trauma’, feeling forced to leave care before they are ready and then feeling forced to move into inappropriate accommodation.

- We heard shocking examples of care-experienced young people living in accommodation that was in disrepair and mouldy homes, waiting months for housing repairs, or being forced to live in homes that weren't ready – with bare walls or no carpets.
- Young people also told us about facing physical or verbal abuse; and feeling unsafe in shared settings with older adults who are drinking and taking drugs or experiencing mental health challenges.

## Key findings (continued)

### 3. Care-experienced young people highlighted numerous missed opportunities to support them to secure appropriate housing.

- Poor quality or poorly timed support to leave care is leaving young people at risk of homelessness, in inappropriate living situations, or in situations where their needs are not being met.
- The Staying Put and Staying Close schemes can be invaluable in providing stability and improving outcomes, but almost two-thirds of 19-year-olds were not living with their foster carers in 2023, despite being eligible to stay with them until the age of 21 through the Government's 'Staying Put' scheme and only 30% local authorities in England had a 'Staying Close' scheme.<sup>4</sup>
- We also heard that housing options were not communicated early or clearly enough, young people did not feel involved in decisions about their options and were not fully aware of their key rights and entitlements.
- Young care leavers are being considered "intentionally" homeless for reasons such as going away to university or for travelling abroad.

“

It was a massive change for me from being with my foster family to suddenly going into this place where everyone had their own set of problems. I felt completely abandoned by social services.

- Duncan

### 4. Care-experienced young people are facing a postcode lottery as well as an age lottery. There is significant variation and inconsistency in whether and how care leavers are prioritised for social housing.

- Although local authorities have responsibility as corporate parents for care-experienced young people to the age of 25, often any additional priority given to care leavers for social housing ended at the age of 18 or 21.
- We found examples of the leaving care grant being used for tenancy deposits rather than helping young people to buy essential furniture (which is what it is intended for), which could leave young people moving into new homes without basic furniture like beds and white goods.
- Young people face significant barriers accessing private rented accommodation, yet only 38% of local authorities provide a guarantor scheme and 58% provide a deposit scheme for care leavers.<sup>5</sup>
- We also found pockets of good practice; for example, several local authorities, such as Oldham and Walsall Councils, have extended automatic priority need status to all care leavers up to the age of 25<sup>6</sup>, or have committed to not make homelessness intentionality decisions against care leavers.

# Recommendations

All care-experienced young people should be supported to make a positive move when leaving care, at a time that works for them.

The Government must:

## **1. Provide greater continuity of care -**

by making the Staying Put and Staying Close schemes fully funded, opt-out legal entitlements for all young people in care up to 25, so young people can stay in their homes or connected to support.

## **2. Increase access to safe, appropriate homes -**

by removing the local area connection test for care leavers as government has committed to do, without delay; and requiring all local authorities to provide a dedicated tenancy deposit and rent guarantor scheme for care leavers.

## **3. Provide a stronger legal safety net to prevent care leaver homelessness -**

by amending homelessness legislation to make all care leavers up to age 25 'priority need' for homelessness support and removing intentionality homeless rules for care leavers.

## **4. Improve financial support to young people leaving care -**

by extending the over-25 rate of universal credit to care leavers, increasing financial entitlements with inflation; and exempting care leavers from council tax.

## **5. Strengthen the role of Personal Advisers to improve the support provided to young people -**

by introducing standardised training, development and qualifications, with a focus on supporting young people to secure safe, appropriate and affordable housing options.

“

I knew that I could always go to her [foster mum] if I needed to chat, or just needed someone to talk to, and I think that really, really helped. And I can't imagine what it would have been like for me if I had faced that care cliff.

- Zara, on her Staying Put arrangement after she turned 18



# Methodology

**This report has been informed by our analysis of Government data, including the annual statutory homelessness data; the views and experiences of the care-experienced young people that we work with at Become; and insights gathered through the services that we provide, including our Care Advice Line.<sup>7</sup>**

Additionally, to better understand the specific challenges that care-experienced young people face in accessing appropriate and secure housing, and the support available to them, we have carried out a series of semi-structured interviews and workshops with 33 care-experienced young people; and sent Freedom of Information requests to all tier-one local authorities and county councils in England.

## **Workshops and interviews with care-experienced young people**

Between June and July 2024, Become held three small group discussions with a total of 19 care-experienced young people from our network aged between 17-27 years old to discuss different housing journeys after leaving care. Additionally, between July and September 2024, we have held five workshops

with our End the Care Cliff youth campaign group, which have been attended by a total of 33 care-experienced young people aged 17-27 years old.

Separately, we have undertaken semi-structured interviews with five young people aged 19-25 from our network to map out their housing journeys after leaving care. Some of the case studies included in this report are a result of these interviews and have been written in partnership with the young people. In some instances, young people's names have been changed for anonymity.

## **Freedom of information requests**

Between July and August 2024, Become sent Freedom of Information requests to all tier one local authorities and county councils in England (153 in total) to ask about their housing support for care leavers for whom they have corporate parenting responsibilities. We asked:

1. Are care leavers given any "reasonable preference" for social housing under your local authority's social housing allocations policy?

2. How many priority bands or categories does your local authority housing allocation policy have?

3. Under your local authority's social housing allocations policy, which priority banding would care leavers be given if they had no additional need or vulnerability?

4. Are there any circumstances or criteria in which care leavers from other local authorities can be assessed as having a local area connection under your local authority's housing allocations policy, and if so, what are these circumstances or criteria?

5. What are the criteria or circumstances in which care leavers aged 21-25 can be assessed as in priority need for a homelessness duty?

6. Are there circumstances or criteria in which care leavers can be assessed as intentionally homeless, and if so, what are these circumstances / criteria?

7. Does your local authority have a joint housing protocol for care leavers across children's services and housing services?

8. Does your local authority currently provide a housing guarantor scheme for care leavers, and if so, what are the eligibility criteria for this scheme?

## Methodology (con't)

9. Does your local authority currently provide a tenancy deposit scheme for care leavers, and if so, what are the eligibility criteria for this scheme?

In total, by 13th October 2024, we had received responses from 135 local authorities (88%): 129 (84%) of these were able to provide some data in response to the questions asked, and 113 (74%) were able to provide full data.

In most instances that full data was not provided, it was from county councils who do not have responsibility for local housing services: in these circumstances, housing responsibility sits with the relevant city, district or borough council.

The full responses to the Freedom of Information requests can be found in [the appendix to this report](#).<sup>8</sup>

“ I feel different to my peers when I am going through the same transition as them but made to feel different – paying rent and after Uni I can't go back to them as my friends will... they will have new foster children. .... When I turned 18 I had to sign up for universal credits and also apply for a DBS check for other children that lived with us.

- A care-experienced young person, aged 18

“ Support prior to being 18 would help a lot more – (you are) meant to get a PA at 16, but many only get it a week before their 18th

- A care-experienced young person

# An unequal start to adulthood

**Young people leaving care are forced to leave home before they are ready and at a much younger age than their peers.**

When a young person turns 18, their legal status formally changes from child to adult. For children in care, there is an additional change in legal status upon their 18th birthday, as they are no longer looked after by their local authority and they become known as care leavers.

Upon turning 18 - and sometimes even younger - many care leavers are forced to move out of their foster home or children's home and live independently for the first time, often in unsuitable accommodation. For many, this triggers an abrupt transition into adulthood, falling at a time in a young person's life when they need stability the most.

Although local authorities can use their discretion about when is the right time for young people to move into independent living, due to a lack of suitable care options and a system focused on the transition from care to independence, too often young people are being forced into living situations which they're not ready for and where they are not getting the support they need to make a positive start to adulthood.

Young people that Become supports have described leaving care as a "care cliff", where vital relationships and support falls away and they are expected to become 'independent' overnight.

At the age of 18, many care leavers have to manage running a home or tenancy for the first time, buying furniture, budgeting, and paying bills whilst also having to adapt to other important transitions, such as starting work, university or both; moving to a new place; and big changes in the type and amount of support they receive. As a result, most care leavers have more practical and financial responsibilities than their non-care-experienced peers, from a much younger age, and without the same family support or safety net to fall back on if things go wrong.

In a 2022 survey, Ofsted found that more than a third of care leavers felt that they left care too early, with many reporting that they were not ready for all the changes. 9

## Providing continuation of care

Young people leaving care are much more likely to be living independently than their non-care experienced peers. Data from the Office for National Statistics suggests that approximately 60% of 18–25-year-olds in the UK live with their parents<sup>10</sup>, and the average age that young people across England leave their parental home has now risen to 24.<sup>11</sup> However, comparatively, in 2023, only 20% of care leavers aged 19–21 were living with parents, relatives or former foster carers.<sup>12</sup>

“ — (There should be) more support for learning to cook for yourself, even cleaning lessons – I wouldn't know how to clean an oven properly; learning to budget – teaching what meals are best when you are on a budget. ... We are just expected to know what to do.

