



Department
for Education



Charter for Care Leavers

A Charter is a set of principles and promises. This Charter sets out promises care leavers want the Central and Local Government to make. Promises and Principles help in decision making and do not replace laws; they give guidance to show how laws are designed to be interpreted.

The key principles in this Charter will remain constant through any changes in Legislation, Regulation and Guidance. Care leavers urge Local Authorities to use these principles when they make decisions about young people's lives. The Charter for Care Leavers is designed to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what care leavers need and what Government and Local Authorities should do to be good Corporate Parents.

We Promise:

To respect and honour your identity

- We will support you to discover and to be who you are and honour your unique identity. We will help you develop your own personal beliefs and values and accept your culture and heritage. We will celebrate your identity as an individual, as a member of identity groups and as a valued member of your community. We will value and support important relationships, and help you manage changing relationships or come to terms with loss, trauma or other significant life events. We will support you to express your identity positively to others.

To believe in you

- We will value your strengths, gifts and talents and encourage your aspirations. We will hold a belief in your potential and a vision for your future even if you have lost sight of these yourself. We will help you push aside limiting barriers and encourage and support you to pursue your goals in whatever ways we can. We will believe in you, celebrate you and affirm you.

To listen to you

- We will take time to listen to you, respect, and strive to understand your point of view. We will place your needs, thoughts and feelings at the heart of all decisions about you, negotiate with you, and show how we have taken these into account. If we don't agree with you we will fully explain why. We will provide easy access to complaint and appeals processes and promote and encourage access to independent advocacy whenever you need it.

To inform you

- We will give you information that you need at every point in your journey, from care to adulthood, presented in a way that you want including information on legal entitlements and the service you can expect to receive from us at different stages in the journey. We will keep information up to date and accurate. We will ensure you know where to get current information once you are no longer in regular touch with leaving care services. We will make it clear to you what information about yourself and your time in care you are entitled to see. We will support you to access this when you want it, to manage any feelings that you might have about the information, and to put on record any disagreement with factual content.

To support you

- We will provide any support set out in current Regulations and Guidance and will not unreasonably withhold advice when you are no longer legally entitled to this service. As well as information, advice, practical and financial help we will provide emotional support. We will make sure you do not have to fight for support you are entitled to and we will fight for you if other agencies let you down. We will not punish you if you change your mind about what you want to do. We will continue to care about you even when we are no longer caring for you. We will make it our responsibility to understand your needs. If we can't meet those needs we will try and help you find a service that can. We will help you learn from your mistakes; we will not judge you and we will be here for you no matter how many times you come back for support.

To find you a home

- We will work alongside you to prepare you for your move into independent living only when you are ready. We will help you think about the choices available and to find accommodation that is right for you. We will do everything we can to ensure you are happy and feel safe when you move to independent living. We recognise that at different times you may need to take a step back and start over again. We will do our best to support you until you are settled in your independent life; we will not judge you for your mistakes or refuse to advise you because you did not listen to us before. We will work proactively with other agencies to help you sustain your home.

To be a lifelong champion

- We will do our best to help you break down barriers encountered dealing with other agencies. We will work together with the services you need, including housing, benefits, colleges & universities, employment providers and health services to help you establish yourself as an independent individual. We will treat you with courtesy and humanity whatever your age when you return to us for advice or support. We will help you to be the driver of your life and not the passenger. We will point you in a positive direction and journey alongside you at your pace. We will trust and respect you. We will not forget about you. We will remain your supporters in whatever way we can, even when our formal relationship with you has ended.

Guidance: What needs to be considered during pathway planning

This should build upon any previous plan, including their Care Plan or Pathway Plan. It is very important to focus on the positives as well as where there are difficulties.

NB this includes guidance in Leaving Care Act, LAC Reviews, Transitions Guidance & Care Planning Regs
If an UASC then consider triple planning, including voluntary returns.

CAREER?

Consider the information within their PEP completed until they are of statutory school age, and any other information available. (This plan should incorporate the PEP/PEET if not completed)

- What do they enjoy or are good at?
- What did they achieve at school – think broadly, socially, educationally, other....
- What did/do they like and dislike? How could these be developed more?
- What activities or routines do they do now? What motivates them?
- Are they currently studying, working, and volunteering (full or part time)?
- If so, what support is currently being provided? How attends parent evenings, supports homework? Is it sufficient? Could the virtual school assist?
- What experience and skills do they have? How can they get more?
- What qualifications, training or relevant experience do they have?
- What are their future goals? How can we develop this further, into an occupation?
- What might be the obstacles in achieving this? How may they be overcome?
- What do they need to achieve these goals and who have they spoken to about them?
- What other training or employment is needed now or in the future?
- Have they got an up to date CV, confidence in searching for jobs/education; interview skills?
- Do they understand NI, Income Tax and other employment rights/responsibilities?

- Who can help them to achieve their goals and ambitions?
- What can we do to help this happen? Include the *GRPAT* Group.
- What do they do when things don't go as well as expected? What might help to get back on track?
- What are their continuing needs for education/employment/training?

HEALTH & WELLBEING?

