

# Important Information for Young People Leaving Care

From April 1, 2004, there will be a number of changes to the law that describe how the support given to young people leaving care is to be improved. It is important that you know about these changes and how they might affect you.

At present, the law says that local authorities (in Dundee, this is Dundee City Council) must offer advice, guidance and assistance to young people who leave care at any time after the date when they are able to leave school. This applies not only to everyone who is in residential care or foster care, but also to young people who are at home and on a Children's Panel supervision order.

This support, which normally comes from the Social Work Department's Throughcare and Aftercare Team, can include help with, for example, preparing to move to your own accommodation, with finding a job or a training scheme, or with sorting out your benefits. The law says that we should offer this help up till your 19th birthday, or for longer in some cases.

## Assessment and Planning

Firstly – the new law will say that if you leave care after your school leaving date, local authorities must ensure that full assessment of all your needs is carried out, and that there should be a detailed plan that will state how these needs are to be met. The areas covered will include accommodation, health, education, training and employment, money and support.

You should be involved at every stage of this assessment and planning, and the law states that **your** views are important and should be included in the assessment and the plan.

The new law also states that the Council should appoint someone, usually a member of the Throughcare and Aftercare Team, to take charge of the assessment and planning, and young people will have the opportunity to request that someone of their own choice is appointed to offer them additional support.

## Appeals

The new law states that you will be able to appeal against any decisions made during the assessment and planning process. If your appeal cannot be resolved informally, then it will be dealt with by an independent person. Full details of the appeals procedures will be available to young people on request.

## Finance

The other big change in April relates to a slightly different group of young people. If you are looked after away from home – i.e. in residential care or in foster care, and you leave care aged 16 or over (and have been in care for at least 13 weeks since your 14<sup>th</sup> birthday), you will no longer be able to claim benefits until your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The new law states that the Council will be responsible for your financial support and for paying for any accommodation that we help you to obtain. The law also states that you should receive at least as much financial support as you would have from benefits, and we may be able to give you additional money depending on your circumstances.

There are 2 exceptions to this part of the new law – if you are a parent, or if you are diagnosed as having a disability, you will be able to claim benefits in the usual way.

Who  
can I  
speak to  
for more  
information?

If you currently have a Resource Worker from the Throughcare and Aftercare Team, then they will be able to explain anything that you do not understand or help you to think about how you might be affected.

Otherwise, your Social Worker, Carers, Who Cares? Worker, Residential Worker or the Children's Rights Officer can give you advice or help put you in touch with a member of our team.

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