- A care-experienced young person

## Table 1

Number and percentage of care leavers, at different ages, living in different accommodation types.<sup>13</sup>

	Age 17-18		Age 19-21	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>w. former foster carers</b>	2,350	18%	3,060	9%
<b>w. parents/relatives</b>	1,720	13%	3,680	11%
<b>Independent Living</b>	1,130	8%	12,300	37%
<b>Supported accommodation</b>	5,630	42%	7,920	24%
<b>Crisis Accommodation</b>	590	4%	1,550	5%
<b>Other</b>	1,160	9%	2,720	8%
<b>Not known</b>	790	6%	2,140	6%
<b>Total care leavers</b>	13,370		33,370	

The move into independent living or supported accommodation for care leavers at 18, however, is not always automatic. The Staying Put and Staying Close schemes provide opportunities for some care leavers to have some continuity of care, enabling them to continue living with their foster carers, or stay connected to children's homes, up to the age of 21.

### Staying Put

Introduced in the Children and Families Act 2014, the Staying Put scheme provides an opportunity for young people to remain with their former foster carers until the age of 21 if they wish to and their foster carer agrees.<sup>15</sup> Evaluation of the programme demonstrates that continuing to live with foster carers beyond the age of 18 can benefit care-experienced young people in a range of ways,<sup>16</sup> including:

- Allowing young people to remain in a nurturing family environment where they can mature and develop, prepare for independence, and receive ongoing support
- Empowering young people and giving them greater choice and control over the timing of their transition from care to independence

- Providing them with a more extensive network of support
- Providing continuity and stability to facilitate engagement in education, employment and training
- Reducing their anxiety about financial management

Research also indicates that care-experienced young people living in Staying Put arrangements report significantly higher emotional health and wellbeing scores than those not in Staying Put<sup>17</sup> and are more likely to be in full-time education too.<sup>18</sup>

This chimes with what care-experienced young people have told us about the impact that Staying Put can have in providing stability, security and a solid foundation during the transition from childhood to adulthood, as emphasised by Zara's story.

Although the number of young people living in Staying Put arrangements has gradually increased since its introduction, the latest available data shows that two-thirds of eligible 19-year-olds were not living with their foster carers in 2023.<sup>19</sup>

Two-thirds third of eligible 19 year olds were not living with their foster carers in 2023. (DfE statistics)

## Zara's story

“I knew that I could always go to her if I needed to chat, or just needed someone to talk to, and I think that really, really helped. And I can't imagine what it would have been like for me if I had faced that care cliff.  
- Zara

Zara had been living with the same foster carer, Sheena, since she entered care at the age of 13. When it came to leaving care at 18, a Staying Put arrangement was put in place.

The social worker knew Zara was settled and as Zara says about herself, 'she wasn't ready at 18 to be fully independent.'

Zara's foster mum had accommodated other young people under a Staying Put arrangement and was in full agreement the same should be in place for Zara. One other young person was also being fostered in the home at the same time, who was the same age as Zara, also 18. It meant there was no one underage living at the home, so Zara could see her boyfriend to stay overnight.

Having that safety net of a home to return to was what Zara needed when she started university.

It was the year Covid hit, the country went into nationwide lockdown and Zara struggled to cope. Her university didn't provide any support for care-experienced students and Zara felt completely alone.

"I hated university, it got me so down," says Zara. "I couldn't go home and I was stuck in this tiny room and felt very isolated," she recalls. "I caught Covid and I couldn't focus on my studies and I didn't do as well as I hoped. I was in one of the deepest darkest states I'd ever been in."

The Staying Put arrangement meant Zara could return to her foster mum at Christmas and rethink her future. "It meant I did have a home to go back to. It meant I wasn't suddenly on my own when things didn't go to plan," she said. "Having that safety blanket provided me with some security during that time."

Now almost 23, she's graduated from a different university, moved in with her boyfriend and is getting ready to get married.

Throughout it all, her foster mum has been there to support her.

"I've known her for almost a decade. She's seen me grow up and we know each other very well now. I wish more people had that security, especially when they are aiming for things like university," she said.

## Table 2

Number and percentage of eligible care leavers living in 'Staying Put' arrangements, 31st March 2023.<sup>20</sup>

	18 years	19 years	20 years
No. of young people who ceased to be looked after in a foster placement on their 18th birthday and were eligible for care leavers support in 2023	3,620	3,620	3,540
Total living with former foster carers in 2023	2,230	1,370	930
Percentage living with former foster carers in 2023	61%	38%	26%

Staying Put is not right for every young person leaving foster care and there are many reasons why a young person may choose not to continue living with their foster carers beyond the age of 18. This can include poor-quality relationships with their carers or others in the foster home; a desire to be free and independent or to leave behind rules that were too restrictive; or to return to live with their birth family.<sup>21</sup> However, we also heard that the option of Staying Put was not communicated early or clearly enough to them and their foster carers; or that they did not feel adequately involved in decisions about whether this was the right option for them, as Cleo's story shows.

We also heard from care-experienced young parents

that they were not able to access or not offered the Staying Put scheme.

Research indicates that insufficient funding and differences in the way that Staying Put has been implemented across the country have created barriers to many young people remaining with their foster carers. Action for Children have highlighted how the scheme has never been funded sufficiently: with local authority funding allocations based on a take-up rate of 25%,<sup>22</sup> significantly lower than the current take-up rate of 61% for 18-year-olds.<sup>23</sup> This means that the more successful a local authority is in supporting young people to remain in Staying Put arrangements, the more cost that the local authority has to bear:

a disincentive to increasing take-up.

A survey by the Fostering Network in 2018 found that in 44% of cases where 'Staying Put' arrangements did not go ahead, it was because local policies and payments prevented it from happening.<sup>24</sup> Foster carers providing Staying Put generally get paid much less than for fostering children under the age of 18: a 2021 survey by the Fostering Network found that three quarters of foster carer respondents who had cared for a young person in an 18+ arrangement experienced a drop-in financial support.<sup>25</sup> Their 2023 report on allowances revealed that Staying Put allowances can differ by up to £12,000 per year.<sup>26</sup>

Many care leavers living with their foster carers as part of Staying Put arrangements are expected to pay rent, from their employment earnings or benefits. This can create messy and anxious conversations between foster carers and young people and can disrupt the dynamics of their relationship. For young people, this can underscore the difference between them and their peers, or other family members in the home, and the arbitrary changes that they face at the age of 18.

Staying Put can provide an invaluable foundation for care-experienced young people, like Zara, and prevent more turbulent and costly housing

“ [You are] treated more as a tenant when you turn 18.

- A care-experienced young person

journeys as they start adulthood. Given the significant financial pressures facing local authorities<sup>27</sup> and the challenges they face in delivering sufficiency of foster care and other care placements,<sup>28</sup> increased and sustainable investment is needed at a national level to ensure that all young people who wish to remain living with their foster carers beyond the age of 18 are able to do so.

### Staying Close

In recent years, the previous Government has piloted a ‘Staying Close’ scheme for children leaving residential care as an alternative to the Staying Put programme. The scheme enables young people who have recently left residential care to live independently, nearby to their previous children’s home, with ongoing support from the staff at the children’s home.<sup>29</sup>

Following an initial pilot in eight sites across the country, additional funding was announced in the Spring Budget 2023 to expand Staying Close to around half of all local

authorities by March 2025. By September 2023, the Staying Close scheme had been introduced in 47 local authorities (30%) in England.<sup>31</sup>

The Department for Education did not include rigid operating principles or criteria for the Staying Close pilot schemes, enabling providers to have flexibility about how they<sup>32</sup> were set up and delivered. This led to real variability across the pilots, for example a pilot scheme run by St Christopher’s, a charitable children’s home provider in Ealing and Hounslow, focused on providing accommodation for young care leavers within one house, whereas Suffolk became guarantor for care leavers<sup>33</sup> accommodation. Whilst the pilot evaluations therefore showed different impacts for young people, the evidence demonstrated clear benefits for young people leaving care across the majority of Staying Close schemes, including:

- A more gradual move towards independence and autonomy with tailored ongoing support;



- Support to enter and remain in education, employment and training, which could include help with childcare, internet access or providing a space to work;
- The ability to develop and maintain strong relationships, resulting in young people feeling support, a strong sense of belonging and meaningful relationships;
- An increase in skills and confidence for independent living; and
- A reduction in risky behaviours, such as drug use, violent behaviour, bullying or suicidal thoughts.<sup>34</sup>

Other benefits across the different pilot evaluations included a reduced risk of homelessness; improved mental health, wellbeing and life satisfaction; reduction in the number of young people going missing, involved in crime or at risk of criminal exploitation.<sup>35</sup> Importantly, every Staying Close pilot was assessed to be either cost neutral or generating a net saving if it were to continue to deliver against its anticipated outcomes.<sup>36</sup>

### **Continuity of care in supported accommodation**

From September 2024, Ofsted have been responsible for inspecting providers of supported accommodation for 16- and 17-year-old children in care, as part of a new regulatory regime introduced by the previous Government.<sup>37</sup> Whilst it is unlawful for children aged 15 or under to be accommodated in supported accommodation, children aged 16- and 17 can live in such settings, which include shared flats and apartments, supported lodgings, and a range of other settings, including caravans and boats.<sup>38</sup>

Whilst providers of these settings may provide children with 'support' they do not provide 'care'. At Become, we have significant concerns about this 'two-tier' care system, with lower standards for 16- and 17-year-olds, that is leaving them without the security, stability and care that they need.<sup>39</sup> With increasing numbers of 16- and 17-year-olds being moved into supported accommodation in recent

years,<sup>40</sup> the care cliff is coming earlier for some young people.<sup>41</sup>

We think it is essential that all children live in settings that provide them with care. Where children aged 16- and 17- are in supported accommodation, there should be options for them to remain living or connected to their home, to provide some continuity of support and accommodation, akin to that provided by the Staying Put and Staying Close schemes.

