

Cumberland Council Cared For Children and Care Experienced Young People - DWP Protocol

An Agreement Between:

Department for Work and Pensions including:

Carlisle Jobcentre

Whitehaven Jobcentre

Workington Jobcentre

Ashton-in-Makerfield Service Centre

&

**Cumberland Council - Corporate Parenting
Cared for Children and Care Experienced Teams**

John Short

Version One

2025-2026

7th February 2025

Key Contact for updating these protocols will be:

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**Department for Work and Pensions and Cumberland
Council - Children's Services –
Cared For Children and Care Experienced Young
People – Benefits Protocol**

Introduction:

The aim of this Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Cumberland Council Children's Services DWP Protocol is to set out the joint working arrangements regarding the benefits claim support, provided to young people in (cared for) and leaving care (care experienced) in Cumberland with an objective of improving the services they receive. Cared for children and care experienced young people are widely acknowledged as a particularly vulnerable group of young people who are likely to require additional support given that as a group, they often move to independent living at an earlier age than their peer group and will need to be economically independent sooner than many of their contemporaries. In addition, it is likely that as a group, they will need to make more use of the welfare benefits system than their peers. Care experienced young people as a group are also overrepresented in the NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) cohort and as such may need enhanced support from the Jobcentre Plus and the DWP Work Coaches.

Certain groups of young people aged 16 & 17 who are in or leaving care (Cared For and Care Experienced) are eligible to claim personal benefits (lone parents and those deemed sick and disabled), but not housing benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit.

At the age of 18 care experienced young people are entitled to make an advanced claim for benefits (28 days prior to their 18th birthday) and those aged 18 to 22/25 will have enhanced entitlements to support from the DWP and in certain circumstances enhanced entitlements (universal credit if attending education), (exemption from the shared room rate of housing benefit).

This document sets out the approach taken to supporting care experienced young people to maximise their entitlements, and the processes for ensuring they receive the support they are eligible for which is targeted at improving their outcomes.

Terminology:

The legal term for children in 'Care' is 'Looked After', however, Cumberland Council Children's Services use the term 'Cared for Children' rather than 'Children Looked After' as children, young people, staff, and carers feel this provides a more helpful & positive use of language. In Cumberland we also use 'Care Experienced' instead of Care Leaver as children, young people, staff, and carers also feel this provides a more helpful and positive use of language.

Aim of the Protocol and Partnership Approach:

The Three Area Jobcentres, Ashton-in-Makerfield Service Centre and Cumberland Council, Children Services Teams will work together to provide an enhanced service offer to support care experienced young people into education, employment, and training and/or with a benefit claim. The provision of the service will be aimed at Cared For Children and Care Experienced Young People residing in **Cumberland** and who, due to geographical location are supported by a Jobcentre located within the Cumberland area. Where young people are living near the Cumberland area boundaries, they may be required to access a Jobcentre in a neighbouring authority, as such the service offer will differ slightly from that set out in this protocol, however, care experienced young people will continue to be deemed a priority group.

This will ensure:

- Co-ordinated support to engage young people into Education, Training, Employment, Apprenticeships, Voluntary Work or Positive and Supportive Activities;
- An early entry system (at age 18 (age 16/17 for certain groups)) and a smooth transition for those care experienced young people needing to claim benefits;
- Prompt and accurate payment of benefits where these are required;
- Young people are empowered and enabled to gain sustainable paid employment through individual route ways;
- Young people who are unable to work or engage in education or training in either the short or long term are supported to access non-means tested and means tested benefits based on any additional needs they have.

It is intended that through this partnership with the **Three Cumberland Area Jobcentres**, the **Ashton-in-Makerfield Service Centre**, and the **Cumberland Council Children Services Teams**, that more care experienced young people are empowered to aspire to, and reach their full potential, enabling improved outcomes and access to sustainable employment/life chances. A critical element of the Protocol is to assist young people to maximise their benefit and general income in order to help to improve their opportunities.

General Guidance for Universal Credit Full Service:

Universal Credit is predominantly a digital/online service. In very limited circumstances, claims can be made over the phone or face to face with DWP staff, or with the assistance of the Citizens Advice 'Help to Claim' service (0800 144 8444).

Care experienced young people can prepare their on-line claim for Universal Credit up to 28 days before and including their 18th birthday. This helps ensure support is in place as soon as possible. The claim should not be activated until the day after their 18th birthday.

Although the claim details should not be submitted until the claimant's 18th birthday, they can be viewed and checked in advance of submission, to help get the claim ready and ensure prompt processing.

The advanced claim service automatically deletes any information after 28 days. All information must be submitted within 28 days of the claimant starting to enter information on the service, providing it is on or after the claimant's 18th birthday. To ensure and support young people to have a positive 18th birthday experience, the initial benefit claim does not need to be submitted until the day after their 18th birthday.

Cumberland Local Authority Teams - 'Cared For Children and Care Experienced Young People Teams', 'Children with Disabilities Teams', 'Safeguarding Hub Teams', 'Support and Protection Teams' and 'Early Help, Prevention and Youth Justice Teams' can assist young people to make their claim using this Protocol.

