

16 May 2022

Support for Young People Leaving Care

All questions below refer to:

- Care leavers who are 16 to 25-year-olds
- Live in Belfast City Council area
- Data from the last financial year (1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022)

1. How many Young people in your caseload live in Belfast City Council area?

There are 239 young people on our caseloads living in Belfast City Council area. This represents 83% of the total number of young people known to Leaving Care and After Care Service (LCAC) in Belfast Trust.

2. How many are in semi-independent or independent living in the stated local authority area?

There are 124 young people (53%) living in Belfast City Council area in semi-independent or independent accommodation.

3. How many ceased receiving support from the stated local authority?

During the last financial year, 17 Young people (7%) were closed from Leaving Care and After Care Service.

4. Does the stated local authority provide care leavers with any kind of help to manage their personal finances?

Yes

If “Yes”, please go to 4.1
If “No”, please go to 5.

a. In the last financial year, how did the stated local authority support care leavers to manage their personal finances and how many care leavers received this type of support?

- From a local authority employee: ___
Such as: Personal Adviser, case worker, social worker, LA employed youth worker

Belfast Trust Leaving Care and After Care Service staff (Social Workers and Personal Advisors) supported the young people by providing support for appropriate benefits applications, budgeting advice – including managing financial outgoings, managing essential bills, prioritising essential payments, opening bank account, encouraging savings and sign posting to appropriate organisations.

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- From an outside organisation: ___
Such as: specialist charity, Jobcentre Plus, non-LA employed youth worker

Advice Space - approximately 63 young people accessed this service.

- Both the above:

b. If support is provided by a local authority employee, what training and support do they get for helping care leavers manage their personal finances?

Most of the Personal Advisor staff in Leaving Care Service have completed NVQ Level 4 in Advice and Guidance course.

c. If support is provided by an outside organisation, do you commission this work? If yes, what commissioning framework do you use to outsource the work?

Leaving Care service commissions Advice Space (Charitable organisation) to offer guidance and support for our young people regarding benefit issues.

The role of this organisation in provision of advice and outcomes is the subject of a quarterly review process.

d. If support is provided by an outside organisation, which organisation(s) do you use?

Advice Space.

e. If support is provided by an outside organisation, how much money did your local authority ring-fence for commissioning this work in the last financial year?

Belfast Trust's Children's Community Services Directorate has no contractual agreement with Advice Space for this provision.

f. What topics does the stated local authority and/or outside organisation(s) cover when helping care leavers manage their personal finances?

- Opening bank account
- Maintaining Universal Credit Journal
- Attending appointments for Universal Credit
- Checking eligibility for additional benefits and help with application
- Housing benefits - eligibility
- Budgeting advice - managing financial out goings, managing essential bills, prioritising essential payments.
- Dealing with debts/ arrears.
- Savings

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g. Is it mandatory for care leavers to complete a course in managing personal finances?

No

h. Of care leavers who were mandated to complete a course on managing personal finances, how many completed the course?

N/A

5. What other support and entitlements can care leavers apply for from the stated local authority?

- Weekly Living Allowance / Weekly Maintenance Allowance if they are not eligible for Universal Credit / Income from Employment and in Education or Training.
- Travel - young people who are in need (e.g. young people attending education) receive a monthly bus card worth (£56) – except those young people who attend alternative educational provision, for example, Include Youth or Give and Take when bus / travel monies / cards are provided by the provider.
- Social Workers / Personal Advisors liaise regularly with the education providers to ensure young people are attending the education/training for bus card payments to continue). The Trust also offer financial support to young people for attending special events like interviews (this is based on a needs assessment).
- Gym Membership - if the young person is interested in attending the gym, Social Worker / Personal Advisors carry out an assessment to check whether attending gym is beneficial for them and, if agreed, they can receive a monthly payment of £15 toward a gym membership. The young person has to be engaging in education / training and with other support services to be eligible for gym membership contribution. However, the Leaving Care Service will also help young people even if they are not in education, employment or training, if it is determined that they are struggling with mental health issues or other similar issues and it is assessed that gym membership would assist with improving their overall emotional health and well-being.
- Clothing Money - young people are expected to budget for clothing, however, an additional amount may be agreed under specific circumstances and as per individual needs assessment. Examples of such specific circumstances are - attending a job interview, going to a funeral, attending formal events, specific work wear, joining a sports team, a new winter coat etc.