Every Staying Close pilot scheme was assessed to be either cost neutral or generating a net saving if it were to continue.

## We recommend that:

- The Government legislate to make the Staying Put and Staying Close schemes an ‘opt-out’ legal entitlement for all children whose final placements are in foster care or children’s homes, up to the age of 25.
- The Department for Education publish guidance on the implementation of the Staying Close scheme with clear operating principles and criteria based on the evaluation of the pilot schemes.
- The Department for Education develop a sustainable and adequate funding model for Staying Put to provide consistent funding for foster carers across the country and to enable all young people who wish to remain living with their foster carers to be able to do so.
- The Department for Education update relevant guidance to make clear that Staying Put arrangements should seek to replicate the home environment as closely as possible, in particular in relation to financial agreements around rent and bills.
- The Department for Education explore options to provide continuity of care, accommodation and support up to the age of 25 to young people whose final placements are in care settings other than foster care or children’s homes, such as supported accommodation and supported lodgings.

“

I very much do wish that was something done earlier just so that there was a little bit of a relationship starting to develop rather than you know, turning 18 being told, you know, yeah, it's going to be this new person.

- A care-experienced young person, aged 19

## Missing support every step of the way

Poorly planned transitions from care are leaving young people living in inappropriate housing.

“ I was offered staying put, but I felt like I was sort of overstaying my welcome if I did take it as well ...it was very much just in my mind, because I never did ask.

### Cleo's story

- Cleo

19-year-old Cleo explains, “for me growing up, I would always think about what other people wanted before myself.” But when leaving care she wishes she had felt empowered to make a choice for herself, something she describes as “a selfish decision.”

Her experience was quite the opposite; she felt unheard, inadequately supported, and has consequently faced a significant and still unresolved period of instability.

At 17, Cleo was moved into her first permanent foster placement where she and her foster mum developed a close and supportive relationship, even now she feels like “part of the family.” But when turning 18 coincided with her younger brother moving back home, she chose to do the same to be close to him. “...I didn't want him to feel like he was alone.”

After a couple of months living at home Cleo told social care that she could no longer stay, “... the idea of my mom and I rebuilding our relationship just kind of went out the window.” It was a difficult decision; after leaving she wanted to cut contact with her mum but was concerned about how this would affect her relationship with her brother.

She was uncertain about where she would live next “...I don't really know what was happening in the background, but I don't think it was much because I didn't really hear anything back... everyone was really under the assumption that I was gonna go to university. But uni was never the plan for me. So it just felt like they didn't listen.”

Age 19, after 6 months of waiting and a homelessness assessment, Cleo moved into supported accommodation. The flat is ‘cute,’ and not too far from her old foster carers. But it's temporary and the pressure is still on to find something permanent. Ever determined, Cleo has found a more secure housing option, eligible only to those in full time employment, “So I'm really trying to push myself by the end of September to find work so that I can get onto the scheme.”

Cleo wishes she'd taken the option of ‘staying put.’ But she felt ‘scared’ to ask her foster carer if she would be welcome to stay or open to making some changes to better suit her as a young adult. ‘I was offered staying put, but I felt like I was sort of overstaying my welcome if I did take it as well ...it was very much just in my mind, because I never did ask.’

## Transition planning for young people leaving care

Young people leaving care face numerous and sudden transitions to their home, relationships and support networks, amongst other changes in education or work. Poor quality or poorly timed transition planning can have significant negative impacts on care-experienced young people, leaving them at risk of homelessness, in inappropriate living situations, or in situations where their essential needs are not being met. A recent example assessed by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman highlighted how “inertia” in transition planning led to a young man with additional support needs missing out on weeks of education after being moved 60 miles from his education provider and not having any transport arrangements in place.<sup>42</sup>

Local authorities have legal responsibilities to support young people to prepare for independent living and adulthood, including finding suitable accommodation. A Personal Adviser (PA) should be appointed to support care leavers between the ages of 16-25 and co-ordinate any support that they need or are entitled to.<sup>43</sup> The PA is responsible for monitoring, reviewing and implementing the young person’s pathway

plan – a personalised, live document, that is co-developed with the young person, and sets out their aspirations and needs, and the different ways in which they will be supported to make a successful transition to adulthood.<sup>44</sup> PAs are also expected to work with the young person and housing services to identify appropriate housing options and secure appropriate housing, prior to them leaving care.<sup>45</sup>

Despite this, for too many young people their transition when leaving care is rushed, or not planned and managed effectively. Many care-experienced young people are not fully aware of their key rights and entitlements; their accommodation options are not explained or provided to them - leaving them in inappropriate living situations, which are not meeting their needs. Through our Care Advice Line and research with care-experienced young people, we have heard how young people have felt disempowered during transition planning: that they have not been actively and meaningfully involved in decision-making about where they would live, or adequately informed about the different options available to them.

Existing guidance makes clear that local authorities should ensure that care leavers moving away to university should have accommodation to return to outside of term time,<sup>46</sup> yet we have heard from young care leavers who have not been able to secure this and instead have had to rely on sofa surfing or staying with friends. Similarly, young people have told us about the difficulties that they have faced in securing permanent accommodation after living in student accommodation during university.

PAs have large caseloads, and many care-experienced young people do not have a Personal Adviser until they turn 18. We have heard from young people that they have been left without the regular communication and in-depth support they need to adequately plan or to weigh up different options. PAs also do not receive the same level of professional training, development and qualifications as the wider social care workforce, and some may not be equipped to provide the relevant advice and information to care leavers, or to advocate for them effectively.

43% of care leavers felt that the main professional supporting them had not helped them think about future housing needs (CentrePoint survey).<sup>47</sup>

“ — Support prior to being 18 would help a lot more – (you are) meant to get a PA at 16, but many only get it a week before their 18th.

- A care-experienced young person

As a result, many young people do not have an up-to-date pathway plan in place before they turn 18, detailing their preferred housing options, transition routes or support; and for those that do, pathway plans can be seen as inflexible or as a statutory tick-box exercise.<sup>48</sup> A survey carried out by MyBnK in 2022 found that 40% of care leavers either didn't have a pathway plan or weren't aware if they had one or not.<sup>49</sup>

### Supporting young people leaving care to prepare for independent living

Young people leaving care can have unrealistic expectations of what it will be like to live independently, the type of home they will move into and the housing support available to them. Many young people are unaware that they will not automatically secure

appropriate and affordable housing through the local authority. Similarly, many young people assume that the housing support they receive at 18 is consistent to the ages of 21 or 25.

Statutory guidance sets out that prior to a move to independent living, a young person's "pathway plan must include an explicit assessment of the support they need to develop the skills that they will require to be ready for this significant change"<sup>50</sup>. For many local authorities and care providers, this usually takes the form of specific courses and training to help develop independent living skills like cooking, cleaning or managing household finances.

“ — I wish someone came to speak to me when I was younger – 16/17 period – and talked to me about my different housing options. Making pro's and con's of options so I could make an informed decision.

- A care-experienced young person

Whilst this level of preparation is considered best practice, Become regularly hears from care leavers through our Care Advice Line who have had little or no appropriate support to prepare them to live independently.

Young people have told us about a variety of different skills they would like to learn to enable them to feel more equipped and confident to live independently when leaving care: from cleaning, cooking and DIY to more specific areas, such as writing a CV and applying for jobs, or advice on how to get your credit score up.

Young people have highlighted the necessity of learning how to budget, pay bills and improve their financial literacy to enable them to manage money effectively, yet research has shown how care leavers are not always aware or informed about the different bills that they will be required to pay whilst living independently, and that this can lead to young people falling into debt or rent arrears, or facing eviction.<sup>51</sup>

Even when training programmes are available to support the development of independent living skills,

young people do not always engage with them before leaving care and only realise that they need to learn these skills once they have started to live independently.<sup>52</sup> This underpins the need for ongoing support to be provided to care leavers to adapt to living independently once they have moved out, not just prior to leaving care.

A related issue is a desire amongst some care leavers to disengage from the professional support provided by the local authority at the age of 18, to distance themselves from their experiences whilst in care. If they face housing insecurity or crisis point later down the line, they may wish to reinstate the housing support they were entitled to but find it is no longer available, as a result of them disengaging with their PA or leaving care services.

