

Jobcentre Plus Support for Care Leavers

This factsheet summarises the additional support that Jobcentre Plus provides to care leavers claiming benefits. However, this additional help can only be applied if the Jobcentre work coach is aware of the young person's care leaver status. Please encourage your care leavers to share this information with their work coach or when applying for Universal Credit.

Every Jobcentre has a care leaver single point of contact to support the needs of care leavers. This individual will usually be your primary local Jobcentre Plus contact.

We know young people leaving care should have a [pathway plan](#) which should capture quality information regarding the young person's education, skills and employment journey and aspirations. Young people should be encouraged to share this information with their work coach to ensure these activities and aims are reflected in the plan (claimant commitment) they will co-develop with their work coach.

[Advanced Claim Preparation facility](#): Care leavers can prepare to apply for Universal Credit up to 28 days in advance of their 18th birthday. Your local Jobcentre Plus point of contact will help book an appointment for the young person to support as smooth a transition as possible from local authority to DWP benefit support.

Our [Second Chance Learning Scheme \(SCL\)](#) supports care leavers aged 18 to 21 who wish to catch up on the education they may have missed out on when they were younger. Housing Benefit or Universal Credit/Housing Support is available to those who take up full time study in non-advanced education (secondary level education).

Care leavers have an [Exemption from the Shared Accommodation Rate](#) until they reach age 25 when claiming either Housing Benefit or Universal Credit and living in the private rented sector.

The [DWP Youth Offer](#) (from day 1 of claim) provides employment support for young people, with access to the Youth_Employment_Programme - the gateway to employability, skills and employment provision. The DWP Youth Offer also provides access to specialist Youth Employability Coaches for young people who have significant barriers to employment and the opportunity to access help from work coaches and the range of local partners present in DWP Youth Hubs.

Jobcentre Plus work coaches also have access to a discretionary fund (**Flexible Support Fund**) which can be used to address barriers to employment, such as travel expenses to attend interviews and tools and clothing/uniform to start work. It is a discretionary award based on the work coaches' assessment of the young person's needs. Care leavers should speak with their work coach ahead of starting work if they require any assistance.

Care leavers are able to access the [Work and Health Programme](#) earlier in their claim than others. The programme provides up to 15 months pre-employment support and up to 6 months light touch in-work support, for those that want it.

[Paid Internship opportunities](#) – The civil service offers work experience opportunities for care leavers through the Department for Education led Care Leaver internship scheme. These are 12-month paid internships aimed at helping care leavers develop skills and behaviours that support them into long-term jobs.

The Local Authority has discretion to support those most in need of help with a small grant to cover daily needs such as clothing and utility bills until March 2024 through the [Household Support Fund](#)