

Preparing for a big change

The 16+ Team are there to help plan your move from care and provide support until you are 21 (or 24 if you are still in full-time education)

Make sure it's the right time for you; don't feel that you should be moving into independent living as soon as you reach 16

Before you reach 16, your Adviser should be talking to you about what support you will need to live independently. You should be planning when is the right time to leave care, what sort of place you want to live in, how you will manage your money and how you will cope with living alone

If you have a disability, your Adviser should be talking to you about any extra support you may need to live independently

Living alone

Coping with loneliness can be a big issue. It's worth thinking about how you will cope with suddenly being alone in your own place. If you are feeling alone or struggling to cope, contact your Adviser. You are not alone – don't forget the 16+ Team are there to support you

Be careful about inviting visitors to your new place - a lot of young people lose their tenancies because of visitors' behaviour. You will sign a Tenancy agreement taking responsibility for all your visitors. If you lose your property due to visitor's behaviour, it will make it difficult for you to get re-housed

Money

Young people leaving care under the age of 18 are normally financed through the 16+ Team. They will normally pay your rent and give you a weekly living allowance unless you start working. They will also help with the cost of setting up your home with a Leaving Care Grant. You won't normally get the whole grant for your first move in case you need to move again or you have any unexpected bills.

When you reach 18, you will need to claim benefits if you are not working. Your 16+ Adviser will help you put a claim in for Housing Benefit to make sure your rent is paid. If you don't put a claim in on time, you will get into rent arrears and Housing Benefit will not be backdated unless you have a very good reason

What sort of place can I live in?

If you leave care before you are 18, you will need to consider living in supported housing which will help you make the move from care into independent living

This will normally be a Foyer or supported housing project where you will be expected to do training, education or work whilst living there

What if I become homeless?

If you become homeless, make sure you tell the Housing Adviser you speak to that you are a care leaver because this will affect the advice you receive

Most young people who have been in care are entitled to extra help if they become homeless. This will depend on your age and personal circumstances

If you are under 18, the 16+ Team are still responsible for finding you a place to live. If you go to Dudley Housing for help, they will probably ask the 16+ Team to help you