

## **LEAVING CARE & TRANSITION**

### **Young Person's Guide**



	<b>CONTENT</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
1.	Contents	2
2.	Introduction	2
3.	Who is this Guide for?	2
4.	Leaving Care	4
5.	Personal Advisor	4
6.	The Leaving Care Assessment of Need	5
7.	The Pathway Plan	5
8.	Reviewing the Pathway Plan	7
9.	What if I don't co-operate?	8
10.	What happens if I am living in a different area?	8
11.	Young People in Custody	8
12.	Young People in the Armed Forces	12
13.	What if I am not happy with the support I am getting?	12

## **Introduction**

Leaving Care and Transition is all about preparing you for when you are no longer 'cared for'. Whilst you will be supported in preparing for when you leave care, some young people can be ready in one area of their life but not in others. Other young people who have not been cared for can call on their families to support them, but you may not have the same support. It is therefore important that you receive the right support, at the right time to help you develop and achieve all the skills you will need when you become independent.

This document explains how Rochdale Children's Services will support you. Rochdale takes their responsibilities to you very seriously and want to provide you with the opportunities and support you need to move successfully into adulthood and independence.

## **Who is this Guide for?**

There are four groups of young people who would be entitled to support in relation to Leaving Care. The information below shows what each group is and how Rochdale will provide support.

	<b>DEFINITION</b>	<b>ROCHDALE'S DUTIES</b>
Eligible	A young person who is aged 16 or 17 years and has been cared for by the Local Authority for a period of at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 years, some of which was after their 16 <sup>th</sup> or 17 <sup>th</sup> birthday, and is still cared for. The total does not include a series of pre planned, short term placements up to four weeks and the child or young person returns to their parent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To undertake a Leaving Care Assessment of Need</li> <li>▪ To prepare a Pathway Plan</li> <li>▪ To keep the Pathway Plan under review</li> <li>▪ To appoint a Personal Advisor</li> </ul>

Relevant	A young person who was previously an eligible young person but who is no longer cared for and is under the age of 18 years. If the young person returns home for a period of 6 months or more after leaving care, and is cared for by a parent, which is thought of as successful, they would no longer be a 'Relevant' young person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To stay in touch with the young person</li> <li>▪ To undertake a Leaving Care Assessment of Need To prepare a Pathway Plan</li> <li>▪ To keep the Pathway Plan under review</li> <li>▪ To appoint a Personal Advisor (unless this was done when the young person was Eligible)</li> <li>▪ To provide accommodation</li> <li>▪ To provide assistance to meet the young person's needs in relation to education, training or employment</li> </ul>
Former Relevant	A young person who has reached the age of 18 years but not 21 years and who was eligible and / or relevant prior to becoming 18. Where a young person is being supported with education or training, they remain a former relevant young person to the end of the agreed programme, even where that takes the young person beyond the age of 21 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To consider the need to support wherever the young person is living</li> <li>▪ To stay in touch with the young person</li> <li>▪ To review the Pathway Plan</li> <li>▪ To continue the support of the Personal Advisor</li> <li>▪ To provide financial assistance to support the young person in respect of education, employment and training</li> <li>▪ To continue to provide support until the young person is 21 years of age, or where the Pathway Plan states that the young person is in education or training beyond 21 years.</li> <li>▪ To pay a higher education bursary to young people who started a course after 2008</li> <li>▪ To support young people in full time further or higher education after the age of 21 and under 25</li> <li>▪ Appointing a Personal Advisor</li> <li>▪ Complete an assessment of needs</li> <li>▪ Assess the appropriateness of a course and how it will support the young person achieving their ambitions.</li> <li>▪ Prepare a Pathway Plan</li> <li>▪ Provide assistance to meet the young person's educational or training needs</li> </ul>
Qualifying	A young person who doesn't meet the criteria for being an eligible young person but who is or was a looked after young person, for example where a young person has no parent to turn to for help or where the parent does not have the capacity to provide assistance. Young people can be deemed 'Qualifying' for example as a result of being cared for immediately prior to becoming subject to a Special	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To assess the young person's needs</li> <li>▪ To establish whether the young person needs advice and assistance to cope in the community and becoming independent</li> <li>▪ To develop a plan with the young person in relation to support to be provided</li> <li>▪ Provide advice, guidance and assistance to certain groups of young people who qualify for leaving care support</li> <li>▪</li> </ul>