### Moving into a new home

Leaving care and moving into a new home can be daunting for many care leavers and this can be exacerbated when young people don't receive the appropriate support to help them to manage the move. Care-experienced young people have described how the process of moving and commencing an independent tenancy is often very inefficient, rushed and chaotic, which adds to the

natural stresses and anxieties about moving and the change in support.

Through our Care Advice Line, we have heard from young people leaving care who have not been given any support to move their belongings or have fallen into arrears on day one of a new tenancy due to the delayed processing of housing benefit claims, leaving them at risk of eviction and homelessness.

On moving into their first unsupported tenancy local authorities provide care leavers with a Setting Up Home Allowance to support them with the costs of furnishing their first home which is also known as a Leaving Care Grant. In April 2023, the recommended minimum amount of the Leaving Care Grant was increased from £2,000 to £3,000.<sup>53</sup>

**“ Social services rushing me to move out rather than thinking about what I needed. Having got indefinite leave to remain – they just placed me anyhow without consideration.**

- A care-experienced young person, aged 25

There is limited guidance about how the Leaving Care Grant should be spent, however, communication from the Department for Education to local authorities has specified that this allowance is designed to “enable care leavers to purchase essentials (such as furniture, white goods and carpets/curtains) when they move into their first home”.<sup>54</sup> Through our Care Advice Line, we have heard that several local authorities are not paying the full recommended minimum amount of the Leaving Care Grant to care leavers. Responses to our Freedom of Information requests, set out later in this report, reveal that several local authorities are using the Leaving Care Grant to provide deposits to care leavers, or in some instances, withholding some of the Leaving Care Grant in case a young person may require a deposit in the future.<sup>56</sup>

Care-experienced young people have expressed frustration and disappointment at the way that their Leaving Care Grant was processed highlighting significant bureaucracy such as councils providing restrictions on what

furniture could be bought, where from and how much could be spent on each item - leaving them feeling disempowered, with little choice or control over how their first home was decorated. We also heard from young people that their Leaving Care Grant was not sufficient to cover the essentials that they needed or was processed too late – leaving them to move into their first home without essential furnishings and furniture, such as carpets or a bed.

“ Had to access own savings to cover furnishing; can't spend Setting Home money yourself- have to go with PA (she went once every two weeks- very slow process); PA had control over what was bought ...PA can only spend in certain places e.g. not Facebook Marketplace. So much admin involved in something that should be quickly spent e.g. buying paint.

- A care-experienced young person

## We recommend that:

- The Department for Education strengthens the role of Personal Advisers to improve the support provided to young people, including by introducing standardised training, development & qualifications, with a focus on how PAs can work with young people and partners to support them to secure safe, appropriate and affordable housing options.
- The Department for Education introduce detailed guidance for local authorities to provide more clarity to young people and professionals about the way that the Leaving Care Grant should be administered and what it can be spent on. The grant should be established as a national minimum amount and should be updated annually in line with inflation. Within the guidance, local authorities should be expected to provide more control and autonomy for young people about how and when the grant is spent; and that any funding provided by local authorities to provide tenancy deposits should be additional to the grant.
- Local authorities provide a greater focus on providing tenancy or floating support to young people who have recently left care and moved into independent living; with joint housing protocols and the local offer for care leavers specifying the type of support that the local authority will provide and how this will be delivered.

## Max's story

“—  
Living alone has been very difficult. I was in a very dark place when I first left care and I'm terrified of being alone... If there's nobody to go home to it breaks me.  
- Max

Max found it devastating to leave the children's home he had lived in since the age of 10. “It was the best place I've ever been and it will always hold a special place in my heart. It was my second family.” But he had to go because of his age.

A lot went into preparing for independence. The children's home gradually took steps back, he spent 3 weeks in a training flat to practice budgeting and experience living alone, he was assigned support from a local housing project. Max carefully chose a flat close to family and not too far from the children's home so he could visit. But it wasn't enough.

Max moved into his Council flat aged 17, too young to officially hold the tenancy. Three months later, aged 18, he became fully responsible for the rent and bills and has been struggling to live independently ever since.

ADHD makes it a challenge for Max to learn about budgeting and manage his finances. To make matters worse, the electricity was initially left on 'building supply' quickly leading to significant arrears. With support of a housing support worker, the energy company said they would sort it out, but the problem persists, and the cost of electricity is unusually high. When he can't pay the meter, the electricity cuts out.

An attempted break in and threats from neighbours left Max feeling unsafe in his home. He installed security cameras in every room and reported the neighbours, who were eventually removed. But there is a general lack of security in the building, the door is easy to kick open, and security cameras have been tampered with. The removed tenants still knock on his door and Max still feels unsafe living there.

The stress of moving disrupted Max's college course. Feeling too far behind to catch up, he quit. Spending a lot of time at home alone impacted Max's mental health. “Living alone has been very difficult. I was in a very dark place when I first left care and I'm terrified of being alone... If there's nobody to go home to it breaks me.” Max has had a few relationships, but these did not provide the stability he wanted.

Now age 19, Max has a partner, dog, and rabbit, he is confident about reaching out for support when he needs it. He has learnt through experience, but overall, still finds living independently a huge struggle. Reflecting on his own journey he thinks that leaving care should be decided based on a young person's ability to cope independently, rather than their age.



# Barriers to a stable home

Care-experienced young people face a lack of safe, affordable and appropriate housing options

## Jessica-Rae's story

“ —  
They say that they'll support me but it's hard to believe they will maintain support when they have said that before and didn't do it.

- Jess

Jessica-Rae went into care aged 13 and enjoyed living with her foster carers, but as she got older the relationship broke down and the foster carers decided they didn't want her to live with them anymore.

At 17, halfway through her mock A levels, Jessica-Rae was moved into a flat by herself in a semi-independent arrangement. Jessica-Rae, who had a part-time evening job as well as attending sixth form, wanted to go to university, and social services agreed to help support her financially after her 18th birthday in March, until she started her degree.

Four days before her 18th birthday, however, social services changed their minds. 'I got a call from my Personal Adviser saying that they will be cutting me off on my eighteenth birthday financially, and that I would have to figure out how to pay my rent on my own,' she recalled.

'I'd never agreed to that because my eighteenth birthday is in March, and my A-Levels were in May and June.' The 'care cliff' left Jessica-Rae facing both the stress of exams and the worries of affording her flat.

"I remember getting the call and just crying. I realised I couldn't go out to celebrate my 18th birthday and spend any money because I was going to need it to pay rent," she explained.

"It was an additional hurdle that I just didn't need and the excuse was that A Levels aren't counted as higher education. They'd only be responsible for me once I actually got into university."

Jessica-Rae is at university in Manchester and saving for a deposit to rent in the private sector for when she finishes next year.

"I don't have anywhere else to go once my degree finishes, so I'm going to have to find somewhere to live," she says. "Renting prices in Manchester are so high and I know that I'm going to be cut off again financially by my local authority. They say that they'll support me but it's hard to believe they will maintain support when they have said that before and didn't do it."

## Barriers in accessing social rented accommodation

There is a serious shortage of affordable homes across England. Social housing, provided by local authorities or other social landlords, is often the most affordable option for care leavers, with rent set at approximately 50% of market rates.<sup>57</sup> But demand for social rented accommodation is high and there are not enough homes to accommodate those with a housing need. Local authorities across the country are under significant housing pressure: in March 2023 there were 1.29 million households on social housing waiting lists across England and research for the National Housing Federation (NHF) has estimated there are around 4.2 million households in England with some form of unmet housing need.<sup>59</sup>

Local authorities have flexibility and autonomy about how they determine the allocation of social housing, with most using a bidding system or points-based allocations scheme. Legislation dictates that local authorities should give reasonable and additional preference to certain categories of applicants in the allocation of housing, including people who are homeless, people who are living in insanitary or

overcrowded housing, or those who need to move due to medical or welfare grounds.<sup>60</sup> Guidance states that welfare grounds could encompass a wide range of needs, including the need to “provide a secure base from which a care leaver ... can build a stable life”.<sup>61</sup>

As part of Freedom of Information requests we sent to local authorities in England in July and August 2024, we asked whether they gave any ‘reasonable preference’ to care leavers and how care leavers were prioritised within their social housing allocations policies. In response, most local authorities stated that they provided some level of prioritisation for care leavers, but there was significant variation about the extent that care leavers were prioritised, how this worked in practice and any qualifying criteria or requirements.<sup>62</sup> At one end of the scale, Hertfordshire County Council’s allocation policy provides care leavers with the same as somebody who is homeless; whilst at the other end, the Isle of Wight Council highlighted that there is no legal requirement for Councils to provide reasonable preference to care leavers.<sup>63</sup>

Several councils specified that care-experienced

young people must meet specific requirements or qualifying criteria prior to any additional preference being awarded to them. The most common eligibility criteria included that they were working with their PA, they had been assessed as being ready to live independently or manage a tenancy, or that they had been recommended by children’s services or the leaving care team.<sup>64</sup>

The extent to which care leavers were prioritised for social housing often differed depending on the age of the young person: with care-experienced young people facing an age lottery as well as a postcode lottery. In some local authorities the priority given to care leavers was greatest at the point of them leaving care and taking up their first tenancy; whilst some local authorities provided additional prioritisation to all care leavers up to the age of 21; and others provided this to all care leavers up to the age of 25.<sup>65</sup> Given the likelihood of care leavers securing social housing in some local authorities reduces as they get older, the importance of providing appropriate, secure and affordable housing when they first

leave care becomes even more critical.

