



Norfolk County Council



# Being independent as an adult

A guide for parents/carers and young people

# Contents

- 03** What do we mean by being independent?
- 04** How to use this guide
- 05** Housing
- 09** Money and benefits
- 11** Travel
- 13** Other advice and support available
- 16** Young people who may need support through Adult Social Services
- 18** Support for carers
- 19** Support available through Adult Social Services Development Workers
- 20** The changing legal status of young people at 16/18
- 23** Ten steps to prepare for adult life

This guide was co-produced in July 2021 by a number of partners including Norfolk County Council, Norfolk and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group, Family Voice Norfolk, City College Norwich and Sidestrand Hall School.

# What do we mean by being independent?

**Being independent means different things for different people.** It develops over time as skills and confidence grow. An important part of independence for most people is moving on from the home they have lived in as a child. Some feel ready to do this at 18. Others may be older. The important thing is to start thinking about it before you are ready. Developing independence gives you more control of your life. Small steps help you to get ready for the life you choose.

Where someone lives and who they live with is important. It should be their choice, whether they have a disability or not.

Thinking about independent living is an important part of preparing for adult life. You can find information about other kinds of independence such as [Employment](#), [Community and relationships](#) and [Independent living](#).

# How to use this guide

**This guide is a good starting point to help find more detailed information, advice and support on independent living.**

It is part of a set of [Norfolk information guides](#) that help young people prepare for adult life. These can be found on the Norfolk County Council website, alongside other guides and links which may be helpful.

**Other resources available include:**

- **Transition from secondary school to post-16 – A guide for parents and carers**
- **Transition and training at 18+ – A guide for young people, parent carers and settings**
- **Post-16 parent/carer guide**
- **Being independent as an adult**
- **Being part of the community as an adult**

This guide can be used by parents/carers, young people and those who support them.

# Housing

A home is much more than a physical building. Home is where you feel safe, comfortable and close to the people and things you love and need. This is important for improving and maintaining independence. The quality of accommodation, its location and security all contribute to wellbeing.

Guides on Housing Top Tips and Exploring housing options can be found on the [NDTI website](#)

## Housing options for all young people

- **Renting**

To rent a property a young person will need to enter into a tenancy agreement with the property owner. A young person who is not fully able to understand this agreement may require someone else to sign on their behalf. House-sharing with other people is an option that can be more affordable and also has a social element to it.

- **Renting social housing**

Social housing has to be applied for from a young person's local city or district council. It is allocated based on need and priority. The benefit is that landlords are regulated and governed by standards. Generally, this type of tenancy is the most secure. Rents are set at a level that reflects housing benefits.

If the application is accepted, it will be put into a band based on need, and a young person will be told what type of housing they can apply for.

Information on your local city or district council on this option can be found on the [Community Directory website](#)

- **Private renting**

Private landlords are not focused on allocation or priority of need. There is more choice of property and location, but this can be a less secure type of tenancy. Private renting can also be more expensive. Housing benefit may not cover all the cost, and some landlords do not rent to people on housing benefits.

“ The right housing option will depend upon the needs of a young person and what they would like for their future ”

“ For social housing options contact your local city or district council ”

- **Private sector leasing**

This is an option that brings together the benefits of social and private housing. The benefit is that a young person is protected as a tenant. Housing associations are regulated. There is no allocation process. Norfolk city or district councils can provide [more information about private sector leasing and support](#).

Housing LIN provide a [case study about the development of a private sector leasing scheme for people with learning difficulties in Norfolk](#).

- **Family investment**

Options could include: outright ownership, mortgage, inheritance of property, or a group of families may purchase a property together, or may pay towards some of the costs. Norfolk County Council can provide online [guidance on housing options](#).

- **Supported accommodation**

Supported accommodation is for vulnerable people who need extra help. People live as a tenant but also have some support to live there. Supported housing can be living in a flat by yourself, living in a shared house, or living in a network or block of flats where everyone gets support. To find out more [contact your district or city council](#).

## **18+ Housing options that require a young person to be supported by Adult Social Services**

For those who are eligible, Adult Social Care can provide additional help. The following options may be explored for a person who has an assessed need:

- **Shared Lives Scheme**

A young person lives with another family in their home. The family provides the support. The young person may be charged for the care element of the Shared Lives Scheme, depending on their financial circumstances.