The care experienced young person MUST make a 'Pre-Claim Interview' appointment (also called an Evidence Interview), once they have completed the online claim form, to confirm (this interview will be completed by telephone where necessary):

- Identity;
- Bank account details;
- Eligibility to claim Universal Credit.
 - a) In all cases - they are a care experienced (standard letter issued from Children Services – (copy in Appendix 1);
 - b) If they are sick or disabled - provide a fit note;
 - c) If they are a lone parent (birth certificate for child/ren);
 - d) Tenancy agreement if appropriate and aged 18 or over;
 - e) Proof of being in education (letter from education provider [sixth form or college]).

At the 'Pre-Claim Interview' (evidence/interview) and if the care experienced young person is unemployed, they will either be able to complete the claimant commitment process at the 'Pre-Claim Interview' or book a 'Claimant Commitment' appointment on or as soon as possible after their 18th birthday.

The care experienced young person may bring a social worker/personal adviser with them to the 'Pre-Claim Interview' (recommended). Where appropriate an interpreter can also attend.

Where a young person makes a claim for welfare benefits after their 18th birthday the claim should still be made online, and the claimant should book their 'Initial Evidence Interview', once the claim has been submitted.

Full-Time Non-Advanced Education for Care Experienced Young People

Care experienced young people can undertake full-time non-advanced education, up to the age of 21 or the end of the academic year in which they reach the age 21 (or at the end of the course if earlier) and claim Universal Credit, so long as they are 'without parental support'. Former foster carers do not count as providing parental support.

During non-advanced education programmes, the care leaver will be in the 'No Work-Related Requirements' regime on the basis that they are undertaking 'Relevant Education'.

During the summer vacation, the care experienced claimant will be allocated to the 'Labour Market Regime' based on their individual circumstances (as if they were not in education or training at that time).

A care experienced young person (care leaver) can also claim Universal Credit if they are undertaking part-time education of under 12 hours a week, and looking for work, and the course they are undertaking is compatible with 'looking for work'.

It is for the DWP's Case Manager to determine if a claimant is entitled to Universal Credit and ultimately if their circumstances deem them a 'care experienced young person (care leaver)' at the age of 16/17 (and 18 to 21/25).

Care experienced young people who return to or are living with a parent at age 18 and/or up to age 21 are not without parental support (not estranged) and are therefore not eligible to be included in the 'Relevant Education' group and will need to comply with the 'Work Requirements Regime'.

Cared for children/care experienced young people who are also unaccompanied separated young people (UASC) are eligible to apply for and claim benefits at age 18 as long as they have had an initial asylum decision and have a form of asylum status that provides access to public services (refugee status, humanitarian protection status, discretionary leave status, limited leave to remain [to be eligible or to remain eligible for benefits/public services, young people will need to apply to extend their leave status prior to any status they have expiring]).

Benefits Protocol – Who is Entitled to Claim Universal Credit

Cared for Children and Care Experienced Young People aged 16 & 17

It is possible for any young person to be entitled to Universal Credit at the age of 16 or 17 if they are:

- a) without parental support (estranged); or
- b) if they have only a limited capability for work due to ill-health; or
- c) they are responsible for a child who lives with them.

This includes those in the above categories who are still in education (since December 2021 the Limited Capability for Work (LCW) must commence before the start of any education).

If the young person is aged 16 or 17, and is cared for, or care experienced they will usually not be entitled to Universal Credit until they reach age 18 unless in categories b) and c) above.

Cared for Children & Care Experienced Young People Aged 16 & 17 who are entitled to Universal Credit:

1. Sick and Disabled (old ESA group):

Documents required: ID, Fit note, Proof of address, bank account details

2. Lone parents (old IS group):

Documents required: ID, proof of address, bank account details and birth certificate of child/children.

The Local Authority Children's Services (Cumberland) must provide housing cost support or a home (placement) for 16 & 17 year-old cared for children and care experienced young people until the age of 18, regardless of them being able to claim the personal element of Universal Credit.

Cumberland Council Children's Services Provides the Following Support for 16 & 17 Year Olds:

Cared for children aged 16 & 17 will have a named social worker and an allocated personal adviser and will also have a pathway plan that sets out the support to be provided. The pathway plan should include information about the benefits they are or will be claiming and the identity documents they have or need to support the claim. Social workers and personal advisers will support young people to prepare their initial benefit claim.

Care experienced young people aged 16 to 21/25 will have a named personal adviser and a pathway plan that sets out the support to be provided. Personal advisers will be responsible for supporting young people with any ongoing benefit claim support.

Care Experienced Young People aged 18 to 21/25 – who are:

1. Unemployed;
2. In relevant education;
3. Lone parents;
4. Ill/sick or disabled;
5. Not estranged (living with a parent);
6. Low waged;
7. Needing help with the housing element of Universal Credit only;
8. Couples.

Documents required: Identity documents, Proof of address, bank account details, tenancy agreement where appropriate, children/s birth certificates where appropriate, fit note if appropriate, proof of relevant education where appropriate.

IN ALL CASES: The standard letter from Cumberland Children's Services, setting out the young person's care experienced status and grounds for making the claim, must be provided before the claim can progress. Copy of letter in Appendix 1.

Definitions/Groups of Care Experienced Young People:

Eligible – Cared for Children - Aged 16 & 17

Eligible Children - young people in care for at least one day aged 16 and 17, and who have been looked after (Section 31, Section 38, Section 20, Section 21) for (a total of) at least 13 weeks from the age of 14 to 18. Where the time spent in care is part of a series of 'short breaks' which total 75 days or less in any 12-month period, the 16 or 17-year-old will not be an eligible child. A short break is a period of 17 days or less which the child spends in the same accommodation, or with the same person and after which the child returns to her/his parent or person with parental responsibility. This will normally exclude children in 'respite care' from the definition of eligible children.