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- Driving Lessons / Provisional licence / Theory test / Driving Test - these are agreed at the Pathway Plan review. The young person must be engaged in some form of ETE. LCAC service initially agree 5 lessons. Young person has to take the theory test at the end of 5 lessons (Trust offers financial support towards Theory test and provisional licence application). LCAC service offers another 5 lessons when the young person completes the theory test. LCAC occasionally fund more than 10 driving lessons for some young people in certain circumstances, perhaps another 5 to 10 but very much on assessed needs basis. LCAC also provide support for costs for the driving test. Young people who are in employment are expected to make a contribution to the costs, depending on their income.
- Education/ Training - young people get their training fees paid by the Trust if they are not entitled to a Further Education Grant - if they are attending college.
- University Attending Young People - Student Loans and Grants cover tuitions fee and other expenses; Trust offers financial support towards accommodation.
- Electronic Devices for Education Purposes - if a young person is attending education and training and requires an electronic device, the Social Worker/ Personal Advisors first check whether financial support can be obtained via VOYPIC / training providers / Belfast Employability or other charities. This is for laptop provision. If this is not possible, an electronic tablet / smartphone can be purchased for them at a cost of £80 - £90 to allow young people to access online work. Contributions towards laptop provision, if not available from other sources, is on an assessed needs basis.
- Mobile Phone and Phone Top-Up - Belfast Trust funds up to £70 towards a mobile phone on one occasion and the young person can add to this if they wish to have a more expensive device. If the young person does not have access to Wi-Fi in their accommodation to maintain contact with family, friends and to engage in education, the Trust will help the young person seek the most cost effective tariff and make a maximum contribution to this at £25 per month. If the young person has other specific needs in terms of contact with family (UASC), funding for an international sim will be considered on an individual basis.
- Health and Leisure cost - young people get financial support toward health and leisure based on individually assessed need.
- Heating/ Electricity/ Internet/ Phone - based on assessed need. Internet / Wi-Fi cost if they are in education (to help remote learning).

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- Setting Up Home Allowance (SUHA) - SUHA are based on assessed needs of young people. The needs are explained in the SUHA applications. There is a list with set costs in Leaving Care Service to help costs on items. Costings are reviewed periodically. There is an expectation that an application will be made for a Discretionary Award through DFC Finance Support Project (NI Direct), prior to SUHA monies being accessed by the Trust, with remaining monies then coming out of a young persons setting up home allowance.
- Rental deposits for private rentals - based on assessed need - if young person cannot afford to pay the deposit (only if the young person is in training / education). Other rent deposit schemes outside the Trust via Voluntary Sector will be approached prior to Trust agreeing such support.
- Legal / Translation cost / Assessments / Travel Document / Interpreter fee - individually needs assessed but Trust will generally fund these costs for Asylum Seeking Young People.
- Child Care costs - if they are young lone parents – based on assessed need - if the child is not open to Family Support / Looked After Children.
- Storage - for young people moving out to University accommodation abroad / moving to another country / area/ remanded or sentenced to prison etc. This will remain under review at Pathway Reviews.
- Christmas monies - young people receive £40 from Leaving Care Service. Young people from UASC background who are celebrating EID a payment of £50 has been agreed. Young People in GEMS receive - £100.13 Birthday Allowance and £300.38 Christmas allowance (both Paid to the carer).

If eligible, young people receive support with food vouchers, food parcels from food banks, support with application for IDs like passport, provisional licence birth certificate etc.

6. Which care leavers are exempt from paying council tax?

If any care leavers pay council tax, please go to 6.1
If all care leavers are exempt, please go to 7.

We do not have council tax in Belfast. However, few of our young people living in Northern Ireland Housing Executive accommodation pay council rates.

a. How many care leavers accrued council tax arrears in the last financial year?

We do not have council tax in Belfast; however, 2 young people (0.8%) had council rates arrears.

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b. What was the average amount of council tax arrears that care leavers accrued in the last financial year?

Average Council rates arrears last year was £310.50.

7. How many care leavers accrued rent or service charge arrears in the last financial year?

During the last financial year, 2 Young people (5%) accrued service charge/ rent arrears.

a. Of those who accrued rent or service charge arrears in the financial year 2021/2022, what was the average amount accrued?

Average Rent/ Service charge arrears was £771.

8. How many care leavers were served an eviction notice by the stated local authority in the financial year 2021/2022?

2 young people were served an eviction notice by the landlords, not by the Belfast Trust.

9. How many care leavers have been evicted from their accommodation by the stated local authority since mid-June 2021?

2 young people have been evicted by the landlord, not by the Belfast Trust.

10. How many care leavers were evicted from their accommodation by the stated local authority in the financial year 2021/2022?

2 young people have been evicted by the landlord, not by the Belfast Trust.

11. What implications does eviction have for a care leaver when applying for future social housing in the stated local authority?

The eviction made the care leaver homeless and prevented from applying for another property for 1 year.