	Guardianship Order or subject to a private fostering arrangement.	
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## Leaving Care

You may leave care before you are 18 years of age. If you are 16 or 17 years of age, the **Director of Children's Services** but be sure that your wishes and feelings have been obtained and considered, your IRO has been consulted and your relatives have been spoken to where appropriate.

## What is a Personal Advisor

A Personal Advisor (PA) is the person who will ensure that you receive the right kind of personal support. You will be allocated when you are 16 years of age and will know who your PA is and how to contact them. Rochdale will make every effort to keep the same PA over the period you receive support. Rochdale will also offer you a choice in your PA to meet your individual needs where possible. You will have a social worker and a PA from 16 years of age, and the PA will continue to support you after you leave care.

The PA must have knowledge, skills and experience in understanding children and young people, the legislation affecting care leavers and the issues that affect cared for young people as they prepare for and leave care. They will work closely with other professionals, for example Doctors and Nurses involved in your health assessments and will support you in respect of your physical and mental health and well being and Housing Officers to support your accommodation needs.

Your PA will develop a relationship with you, provide advice, support you and will listen to your wishes and views. They will support the Leaving Care Assessment of Needs and the development, implementation, monitoring and review of the Pathway Plan.

The PA will co-ordinate support and services and ensure that you receive support at the right time. They will monitor how the support you are receiving is helping you and will encourage you to accept and use the support offered. The support you may require would be in relation to manage your finances and bank account, caring for yourself, managing your own home. Your PA will have access to specialist advice and information and will be able to obtain support to meet your needs.

Your PA will visit and keep in touch with you to make sure that your Pathway Plan is meeting your needs. You and your PA will agree how you will 'keep in touch' for example text messages, emails, telephone conversations and visits. The PA is required to visit your accommodation within 7 days of you moving in and must make sure that it is suitable for you on an ongoing basis. They will also discuss your Pathway Plan before the review date (after 28 days) and will visit you at least every 2 months but this could be more often depending on your needs and circumstances for example if you have a problem your PA will visit you more often.

Your PA must keep up to date and accurate records of their involvement with you and where they talk to other professionals or individuals about you. These records will help to keep an eye on your Pathway Plan and inform the Review. You can access your records at any time and the **Access to Records** leaflet will help you to do this.

Your PA will continue to support you until you are 21 years of age, unless you are involved in a programme of education or training, as long as Rochdale feels this is appropriate and will support you to achieve your ambitions, in which case it could be up to your 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **The Leaving Care Assessment of Need**

All eligible, relevant and former relevant young people will have a multi agency assessment of their needs in relation to the advice and support they need in order to prepare for leaving care and when they leave care.

Your social worker is responsible for organising the Assessment of Need. In Rochdale this is also called a Pathway Plan Part 1. The assessment must be completed no later than 3 months after your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday or if you didn't become cared for until after you were 16, three months after this date. Your social worker will be aware if you are doing examinations or there are any other important events in your life and will make sure that the assessment doesn't impact on these.

The Leaving Care Assessment of Need will be based on your Care Plan. It is important that you are involved in the assessment and any meetings held and you will be supported in contributing fully.

A number of people will also be involved to make sure that all of your needs are considered, for example your parent, carer, school or college, advocate, health professional, PA or anyone else who would be relevant. Your social worker will record who is involved, who wasn't involved and why and what was discussed.

The assessment will focus on all aspects of your life and your individual needs and circumstances. The people involved in the assessment will be able to share their knowledge and understanding about you. Once all of the information has been gathered together, it will be recorded in the Pathway Plan Part 1 document and everyone involved will sign. You will receive a copy of the assessment within 2 weeks of it being completed and your social worker will discuss it with you.