- Include information from the recent Health Assessment and other available info. This must consider their physical, emotional and mental health.
- Have they been informed about their right to meet with a specialist Looked After Doctor or Nurse to talk through their health, including health prevention, and to ensure support is provided?
- If they refuse, what might encourage their participation? Talk to the HELAC nurse.
- Are they registered with a GP/dentist and optician? Do they know where to find them and how to make an appointment? Do they have specialist services or know how get such support if needed?
- Are they, or anyone else, concerned about:
 - Their general health, e.g. eyesight/hearing; dental health, immunisations, eating habits; sleeping patterns, leisure activities, accidents, illnesses....
 - Any family health issues or difficulties, now or in the past?
 - Their diet /eating and the importance of exercise to stay healthy?
 - Their relationships with other people, and what would help?
 - Their ability to keep safe? Including any bullying or harm they are exposed to? Include social networks? Include any running away or missing from placement etc.
 - Their behaviour or emotional wellbeing (I.e. sadness / anger / anxiety / tiredness, lack of motivation / concentration / loneliness / changes in behaviour / feeling out of control)?
 - Their use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs/substances, gambling, gaming etc.?
 - Their sexual health and well-being (contraception, sexually transmitted infections, feeling pressurised by others, views about becoming a parent?)? Include the *GRPAT* Group.
 - Their access to sexual health information and local clinics?
 - Their identity (It must consider their Disability; Religion; Race; Linguistic Background & Culture; It should also consider any other identity needs, I.e. gender, sexuality, mental health)?
 - Anything else?
- If so, what support has been provided and what else might help?
- What do they want to happen, who may support them in achieving this?
- Can we make any referrals to support them more? Include contact full details of possible support?
- If the young person does become concerned about anything, who do they think they can talk to?
- What other support is available, I.e. confidential support; include these in their plan.

FAMILY & FRIENDS?	<p>Who are the most important people in their life; consider parents, siblings, wider family, friendships, previous carers, professionals? Consider current and historically.</p> <p>How often do they have contact with these significant people?</p> <p>Is there any consideration about living with family members or supported lodgings within network?</p> <p>What are the parents'/carer's views? How have we taken these people's views into account?</p> <p>What do they enjoy doing with these people, would they like to do other things?</p> <p>How do they get there, are there any difficulties? How can these be sorted?</p> <p>Is there anyone they would want to see or talk to more? Are there people that they miss?</p> <p>How can we improve this support network?</p> <p>Are there any difficulties, including risks, in these relationships or arrangements? What may help?</p> <p>How can we promote continuity of these positive relationships if planned changes ahead?</p> <p>Does the support network encourage & enable positive transitions to adulthood, what else is needed?</p> <p>Do they understand the full range of Leaving Care Support: Allocated worker, Personal Advisors, Virtual School, Advocacy, Independent visitors, Mentors?</p> <p>Do they know they can contact EDT if there is a crisis out of hours?</p>
WHERE THEY LIVE: (inc Independence skills)?	<p>Their current arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do they feel about their current accommodation? Is this accommodation suitable and meeting their needs into the future? Are the relationships positive within this accommodation? If not, what needs to be done, by whom and by when? What are the financial arrangements, do they have clear understanding of their budgeting? What local activities do / could they do? What might help this happen? Has anything happened in the past, which may reoccur and put their accommodation at risk? What can we do to reduce this likelihood? What is the plan if things start to go wrong? Outline the contingency planning. <p>Do they have the practical and other skills for independent living?</p> <p>We have a duty to support them to feel fully prepared for living independently. Do they, or anyone else, think that they need more support about independence skills, i.e. Cooking, Budgeting, Washing, Ironing, Cleaning, Personal hygiene, Shopping, Public Transport?</p> <p>Who will support them to develop this? Include the <i>GRPAT</i> Group.</p> <p>Their future plans: (Staying Put, Supported Lodgings, Supported Housing, Independent Living, Other.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do they want to live with others? Whereabouts? What are their choices available in the longer term? What do they prefer? Is this realistic and/or suitable (separate assessment & review to discuss options beforehand)? What needs to occur for the young person to move onto in their accommodation? What are their other options if things don't go to plan?
FINANCES?	<p>We have a duty to assess their actual and anticipated ability to manage their finances.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do they have a bank account, and do they feel confident to use it? Do they, or others, have any concerns about budgeting? What might help? Do they make good use of their Allowances? If in foster care, is this managed well by the carer? Do they know what they will receive from the Team, now and in the future (E.g. allowances, accommodation, incentives, LTS, birthday/Celebration, independence support, on-going educational support may be available until 24, including university bursary) Do they understand where else they can receive money, E.g. Employment, Benefits, Bursaries etc.? Do they understand "saving" for more expensive items? What do they want to use their LTS for? Do they feel able to ask for additional support? Who can they talk to?
BEING INVOLVED?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have they attended their LAC reviews and pathway planning meetings? How involved do they feel? How can we improve this? What might get in the way? Do they have any comments, complaints or compliments about the service? Do they know they can talk to a manager if they are unhappy with the service (or the complaints unit)? Do they understand their journey into / through care? Their current plan? What might help? Do they have opportunities to meet with other Looked After people or Care Leavers? Would they like to be more involved in developing the service? Do they know about the Children In Care Council/FORUM, and other participation activities?