“ I guess the change would have to come from central government in terms of statutory laws which would legally require councils to meet those requirements. Just like the up to 25 for support for example.

- A care-experienced young person, aged 23

Where care leavers were given additional prioritisation within social housing allocation policies, there were also differences in how this worked, or the types of properties available to them: one local authority, for example, only allowed care leavers to bid for studio flats. Several local authorities used quotas, reserving a number of properties for care leavers each year, whilst others had quotas about how many care leavers could be put forward for priority banding each year. In a similar way several local authorities would provide care leavers with direct offers of properties instead of requiring them to bid for a particular property.<sup>66</sup>

Although many local

authorities provide some level of additional prioritisation for young people leaving care, we have heard from young people that they do not feel empowered or involved in decision-making, and that their local authorities were only providing a limited number of housing options, ultimately given them a choice between two or three different properties, all of which might be unsuitable to them.

“ The place I have now I didn't choose, the hostel support worker had chosen it and you get 2 options so if you don't like the 1st option then you get one more but you have to take it otherwise you have to wait longer.

- A care-experienced young person, aged 21

**Many young people that were uprooted in care are unable to apply for social housing.**

Another barrier to securing appropriate accommodation for many young people leaving care is the local area connection test that most local authorities employ as a key eligibility criterion for social housing.

On 31st March 2023, 36,390 children in care in England (43.4%) were living in homes outside of their local authority boundary and the proportion of children in care living out of area has continued to increase every year for the last five years.<sup>67</sup>

As our Gone Too Far report examines, living out of area, or far from support networks and home communities, can have a significant negative impact on a child's wellbeing, relationships and development.<sup>68</sup> Although there can be legitimate reasons why some children are moved out of area, such as to safeguard them from exploitation and harm, or to move closer to wider family networks, too often this is due to a lack of appropriate options within the local area that are able to meet their needs.<sup>69</sup>

Many young people spend long periods of time whilst in care living in a new place, or multiple places which are outside of their local authority area. During this time, they may have built vital connections, relationships and a life that they are happy with. However, when leaving care, they may find that they are unable to access or secure social housing where they are

currently living due to local area connection rules; they may only qualify as eligible for social housing within the boundary of their 'home' local authority, an area where they have not lived for years and may not have any enduring connections, or may be triggering to them due to traumatic past experiences.

In these circumstances young people can be faced with an impossible choice between being uprooted again and leaving behind important relationships to secure appropriate and affordable housing or stay within their local area and face housing insecurity.

Under current legislation, where a care leaver is under the age of 21, and has lived in an area that is different to that of their responsible local authority for at least two years, including some time before they turned 16, the young person will also have a local connection in that area.<sup>70</sup> However, we have found from the responses to our Freedom of Information requests that not all local authorities are currently following existing guidance and legislation. For example, several local authorities stated that there were no circumstances or criteria in which care leavers from other local authorities can be assessed as having a

local area connection under the local authority's housing allocations policy.<sup>71</sup>

We welcomed the commitment by the Prime Minister in September 2024 that the new Labour Government would exempt care leavers from local area connection requirements, along with veterans and domestic abuse survivors.<sup>72</sup> It is important that these regulations are introduced without delay, and as part of these reforms, guidance should be updated for local authorities to make clear that care leavers who are living or connected to their area should be prioritised for social housing, instead of just able to apply for social housing.

### **A closed door to private rent**

The vast majority of young people in England aged 16-24, who are not living within their family home, live in private rented accommodation.<sup>73</sup> Care leavers however can face barriers to accessing private rented accommodation - many of which are demonstrated in Matt's story.

Private rented accommodation is often more expensive and less affordable for young people who have recently left care,

many of whom will be on low incomes or in receipt of universal credit. There are also examples of young care leavers facing discrimination from private landlords and other housing providers and there are currently no legal protections preventing landlords from refusing to rent to young people due to them having grown up in care.<sup>74</sup> In one shocking recent example, a public advert posted by the Guinness Housing Association in 2024 read: "Sensitive let: No history of substance misuse within the last five years – no care leavers".<sup>75</sup>

Significant barriers that young people face in accessing private rented accommodation is the requirement to provide a tenancy deposit, which is often equivalent to or more than a month's rent; to provide rent in advance, or to provide a guarantor – somebody who agrees and is legally liable to pay any rent owed to the landlord if the young person doesn't pay. For many care-experienced young people, without savings or a family member willing to act as a guarantor, this simply isn't an option without local authority support.

Through our Freedom of Information requests, we

asked local authorities whether they provided rent guarantor or deposit scheme for care leavers, and if so, what the eligibility criteria were for these schemes.<sup>76</sup>

- In total, 47 local authorities in England (38% of those who were able to provide data) provided a guarantor scheme for care leavers, and 76 did not provide a guarantor scheme (62%).<sup>77</sup>
- 78 local authorities provided a deposit scheme for care leavers (64%), and 44 local authorities did not (36%).<sup>78</sup>
- Several local authorities who provided tenancy deposit or guarantor schemes did so on a case-by-case basis, without specifying clear eligibility criteria.<sup>79</sup>

## Table 3

Number and percentage of local authorities that provided a guarantor scheme for care leavers<sup>80</sup>

	Number of local authorities in England	Percentage of local authorities in England
Local authorities that provide a guarantor scheme for care leavers	47	38%
Local authorities that do not provide a guarantor scheme for care leavers	76	62%

## Table 4

Number and percentage of local authorities that provided a tenancy deposit scheme for care leavers.<sup>81</sup>

	Number of local authorities in England	Percentage of local authorities in England
Local authorities that provide a deposit scheme for care leavers	78	64%
Local authorities that do not provide a deposit scheme for care leavers	12	36%

The responses to Freedom of Information requests included in [the appendix](#) to this report show examples of the different ways that local authorities provide support to care leavers to access private rented accommodation. For example, in addition to being able to provide one month's rent towards a deposit, Westmoreland Council can also provide care leavers with £100 to support any administration fee that they may have to pay an estate agent. However, at least seven, reported that care leavers were able to access a tenancy deposit,

or first month's rent through their Leaving Care Grant - even though the Leaving Care Grant is used as a setting up home allowance for care leavers to be able to purchase.

Given the shortage of social housing, more needs to be done to make private rent a viable housing route for young people leaving care. Barnardo's have estimated that a national rent deposit scheme for care leavers aged 18-24 in England would require an initial one-off investment of £23.5 million and an ongoing annual cost of £380,000, whilst requiring local

authorities to provide a rent guarantor scheme for care leavers would cost an estimated £6m per year.<sup>82</sup> Not only could investment in guarantor and deposit schemes be invaluable in providing young care leavers with a solid foundation to build a positive start to adulthood, it could also lead to significant long-term savings in reducing the risk of homelessness or most costly interventions, such as temporary accommodation.

Care leavers were able to access a tenancy deposit, or first month's rent, through their Leaving Care Grant, even though the Leaving Care Grant is used as a setting up home allowance for care leavers to be able to purchase furniture.

## Matt's story

“The threat of homelessness is always there if you have been in care, no matter how old you are. You're just always on your own.

- Matt

Matt left foster care in Chester and aged 17 moved to Gloucester to be with his girlfriend he'd met online. He lived in supported housing, in a two-bed flat with a key worker occupying the other bedroom. He says: “No one sat me down to ask whether this was the right thing for me to do, or suggested an alternative.”

When he reached 18 and was no longer in care and entitled to a key worker, Matt had to move out of where he was living. Although he was told he could have taken over the tenancy, because it was a two-bed he couldn't afford the rent.

His leaving care team provided no help with accommodation, so he turned to the homelessness team at his local authority who helped with a deposit and acted as rent guarantor for a one-bed flat with his girlfriend. When that relationship ended he was homeless again. “It was a joint tenancy with my girlfriend, but as everything was in my name, I was left with all the bills and the rent and just couldn't afford it, so the property was repossessed.”

Matt left college, got a job at a climbing centre and was sofa surfing, unable to secure a home of his own. “I didn't have enough money or enough financial stability to be able to go and rent again.” A charity called Night Stop, which provides rooms in people's houses, helped Matt with somewhere to live, then he got a job as a manager of a chip shop which came with a flat.

A move to Brighton followed and then Bognor Regis, where he lives now. His brother, also care-experienced, helped him with a deposit and, luckily, his landlord didn't ask for a guarantor. Now aged 28, in a stable relationship and working for 111 in the mental health response unit, Matt feels he has some security in his life. “My home, my accommodation, is my sanctuary. It is where I feel safe, happy and comfortable. But the threat of homelessness is always there if you've been in care, no matter how old you are. You're just always on your own.”