The assessment will also consider whether you are entitled to a 'Staying Put' arrangement. This relates to eligible young people living with Foster Carers. There is a Young Person's Guide to 'Staying Put' arrangements, which you can read for further information.

The Leaving Care Assessment of Need and your Care Plan will then support the development of the Pathway Plan, which is also called Pathway Plan Part 2. If you are still cared for your Placement Plan / Placement Information Record will also be updated to evidence how your placement will support you as outlined in your Pathway Plan.

### **The Pathway Plan**

Your Pathway Plan will be completed within 3 months of your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday or if you became cared for after your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, within three months of this date. The Pathway Plan will be based on and include your Care Plan and Personal Education Plan. You will be an important part of developing your Pathway Plan, setting goals and what support you need, including services to be provided. You may need more specialist support and services for example if you have a disability, are in custody or are an unaccompanied asylum seeker.

The Pathway Plan includes your ambitions for the future, how you are managing, what support you need, who will help you and when this support will take place. It includes contingency plans, that is alternative plans in case your main plan doesn't work out or isn't possible. The table below sets out what will be considered and included in your Pathway Plan.

<b>YOUR NEEDS</b>	<b>WHAT WILL BE DISCUSSED AND INCLUDED</b>
Health and Development	Do you have a doctor and dentist, do you attend appointments, do you need specialist health and therapeutic support, do you understand how to live a healthy life, do you enjoy and take part in leisure activities?
Education, Training and Employment	How you are doing in school or college, how you are expected to do in examinations, issues included in your Personal Education Plan, what are your ambitions, what career are you interested in, whether you wish to go to University, be involved in an apprenticeship, opportunities for work experience, career mentoring.
Emotional and Behavioural Development	Your self esteem, confidence and resilience, contact and relationship with friends and family, understanding of other's feelings, ability to take responsibility for your own behaviour and actions, ability to make appropriate relationships, adapt to change, manage stress, show self control and self awareness.
Identity	Do you need assistance, advice or support in respect of your ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, being cared for and a care leaver, what key documents you have including your National Insurance Number, a Passport, your birth certificate, a driving licence.
Family and Social Relationships	Your relationship with your parents and family, whether you have contact with people important to you, do you have friends and support from significant adults, do all of these relationships help you, are there any negative issues you require support with?
Practical and other skills necessary for independent living	Do you have all of the practical skills you need to be independent and are you prepared for taking on greater responsibility as an adult? What support do you need?
Financial Arrangements	Can you manage money, do you have a bank account, are you able to budget your money, do you save money, do you have advice and support regarding money matters, do you have sufficient money to meet your expenses, do you have additional financial needs, are you aware whether you are entitled to benefits?
Accommodation (suitability)	Where are you living, is it suitable, where are you intending to live when you leave care, do you need support in relation to accommodation?
Support	How often will your social worker or PA visit you, how will this happen, who else is involved and how will they help you,

Your Pathway Plan will clearly identify what role each person will undertake in providing you with the support you need. In relation to gaining employment the following link will provide

additional information <http://www.catch-22.org.uk/programmes-services/care2work/>

There is a **Young Person's Guide to financial assistance**, which explains what support you may be entitled to depending on your circumstances. Your Pathway Plan will have a summary of financial issues attached. The Young Person's Guide also provides information regarding the 16 – 19 Bursary Fund which helps young people in education. The following link will give you more information about this. [Department for Education website/The 16-19 Bursary Fund](#).

In relation to your accommodation, Rochdale is responsible for making sure that it is suitable. There is a **Suitability Checklist** which explains what your social worker or PA will look for. For example the general state of repair, whether the facilities and services provided are appropriate, whether it is safe, where it is located, what support is available, what your tenancy status is, what financial commitments are involved, what your views are about your accommodation, whether you understand your rights and responsibilities regarding your accommodation and whether you understand the funding arrangements.

Your Pathway Plan will identify what you are aiming for when you leave care, but sometimes things don't work out, therefore it is important to have a contingency plan, that is what would happen if your original plan didn't work out.

