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# Am I a care leaver and your PA

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## Eligible child

If you are aged 16 or 17 and you have been in care for 13 weeks or more (this does not have to be a 13 weeks all at once. It can be several periods where you have been looked after). The 13 weeks has to have started after you reached 14 years of age and ended after you reached the age of 16.

Children's services are required to support you and you should have a personal advisor (PA). Your PA or social worker must complete an assessment of your needs, in areas such as housing, education and finances. When this has been agreed, with your input, they must write a pathway plan with you, setting out how you will receive the support.

## Relevant child

If you are aged 16 or 17, were in care for more than 13 weeks after your 14th birthday and left care on or after your 16th birthday, the law says you are a relevant child.

Children's services are required to support you and you should have a personal advisor (PA). Your PA or social worker must complete an assessment of your needs, in areas such as housing, education and finances. When this has been agreed, with your input, they must write a pathway plan with you, setting out how you will receive the support.

## Former relevant child

If you are aged 18 to 25 and were in care for more than 13 weeks after your 14th birthday, and you were still in care on your 16th birthday, the law says you are a former relevant child.

You should have a personal advisor (PA) and pathway plan, and receive support with your housing, education, and related expenses.

## Qualifying care leaver

If you are aged 18 to 25 and spent time in care after your 16th birthday, but have been in care for less than 13 weeks in total since your 14th birthday, the law says you are a qualifying care leaver.

You will not have a pathway plan or personal advisor, but you are entitled to advice and assistance from the local authority's leaving care service. They can support you with your education, such as study expenses and accommodation during the holidays, and can help you with your housing and health in exceptional circumstances.

## Been on remand to a secure establishment

When a person under the age of 18 is remanded to youth detention accommodation they become one of our children under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. If you have served a period of time on remand you could be classed as an **eligible, relevant** or **qualifying** child. Check out the criteria above.

## Separated children and young people

If you are a child under the age of 18 who has travelled to the UK for safety or a better life then you will become one of our children under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, you could be classed as an **eligible, relevant or qualifying child**. Check out the criteria above.

Coram Voice has a [very useful tool for working out if you are a care leaver, and what support you are entitled to](#).

## Personal advisors

### Leaving care

Before you turn 16 you will meet your personal advisor (PA). They will support you and work alongside you and your social worker to plan for when you leave our care.

They will continue to help and support you beyond 18. You will have a pathway plan that helps you and your personal advisor work out what you want to achieve in the future, build on your strengths, listen to your views and work out what level of support you need to achieve these goals. You and your personal advisor will review your plan every 6 months or sooner.

### Your personal advisor (PA)

Your personal advisor will visit you at home and other places that you feel safe and comfortable.

They will make sure they keep in touch with you as often as you want but as a minimum it will be face to face once every two months.

They are there to help and support you with all parts of your life and you can contact them whenever you want. We want to know about all of the great things that you are doing so we can celebrate these with you!

### Preparing to leave care

To make sure that you are ready to leave our care when you are 18 your social worker, personal advisor and other important people in your life will work alongside you to help you to become more independent and plan for the future.

This will include completing direct work with adults in your life who will support you to be ready for independence. This will include support around the following:

- Earning and managing your money
- Your cooking skills
- Your wellbeing
- Managing your home
- Making friends and expanding your networks
- Managing appointments... and much more

We know, because you have told us that consistent relationships are really important to you.

We therefore will not change your personal advisor unless we have to, or you want us to.

We will talk about this with you before we make any changes and make sure you have the chance to say goodbye and 'hello' to your new personal advisor.

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