

Annex A

CARE LEAVER COVENANT

We, the undersigned, recognise the challenges that young people face when they leave the care system and begin to live independently. We believe that all parts of society have a responsibility to support care leavers so that they can make a successful transition to adulthood. We hereby make a commitment to undertake the following actions that will help improve care leavers' life chances.

Signed on behalf of: **Department for Work & Pensions**

Signature 
Name Rt Hon Esther McVey MP
Position Secretary of State
Date October 2018


Department
for Work &
Pensions

A care leaver is a person who has been in Local Authority care (e.g. residential or foster care) for a period of at least 13 weeks or more, or periods amounting in total to 13 weeks or more, since they were age 14, and ending after age 16.

Principles of the care leaver covenant

We **DWP** support the key principles of the care leaver covenant, which are:

- That all parts of society have a responsibility to help care leavers to avoid poor outcomes and make a successful transition to adulthood.
- That action to support care leavers should be in their best interests, promote their health and well-being and secure the best possible outcomes for them.

Demonstrating our commitment

We **DWP** will demonstrate our commitment to the care leaver covenant through the following actions:

- Enabling care leavers to make an advanced claim for Universal Credit up to 28 days before their 18th birthday, by making a pre-claim appointment with the Jobcentre. This will help to ensure care leavers have the required documents

to make their claim and that all relevant support is in place. Care leavers can take their Personal Adviser with them to their Jobcentre appointments.

- Offering 18-21 year olds making a new claim to Universal Credit the opportunity to take part in the Youth Obligation Support Programme. This provides support, skills and experience to motivate young people into finding employment and fulfil their potential.
- Appointing a care leaver single point of contact in every Jobcentre who can provide support to care leavers and colleagues if required. They will also act as a point of contact for the Local Authority Leaving Care team.
- Providing employment opportunities to care leavers, through participating in the Civil Service care leaver internship scheme.
- Offering early entry into the Work & Health Programme to prevent the risk of long- term unemployment (England & Wales only).
- Offering care leavers up to the age of 22 the chance to catch up on education they may have missed when they were younger, under the 'Second Chance Learning' initiative (secondary education level).
- Supporting care leavers who remain in a 'Staying Put' arrangement with their former foster carers to claim means-tested benefits for their personal needs from their 18th birthday up to age 21. This is the same under the equivalent schemes in the devolved administrations, including 'Continuing Care' in Scotland and 'When I'm Ready' in Wales.
- Supporting care leavers to start living independently by exempting them from the shared accommodation rate (which applies to those renting in the private renting sector) up to age 22.
- Ensuring care leavers understand the activities they need to undertake in order to receive benefits, this is known as the claimant commitment. The work coach can tailor this to each person's current situation and review it regularly.
- Offering personal budgeting support to care leavers who feel they need it.
- Offering care leavers an advance payment of up to 100% of their likely benefit entitlement from the first day that they claim Universal Credit, where they are in financial need.
- Allowing care leavers to receive more frequent payments and/or managed payments of their housing costs to their landlord, where appropriate.
- Providing financial support to those care leavers who are working and on a low income, as Universal Credit is an in and out of work benefit.

- Building close relationships with Local Authority Leaving Care teams to support the transition from care and to ensure care leavers meet any benefit conditionality requirements. If a sanction is applied all care leavers in Universal Credit are able to apply for a recoverable hardship payment from the first accounting period the sanction reduction is applied.