If you need ongoing support from Adult Social Care, your Pathway Plan will include the arrangements for notifying Adult Social Care and when they will become involved.

When the Pathway Plan is completed it will be approved by a Manager responsible for care leavers, and then everyone involved will sign it. Your social worker will explain your Pathway Plan to you and make sure you understand and are happy with it. Your social worker will also speak to you about who gets a copy of your Pathway Plan. It is helpful for anyone named in the plan or contributing to it gets a copy. Where possible the social worker will respect your wishes but there may be occasions where they feel a copy of the Plan needs to be shared. This will be recorded and you will be notified. You can challenge this decision and request to be present when the information is shared. It may be that only parts of the plan are shared however this will be discussed and explained to you at the time.

Finally your plan will include your wishes and feelings and any comments you wish to make. Your Pathway Plan will be written in a way that supports your understanding and covers your ambitions, and what will happen. If you need the plan to be translated or independent support, for example an advocate, your social worker will help you.

### **Reviewing your Pathway Plan**

Your Pathway Plan will be reviewed at least every 6 months but may take place more often if you or your PA ask, or there has been a significant change in your circumstances.

The review will check whether the Plan is working, that the goals that were set are right and that you are benefiting from the support in place. Everything included in the plan will be discussed to make sure that the plan is working.

If you are still cared for, your Pathway Review will take place alongside your care review and will be chaired by your Independent Reviewing Officer. If you have left care and are a relevant young person, the review date will be set at the last care review before you leave care, but at least within 6 months of becoming a relevant young person. If you are a former

relevant young person, the date of the first review will take place within 6 months of your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. For relevant and former relevant young people the Pathway Review will be chaired by an independent person. You could chair your reviews and would be given support to do this.

The last review prior to your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday or leaving care will agree how often your future reviews will be, how they will be held, and who should be involved. These decisions will be recorded in the minutes. Your Pathway Plan will be monitored at least every 6 months. You will be supported in travelling to your review and the date and time should be convenient to you and your commitments.

If you move to accommodation which is not inspected by OFSTED, a review will be organised within 28 days, and agree how often further reviews will be held. If your social worker or PA assesses that you are at risk for example because you have been charged with an offence and may receive a custodial sentence and may lose your accommodation or you are being evicted and may become homeless they will organise a review. You can request a review at any time.

### **What if I don't co-operate?**

If you decide that you do not wish to co-operate or engage with the support or advice planned, a review will be organised, which could take place by telephone, email or by letter as long as the chair and the PA agree. Your PA will talk to you about developing a revised Pathway Plan which everyone agrees with.

If you are not co-operating, your PA will continue to try to get in touch with you and find a way for you to work together. They will record how they try to do this and how the Pathway Plan will be reviewed. You will be given a copy of any reviews and will be advised that you can contact Children's Services at any time. Your PA will continue to be responsible for you and will write to you, send birthday cards and let you have information about services or events you may be interested in.

### **What happens if I am living in a different area?**

You may have been living in another part of the country and wish to remain there when you leave care or you may move to live elsewhere for whatever reason. Children's Services is responsible for making sure that you receive the same level of support that you would receive if you lived in Rochdale. Children's Services will speak to the authority where you are or will be living before you leave care. Your social worker or PA will advise you how to access support and services from another authority and will also confirm this in writing to you.

If you are moving to live in another authority, a meeting will be organised to discuss the support to be provided.

### **Young People in Custody**

If you are in custody, your Pathway Plan will continue and your social worker or PA will continue to visit you on a regular basis, with the first visit being within 10 days. Your social worker or PA will work with the Youth Offending Team or Probation Service to provide emotional, practical and financial support whilst you are in custody. A review will be held at least 1 month before you are released from custody to give enough time to plan for your future, including finding suitable accommodation if needed, who will collect you and what



support you will need.