Relevant - Care Experienced – Children Who Have Ceased to be Cared For - Aged 16 & 17

Relevant Children - young people aged 16 or 17 who have ceased to be cared for (ceased to be looked after) and were eligible children before ceasing to be cared for. For this definition, the child will cease to be a relevant child if s/he lives continuously for six months or more with a parent or person with parental responsibility and will then be a 'qualifying young person' (see below). If this arrangement breaks down, while the child is still 16 or 17, however, s/he will once again become a relevant child. A 16 or 17-year-old will also be a relevant child if s/he would have been in care on her/his 16th birthday but was detained in the criminal justice system or in hospital and had immediately before being detained (sentenced) or in hospital spent a total of at least 13 weeks in care when aged 14 or above. The calculation of these 13 weeks will exclude any time spent in a 'pre-planned series of short-term placements' of up to four weeks where the child returned to her/his parent or person with parental responsibility after the placement.

Former Relevant Care Experienced – Young People who were Previously Eligible or Relevant or both – Aged 18 to 21 (and 21 to 25 Year Olds)

Former Relevant Children - young people aged 18 or over who have been eligible or relevant children – up to age 21/25.

Qualifying Care Experienced – Young people aged 16 to 21/25

Qualifying Young People - young people under the age of 21/25 who were subject to a Special Guardianship Order and were looked after prior to the making of the Order. Young people who have spent at least one day in care or privately fostered while over the age of 16. Qualifying young people may not be entitled to full leaving care duties because they have not spent at least 13 weeks in care, a) because they are privately fostered rather than looked after by Children's Services, b) because their care was made up of a series of short breaks or short term placements or c) because they spent six months or more with a parent or person with parental responsibility when aged 16 or 17 and this arrangement did not break down.

Cumberland Council Children Services Teams will:

- Assist young people to make their initial claim online using the gov.uk website, up to 28 days prior to their 18th birthday. The DWP's Advice for Decision Makers Guide, section A-2048 provides the framework for advanced claims for care experienced young people;
- Ensure the young person has relevant identity documentation;
- Ensure the young person has a National Insurance Number; and
- The young person can prove they have care leaver status (standard Cumberland Council Children's Services benefit support letter setting out Care Experienced status and grounds for the claim);
- Once the online claim is completed, the social worker/personal adviser, claimant must ensure the 'Pre-Claim interview' is booked, by contacting the Jobcentre, Care Experienced Single Point of Contact (SPOC).

At this initial 'Pre-Claim Interview', the young person will be expected to confirm their identity, bank account details and Care Experienced status as well their benefit eligibility criteria if appropriate (limited capacity for work, lone parents, student status if studying).

At the end of the 'Pre-Claim Interview' the Care Experienced young person (if unemployed) can book their claimant commitment interview (work search activity), which should also be booked prior to, or as soon as possible after their 18th birthday.

The Care Experienced young person should bring a social worker/personal adviser with them to the 'Pre-Claim Interview'. Where appropriate an interpreter can also attend.

- On their 18th Birthday (day after) the personal adviser (or responsible case worker) and young person should access the online account and submit the claim. The claim will start on the day that it is submitted. A claimant "To Do" is generated called 'book your interview'. The leaving care personal adviser (or responsible case worker) and young person should call the relevant area jobcentre and book this appointment directly with the jobcentre plus named contact (SPOC). The interview should take place within 7 days.

In all Cases:

Once the online claim is completed, the social worker/personal adviser or claimant must call the Jobcentre, specifically the 'Care Experienced' (Care Leavers) Single Point of Contact (SPOC) listed at the back of the protocol, to book the 'Pre-Claim Interview'.

Jobcentre Plus will ensure:

- The care experienced young person's SPOC (list at the back of the protocol) will book the first 'Pre-Claim Interview' (Identification verification and claim type) and remind the social worker/personal adviser/care leaver what they need to bring to the 'Pre-Claim interview';
- The care experienced young person's SPOC will see the young person at the 'Pre-Claim interview' and will check that all their documentation is relevant and appropriate;
- The care experienced young person's SPOC will also allocate the young person a Work Coach and book the claimant commitment appointment (if unemployed), on or as near to their 18th birthday as possible with the Work Coach who will support the young person (care leaver) throughout the life of their claim;
- The care experienced young person's SPOC will ensure the claimant's profile is noted with 'care experienced/care leaver' and that a meaningful discussion with the young person is held to promote the benefits of informing staff as to their care experienced status and that the status will remain confidential.

Once the 'New Claims' Process is Complete – In all Cases

Local Authority - Care Experienced or Case Holding Team Will:

- Reiterate what the role of the social worker or personal adviser is and how they can support the care experienced young person going forward;
- Ensure the care experienced young person makes the Jobcentre / DWP aware of any changes to their contact details and circumstances;
- Encourage the care experienced young person to attend all appointments at the Jobcentre.

Improving Support:

Cumberland Council Children's Services, provides **5 weeks transitional financial support** where young people have submitted a Universal Credit claim and are awaiting their first payment. This is provided to ensure young people make a smooth transition from the Maintenance Allowance to Universal Credit support and to avoid the need for an advanced payment.

