

Locked Out and Let Down: The Housing Crisis and Care Leavers

NYAS and Generation Rent

In England
40%
of care leavers
reported a lack of
savings for a deposit as a
barrier to private renting.

**England and Wales have
the highest rates of
youth homelessness
amongst all UK devolved
nations.**

In Wales
1 in 3
care leavers experience
homelessness within the
first two years of leaving
care.

At 18-years-old, young people living in care are faced with having to move into a new home and begin independent living, regardless of whether they feel ready to or not. Too often this transition happens alongside other important moments of a young person's life, such as finishing college courses or applying for university, and is often referred to as the 'cliff edge of care'. It is vital that care leavers are provided with enhanced support, guidance, and care to encourage a positive and successful transition into both adulthood and independent living.

In England and Wales, a Pathway Plan is used to support a young person in their transition into independent living. However, they are not housing-specific plans and can only go so far in helping to prepare care leavers to access safe and secure housing. As a result, too many care leavers leave care at 18 years old without a long-term plan of where they are going to live.

Private Renting

As social housing shortages in England and Wales become increasingly severe, the private rented sector plays an increasing role in accommodating people who have left care.

Many care leavers can face difficulties in accessing these types of homes which require large deposits or upfront rent payments.

Care leavers across England and Wales told us that they have previously struggled to find landlords willing to rent to them because of their status as a care leaver.

“ It was quite hard to actually get a landlord that would accept a care leaver because of all the things said about care leavers... he [the landlord] wouldn't deal with care experience. ”

Care leaver working with NYAS



Guarantors

Care leavers have told us that not having a guarantor - **someone who agrees to pay their rent if they don't pay it, for example a parent of close relative** - can also make private renting inaccessible for them.

Local authorities in England and Wales have a corporate parenting duty to care leavers but this does not include a legal requirement to act as a guarantor.

In England only **38%** of upper tier local authorities will, in principle, act as a guarantor for care leavers. Until there is a statutory duty placed on local authorities to act as guarantors for care leavers, access to private renting will remain a postcode lottery.

“
When you're a care leaver everybody wants a guarantor, regardless of how good your credit history is.
”

Care leaver working with NYAS



Rights and Support

When care leavers do access housing, it is important they are supported to manage day-to-day tasks such as understanding and paying bills, food shopping and looking after their home.

In England, care leavers receive a 'Setting Up Home Allowance' **grant of up to £2,000** which can be used to help buy essential household items or put towards deposits.

In Wales, care leavers involved in the Welsh Government's basic income pilot trial are provided with **£1,280 every month for two years after their 18th birthday**. The basic income can be used to buy essential household items or pay bills.

Care leavers have told us though that when they left care, they were not given enough support to help with these responsibilities or informed of their rights as tenants, especially surrounding repairs and evictions.

Too often care leavers find themselves in rent arrears or evicted from their homes, with homelessness increasing among care leavers increasing in both England and Wales.

“
I wasn't taught how to budget or what bills were most important, like how to prioritise things...
”

”
Care leaver working with NYAS

What housing support is there for care leavers in England and Wales?

Housing is a devolved issue which means that England and Wales have different laws and policies in place.

Policy	England	Wales
Are care leavers exempt from paying council tax until the age of 25?	No*	Yes
Is there legislation that places a statutory duty on local authorities to act as guarantors for care leavers wishing to access private rented properties?	No	No
Are there schemes which allow care leavers to remain living with their foster parents after turning 18 years old?	Yes**	Yes**
Are care leavers entitled to one-bed Local Housing Allowance rates?	Yes***	Yes***
Do care leavers have priority need if they make a homeless application?	Yes****	Yes****

*Only some local authorities in England offer council tax exemptions for care leavers.

**In England this scheme is called 'Staying Put', whereas in Wales this is called 'When I'm Ready'. This is only in cases where both the foster parents/s and fostered young people agree to take part in the respective schemes.

***Local Housing Allowance is a benefit used to pay the rent. Care leavers in England and Wales are only entitled to this if they are in receipt of benefits.

****Only until the age of 21 in England and Wales.

NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service) is a children's rights charity that campaigns for the rights of care experienced young people across England and Wales, championing their voices to be heard in their decisions.

Generation Rent is the voice of private renters across the UK, campaigning for every renter to live in a secure, quality, and affordable home.

This report was written by colleagues at NYAS and Generation Rent. We thank members of NYAS' Campaigns Advisory Group who contributed their views and experiences to this report.