If you are an eligible cared for young person, and receive a custodial sentence you will continue to be cared for, unless you are accommodated under S20 of Children Act 1989. Your legal status is discussed at your review and you can ask your social worker to explain this to you if you are not sure.

If you are remanded to Local Authority accommodation, Youth Detention Accommodation or Secure accommodation you will become cared for.

The responsibilities of Children's Services are different depending on whether you are eligible, relevant or former relevant.

- Relevant Young People in Custody

If you are aged 16 or 17 years of age and were previously an eligible young person, you will be entitled to support as a care leaver by the Local Authority who was responsible for you before you entered custody. Children's Services will allocate a Personal Advisor who will keep in touch with you and will also support your Pathway Plan. The Pathway Plan will include support you may need when you are released from custody, including accommodation. Children's Services and the Youth Offending Team (YOT) will work together to support you.

- Young people who are not Relevant

If you are not a Relevant young person and are no longer cared for following being sentenced to custody, Children's Services will organise for someone to visit you to assess your needs. This may be a social worker or PA, and they will consider what support, advice and assistance you may need whilst in custody and upon release. The assessment will consider all of the issues identified in the Pathway Plan, but may also consider you becoming cared for following your release.

- Sentencing

If you are cared for your social worker will attend court when you attend. However if you are not known to Children's Services and a social worker is not in Court, the Youth Offending Team will let Children's Services know about you and what your sentence was including being remanded to custody and where you have been detained.

If you are cared for, your social worker will be responsible for visiting you and will notify your Independent Reviewing Officer. However if you were not known and did not have a social worker, you will be allocated a social worker. This may be from the Youth Offending Team for a short period of time whilst Children's Services identify someone to support and visit you.

Within 5 days of being placed in custody, your social worker will ensure that they provide information about you to the people in charge of where you have been placed. They will let them know about your legal status, whether you were cared for, who has [Parental Responsibility](#) for you, information about your family or carers and contact arrangements, the contact details of your social worker and their line manager, information about you to ensure your safety and about your needs which will support the Custodial establishment to care for you for example in relation to your health and educational needs and the date the social worker will be visiting you. Your social worker will also ask how you have settled in and agree the visiting arrangements.

- Visiting

Your social worker will visit you within 10 working days of you being placed in a custodial establishment and will continue to visit when reasonably requested by you or a member of staff in the custodial establishment, your parents or person with Parental Responsibility or the YOT case manager. On the first visit your social worker will complete an assessment of your needs whilst in custody and on release. They will consider any assessments which have been completed previously, your Care Plan (where appropriate) and any new information from the YOT or custodial establishment.

The assessment will consider your educational needs, whether you have any special needs or abilities, your health and your emotional needs, whether you are worried about anything, whether there is a risk of you self harming, your ethnicity, religion and cultural needs, whether you would like an advocate, whether your parents are able to exercise their responsibilities for you, whether you need clothes, books, money or other practical support, visiting arrangements for your family and other significant people in your life, how often your social worker will visit, where you are likely to go upon release and if you cannot return home, to look at alternative arrangements for your accommodation. Your wishes, feelings and comments will be an important part of this assessment. Other people will also be asked to contribute to the assessment, for example your parents or other person with Parental Responsibility, previous carers, IRO, previous social worker, staff in the custodial establishment and YOT.

The assessment will be completed within 20 days of you entering custody. The social worker will include recommendations about what advice, assistance and support you need whilst in custody and following your release. They will consider whether you should become cared for when you are released from custody depending on your circumstances and needs.

Your social worker will visit you at least every 6 weeks for the first year and no more than 3 monthly after that. They will also visit you if you request an additional visit for example to attend a remand or sentence planning meeting. If there are concerns about your safety or welfare your social worker will visit. On each visit your social worker will speak to you in private unless you refuse or it is decided that this is inappropriate.

Where there are concerns about you for example the care you are receiving, the suitability of your placement, this will be discussed with the staff at the custodial establishment. If Children's Services remain concerned and feel you need to be moved they can speak to the YOT will speak to the Youth Justice Board.