Where a young person applies for a Universal Credit Advanced Payment, they will not receive transitional care experienced financial support.

Alternative Payment Arrangements:

Care experienced young people are deemed a Tier 1 vulnerable group and as such are eligible to an Alternative Payment Arrangement/Managed Payment to the Landlord on request. It is always recommended that Personal Advisers and DWP Work Coaches encourage care experienced young people to set up an APA/MPTL so that the housing element of their Universal Credit is paid directly to their landlord. Complete a UC 47 Form.

Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches will:

The work coach will continue to ensure that the care experienced young person is aware of the support available in the Jobcentre and on-going opportunities.

Liaise with the social worker/personal adviser if any issues or concerns arise which could constitute any sanction activity before it is considered and/or put into effect.

Communicating with the DWP:

Care experienced young people should be aware that all communications from/to the DWP relating to their Universal Credit claim will be directed through their Universal Credit Journal and the young person will be notified of any changes to that journal through either the SMS or Email contact they choose at the beginning of their claim. Paper documents and postal notifications are no longer sent to the young person and any documents the young person needs to submit will have to be uploaded via their Journal and Account.

SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYMENT

Jobcentre Plus and Cumberland - case holding teams (social workers, personal advisers, support workers) will work together to maximise the opportunities for all care experienced young people.

Details to be Aware of:

Which Jobcentre to Attend:

- Universal Credit claimants can only be supported in the area they live in – for example if they live near Carlisle, they can only get support with Universal Credit in Carlisle Job Centre;
- This Protocol is for Cumberland care experienced young people only and the contacts below are only to be used for the relevant Jobcentres. There is a National Care Leavers Protocol expectation, but staff will have to contact the local Jobcentres (outside of Cumberland) to find out what those Protocols are – they should not differ greatly from this one, but the SPOC contacts will be different.

Please be Aware:

- If the care experienced young person is already on a legacy benefit (JSA/ESA/IS/HB) this will not change. They may remain on their legacy benefit until the full migration of Universal Credit is started (not expected until at least 2025). However, if they have a relevant change of circumstances, such as having their first child; needing to claim help with rent for the first time, or in a new district/borough council area; being found fit for work if previously on ESA, or unfit for work if previously on JSA; becoming part of a couple - this will lead to a natural migration to UC at that point.
- If the care experienced young person is in Supported, Exempt or Temporary Accommodation (provided by a housing department/authority), they will continue to receive Housing Benefit for their housing costs. Universal Credit does not pay these housing costs but will continue to pay the rest of the claimants UC entitlement.
- If the care experienced young person qualifies for Housing Benefit, as a result, they must make a separate claim for this once their Universal Credit Full Service claim has been submitted. Whether the rent is met by Universal Credit or Housing Benefit, the care experienced young person must also make a claim for council tax support from their local council, as this is not part of Universal Credit.

Named Contacts:

To enable this process to work efficiently named contacts are vital. The Named Contacts are detailed below and will remain the Point of Contact (SPOC) to book the Care Experienced Young Persons – 'Pre-Claim Interview' only. Once the 'Pre-Claim Interview' has been completed, the young person will be allocated a specific Work Coach and their contact details will be in the care experienced young person's journal along with the Service Centre agent that will be looking after their ongoing benefit claim.

Department For Work and Pensions – Contacts:

Carlisle Partnership Manager

NAME	EMAIL	TEL NUMBER
Shane Byrne	Shane.Byrne@dwp.gov.uk	07831121585

Whitehaven and Workington Partnership Manager

NAME	EMAIL	TEL NUMBER
Rachel Wells	rachel.wells@dwp.gov.uk	07788 768475

Social Justice and Supporting Families

NAME	EMAIL	TEL NUMBER
Louise Humphreys	Louise.Humphreys@dwp.gov.uk	07557078314

Carlisle Jobcentre – Single Point of Contact

NAME	EMAIL	TEL NUMBER
Stewart Thompson	Stewart.Thompson@dwp.gov.uk	0300 089 3667

Whitehaven Jobcentre – Single Point of Contact

NAME	EMAIL	TEL NUMBER
Jana Mrengo	Jana.Mrengo@dwp.gov.uk	0300 089 3667

Workington Jobcentre – Single Point of Contact

NAME	EMAIL	TEL NUMBER
Debbie Simmons	Debbie.Simmons@dwp.gov.uk	0300 089 3667

Employment and Employment Related Support

NAME	EMAIL	TEL NUMBER
Jack Bland	Jack.Bland@dwp.gov.uk	07464536900

Disability Employment Advisors, Access to Work and Health Support

NAME	EMAIL	TEL NUMBER
Jack Bland	Jack.Bland@dwp.gov.uk	07464536900

NAME	EMAIL	TEL NUMBER
Ashford-in-Makerfield UC Service Centre Please contact the 'spocs' above who will support you with UC enquiries and link with the payment team – If escalation is required contact Shane Byrne & Rachel Wells	Not applicable	