You can watch [the story of Ben on YouTube](#), a young man who is part of the Shared Lives Scheme.

- **Supported living**

Supported living is the term for shared properties or clusters of individual homes, where support is provided to people who are tenants in their own homes. There is a range of supported living properties across Norfolk. Some supported living is for longer term living, and some is shorter term, to give people a stepping stone to help them to live more independently.

This shorter-term supported living is called 'enablement'. Access for any supported living is usually via Adult Social Services so, if an assessment shows you are eligible for support, talk to the person carrying out your assessment about the available options. You may be charged for the care element of supported living, depending on your financial circumstances.

- **Residential care**

A person may have a room, or sometimes a flat, in a building shared with several other people. There is 24-hour support and meals provided.

For more information on the options above, talk to your social worker or Preparing for Adult Life (PfAL) worker.

## **Young people who are looked after or are leaving care**

There are a number of housing options for these young people, such as Staying Put, Staying Close, Staying Connected, Semi-independent accommodation, Supported Lodgings. Norfolk County Council offer [information on accommodation for care leavers](#).

## **Housing-based support services**

### **Pathways Norwich**

A multi-agency service that provides outreach, advice and support services for people with multiple and complex needs and to prevent homelessness. For more information [visit the Pathways Norwich website](#)

### **The Purfleet Trust**

Providing services to homeless people in King's Lynn and West Norfolk. Services include housing advice to help people find accommodation, support to help them maintain their tenancies, and a Health and Wellbeing Centre providing a daily hot meal and the opportunity to gain some essential life skills. For more information [visit the Purfleet Trust website](#).



“ There is a range of housing-based support services for people in Norfolk ”

## Shelter

At the Shelter offices in Norwich, you can receive free expert advice on a great range of housing issues. From disrepairs and landlord disputes to guidance on housing rights and resources to help you understand your housing situation. Legal advisers can also offer support and guidance to help you understand housing law and offer support in court to those entitled to legal aid. For more information, or to make an appointment: Telephone **0344 515 1860** or [visit the shelter website](#).

## Under1Roof St Martins Housing

A Training and Development Centre that runs positive activities – supporting people experiencing homelessness with health and wellbeing, tenancy skills and skills for independent living and providing employment support. Under1Roof can provide information on [learning and development](#) on their website.

Contact 100/102 Westwick Street, Norwich, NR2 4SZ

Telephone **01603 699150**

## Your Own Place

The aim of Your Own Place is to prevent homelessness. Training is offered on Tenancy & Independent Living Skills (TILS), both one-to-one and in small groups. Support services include employment support, volunteer tenancy mentors and training for housing workers to enable young people to make a successful transition to independent living. For further information please [visit the Your Own Place website](#) or alternatively you can email them at [rebecca@yourownplace.org.uk](mailto:rebecca@yourownplace.org.uk).

Telephone **01603 611910** Mobile **07530 028446**



# Money and benefits

- The government [provide an overview of financial help for parents/carers who have a disabled child including Disability Living Allowance \(DLA\)](#).
- [Information on benefits and financial help for carers and those with disabilities](#), including Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Employment Support Allowance (ESA) can be found on the government website.
- Universal Credit can help with living costs for those on a low income or out of work. It is replacing Employment Support Allowance (ESA) if you are unable to work because of a physical or mental health disability. Visit the government website on [how to claim universal credit](#).

## Services who can advise and support on money matters:

### Equal Lives Money Matters Service

For assistance with budgeting or low level debt issues, visit the [Equal Lives Money Matters Service Website](#).

### Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice can provide information and support to make the right money choices, including [help to deal with debt problems](#).

### Money Support Service (Norfolk County Council)

The Money Support Service is available for Norfolk County Council service users who are struggling with money and need help with budgeting. You can contact them via email at [MSS@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:MSS@norfolk.gov.uk)

Telephone **01603 223392** (option 4)

Information on other services that can help can be found on the Norfolk County Council website on their [money support services](#) pages.

