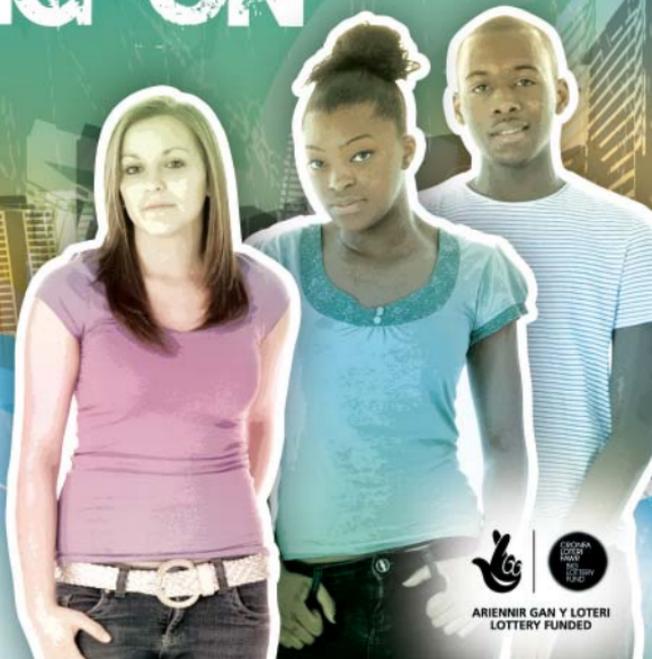


# LEAVING CARE AND MOVING ON

A housing guide  
for care leavers



Shelter  
Cymru



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**Shelter Cymru is Wales's people and homes charity. Our vision is that everyone in Wales should have a decent home.**

Our Education Service develops ways of sharing information with young people across Wales about living independently.

We acknowledge the support of the Big Lottery Fund in producing this resource, as part of Shelter Cymru's North East Wales Peer Learning Project.

#### Disclaimer

This booklet is designed to give young care leavers basic housing information. Specialist advice should also be sought if faced with a housing problem. Shelter Cymru accepts no responsibility for any errors or omissions.

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**This booklet is designed to help you prepare for living on your own for the first time. Leaving care can be an unsettling time, but it can also be very exciting and being well prepared can help make sure it goes well.**

As a care leaver you have special housing rights, which also depend on your age and circumstances. Speak to your Personal Adviser about how much support you should be receiving.

As a care leaver you should have developed a Pathway Plan from the age of 16. This booklet does not replace your plan, but provides some information on accommodation, practical life skills, financial support and what to do if things don't work out.

You can get more information about the other areas of your Pathway Plan, such as training and education, specific support needs and employment from your Personal Adviser. If you don't know who your Personal Adviser is, or don't have a Pathway Plan, speak to your Social Worker.

# What do these words mean?

## **Housing Options**

Choices you have about where you live.

## **Landlord**

A person or organisation that owns a property.

A tenant pays rent to the landlord to live in the property.

## **Personal Adviser**

The person who helps you with day-to-day issues and makes sure your Pathway Plan works for you. This person may also be known as a Support Worker or Keyworker.

## **Tenancy**

An agreement you enter into when you move into your rented accommodation.

## **Housing Options**

Your accommodation is likely to be provided by the council, housing association, private rented or supported housing. You should apply to the council and housing associations in the first place but be aware that in many areas there is a limited amount of council housing available. Private rented accommodation is usually the most expensive option. Your accommodation should be safe and suitable for your needs.

## **Council Housing**

You apply by filling in a form or attending an appointment. Ask your Personal Adviser more about this. Rent tends to be lower than for other types of housing. You join a waiting list and the time you wait depends on a number of things. Local authorities use an allocation or points system to decide who will be housed first. You may get more points as a care leaver but there are no guarantees.

The council may not be able to give you the type of home you want or in an area you would like to live in. Council housing is usually unfurnished, so you will need to think about things you will need to buy. Go to the Money Matters section for more information.

## **Housing Associations**

This is similar to council housing. The application process and the waiting list work in the same way. Some groups (such as young people) may get priority in certain areas.

## **Private Rented**

This is generally the most expensive option and in some areas there is a limited amount of accommodation available to rent privately. You will need a deposit and some rent in advance before you can move in. You pay the deposit to the landlord who will pay it back to you in full when you move out, unless you have damaged the property.

You may want to consider sharing with friends, as this can be cheaper. You can look for places to rent on the internet, in the local paper or in estate agents.

## Supported Accommodation

If you don't feel that you are quite ready to manage living on your own, supported housing may be an option for you. This is usually provided by councils or housing associations and places are limited. In supported housing you have support based where you live. If you are living in council, housing association or private rented accommodation you may have a support worker (called Floating Support) who will visit you at your home and give you help.

If you are evicted from supported housing the council may say that they cannot help you any more. If this happens, you should get advice from Shelter Cymru on 0845 075 5005.

## Money Matters

Up until the age of 18 you will have been receiving financial support from Social Services. Once you reach 18, you may be entitled to claim benefits to help you to live independently.

It doesn't matter what age you are or how you are being supported financially, the chances are that you will be receiving a limited amount of money. It is important to make the most of the money that you have.