- Young people serving long sentences

Children's Services may speak to the authority where your custodial establishment is located and ask them to support you in relation to your release plan in adulthood. They will also advise whether you will be entitled to leaving care support and services. The Youth Justice Board will also be informed of your details and the length of your sentence.

If you become 18 years of age whilst in custody you may be moved to an adult prison. YOT will transfer responsibility for you to the Probation Service.

- Release

There a number of options to be considered when you are released. You may return to your

parents or family with support from Children's Services or YOT. You may not be able to return home after your release and therefore your social worker will consider with you whether you should become looked after (if you are under 18 years of age when you are released) or Children's Services and YOT will meet with Housing and other relevant services before you are released to make appropriate arrangements for suitable accommodation and support.

Children's Services will be involved in the plans for your release including where you are considered for early release or home curfew detention, electronic monitoring or an Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP) or [MAPPA](#) arrangements.

If possible you will visit your new accommodation, placement, employment or educational facility before you are released.

A report / plan will be completed and you will receive a copy. A copy will also be given to your parents or those with Parental Responsibility unless this is not appropriate, the Governor or Manager of the custodial establishment, the YOT Manager, Children's Services of the authority you are being detained in if you are not in Rochdale and anyone else appropriate.

The assessment report will be sent to the social worker's manager who will make a decision about the recommendations made. If the manager doesn't agree with the recommendations they will speak to the YOT worker and manager and your IRO before making a final decision. If there are any disagreements in relation to the recommendations this will be referred to the Head of Service who will make the final decision no later than 28 days prior to your release date.

If Children's Services decide that they will not be providing ongoing support, you will be informed as will your parents or others with Parental Responsibility, your YOT worker and the Governor or Manager of the custodial establishment. Whatever the decision your social worker will continue to have contact with you whilst you are in custody.

As soon as possible, but no later than 14 days before you are released, you will be informed who will collect you on the day of your release, where you will be living, what your reporting arrangements are, what support you will receive (including out of hours), arrangements for education or employment, arrangements to meet your health needs, whether and how you will receive financial support, when you will see your social worker, who will be involved with you and how they will help. All of this will be recorded in your plan.

- Support in the Community

The Youth Offending Team will continue to supervise you when you are released from custody. If Children's Services remain involved and are offering support, your social worker and YOT worker will work together and will arrange to see you together to make sure the information shared with you is clear. If the YOT feel that there are enforcement issues for example they intend to breach you and there is a possibility of you being returned to custody, they will notify the social worker. You will be supported in complying with the conditions of your release and your social worker and YOT worker will talk to each other and agree any changes to the support or services you receive or your plan.

If you become cared for following your release, a Care Plan will be developed and a Placement Plan completed and agreed with the placement provider and should include information about the support they will provide to prevent you committing further offences.

## **Young People in the Armed Forces**

If you are interested in joining the Armed Forces, and are an eligible young person, Children's Services will need to consider whether they feel this is in your best interests before giving consent.

Most young people under 18 years of age who wish to serve in the armed forces engage in a college environment associated with the armed service area of their choice. It is not usual for young people to engage in front line services being called up to serve in battle for their country during a time of war.

If you are cared for under Care Orders, Children's Services will not consent to you engaging in front line service (in battle) with any armed force as this could result in the death or serious injury of a young person if they were called up to serve their country at a time of war. Children's Services will give consent to young people attending an armed forces college course, which would prepare them to serve on the front line once they reach adulthood at age 18.

If you are Accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, your parent or other person with Parental Responsibility can give consent for you to enter the armed force before your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Once you are 18, you no longer need consent and can make your own decision.

Where you join the armed forces, were eligible and living with a foster carer you may be entitled to a 'Staying Put' arrangement for the first three months of the basic training.

### **What if I am not happy with the support I am getting?**

If you are not happy with how your Leaving Care Assessment of Need or Pathway Plan has been undertaken or developed, or with the support you have received, you should request a review of your Pathway Plan. You may also wish to consider making a complaint, and can access more information on this by the following link [Complaints and Representations Procedure](#)

End