### **Welfare Rights Unit (Norfolk County Council)**

If you receive a social care package or are a care leaver, you can contact [the Welfare Rights Unit for benefits advice](#). They offer free specialist help and advice over the phone or face-to-face. Call **01603 224447** or email them at [welfarerights@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:welfarerights@norfolk.gov.uk)

### **Norfolk Assistance Scheme**

The Norfolk Assistance Scheme offers [support to Norfolk residents facing financial crisis](#). Through providing reused white goods and furniture to people setting up home as part of a resettlement programme or leaving an institution, the scheme helps to enable independent living. Norfolk Assistance Scheme will also provide emergency cash to those that are unable to heat or power their homes or unable to purchase food. Call **01603 223392** (option 5) or email the NAS at [NAS@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:NAS@norfolk.gov.uk)

# Travel

Young people who are able confidently to use public transport, cycle, walk or use other kinds of travel have a wider range of opportunities for independence, being active in their community and employment. Planning is an important skill for independent travelling.

A young person with SEND may worry about using public transport because:

- They need to plan travel routes.
- They need know what to do if there is a disruption to the normal route, or journey timings.



**There are several websites that can help with route planning:**

**Find your transport**

Norfolk County Council provide a [find your transport tool](#) to find transport services that operate in your area.

**One Network**

The [One Network website](#) provides information on planned roadworks and diversions:

**Accessibility aids**

Norfolk County Council provide a useful [list of ideas and systems to help Norfolk's public transport accessibility](#).

**For other things to think about visit:**

For further information, see the [guidance on independent travel](#) from the local offer.

**Travel Independence Training Across Norfolk (TITAN)**

The TITAN team will help a young person with SEND (16–25 years old) learn to travel to college, sixth form or another educational setting independently through their [TITAN travel training](#).



**TITAN offers young people with SEND support to help become confident independent travellers**

**Concessionary travel (bus) pass**

For information on [age-related and disabled travel passes](#) visit the Norfolk County Council website.

# Other advice and support available

## Support in the home – changes and adaptations

Support and adaptations that can be made to a young person’s home, to help them live independently. Norfolk County Council provide [information on support and adaption](#) in a young person’s home.

## Assistive technologies

These can include:

- Sensors/detectors that link to a monitoring centre (via a rented community pendant alarm). For example, smoke, low temperature, falls, and property exit sensors.
- Global Positioning System (GPS) location devices that use a mobile network to raise an alert to a carer or monitoring centre, such as the Buddi GPS device.
- Triggers/sensors that can support a person or their carer in and around the home, such as pendant buttons, door contacts or motion sensors linked to a pager.

“ Assistive technology means electronic gadgets that can help independence at home and in the community ”

## The Assistive Technology Service

This service is for adults living at home (this excludes residential/care homes).

For more [information on assistive technology](#) visit the Norfolk County Council website.

---

## Norfolk Swift Response

Norfolk Swift Response is a 24-hour, 365-day-a-year service that provides help, support and reassurance if a person has an urgent, unplanned need at home but doesn’t need the emergency services.

Norfolk Swift Response (Swifts/Night Owls) is part of the Adult Social Services Early Help and Prevention offer. It is a free service for people living in Norfolk. People do not have to be eligible for social care funding to use it.

Telephone **0344 800 8020**

### **Adult Learning courses on independent living**

[The Adult Learning Independent Living Skills](#) course consists of three parts – Living Positively, Living Creatively and Living Healthily – all aimed at supporting learners to work together on independence skills.

---

### **Mancroft Advice Project (MAP)**

Youth information, advice and counselling centre offering support to young people in Norfolk aged 11 to 25, including on housing, money and benefits can be found on the [MAP website](#).

Drop-in centres in Norwich and Great Yarmouth and hubs and schools across Norfolk. Telephone **01603 766994** or email MAP at [info@map.uk.net](mailto:info@map.uk.net)

---

### **National Domestic Violence Helpline (24 hours)**

For anyone fleeing domestic violence.

Telephone **0808 2000 247**

---

### **The 4women Resource Centre**

Support for women currently serving community orders with the Criminal Justice System. The centre offers a range of positive activities linked into health and wellbeing, developing social skills and helping women to reduce their risk of reoffending.

Telephone **0300 131 7983** or email [4WomenReception@homgroup.org.uk](mailto:4WomenReception@homgroup.org.uk)

---

### **Norfolk Community Law Service (NCLS)**

A registered charity dedicated to providing access to justice and equality in Norfolk. All services are free, independent and confidential. Funding comes from grants and donations – there is no charge to clients. Interpreters are available by arrangement.

