

POLICY SUMMARY

Chrysalis Care recognises that as a foster child approaches the age of becoming a care leaver, foster carer and workers within the agency would be looking for some early tips on how to [prepare the young person for independence](#). Broaching the subject of foster children leaving care can often be challenging, so it is important the topic is handled sensitively and with the foster child's needs always at the forefront.

We acknowledge that preparing young people for becoming a care leaver is essential, as this is often a transition process that needs to be handled sensitively with patience and support. This policy provides the framework for how we prepare young people for independence and support their transition to leaving care.

DEFINITION: What is a care leaver?

Once a foster child has reached a certain age, they will start to begin discussions about becoming a care leaver. A care leaver is defined as 'a young person aged 16-21 years old who has been 'looked after' at some point since they were 14 years old, and were in care on or after their 16th birthday' ([see more information here](#)).

Chrysalis Care prepares care leavers for independence from a young age

Although it is not common for a foster child to leave care until around 18 years old, Chrysalis Care believe that it is important to discuss the prospect of becoming a care leaver long before this time. This is likely to be a daunting topic, especially if it has not been thoroughly discussed beforehand. Ensuring the foster child has as much information on the topic as possible will allow them to process this concept and help them accept it when the time comes.

As well as communication around the topic itself, it's also important to prepare them with practical life skills they can take into their lives:

- **Domestic skills** – such as cooking, cleaning, completing their own laundry.
- **Social skills** – such as asking for help, handling difficult situations and setting their own boundaries.
- **Financial skills** – this could be implemented through weekly/monthly pocket money, and encouraged through savings accounts, and education around finances.

THE PRACTICE (Foster Carer)

- 1.** Chrysalis Care will work on the understanding that every local authority that has a young person in our will have a Leaving Care Statement. This must be requested at the placement agreement meeting, or at a Child Looked After (CLA) review, of any young person aged 15 and over.
- 2.** Foster carers will ensure that at all times the young person is consulted about their future and actively involved in the pathway plan and the decision-making process.
- 3.** The foster carer will not only be in receipt of the leaving care statement, they will also have a copy of the care plan which should state which tasks are to be undertaken, and which specifically by the carer.
- 4.** Foster carers will receive regular support from their supervising social worker and training about the practical and emotional adjustments around transition and change.
- 5.** The foster carer will ensure that the young person's social worker has given the young person the relevant leaving care guide.
- 6.** The foster carer will ensure that the young person is supported in accessing information from their local authority about further financial support.
- 7.** Chrysalis Care will become an effective partner in the joint working necessary for smooth transition along with housing, education and employment.
- 8.** Where a carer has a young person in their care who has a disability they will ensure that the young person's needs are fully supported.
- 9.** The foster carer will assist the young person in all of the practical tasks necessary for leaving care, which include not only the day-to-day practical skills, but also major changes such as housing.
- 10.** The carer will be entitled to support both practical and financial if they continue to support the young person after they leave care.

THE PRACTICE (The agency, including children's services)

- 11.** The agency will monitor and evaluate the leaving care transition in order to inform future service provision.

- 12.** If a child is no longer of compulsory school age, the agency will assist the young person in arranging, education training or development.
- 13.** On approval all carers will be given a good practice guide which, includes the written requirements of what is expected of foster carers in terms of their work to prepare young people for independent living. It also provides guidelines to assist carers in their task of providing help with independent skills, at any age.

CHARMS Report 12 helps the agency to identify and monitor young people aged 15-16. At this age we start the Chrysalis Care Preparation for Independence training for Carers of CLA aged 15-16 and individual work with young people of this age.

Throughout this process the young person's needs are paramount, and we work closely with this young person and carers to ensure that they are prepared for leaving care.

- 14.** The following areas are covered in the leaving care pack:

- Budgeting – Planning a shopping trip, including writing lists and menus.
- Individual trip to the local supermarket to look at products/costs/essential items/promotions, etc.
- Planning, preparing, shopping and cooking meals that were economical and healthy.
- Basic household skills e.g., changing a plug and learning techniques on how to remember the wiring.
- Staying safe within the home, on the phone and online.
- Healthy living – covering the areas of safe sex, drugs, alcohol, diet and exercise.
- Benefits/Bank Accounts/Loans etc.

- 15.** Carers are contacted to attend the relevant training. Training will:

- Explore key aspects relating to young people and transitions.
- Adolescence & Identity.
- Every Child Matters: How the Leaving care pack links into the 5 areas.
- Familiarise carers with the Chrysalis Care Leaving Pack.
- Practical use of the pack alongside role play with Young People.

Carers can then make a request for a pack, one for each household.

Evaluation and programme development

The agency uses a range of methods to ascertain feedback from the young person, foster carers and the local authorities about the Preparation for Independence and Transitioning to Leaving Care programme provided by Chrysalis Care. Any suggestions for change or required amendments arising from the feedback will be integrated into the pack and the delivery of the programme.