“Having support like everyone else does in the world would have been so much better. I'm grateful to have what I have but I have fought for it. I can't afford to mess up or make mistakes because I have no one to fall back on. If I'm not hard on myself I might let something slip and it will all go wrong.”

## **Lack of financial security as a barrier to appropriate, safe and secure housing**

Impacting young care leavers housing security is affordability. This is due to both the limited number of affordable rental properties and the limited financial means or security that care leavers have.

“**As a care leaver most of us are more likely to be homeless due to unstable financial stability so they are less likely to give care leavers flats/studio due to fear of not being able to keep it.**

**- A care-experienced young person, aged 23**

At Become, we are concerned that many young people leaving care are living on or below the poverty line. The national minimum wage is set at a lower rate<sup>83</sup> for young people under 21 and young people under 25 who are in receipt of universal credit receive a lower rate<sup>84</sup> than adults aged 25 or over. These differences in financial entitlements are based on the assumption that young people between the ages of 18-25 will continue to receive financial support from their family or won't

have the same financial responsibilities associated with living independently – this is often not the case for care leavers.

There have been some welcome changes in recent years, such as the exemption from the shared accommodation rate for care leavers under the age of 25.<sup>85</sup> Despite this, we continue to hear from young people that the under-25 rate of universal credit does not provide sufficient income for them to live independently and to be able to afford rent, bills, food, essentials and to participate fully in society. A study by CentrePoint in 2017 found that 39% of care leavers claiming housing benefit said it wasn't<sup>86</sup> enough to cover their rent.

Many local authorities do provide additional discretionary support to care leavers as part of their local offer, for example, research by The Children's Society has estimated that two-thirds of Councils in England exempt care leavers from paying council tax before the age of 25.<sup>87</sup> However, this assistance is not universal, and care leavers face a postcode lottery in terms of their rights and entitlements, and the financial support available to them.

Given the additional financial responsibilities that care leavers often face from a younger age than their peers, and the absence of a financial safety net to fall back on, it is important that there is more consistent and comprehensive financial support available to young people leaving care to prevent them from facing financial insecurity, which can often lead to housing insecurity or homelessness.

## **Young people living in unsuitable accommodation**

On 31st March 2023, 2,420 care leavers aged 17-21 were living in accommodation that was deemed to be unsuitable by their local authority and a further 2,940 care leavers were living in accommodation that their local authority had no information about.<sup>88</sup>

Guidance clarifies that unsuitable accommodation includes staying in emergency accommodation, bed and breakfasts, hotels, having no fixed abode, or being homeless,<sup>89</sup> however in reality, many more care-experienced young people are forced into accommodation that may



be unsuitable for different reasons including:

- Feeling forced to move into or remain living in accommodation that has damp, mould or various types of disrepair that has not been resolved by the landlord or housing provider;
- Being moved into housing or supported accommodation that is not able to meet all of their health needs, or which has a negative impact on their mental health or wellbeing;
- Being exposed to persistent anti-social behaviour, or being subject to physical or verbal abuse, stigma or discrimination;
- Feeling scared, anxious or isolated in their home, in particular when living in certain shared accommodation settings - such as foyers, hostels or temporary accommodation - where they are forced to live with other adults who may drink, take drugs, have mental health challenges, stay up late and engage in various types of anti-social or threatening behaviour.

Being moved to unsuitable accommodation or living in a home environment where they feel unsafe, isolated or scared, can be harmful for care-experienced young people, compounding the adversity, trauma or complexity they may have faced before entering or during their time in care. This can represent the beginning of turbulent and perilous housing journeys: young people may be forced to leave housing that is damaging their health and wellbeing, without the promise of a more suitable alternative or the same level of housing support once they have left.

Young people have described this as being like a 'double trauma': facing the cliff edge of leaving care, where vital support and relationships fall away, and then being moved to a home where they feel isolated and "abandoned", as described in Duncan's story.

## We recommend that:

- The Government introduce requirements on local authorities, alongside sufficient and sustainable investment, to provide dedicated tenancy deposit and guarantor schemes, and council tax exemptions, to care leavers as part of their local offer.
- The Department for Work and Pensions extends the over-25 rate of universal credit to all care leavers under the age of 25 who are in receipt of the benefit.
- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government introduce regulations to exempt care leavers from the local area connection requirements for social rent.
- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government develop and publish statutory guidance for local authorities on improving access to social housing for care leavers to further encourage local authorities to prioritise care leavers up the age of 25 within social housing allocation policies<sup>90</sup>, including care leavers who are living away from their 'home' local authority.

“

[In the eyes of professionals] a roof over your head trumps your coping mechanisms or needs or wants.

- A care-experienced young person, aged 23

## Duncan's story

“

It was a big jump going from living with people who looked after me to just being dumped on my own. It was just like hell.

- Duncan

Duncan went into care aged 11 and was with the same foster carers until the age of 18. He describes himself as one of the lucky ones. “My foster family treated me like their own son and if I had any problems, I knew I could talk to them.”

When he reached 18, Duncan wanted to stay where he was, as did his foster family, but social services said that wasn't an option. A week after his 18th birthday, Duncan came home from college to find his belongings packed up with the news he was to be moved to a hostel, known as supported accommodation. The police would be called if he didn't go calmly.

“I was completely devastated,” he says. “It was a big jump going from living with people who looked after me to just being dumped on my own. It was just like hell.”

Duncan had his own small flat within the hostel, for which he had to pay rent and bills, but he says it was a frightening environment and once had a glass bottle thrown through his door, which hit him in the face.

“There were a lot of drug dealers and people who liked to cause trouble,” he recalls. “You didn't know who to trust and it didn't feel safe.

Every time you woke up, you would be wondering if your stuff was still there.

“It was a massive change for me from being with my foster family to suddenly going into this place where everyone had their own set of problems. I felt completely abandoned by social services.”

After a year, during which Duncan struggled to find work, Duncan landed a summer job at a PGL children's activity centre. The job came with accommodation and Duncan moved out of the hostel. But when the role came to an end and he turned to social services for help with somewhere to live, he was told he was on his own.

“By then Covid had hit, so I moved in with my mum who was vulnerable,” says Duncan. Now 25, and after a couple of years living with his sister, Duncan is back living with his mum in Eastbourne. He says what happened when he left care still has an impact, making it harder for him to trust in relationships. “It's still tough, even now. You have to do everything for yourself, you still feel abandoned.”

# Preventing homelessness

**Too many young people who have left the care system face homelessness and are left without the appropriate support at crisis point.**

## Disproportionate and growing risk of homelessness amongst care leavers

For many of the reasons set out in this report – including the care cliff that young people face when leaving the care system and the absence of a robust safety net once they reach crisis point – young care leavers face a disproportionate risk of homelessness, compared to other young people.

Our analysis found that care-experienced young people are nine times more likely to face homelessness<sup>91</sup> than other young people. Worryingly, there has been a significant increase in the number of young care leavers assessed as homeless by local authorities in recent years. The number of 18-20 care leavers facing homelessness increased by 54% between 2018/19 and 2023/24 – much higher than the increase in the total number of households, or the total number of young people facing homelessness.<sup>92</sup>

From our work with care-experienced young people, we know this is just the tip of the iceberg and beyond these statistics are many more who are ‘hidden homeless’, sofa

surfing or rough sleeping, who may be unaware of their rights and entitlements and haven't been in touch with their local authority for support. It has been estimated that as many as one in three young people will become homeless within the first two years after leaving care.<sup>93</sup>

Care-experienced young people are nine times more likely to face homelessness than other young people.

Despite statutory guidance explicitly stating that local authorities should not assess care leavers as homeless in order for them to guarantee support,<sup>94</sup> we have heard from care-experienced young people who have been told to present as homeless to their local authority to ensure that they are given priority for housing. It appears this practice is a common experience: in one self-selecting survey carried out by the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum, 25% of care leavers reported having been advised to make themselves homeless to move to a more

<sup>95</sup> appropriate home. This represents a stark illustration of the care cliff that young people leaving care face if they are being encouraged by their local authority to present as homeless as a way of securing an appropriate home.

“ I have just come out of care and the state the system is I have been made homeless even after being promised not after mental health. I had to sofa surf for ages and it does need sorting out.

- Care-experienced young person, aged 18

## Support for care leavers at risk of homelessness

Care-experienced young people who have been told to present as homeless to their local authority to ensure that they are given priority for housing.

At Become, we hear regularly from care-experienced young people

who have faced barriers accessing appropriate support once they have become at risk of homelessness.

In recent years, there have been some welcome policy developments designed to prevent care leavers facing homelessness. The Rough Sleeping Strategy introduced by the previous Government in 2018 included £3.2 million funding to 47 local authorities to employ specialist Personal Advisers to provide intensive support to the care leavers deemed to be most-at-risk of homelessness.<sup>96</sup>

Since 2020, local authorities have been encouraged to develop joint housing protocols to provide collective responsibility for corporate parenting support to young people leaving care.<sup>97</sup> The guidance was updated in May 2024,<sup>98</sup> stating that local authorities are expected to have a joint protocol in place that should cover the following in relation to care leavers:

- Arrangements for appropriate transitions to independent living;
- Identifying and preventing any risks of homelessness early;
- Providing a quick and joined-up response for care leavers who do become homeless; and

- Having robust scrutiny processes in place when intentional homelessness decisions are being considered.