Free Legal Advice covers general legal matters, family and employment. This is available in Norwich, Cromer and Great Yarmouth and further information can be found on the [NCLS website](#).

## StreetLink

[The StreetLink website](#) enables the public to alert local authorities in England and Wales about people sleeping rough in their area. This is the first step someone can take to ensure rough sleepers are connected to the local services and support available to them. The service is funded by Government as part of its drive to end rough sleeping. Telephone **0300 500 0914**

---

## St Giles Trust

St Giles Trust is a charity helping people facing severe disadvantage to find jobs, homes and the support they need. They help people become positive members of local communities and wider society. Help is offered by someone who has been there. For more information [visit the St Giles Trust website](#). Telephone **0207 709 8000** or email St Giles Trust at [info@stgilestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@stgilestrust.org.uk)



# Young people who may need support through Adult Social Services

Young people who have more complex care and support needs might need services through Adult Social Services.

In Norfolk when the young person is under 18 the Preparing for Adult Life (PfAL) Service is responsible for carrying out the Care Act (2014) assessment to identify the young person's needs and the support required.

Young people can be referred to the PfAL Service when they are aged 14–17 when:

- They have a disability (learning disability, mental health needs, autism or physical disability) and
- They are likely to need support from Adult Social Services (under the Care Act) to achieve the four PfAL outcomes – good health, independent living, employment, and friends, relationships and community inclusion.

The PfAL service will normally start the Care Act assessment on the young person's 17th birthday. For those under 17 it will work with the young person and others to produce a person-centred PfAL plan.

The PfAL referral should be completed by someone who knows the young person well. This could be a social worker or other Children's Services worker. If there is no such worker involved, then the referral should be made via the Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) by ringing **0344 800 8021** (for professionals) or **0344 800 8020** (for young people themselves, family members or other supporters).

Norfolk County Council provide more detailed information online on [people who can help in transition to adult life](#).

“ All young people under 18 who are likely to require Adult Social Services should be referred to the PfAL Service ”



After the age of 18 people who may require services through Adult Social Services should be referred directly by calling 0344 800 8020. Referral can be made by young people, families or professionals. As an alternative to this telephone number you can also email the Social Care Community Engagement team at [norfolkcareconnectbusinesssupport@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:norfolkcareconnectbusinesssupport@norfolk.gov.uk)

Further [information on Adult Social Care, Support and Health](#) is provided online by Norfolk County Council.

Norfolk County Council also produces a helpful guide to adult care and support called [Your Guide to Care and Support for Adults](#).



# Support for carers

**A carer is anyone who helps somebody with an illness, disability or mental health difficulty that means they need support.**

Carers Matter Norfolk delivers personalised services to unpaid carers on behalf of Norfolk County Council including:

- Carers' assessments
- Information, support and advice
- Advice line open six days a week Monday to Saturday
- One-to-one support to find out about help available

Carers Matter Norfolk has also produced a handbook offering advice and information for carers on a range of topics including handling emergencies, benefits and self care. It also includes a list of useful contacts.

- If you'd like someone to call you and chat about your needs, [visit the Carers Matter website.](#) or call 0800 083 1148.
- [Information for young carers and family support](#) can be found them on the [Young Carers website.](#)

“  
If you are an unpaid carer living in Norfolk Carers Matter Norfolk is there to support you  
”

---

## Emergency planning

Having a plan for emergencies can be a comfort for carers and those they care for, even if it never needs to be put into action. You can [sign up for a Carers Emergency Card](#) and Young Carers Matter provide [advice on making an escape plan.](#)

---

## Norfolk Community Directory

The Norfolk Community Directory provides wealth of [information and support for carers of all ages.](#)

---

## Norfolk Carers' Charter

[The Carers' Charter](#) has been produced by carers and councillors. It has three key strands – carers in work, young carers in education, and carers in the community.

# Support available through Adult Social Services Development Workers

This team works to improve links within communities as a whole, support new or struggling community groups, and help strengthen an individual's links to their communities.