Cumberland Council – DWP Potocol Contacts

Cared For and Care Experienced Team One

Name	Role	Phone	Email
Heather Bracken	Team Manager	07920 783105	Heather.Bracken@cumberland.gov.uk
Lisa Dixon (Team 1 and 2)	Advanced Practitioner	07824 865923	Lisa.Dixon@cumberland.gov.uk
Mandy McKenna	Personal Adviser	07825 340043	Amanda.McKenna@cumberland.gov.uk
James Turner	Personal Adviser	07825 830385	James.Turner@cumberland.gov.uk
Naomi Carter	Personal Adviser	07825 340016	Naomi.Carter@cumberland.gov.uk
Emma Doran	Social Worker	07966 649167	Emma.Doran@cumbria.gov.uk
Joanne Ford	Social Worker	07557 295067	Joanne.Ford@cumbria.gov.uk
Angela Strange	Social Worker	07825 340180	Angela.Strange@cumbria.gov.uk
Andrea Burlinson	Social Worker	07920 596196	Andrea.Burlinson1@cumbria.gov.uk

Cared For and Care Experienced Team Two

Name	Role	Phone	Email
Laura Harding	Team Manager	07920 831482	Laura.Harding@cumberland.gov.uk
Lisa Dixon (Team 1 and 2)	Advanced Practitioner	07824 865923	Lisa.Dixon@cumberland.gov.uk
Emily Fisher	Personal Adviser	07747 631112	Emily.Fosher@cumberland.gov.uk
Maria Yarker	Personal Adviser	07721 566134	Maria.Yarler@cumberland.gov.uk
Fran Lewis	Personal Adviser	07825 340195	Francesca.Lewis@cumberland.gov.uk

Peter Barnes	Social Worker	07500 784908	Peter.Barnes@cumberland.gov.uk
Louisa Burns	Social Worker	07887 717143	Louisa.Burns@cumberland.gov.uk
Lin Thorpe	Social Worker	07788 396258	Lin.Thorpe@cumberland.gov.uk
John Jackson	Social Worker	07768 798197	John.Jackson2@cumberland.gov.uk
Neddy Simenda	Social Worker	07442 261504	Neddy.Simenda@cumberland.gov.uk
Andrew Ndirwo	Social Worker	07584 115336	Andrew.Ndirwo@cumbria.gov.uk
Kerry Jardine	Social Worker	07551 678525	Kerry.Jardine@cumbria.gov.uk

West Duty E-Mail Address	LeavingCareAllerdaleandCopeland@cumbria.gov.uk
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Cared For and Care Experienced Team Three

Name	Role	Phone	Email
Kath McCutcheon	Team Manager	07768 044171	Kath.McCutcheon@cumbria.gov.uk
Matt Hill	Advanced Practitioner	07423 760175	Matthew.Hill2@cumbria.gov.uk
Susie Cooper	Personal Adviser	07900 685679	Susannah.Cooper@cumbria.gov.uk
Danielle Scott	Personal Adviser	07551 678495	Danielle.Scott@cumbria.gov.uk
Warren Barnett	Social Worker	07880 303351	Warren.Barnett@cumbria.gov.uk
Joseph Dixon	Personal Adviser	07825 340421	Joseph.Dixon@cumbria.gov.uk
Laura Stamp	Personal Adviser	07879 880359	Laura.Stamp@cumbria.gov.uk
Shannon Cummings	ASYE	07827 234278	Shannon.Cummings@cumbria.gov.uk
Noluthando Thwala	Social Worker	07442 868541	Noluthando.Thwala@cumbria.gov.uk
Stephen Bonsu	Social Worker	07825 340177	Stephen.Bonsu@cumbria.gov.uk

Cared For and Care Experienced Team Four

Name	Role	Phone	Email
Lorna Graham	Team Manager	07920 020991	Lorna.Graham@cumbria.gov.uk
Mathew Gower	Social Worker	07907 651721	Matthew.Gower@cumbria.gov.uk

Karen Rome	Personal Adviser	07971 446118	Karen.Rome@cumbria.gov.uk
Louise Cook	Social Worker	07880 052896	Louise.Cook@cumbria.gov.uk
Mandi Carruthers	Personal Adviser	07825 340621	Mandi.Carruthers@cumbria.gov.uk
Hollie Ritson	Personal Adviser	07901 532898	Hollie.Ritson@cumbria.gov.uk
Susan Ayre	Personal Adviser	07584 508094	Susan.Ayre@cumbria.gov.uk
Georgina Platt	Social Worker	07469103482	Georgina.Platt@cumbria.gov.uk
Sphesihle Ngidi	Social Worker	07442 874782	Sphesihle.Ngidi@cumbria.gov.uk
Rebecca Burrough	Social Worker	07920 250784	Rebecca.Burrough@cumbria.gov.uk

East Duty E-Mail Address	LeavingCareCarlisleandEden@cumbria.gov.uk
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Children With Disabilities – Team One

Name	Role	Phone	Email
James Shaw	Team Manager	07880 787979	James.Shaw@cumbria.gov.uk

Virtual School Contact

Name	Role	Phone	Email
Edward Strong	Head of the Virtual School	07827 982322	Edward.Strong@cumbria.gov.uk

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX ONE:	Standard Benefit Claim Letter 2025-2026, Template
APPENDIX TWO:	Authorisation to Share Information Form
APPENDIX THREE:	Identity Documentation Required to Support a Benefit Claim
APPENDIX FOUR:	Universal Credit Process Flowchart
APPENDIX FIVE:	Universal Credit, Housing Element or Housing Benefit - Care Experienced Rent Costs

APPENDIX ONE - Standard Benefit Claim Letter 2025 – 2026 (TEMPLATE)

ADD CUMBERLAND LOGO

ADD ADDRESS

CLIENT NAME:
(Tenant)

D.O.B:

N.I. NUMBER:

CURRENT ADDRESS:

ADJUST AND AMMEND AS REQUIRED:

TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION AND TENANCY: (Licence Agreement/Assured Shorthold)

PLACEMENT TYPE

NAME OF LANDLORD

ADDRESS OF LANDLORD

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter is provided to verify the identity of the above named young person and to confirm and clarify **(his/her)** circumstances in support of their welfare benefit claim.