Almost all of the local authorities who responded to our Freedom of Information requests had either published a joint housing protocol for care leavers or had a draft protocol that was due to be published shortly.<sup>99</sup> Going forward, as the relevant regulator, Ofsted should identify and communicate learning about the effectiveness of measures taken by local authorities to provide appropriate transitions for young people leaving care, and to prevent any risks of homelessness.

Homelessness legislation requires local authorities to secure housing for people who are homeless or face homelessness who are in “priority need”.<sup>100</sup> A care leaver aged 18-20 who was in care between the ages of 16-18 automatically qualifies as ‘priority need’,<sup>101</sup> and care leavers aged 21 or over who are assessed as being ‘vulnerable’ as a result of being in care may also be assessed as being in priority need.<sup>102</sup> When assessing vulnerability local authorities should

consider the amount of time a young person was in care and the reason for being in care; their housing journey since leaving care; their support networks; and any risks to abuse, exploitation or criminal activity that they may have faced linked to their care experience.

In 2022-23, 29% of care leavers aged 21 or over who were awarded a relief duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 were assessed as not being in priority need.<sup>103</sup> Research by Just for Kids Law has highlighted the challenges that care leavers this age can face in proving their vulnerability at a time where they are at crisis point, including taking part in psychiatric assessments, having to pay for a GP letter or recounting past traumas multiple times to statutory services.<sup>104</sup>

The assessment of ‘priority need status for care leavers over the age of 20 is another example where the interpretation of rights and entitlements provided to care leavers in regard to housing are inconsistent, meaning that

Care leavers facing homelessness can be granted different levels of support depending on where in the country they are living

Responses to our Freedom of Information requests show that 11 local authorities, such as Cheshire East Council, extend automatic priority need status to all care leavers up to the age of 25.<sup>105</sup>

Another area where care leavers entitlements are not applied consistently across the country is in relation to homeless intentionality rules. Homelessness legislation states that a person is deemed to be intentionally homeless if they deliberately do or fail to do something, which leads to them leaving, or not taking up, reasonable accommodation.<sup>106</sup> Updated guidance from May 2024 makes clear that all attempts should be made to avoid intentionally homeless decisions for care leavers aged 18-25 and that these decisions should be exceptional.<sup>107</sup>

We have heard numerous examples of young care leavers being deemed to be intentionally homeless for reasons such as disengaging with their PA, going away to university or going travelling, such as in Clara's story.

Although the updated guidance on homelessness intentionality practice is welcome, the findings from our Freedom of Information

requests since the new guidance was published demonstrates the variation in application across local authorities. Some local authorities were not aware of the updated guidance, whilst at least eight local authorities, such as Oldham Council, said that they would not make homelessness intentionality decisions against care leavers.<sup>108</sup>

The response from Worcester County Council which states that "there is currently no legislation to give care leavers any additional protection from intentional decisions than someone who is not care-experienced" demonstrates the need for legislative change to fully eradicate homeless intentionality practice for care leavers.<sup>109</sup>

Through our Care Advice Line, we have heard from young people who have spent months living in temporary accommodation once they have secured a prevention or relief duty. Temporary accommodation can often be overcrowded, unsafe and put young people at risk of sexual exploitation, involvement in criminal

activity, mental and physical abuse and pressure to take drugs or alcohol.

In 2023-24, 2,130 children aged 16-17 were owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty in England.<sup>110</sup> It is concerning that so many children are being assessed as homeless without being taken into care.<sup>111</sup> Similarly concerning, are reports about the growing number of 16- and 17-year old children who are entering the care system under section 17, rather than section 20, of the Children Act, which means they will not receive care leaver rights and entitlements at the age of 18, including priority need under homelessness legislation.<sup>112</sup>

### **The cost of homelessness**

Experiencing or facing homelessness can have negative long-term impacts on young people leaving or who have recently left care, including adversely impacting on their physical and mental health and wellbeing, their relationships, finances, their sense of self and identity; as well as increased risk of engaging in criminal activity, risky behaviours or substance abuse.

Homelessness can also have a significant financial cost to public finances too. Research commissioned by CentrePoint, and carried out by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR), has estimated that the average cost of youth homelessness is £27,347 per person per year. This includes the direct costs for government in providing homelessness support, as well as the indirect costs linked to homeless young

people not being able to contribute to societal economic output.

Given the huge human and financial cost of care leaver homelessness, there is a strong moral and financial need for a more comprehensive and joined-up national approach to preventing the risk of care leavers facing homelessness.

## We recommend that:

- The Government amend homelessness legislation to extend automatic 'priority need' to all care leavers up to the age of 25 who are owed a homelessness duty, regardless of vulnerability; and to exempt care leavers from homelessness intentionality rules.
- Ofsted undertake a thematic review to examine the impact of joint working arrangements across local authority services and other partners in supporting care-experienced young people into appropriate and secure accommodation, and preventing the risk of homelessness.

## Clara's story

“...that's such a huge fear of mine, losing my home.

- Clara

During lockdown, her foster carer began making racist and anti-immigration comments in relation to the Black Lives Matter movement. Finding it impossible to stay, Clara requested to move into a semi-independent living flat sooner than planned.

She was moved into a mouldy, semi-independent living flat, with two bedrooms, meaning she had to share with another young person. Her flat mate struggled to cope, so Clara spent a lot of time taking care of her and the flat.

Turning 18 in the summer of 2020, Clara found out that her 'Covid - Calculated' grades were not enough for university. Her flat mate moved out and she was told that someone else would move in. Voicing her concerns about this new arrangement, she was told it was non-negotiable. "This girl is not emotionally regulated at all, and neither am I... they said to me, if you don't allow this girl to move in, we might have to kick you out because you're being seen as bed blocking." It didn't work out again and her flat mate moved. Then Clara was told that the spare room would be used for care leavers returning from university for their holidays.

This continued for a few months until Clara moved to a one-bed flat in the same unit and, despite some safety and security issues, it was the best place so far. Clara always wanted to travel so, having worked hard to save money, she went away for a few weeks. Social Care told her they could not hold her flat despite saying previously they could.

Upon her return, Clara found "They were using homelessness as a punishment for me going away and fulfilling self-development opportunities" and she would move into emergency accommodation. Clara's complaint about this was dealt with by the social work manager who made the decision to end her tenancy - they explained it was a tactic designed to pressurise Housing into moving her application along. Clara believes that so much pressure was put on the move that, when it did happen in October 2023, the property was unfinished with no heating or plumbing for a washing machine.

Now 22, Clara runs a successful business. She feels grateful to have a home and some sense of stability where she can begin healing, but at the back of her mind is a constant fear of losing it all and ending up on the housing register again. "...that's such a huge fear of mine, losing my home."



## Conclusion

The stories that young people shared with us are at the heart of this report.

No young person leaving care should have to live in unsafe accommodation or be left homeless – but that is the reality that many care-experienced young people are facing right now.

We have heard far too many examples of missed opportunities where improved planning, support or involvement in decisions at a key moment could have made a real difference in providing young people with the stable home and foundation that we all need as we move into adulthood.

### **This can be fixed.**

With the right action now from national and local government we can make sure young people leaving care have suitable housing options and the right **Support** in place **Every Step of the Way.**

## Our full recommendations:

- The Government legislate to make the Staying Put and Staying Close schemes an ‘opt-out’ legal entitlement for all children whose final placements are in foster care or children’s homes, up to the age of 25.
- The Department for Education publish guidance on the implementation of the Staying Close scheme with clear operating principles and criteria based on the evaluation of the pilot schemes.
- The Department for Education develop a sustainable and adequate funding model for Staying Put to provide consistent funding for foster carers across the country and to enable all young people who wish to remain living with their foster carers to be able to do so.
- The Department for Education update relevant guidance to make clear that Staying Put arrangements should seek to replicate the home environment as closely as possible, in particular in relation to financial agreements around rent and bills.
- The Department for Education explore options to provide continuity of care, accommodation and support up to the age of 25 to young people whose final placements are in care settings other than foster care or children’s homes, such as supported accommodation and supported lodgings.
- The Department for Education strengthens the role of Personal Advisers to improve the support provided to young people, including by introducing standardised training, development & qualifications, with a focus on how PAs can work with young people and partners to support them to secure safe, appropriate and affordable housing options.