### **Some things you should think about before living on your own:**

- Will I be able to afford to pay the rent and Council Tax? You could lose your home if you don't pay your rent and you also have to pay your Council Tax. You may be entitled to Council Tax benefit to help.
- Have I got enough money for a deposit?
- What other bills will I have to pay? You will probably have to pay for electricity/gas and water and it is very important that you pay these bills. You could ask for a meter to be installed to help you to control the cost. Contact your supplier to ensure that you are getting the best deal

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- Am I entitled to any benefits or grants?
  - Will I need to buy furniture?
  - Food – takeaways may be an easy option but they are much more expensive than cooking at home. You can get good value food in your local supermarket or local market. Corner shops tend to be more expensive.
  - Travel – buy weekly or season tickets if you need to use public transport regularly. Avoid taking taxis if you can.

## More Money Matters

There is some financial help that may be available to you when you move in to your own place:

A budgeting loan is an interest-free loan, which could help you to spread out the cost of essential things such as furniture and household equipment. If you get one, you will have to pay it back.

Community care grants can help people on a low income to live independently. They can be used to pay for things like furniture, bedding and household equipment, and for connection charges for utilities. You don't have to pay them back.

For more information contact the Social Fund on 0845 603 2713 or visit [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

It is likely that you will be entitled to Housing Benefit to help you pay your rent. If the amount of Housing Benefit you receive does not cover the whole amount of your rent you will need to pay the rest. Speak to your Personal Adviser about applying and for information about other financial help.

## Things to think about

Once you find somewhere you really like, you should think about some things before signing a tenancy agreement

The most important thing to consider is whether you will be able to afford to pay the rent, Council tax and any deposit.

### Also consider:

#### The property

- Are the doors and windows secure?
- Does the landlord have a good reputation?

#### Transport

- Can you get to school or college, shops or your work easily?
- Is there a bus stop or train station nearby?

#### Safety

- Is the area well lit?
- Do you feel safe walking down the street on your own?

## Moving in

Think about items you need in your new home such as:

Living room – chair, table, lights

Kitchen – cooker, fridge, crockery, cutlery, pans

Bedroom – bed, bedding, wardrobe

General – carpets, curtains, vacuum cleaner, cleaning products.

You might not be able to buy everything at once. Check out second hand shops, furniture recycling schemes and charity shops for bargains. Some supermarkets sell furniture and equipment quite cheaply.

## Settling In

It's normal to feel a little unsettled when you first move into a new place. To avoid feeling lonely:

- Introduce yourself to your neighbours
- Keep in touch with friends and your Personal Adviser
- Make arrangements with friends and get out regularly
- Try to keep yourself busy

## Keeping your home

As a tenant you have responsibilities:

- You should make sure that you can afford to pay your rent and Council Tax and do it on time
- Don't leave your home empty for long periods of time
- Keep your home clean
- Keep the noise down
- Report any damage to the landlord.

You could be at risk of losing your home if you don't stick to the rules in your tenancy agreement or if you break the law. Think about how certain behaviour could lead to losing your home.

## Thinking of having a party?

Remember:

- Ask your neighbours if they mind
- Keep the noise to a minimum
- Don't invite too many people
- Don't let in people you don't know
- Don't make it a regular thing.

Now that you have your own place your mates might think they can call round all the time. Explain to them that this could cause problems with the landlord or neighbours. They may give you a hard time about this but it's your home so don't risk losing it!

## **Landlords' responsibilities:**

- To place the money you paid as a deposit in a 'deposit protection scheme'
- To collect the rent
- To make sure that the property is in a decent condition
- To ask permission before entering the property. As a tenant you have a right to be able to enjoy your home without the landlord's interference
- To end a tenancy properly. Your landlord cannot just throw you out of the property if he wants you to leave. There are rules that landlords must follow if they want to evict you.

If you are having any problems with your landlord or if you are at risk of losing your home, speak to your Personal Adviser or call Shelter Cymru on 0845 075 5005.

## Coping with day to day tasks

Living independently isn't always easy. You will probably need to learn new skills. Don't be embarrassed to ask for help with things like:

- Using a washing machine
- How the oven works
- Food shopping
- How to use the vacuum cleaner
- When and how to pay the bills
- How the gas, electricity and water meters work.

You could ask a friend or neighbour to show you. If you are finding it difficult to cope speak to your Personal Adviser.

## Being happy and healthy in your home

Living independently can be stressful as there are many responsibilities. Even the day-to-day stuff can stress you out.

Or, you may be coping well with the practical side of living in your own place, but still feeling lonely or isolated.

Many people feel like this from time to time, but if you feel unhappy all the time, you should speak to someone who can help such as a friend, your doctor, or your Personal Adviser.

You should register with a doctor and a dentist to make sure you get proper health care. Call NHS Direct on 0845 4647 for more information.

## **If things don't work out...**

If you are having problems with your landlord, are at risk of losing your home or have already been evicted, it is important to get advice as soon as possible. Shelter Cymru may be able to help you.

Although care leavers may get priority for housing if they are homeless, the council may not be able to re-house you in certain circumstances. If this happens to you, contact Shelter Cymru for advice.

Shelter Cymru Advice & Support Services 0845 075 5005  
(Mon-Fri 9.30-4.30)

You can find more detailed and practical information on living in your own place on: [www.housemate.org.uk](http://www.housemate.org.uk)

Or check out the advice section on [www.sheltercymru.org.uk](http://www.sheltercymru.org.uk)