

16 + SERVICES

(Leaving Care and Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers)

If you are looking after a young person who is aged 15 or over, then planning for that young person's future should begin immediately. There are a number of options.

1. The young people can remain with you after they are 18 and you could become a supported lodging provider.
2. If the young person is disabled, they could remain with you after they are 18 and you could join the Adult Placement Scheme.
3. Some young people will be desperate for independence at 16 and will want their own flat. This is however rarely the best option for a young person as they are generally too young to manage this level of independence. They are unlikely to be given a tenancy at this age. If the young person cannot be deterred from seeking their own accommodation you might want to keep their placement for a period to enable them to have somewhere to return to. Or you might want to become a befriender to that young person, visiting them, offering support and guidance and the occasional hot meal.
4. You may be willing to offer a home during a young person's holidays from college or university.

What ever is to happen make sure that you start asking about a leaving care plan (a Pathway Plan) once your foster child reaches the age of 15. No matter what the plan is it will take time to put into operation.

What can I do to help the child prepare?

1. Make sure that your foster child has basic survival skills.
 - Can they cook at least 5 different meals?
 - Use an iron, a washing machine?
 - Can they change a light bulb or a plug?
 - Have they got a bank account?
 - Have they been receiving a regular clothing allowance?
 - Can they find the post office, a bank and the doctors?
 - Have you considered giving them driving lessons by using their 17th birthday money for lessons? (and by approaching corporate parenting)
 - Have they got a birth certificate and a passport?
 - Has their National Insurance number been obtained?

Most importantly have they got a support network of friends and family who can offer them support? Living alone on a limited income can be very lonely. Few young people cope with this experience unless they have good support.

2. Talk to them about the options that are open to them. They may think that they have to follow a particular course of action just because a friend of theirs has.
3. Start to give them control over some aspects of the fostering allowance. This might mean agreeing to give them a clothing or personal allowance. Encourage them to buy the food for meals they cook and serve themselves. Allow them to make mistakes in as safe a way as possible.

Young people are generally desperate for their independence but they may bitterly come to regret any hasty or irrevocable moves. Many young people leaving care do not have all the usual family networks to support them, so they need as many survival skills as possible.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

This radical legislation gave new powers and responsibilities to local authorities for young people leaving care. Its basic premise is that young people should receive the same services from the local authority, as they would expect to receive from a good parent.

- Young people should have a pathway plan by the time they are 16
- Young people remain financially dependent on the local authority between the ages of 16-18. They cannot claim any state benefits.
- After the age of 18, the local authority should still keep in touch with care leavers and help them to find suitable accommodation, education or employment.
- Young people should have a young person's adviser to befriend and advise them. This role is very suitable for former foster carers.
- Young people should be encouraged to remain looked after until they are 18.

Supported Lodgings

As part of our services to young people aged 18 plus we are very grateful to those foster carers who continue to offer their home to young people as they reach adulthood. Carers who make this offer and are willing to become supported lodgings providers need to know that the financial arrangements will have to change as the young person moves from fostering allowance payments to state benefits or employment. Though we offer transitional arrangements enhanced fostering rates cannot continue into adulthood.

In a similar way the adult placement scheme runs on a different financial basis. Carer's should ask to speak to a representative from either the adult placement scheme or the 16+ Service so that they are fully informed of their future options.

The 16+ Service is based at the following two offices:-

Hinckley

27 Upper Bond Street
Hinckley
LE10 1RH

☎ 01455 899 099

Team Manager: Angie Lymer-Cox

Loughborough

2 Lemyngton Street
Loughborough
LE11 1UH

☎ 01509 283 555

Team Manager Victor Cook

The Adult Placement Scheme

8 Garden Street
Thurmaston
Leicester LE4 8DS

☎ 0116 260 4660