

Foster care conversions to supported lodgings

This is an enquiry we received from a foster carer who wanted to know about possible arrangements when a young person becomes 18 but want to remain with their carer. Sue Baxter, NCAS Accommodation Project Manager supplied the information for the response.

Question

I am a foster carer and have a young man living with me who is now 18. It was in his Pathway plan that he would remain staying with me for a further period. However, the young man got a new social worker after two months who placed him in a room with a charity. The young man was not happy with this arrangement and has moved back in with me. What kind of practical and financial support can we both expect from the local authority?

Answer

Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

Under the CLCA 2000 this young person is 'former relevant' status and as such is entitled to:

- A Personal Adviser
- Pathway Plan with reviews when necessary (at least every 6 months)
- Assistance with employment, education and training
- General assistance
- Vacation accommodation for higher education or residential further education, if needed
- Access to the representations procedure
- The responsible authority must keep in touch.

Foster care conversions

In your particular case the social worker should be supporting him and you in getting his previous foster placement converted to supported lodgings. As the young man is over 18 he would be entitled to housing benefit to pay for the accommodation or rent cost of him continuing to stay with you. The cost of the support that you are offering can be met by the local authority leaving care service or from supporting people funding. The social worker should advise you if there is a supported lodgings scheme for young people leaving care or other young people in your area and how you could apply to become a host (person who provides the support and

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lodgings). In some local authorities there are specific schemes for converting foster placements to supported lodgings, and as part of the Care Matters government programme in 9 authorities they are currently undertaking pilots looking at the practical and financial barriers that could arise, where foster carers provide support to young adults from a care background. If your local authority has not been chosen as a pilot this does not mean they are not running such a scheme. The social worker should be able to advise you.

Financial implications

You need to be aware that the tax and benefit position is not the same for supported lodgings as it is for foster care, and the payments you receive if over a certain amount may attract tax and affect any benefits you receive. The Fostering Network has produced a helpful guide on the financial implications of converting to supported lodgings, see <http://www.fostering.net/resources/382> for details.

The young man will also be entitled to claim income support or job seekers allowance if he is not working or is on a low income. Your local Citizens Advice Bureau can provide information about welfare benefits or visit <http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/life/benefits.htm>. The benefits (including housing benefit) this young man is entitled to may be affected if he is a full time student; Citizens Advice Bureau should be able to advise you about this.

About us

Please note that, although the information in this briefing is correct to the best of our knowledge, NCAS does not give legal or benefits advice and we recommend that you seek separate legal advice as necessary.

For further information and resources please go to our website www.leavingcare.org or contact:

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NCAS is part of Catch22, the charity that helps young people out, www.catch-22.org.uk