

Care leavers



The Council works closely with Hertfordshire County Council Children's Services and other Hertfordshire councils to try to find suitable accommodation for you when you leave care. Plans for this should be set out in your pathway plan (PWP) which you would have been involved in creating. Contact your personal advisor (or social worker if you are aged under 18) if you are not sure about anything in your PWP.

This leaflet provides information if you are leaving care and you find yourself facing homelessness.

Children's Services have to provide you with the support of a personal advisor up until you reach the age of 25, even if you're not in education. Your personal advisor will keep in regular contact with you to provide you with advice, help you to access any services or support you might need and help you with your accommodation needs.

Care leavers aged 16 or 17

If you are under the age of 18 and are in care, or have been in care, Children's Services at Hertfordshire County Council must legally help you by providing you with housing or helping you to find and keep your own place.

They must also help you with financial assistance towards food, bills and other living expenses and support you to continue your education or training or find work.

Children's Services can be contacted on 0300 123 4043 (24 hours a day).

See also [Herts County Council](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/childrens-social-care.aspx) website (www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/childrens-social-care.aspx)

Care leavers aged 18 - 25

The Council and Children's Services will work together to try and find suitable accommodation for you when you leave care.

Before you turn 18, your personal advisor will support you to make an application for social housing. You will usually receive extra priority on social housing waiting lists for being a care leaver. At North Herts, we use a choice based lettings system which means that you are able to choose which

properties you would like to live in and place bids for them. Properties are offered to those with the highest priority on the waiting list.

If however you think you may be at risk of homelessness, or are homeless, you should contact us as soon as possible. Either:

- use our online [Housing Assistance Referral Portal](#) for 24/7 access (see our Housing Advice and Homelessness Support pages at www.north-herts.gov.uk) or
- call us on 01462 474000 and ask to speak to the Housing Options team.

If you are aged 18, 19 or 20 and spent at least one night in care when you were 16 or 17 years old, you will have a priority need for accommodation. This means that if you are homeless, we will have a legal duty to find you emergency accommodation.

If you are also homeless through no fault of your own and have a local connection to Hertfordshire, we will have an additional legal duty to find you settled accommodation. This may be social housing or private rented accommodation. You should be aware that if you are placed on the North Herts social housing waiting list because you are homeless, you may have limited choice over the properties you wish to live in.

If you are aged 21 or older and not in full-time education, you could also be in priority need if you are vulnerable as a result of being in care, have mental or physical health problems, are pregnant or have a dependent child.

If you are aged between 21 and 25 and are in full-time further or higher education, Children's Services must help you with accommodation if you have nowhere to stay outside of term time.

Support and advice

Further help is available from the following organisations.

Become Advice and support for children in care and young care leavers, including life coaching programmes and advice line.

0800 023 2033 (freephone)

www.becomecharity.org.uk

Herts Young Homeless Housing advice and support for 18-24 year olds and signposting to other agencies. Ongoing support is available for care leavers.

08000 355775 (freephone)

www.hyh.org.uk

National Youth Advocacy Service Help and advice about your rights including legal representation.

0808 808 1001 (freephone)

www.nyas.net

Rees Foundation Support and assistance to care leavers by helping them to access a network of people with care experience so they can support one another.

www.reesfoundation.org

Shelter Advice, support and legal services for people of all ages with housing issues or who are facing homelessness.

0808 800 4444 (freephone)

www.shelter.org.uk

Turn2Us Helps people in financial need get access to benefits, charitable grants and other help.

www.turn2us.org.uk

YC Hertfordshire Advice and support for young people and care leavers aged 13-21.

www.ychertfordshire.org