The above named young person was previously placed in **(private accommodation /semi-independent accommodation/foster care/residential)** by Cumberland Council Children's Services at the above address. As the young person has now reached the age of eighteen and **(he/she)** is deemed 'independent in **(his/her)** own right' and is liable for accommodation costs of **(£00.00 per week)**, excluding utility and support charges **(he/she)** is submitting a claim for **(set out benefits being claimed)**. The information provided below sets out **(his/her)** legal status and financial circumstances

I can confirm that **(Add Full Name)** was previously an 'Eligible' child, or an 'Eligible' and/or 'Relevant' child and became a 'Former Relevant' child on **(Add Date)** as defined by the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations and Guidance 2010 (revised 2015 and 2022) and The Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010.

A. I can also confirm that **(Add Full Name)** was previously 'Cared For' (Looked After) by Cumberland Council Children's Services and was 'Accommodated' under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

B. I can also confirm that **(Add Full Name)** was previously 'Cared For' (Looked After) by Cumberland Council Children's Services and was subject to a Section 31 Care Order under the terms of the Children Act 1989.

(Add Full Name) ceased to be 'Looked After' on **(Add Date- 18th birthday or actual date if earlier)** and will continue to receive practical support and, in specific circumstances, financial help from Cumberland Council, Children's Services under Section 24 of the Children Act 1989 or Section 23C of the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010.

Section 23C and Section 24 payments must be declared when claiming benefits but are not be counted as income for any welfare benefit purposes.

Whilst **(Add Full Name)** is establishing **(his/her)** welfare benefit claim **(he/she)** will be provided with weekly leaving care maintenance allowance of £72.90 (2025-2026) under these powers for 5 weeks.

1. As **(Add Full Name)** has now become a 'Former Relevant' child and ceased to be 'Looked After', I believe **(he/she)** will be entitled to claim Universal Credit at the rate of £316.98 (2025-2026) per month (if single without dependent children and not having limited capacity for work or work-related activity) and the relevant Housing Costs element. **(He/she)** will also be eligible to apply for Council Tax Support from the relevant local authority.
2. As **(Add Full Name)** has now become a 'Former Relevant' child, has ceased to be 'Looked After' and is engaged on a traineeship at the rate of **(ADD £ per week)**, I believe **(he/she)** will be entitled to claim Universal Credit at the rate of £316.98 (2025-2026) per month (if single without dependent children and not having limited capacity for work or work-related activity) and the relevant Housing Costs element, minus any income received from his training allowance, apart from the payment of travel and childcare expenses. **(He/she)** will also be eligible to apply for Council Tax Support from the relevant local authority.
3. As **(Add Full Name)** has now become a 'Former Relevant' child, has ceased to be 'Looked After', is without parental support and is entitled to claim whilst receiving non-advanced education, I believe **(he/she)** should receive Universal Credit at the rate of £316.98 (2025-2026) per month (if single without dependent children and not having limited capacity for work or work-related activity) and the relevant Housing Costs element. He/she will also be eligible to apply for Council Tax Support from the relevant local authority.
4. As **(Add Full Name)** has now become a 'Former Relevant' child, has ceased to be 'Looked After', and has been given a 'Fit Note' by **(his/her)** Doctor, I believe **(he/she)** will be entitled to claim Universal Credit at the rate of £316.98 (2025-2026) per month (if single without dependent children) and the relevant Housing Costs element. **(He/She)** should also be assessed for Limited Capacity for Work and Limited Capacity for Work-Related Activity. **(He/she)** will also be eligible to apply for Council Tax Support from the relevant local authority.
5. As **(Add Full Name)** has now become a 'Former Relevant' child, has ceased to be 'Looked After' and is earning a low income, I believe **(he/she)** will be entitled to claim Universal Credit at the rate of £316.98 (2025-2026) per month (if single without dependent children and not having limited capacity for work or work related activity) and the relevant Housing Costs element. **(He/she)** will also be eligible to apply for Council Tax Support from the relevant local authority. Please find attached relevant wage slips/prove of income.

As **(Add Full Name)** was 'Looked After' on/or after **(his/her)** sixteenth birthday **(he/she)** and is under 25 years of age, **(he/she)** is currently exempt from the shared accommodation rate of local housing allowance, and therefore should receive the one-bedroom rate as **(his/her)** housing cost element.

Alternative Payment Arrangements:

As **(Add Full Name)** was previously 'Looked After' and remains vulnerable, I would request that the 'Housing Costs' element of Universal Credit is paid under a 'Tier 1 Vulnerability - Alternative Payment Arrangement' directly to their landlord.

(Add specific information about the claim/claimant)

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Approved Signatures

Team Manager

*** Please complete, or delete, either section A or B, the sections in the bold text, the relevant sections 1 to 5 and then either section A or B. All other sections must be completed.**

Information about disregarding Social Services payments to care leavers.

Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook; Child Poverty Action Group: 2019/20 edition

Chapter 7 Universal Credit – What Counts as Income

Page 128 – Other Income

Payments by Social Services

Universal Credit operates differently to other means-tested benefits, where all income is counted unless specifically disregarded. Under universal credit, only income that is specifically mentioned in the regulations counts as income. There is no mention of payments under the Children Act, and therefore any payments made under that legislation will be disregarded as income.

APPENDIX TWO – Authorisation to Share Information Form

Agencies and individuals, I agree to share information with – Name **ADD**

I agree to my Social Worker/Personal Adviser sharing my information and relevant sections of my pathway plan and discussing my situation with the following agencies:

Tick each agency or person as relevant:

- ☐ Department for Work and Pensions (for Universal Credit claims, a copy of this agreement should be lodged in the claimant's journal).
- ☐ Housing Benefit Department
- ☐ Housing Department and Partner Housing Associations
- ☐ Local College
- ☐ Employment and Training Providers
- ☐ Health Services
- ☐ Other Agency or Individuals (Specify)
- ☐ Permission to assist with bidding on properties through Choice Based Lettings on my behalf

I understand that my Social Worker / Personal Adviser will only share my personal information and pathway plan with these agencies on a 'need to know' basis and in situations relevant to each agency. If a situation arises where my information needs to be shared as a result of child protection issues, because I, or others, are at imminent risk of serious harm, or if there is a legal requirement to share information, I will be informed beforehand.

Full Name.....

Signed.....

Date of Birth.....

Address.....

National Insurance Number.....

My Social Worker/Personal Adviser will review this consent to share information on a yearly basis. Date agreement made.....

Date agreement to be reviewed.....(not more than one year after the agreement is made)

I agree that the Jobcentre Plus (DWP) and Cumberland Council Children's Services can share a copy of my Claimant Commitment or Work Plan (This will help you and your social worker / personal adviser to work together to ensure plans co-ordinate any support).

APPENDIX THREE – Identity Documentation Required to Support a Benefit Claim

A Universal Credit claimant will require at least 1 form of photographic identity documentation and at least 2 forms of secondary identity documentation to confirm residency at the claiming address

Primary Documentation that can support a person's identity:

Primary – The issuing source is Government and has strong registration procedures with robust checking processes contained within the face to face application. Documents contain many developed security features, which make them more difficult to forge or counterfeit.

The Primary documents listed below must be current where necessary.

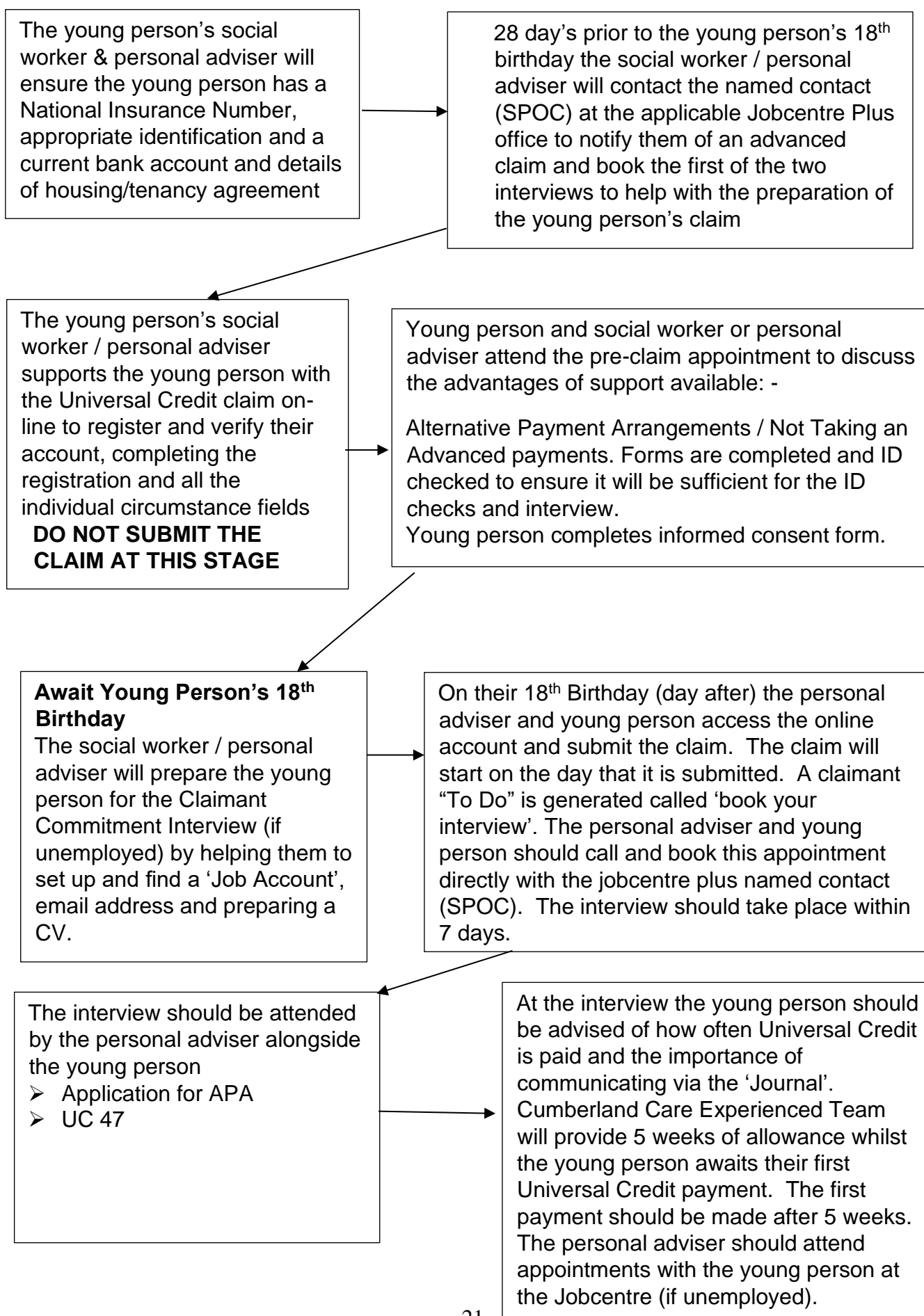
- A passport showing that the holder, or a person named in the passport as the child of the holder;
- A full or provisional UK photo driving licence;
- A residence permit, registration certificate or document certifying or indicating permanent residence issued by the Home Office or the United Kingdom Border Agency to a national of a European Economic Area country or Switzerland;
- A permanent residence card issued by the Home Office or the Border and Immigration Agency to the family member of a national of a European Economic Area country or Switzerland;
- A Biometric Residence Permit issued by the United Kingdom Border Agency to the holder which indicates that the person named in it is allowed to stay indefinitely in the United Kingdom, or has no time limit on their stay in the United Kingdom. (Please note that in the case of a refugee who has no other forms of ID, the Biometric Residence Permit can be accepted as sole evidence of identity);
- A passport or other travel document endorsed to show that the holder is exempt from immigration control, is allowed to stay indefinitely in the United Kingdom, has the right of abode in the United Kingdom, or has no time limit on their stay in the United Kingdom;
- Citizen card;
- An Immigration Status Document issued by the Home Office or the United Kingdom Border Agency to the holder with an endorsement indicating that the person named in it, is allowed to stay indefinitely in the United Kingdom or has no time limit on their stay in the United Kingdom;
- A certificate of registration or naturalisation as a British citizen, which indicates the holder is entitled to take up employment in the United Kingdom;
- A bank card – the bank card must show the claimants name, sort code and account number or be supported by a recent bank statement.