## Our full recommendations (con't):

- The Department for Education strengthens the role of Personal Advisers to improve the support provided to young people, including by introducing standardised training, development & qualifications, with a focus on how PAs can work with young people and partners to support them to secure safe, appropriate and affordable housing options.
- The Department for Education introduce detailed guidance for local authorities to provide more clarity to young people and professionals about the way that the Leaving Care Grant should be administered and what it can be spent on. The grant should be established as a national minimum amount and should be uprated annually in line with inflation. Within the guidance, local authorities should be expected to provide more control and autonomy for young people about how and when the grant is spent; and that any funding provided by local authorities to provide tenancy deposits should be additional to the grant.
- Local authorities provide a greater focus on providing tenancy or floating support to young people who have recently left care and moved into independent living; with joint housing protocols and the local offer for care leavers specifying the type of support that the local authority will provide and how this will be delivered.
- The Government introduce requirements on local authorities, alongside sufficient and sustainable investment, to provide dedicated tenancy deposit and guarantor schemes, and council tax exemptions, to care leavers as part of their local offer.
- The Department for Work and Pensions extends the over-25 rate of universal credit to all care leavers under the age of 25 who are in receipt of the benefit.
- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government introduce regulations to exempt care leavers from the local area connection requirements for social rent.
- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government develop and publish statutory guidance for local authorities on improving access to social housing for care leavers to further encourage local authorities to prioritise care leavers up to the age of 25 within social housing allocation policies, including care leavers who are living away from their 'home' local authority.
- The Government amend homelessness legislation to extend automatic 'priority need' to all care leavers up to the age of 25 who are owed a homelessness duty, regardless of vulnerability; and to exempt care leavers from homelessness intentionality rules.
- Ofsted undertake a thematic review to examine the impact of joint working arrangements across local authority services and other partners in supporting care-experienced young people into appropriate and secure accommodation and preventing the risk of homelessness.

## Footnotes

1. Become (2024), Press release (03/10/2024): Shocking new figures show 4,300 young care leavers facing homelessness, an increase of 54% in the last five years
2. See footnote 91 for full explanation of this calculation and analysis.
3. Department for Education (2023), Children Looked After in England, including Adoptions: reporting year 2023
4. Department for Education (2023), Children's social care reform accelerates with more support for care leavers (press release: 21st September 2023).
5. Some local authorities offer tenancy deposit schemes to provide financial assistance to tenants of private rented accommodation to cover the cost of their deposit. Similarly, guarantor schemes are where the local authority agrees to guarantee the payment of rent to a landlord – a requirement some landlords insist on when a person is on a low income.
6. Local authorities have a legal duty to provide emergency accommodation to anybody who is homeless and deemed to be in 'priority need'. Homelessness legislation makes clear that care leavers aged 18-20 automatically have priority need status, whilst for care leavers aged 21 and over this depends on their 'vulnerability'.
7. Become (2024), Care Advice Line
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10. Office for National Statistics (2022) 'Adults living with parents' <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/datasets/youngadultslivingwiththeirparents>, calculated for 18-25 year olds using raw data.
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14. All figures rounded to the nearest 10 and anything less than 10 suppressed to ensure anonymity and entered as a 'c'. As a result, figures do not sum to totals and percentages do not necessarily sum to 100. Different types of accommodations have been grouped as follows: 'Supported accommodation' includes: 'semi-independent and transitional accommodation, and supported lodgings. 'Crisis accommodation' is used to denote more precarious living situations (likely as the result of, or a risk of homelessness including: bed and breakfasts, homelessness/no fixed abode, foyers and emergency accommodation. 'Other' includes community homes, ordinary lodgings, gone abroad, custody and other accommodation. Figures exclude young people 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.
15. Department for Education, Department for Work and Pensions and HMRC (2013), "Staying Put": Arrangements for Care Leavers aged 18 and above to stay on with their former foster carers – DfE, DWP and HMRC guidance
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17. Action for Children (2020), Giving care leavers the chance to stay: Staying Put six years on
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22. Action for Children (2020), Giving care leavers the chance to stay: Staying Put six years on
23. The methodology for allocating funding remained the same between 2022-25 as previous years. See - Department for Education (2022), S31 Staying Put Implementation Grant (New Burdens) Determination Letter 2022- 2025 [Project\_6622] [31/6003]
24. Fostering Network (2018), England Foster Care Allowances and Fees Survey 2017-18: Summary Report
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26. The Fostering Network (2023) 'Our children deserve better': Calling for a fairer funding framework for children and young people in foster care
27. Local Government Association (2024), Relationship reset with whoever forms next government needed as councils face more than £6bn funding gap
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30. HM Treasury, Spring Budget 2023, March 2023, para 3.27
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32. See Heyes, K et al (2020), St Christopher's Staying Close Pilot; Allen, D et al (2020), Bristol City Council Staying Close Pilot; Neagu, M et al (2020), The Fair Ways Staying Close Project; Szifris, K et al (2020), Staying Close North Tyneside (pilot), Mitchell-Smith, Z et al (2020), Staying Close Suffolk; Dixon, J et al (2020), The Break Staying Close, Staying Connected Project; Neagu, M et al (2020), The Portsmouth Aspiration Staying Close Project
33. Ibid
34. Ibid
35. Ibid
36. Ibid
37. Department for Education (2023), Guide to the supported accommodation regulations including quality standards
38. Ibid
39. Become (2023), Supported accommodation proposal concerns
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43. Department for Education (2018), Extending Personal Adviser support to all care leavers to age 25 Statutory guidance for local authorities
44. Department for Education (2015), The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations Volume 3: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers
45. Department for Education (2018), Local offer guidance: guidance for local authorities
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47. CentrePoint (2017), From care to where? Care leavers' access to accommodation
48. Ibid
49. My BnK (2022), Do local authorities provide support that care leavers need to help them manage their personal finances and transition into independent living?
50. Department for Education (2021) 'Children Act Regulations Volume Three' [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1051441/CA1989\\_Transitions\\_Guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1051441/CA1989_Transitions_Guidance.pdf), page 19, section 3.9
51. Ofsted (2022), 'Ready or not': care leavers' views of preparing to leave care
52. CentrePoint (2017), From care to where? Care leavers' access to accommodation
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65. Ibid
66. Ibid
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68. Become (2023), Gone Too Far: Preventing children in care being moved miles from the people and places that matter to them
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71. Although in some circumstances this was due to the Council not having a local area connection test.
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73. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020), English housing survey, private rented sector: 2019-20
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77. A further 12 local authorities who responded to our Fol request did not provide an answer to this question, or answered as N/A.
78. A further 13 local authorities who responded to our Fol request did not provide an answer to this question, or answered as N/A.
79. NB on methodology. A minority of local authorities provided a guarantor or deposit scheme solely for care leavers under the age of 18; whilst several other local authorities provided deposit schemes through homelessness prevention schemes, which care leavers could access only if they were homeless. In our assessment, we have not assessed local authorities as providing a tenancy deposit or guarantor scheme for care leavers in these two circumstances, given that they were only accessible by care leavers below the age of 18 or care leavers facing homelessness. For full findings and methodology see: Become (2024), End the Care Cliff – Appendix: Data from Freedom of Information requests to local authorities
80. Become (2024), End the Care Cliff – Appendix: Data from Freedom of Information requests to local authorities
81. Ibid
82. Barnardo's (2023), The case for a national rent guarantor and deposit scheme for care leavers aged 18-24 in England
83. Low Pay Commission (2024), The National Minimum Wage in 2024
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89. Department for Education (2024), Children looked-after by local authorities in England Guide to the SSDA903 collection 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 – Version 1.1
90. Building on existing guidance to care leavers for local authorities on improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse, and for members of the Armed Forces. See: Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Social housing allocations guidance: collection
91. This is based on a comparison between the rate of care-experienced young people aged 18-25 who received a statutory homelessness duty in 2022-23, which we estimate at 9.13% of all care leavers aged 18-25; and the rate of non- care-experienced young people aged 18-24 who received a statutory homeless duty, which we estimate at 0.97%. Due to slight differences in the age-ranges and time periods, there may be a small margin for error with this analysis, but we expect this to be minimal. A full explanation and data sources can be found in the appendix to this report: Become (2024), End the Care Cliff – Appendix: Data from Freedom of Information requests to local authorities
93. Become (2024), Press release (03/10/2024): Shocking new figures show 4,300 young care leavers facing homelessness, an increase of 54% in the last five years
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96. National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum (2024), In their own words: safe and affordable homes
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99. Ibid
100. Become (2024), End the Care Cliff – Appendix: Data from Freedom of Information requests to local authorities
101. Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018), Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities, chapter 8.
102. Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018), Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities, chapter 22.
103. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024), Households with care leavers 18-20 and 21 plus: 2023-24, table MD1\_CL\_21plus
104. Just for Kids Law (2022), Hitting brick walls: barriers faced by homeless care leavers
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106. Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (2018), Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities, chapter 9.
107. The guidance states that intentional homelessness decisions should only be made by a housing team following consultation with children’s services and the involvement of the care leaver’s Personal Adviser or other relevant professionals. These decisions need to be approved by senior leaders in both the housing team and children’s services team, and consideration should first be given to the young person’s wellbeing and maturity, and whether the accommodation met the young person’s needs. Senior leaders should also consider what steps have been taken to prevent an intentionally homeless decision and the ongoing plan to meet housing and support needs. See Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and Department for Education (2024), Joint housing protocols for care leavers: good practice advice
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CARE  
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