The team includes Information Development Workers who focus on county-wide information-sharing, both within social services and with professionals working within organisations that seek to support individuals through early help and prevention. Development Workers can support practitioners by undertaking research requests for individuals who need support and are aged over 18 (by referral).

This includes putting together information on local community activities, funding opportunities, adult learning and volunteering opportunities. If appropriate they can work directly with an individual to identify social opportunities and community information so they can connect with other people.

Internal Adult Social Services professionals can request this help. Self-referral is also an option through the Council's customer service centre on 0344 800 8020. External professionals would also use this referral route. As an alternative to this telephone number you can email the Social Care Community Engagement team at [norfolkcareconnectbusinesssupport@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:norfolkcareconnectbusinesssupport@norfolk.gov.uk)



# The changing legal status of young people at 16/18

“ At the age of 18 there are changes for a young person in respect of their legal status. They legally become an adult ”

At the age of 18 a young person legally becomes an adult. Below is some important information to consider about this.

## Mental Capacity Act

The Mental Capacity Act is designed to protect and support people who may lack the mental capacity to make their own decisions about a range of subjects.

- It applies to people aged 16 and over.
- Young people with a learning disability or autism may at times be assessed to check their mental capacity in relation to a decision.
- This is not about their overall capacity but about a particular decision or type of decision.
- This may be about everyday things or more difficult decisions about whether to have surgery or move to another home.
- The Act says how an individual can be supported and how ‘best interest’ decisions can be arrived at on their behalf if they are assessed as lacking capacity to make a certain decision.
- For example, a person may have capacity to decide what to wear or what to eat, but not have capacity to understand their own finances.

Full [guidance on the mental capacity act and making decisions](#) can be found on the Government website.

---

## Becoming an appointee for someone claiming benefits

- A person – often a family carer – can apply for the right to deal with the benefits of someone whose disability means they are unable to manage their own affairs.
- Further [information on becoming an appointee for someone claiming benefits](#) is provided on the Government website.

## Power of attorney

- A lasting power of attorney (LPA) is a legal document that lets a young person appoint people to make decisions on their behalf. It can be about finances or about health and social care. A young person must be 18 or over and able to make their own decisions when they make the lasting power of attorney. If they do not have mental capacity a court-appointed deputy might be needed.
  - A deputy is a person appointed by the Court of Protection to make decisions for someone who is unable to do so alone. They are responsible for doing this until the person they are acting for dies or is able to make decisions on their own again.
  - The government provides more [information on power of attorney](#) via their website.
- 

## Wills

- A will lets a person decide what happens to their money, property and possessions after their death.
  - A person can write their own will, but it is better to get advice if the will isn't straightforward.
  - Special thought needs to be given when leaving money to someone who needs care, such as a child or a person with a learning or other disability. A professional with experience in these matters can help.
  - A will needs to be formally witnessed and signed to make it legally valid.
  - An existing will can be updated by making an official change (called a 'codicil') or a new will can be made. If a person dies without a will, the law says who gets what.
  - A person has to have the mental capacity to write a will.
  - The government provides more [information on making a will](#) via their website.
- 

## Mental Health Act

- The Mental Health Act is a law that can be used to provide support and treatment to people with a diagnosed mental illness.
- Being detained (also known as sectioned) under the Mental Health Act is a legal process that starts when an approved mental health practitioner and two specialist doctors have assessed that someone is not safe to be at home and needs to be kept safe while they are being assessed and/or treated. This law protects a person's rights.
- The NHS provides and [easy read document on your rights and the Mental Health Act](#).

## **Children and young people – consent to treatment**

People aged 16 or over are entitled to consent to their own treatment. This can only be overruled in exceptional circumstances. Adults and young people (aged 16 or 17) are presumed to have sufficient capacity to decide on their own medical treatment unless there is significant evidence to suggest otherwise. Children under the age of 16 can consent to their own treatment if they're believed to have enough intelligence, competence and understanding to fully appreciate what's involved in their treatment. This is known as being 'Gillick competent' (or within 'Fraser guidelines' when used in relation to sexual health consent). Otherwise, someone with parental responsibility can consent for them.

The NHS provides further advice in their [consent to treatment guidance](#).

# Ten steps to prepare for adult life

Norfolk County Council provides a useful [step by step guide on preparing for adult life](#) and the different stages involved.