Secondary Documentation that can support a person's identity:

Secondary – Documents can be Government or non-Government issued and contain some security features (though not significantly developed) to assist the authentication of the document. However, documents can be forged or counterfeited with relative ease. Usually issued by remote channels of application but can be issued by face to face in some cases.

- Any form of Primary evidence (not already used as a Primary evidence)
- Certificate of registration or naturalisation as a British citizen;
- Original Birth certificate issued in the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or Ireland (or certified copy from Registrar);
- Foreign birth certificate;
- Original (or certified copy from Registrar) birth/adoption certificates;
- Citizen card;
- Building Society passbook;
- Local Authority rent card;
- Council tax documents;
- Life assurance/insurance policies;
- Mortgage repayment policies;
- Recently paid fuel/telephone bills in the customer's name;
- Original marriage certificate;
- Original civil partnership certificate;
- Divorce/annulment papers;
- Dissolution of civil partnership papers;
- Certificate/contract of employment in Her Majesty's forces;
- Certificate/contract of employment under the Crown;
- Certificate/contract of employment in the Merchant Navy;
- Current Police registration certificate;
- Current/recent wage/pension slip that includes payee name and NI Number;
- Letter from employer/contract of employment;
- Deed Poll certificate.

APPENDIX FOUR – Universal Credit Process Flowchart



APPENDIX FIVE – Universal Credit, Housing Element or Housing Benefit - Care Leavers Rent Costs

All care leavers aged 18 to 25 are exempt from the Shared Accommodation LHA Rate and are entitled to claim support to pay their rent

Staying Put – Where a care experienced young person remains living within their former foster carer after their 18th birthday under a Staying Put arrangement, the young person can claim Universal Credit (Housing Element) in order to pay their rent/housing costs. Cumberland Council Children's Services support those within Staying Put and their former foster parents to create a liability for rent by issuing a Licence Agreement - to occupy which is required for the Universal Credit Housing Element - verification.

Staying Put and Extended Family

Please note some young people will refer to their foster carers as family as they will have been living within the fostering arrangement for a long period and see the foster carers as a replacement family. In order to claim Universal Credit – Housing Element, their needs to be a commercial arrangement and liability for rent. Whilst normally Universal Credit – Housing Element is not payable where someone is living with extended family (i.e., Grandparents/ Uncle/Auntie), this is not the case with Staying Put, as the young person will be claiming based on the person being their former foster carer.

Job Centre Appointments:

- When a young person reaches the age of 18, a Cumberland Council Children's Services social worker / personal adviser will attend the first Jobcentre appointment with the young person and will provide a copy of the Staying Put (or accommodation tenancy) **Licence Agreement** detailing the rent liability.
- At this appointment the expectation is that all young people living in a Staying Put arrangement will request and set up an Alternative Payment Arrangement to ensure their rent is paid directly to the Staying Put carer (requirement of Staying Put). All care leavers are deemed a tier one priority group for an Alternative Payment Arrangement. The Work Coach will complete and submit an APA request. Young people will need to complete a UC47 form alongside the request for an APA.

See link below:

<https://directpayment.universal-credit.service.gov.uk/>