How to: win for care leavers.
The Children’s Society is a national charity that runs local projects, helping children and young people when they are at their most vulnerable and have nowhere left to turn. We also campaign for changes to laws affecting children and young people, to stop the mistakes of the past being repeated in the future.

Our How To guides provide the information you need to support our campaigns and make a difference in your area.

If you want to get involved, or are thinking of planning a campaign activity locally, then we’d love to hear from you.

Email campaigns@childrenssociety.org.uk or call us on 0300 303 7000
What’s the issue?

We are asking councils to make young people leaving the care system exempt from paying council tax until they turn 25.

The majority of councils have already made this important change to help young people, but we need your help to reach your local council.

As well as having had a difficult start in life, when young people leave the care system at 16 or 17 it can be really tough adjusting to adult life alone. They are more likely to be unemployed, homeless, and have mental health problems.

We know from our work with care leavers that managing finances can be tricky – often they haven’t had support or training in paying bills or managing money, and might not have the same support from family as other young people.

Council tax debt can be particularly frightening and stressful. It can quickly escalate to fines, and even court.

Your council has a legal responsibility to look out for young people in their care until they turn 25, and so we think that not charging them council tax until they reach this age is a great way to help them. Giving these young people a few valuable years to learn how to manage their finances might help them avoid falling into a spiral of problem debt in the future.

This change can make a huge difference for young people, for a relatively low cost for councils.

What can you do?

There are lots of ways that you can help make this change a reality in your local area. You could write to your councillor, attend a meeting, start a petition and ask your friends and family to sign up in support. We can provide you with a range of resources to support you!
Who makes the decision?

**To find out who your local councillors are:**
- Phone your town hall
- Search on [direct.gov.uk](http://direct.gov.uk)

Your local council has the power to make this change. Local people elect councillors. You have a right to meet with your councillor about the issues that matter to you.

There are a range of ways you can get this issue raised with your council:

You can arrange to meet with your local councillors and ask them to raise it as an agenda item in upcoming council meetings for discussion, or to submit a motion to council calling for the change to be made.

You can attend a council meeting and submit a public question.

If you get a few people on board, you can send a ‘deputation’ to a council meeting.

We have a briefing you can download included in this pack that gives you more detail on each of these.

We also have materials you can provide for your councillors.

**How can you use people power?**

**Showing decision makers that many local people care about an issue is a powerful way to amplify your message.**

The more people in favour of the change, the more the council will need to listen.

Talk to people in your community and explain why you care about this issue, and ask them to sign your petition. Friends, family and colleagues are a good place to start. When you have lots of signatures, we can help you organise to present this to your council.

Tell people about the campaign by running a stall at your local church, or at a community group or event. We can provide you with reports, leaflets and posters.

The council will be keen to hear from young people who are affected by this issue. You could contact your local Children in Care Council (CiCC) to hear their views and experiences. A CiCC is a group of children and young people with experience of being in care. They usually meet a few times a year to discuss issues that are important to them and ensure that the voices of young people in care are being heard.

You could write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper(s), and outline the issues care leavers face in the letter. Local papers are read by lots of people – particularly the letters pages – so it’s a useful way to promote campaigns. Don’t forget to include a link to the campaign so people can sign up!

Be creative. If you have other ideas, don’t be afraid to use them! And remember, we’re here to support you.

A combination of these tactics will show your council how important the issue is to local people. Read our [People Power](#) briefing for more information.
What next?

Don’t forget to keep in touch with us as your campaign progresses. Do send us copies of any publicity, correspondence with your council, agendas and minutes if it was discussed, photos of any events, or a picture of you meeting your councillors. We would love to hear about it all. So if you would like to send us something or discuss anything further before you start then please get in touch at campaigns@childreenssociety.org.uk

We can also give you lots of support, information and materials to help you get started.

Further information

Get more information on this campaign: childrenssociety.org.uk/careleavers

Listen to our podcast on why this campaign is so important: childrenssociety.org.uk/careleavers#podcast

Email campaigns@childrenssociety.org.uk or call 0300 303 7000
Right now in Britain there are children and young people who feel scared, unloved and unable to cope. The Children’s Society works with these young people, step by step, for as long as it takes.

We listen. We support. We act.

There are no simple answers so we work with others to tackle complex problems. Only together can we make a difference to the lives of children now and in the future.

Because no child should feel alone.