



Medway Children's Services

Supporting Care Leavers Transition to Adulthood – Leaving Care Financial Procedures 2020.

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Introduction.

The Government report “Keep on caring – Supporting Young People from Care to Independence” published in 2016 states that “a good corporate parent should have the same aspirations for a child in care or care leaver as a good parent would have for their own child. It means providing them with the stability and support they need to make progress; and helping them to access new opportunities and experiences that inspire them to set ambitious goals for themselves. It means celebrating their successes, but also recognising that they will sometimes make mistakes and need help to get back on track. It also means supporting them to gain the skills and confidence to live independent lives, while letting them know that they have someone to call on for help if the going gets tough”.

Every good parent wants the best for their child, to see their child flourish with good health, to be safe and happy, to do well at school, to enjoy good relationships with their peers. To ensure that children and young people make the most of leisure opportunities, hobbies and interests, and to grow towards adulthood equipped to lead independent lives and to make their way as adults in higher education, in good careers and jobs, and to be financially secure.

As Corporate Parents Medway Council has the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children and young people who are looked after by the council. This responsibility extends to young people who leave the care of the local authority at the age of 18 years and become care leavers of which the council continue to have care leaving responsibilities until young people reach 21 years of age, or age 25 if they request it.

The Children Act 1989 is the primary legislation setting out local authority responsibility to children ‘in need’, including looked after children. Section 22 imposes a duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of each child they look after.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 extended the responsibility of the local authority to young people leaving care, requiring them to plan the young person’s transition to adulthood and provide ongoing advice and assistance until at least the age of 21 (more recently extended up to the age of 25).

A successful transition to independence is inevitably linked both to the quality of the care experience in general and the specific support directed at the transition itself.

Medway Council is committed to supporting the young people in its care to achieve the best possible start into adult life. Medway Council has a number of responsibilities for the provision of financial support to care leavers which depend on age and circumstance. There is also a requirement to support young people to manage their financial resources and money gradually helping them to take responsibility for themselves.

Medway council has a duty to provide the following financial assistance once a young person turns 18:

- **Leaving Care Grant (setting up home allowance)** - To furnish accommodation. Government guidance says at least £2,000.
- **16-19 Bursary** Aged 16-19? In education? - Young people should receive £1,200 each academic year from your college.

- **Higher Education Bursary** - In higher education? Young people are entitled to £2,000, usually paid in instalments over the duration of the course.
- **Vacation accommodation for higher education** - Young people should get help paying rent.
- **Assistance with costs for education, employment and training** - All councils should have a financial policy for care leavers and the pathway plan should highlight the support needed. For example, money towards driving lessons.

This policy outlines the arrangements that Medway Council has in place to meet their duties and responsibilities for young people in preparation for leaving care, and once they have left care. This document is available for young people, parents, carers, staff and professionals.

LEGISLATION

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and Regulations and Guidance came into operation on 1st October 2001. Planning Transition to Adulthood Guidance, which came into effect April 2011, updated this guidance. The main purpose of the Act is to improve the life chances of young people living in and transitioning to independent living. Its main aims are to:

- Delay a young person's discharge from care until they are prepared and ready
- Improve the assessment, preparation and planning for leaving care
- Provide better personal support for young people leaving care
- Improve the financial arrangements for care leavers.

The Children & Social Work Act 2017 extended the role of the Leaving Care Personal Advisor for all up to the age of 25 years if needed, regardless of involvement with education.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 Regulations and Guidance is issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970. The guidance should be read in conjunction with the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations.

PURPOSE

Under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 the local authority has a duty to support young people financially to 'Achieve Economic Well-Being'. The aim of this policy is to achieve a clear, consistent and coherent plan which ensures fair access to financial support that links economic activity to financial context, in a logical relationship to enable young people to make informed choices about their education, employment and training status. Therefore, offering opportunities and lifestyle that will enable young people to achieve long-term economic well-being.

The purpose of this document is to establish the principles for implementing the financial policy by the Leaving Care Service.

POLICY STATEMENT

As Corporate Parents for young people we want to ensure that the young people we support are provided with the necessities that all good parents would want to ensure their children have, providing these essentials within an affordable budget.

We want to support our young people to gain financial independence and make informed choices about their lifelong economic well-being, while recognising the effort, commitment and achievement of young people in terms of their learning, work and social activities. It is hoped that young people will be able to connect their economic activity with their income and lifestyle, make informed choices and decide to 'upgrade' their essentials as they choose within their budget, they can extend the range of things they are able to spend their money on, key to this is that they will be supported and encouraged to continue to learn, work, play and progress, and will learn to budget effectively including saving for their future.

Decision-making for individual young people is made at ground level on a daily basis and should be recorded on the Pathway Plan subject to the monitoring and quality assurance procedures in place for this service. In addition, quarterly monitoring of the overall spending will be undertaken to identify inconsistency in implementation across care leavers, as well as identifying unforeseen circumstances which can then be brought back to the young people and personal advisor groups for problem-solving.

APPLICATION

This policy applies to all young people who are Looked After, and Care Leavers who are Eligible, Relevant or Former Relevant young people living independently. All Leaving Care Personal Advisors and Social Workers working with young people in these categories will need to implement the policy as a key aspect of their work to support young people make a successful transition to independence and adulthood.

Application of this policy regarding individual young people is identified, agreed and recorded in the Pathway Plan which is undertaken jointly between the young person and their Leaving Care personal advisor/social worker.

This policy does not apply to those young people engaged in Higher Education as these young people fall under the Higher Education Policy.

Summary of leaving care entitlements and Leaving care status

Definitions	Main Statutory obligations of the Local authority.
Eligible Young Person	
A young person who: <ul style="list-style-type: none">is looked after under a Care Order (Section 31), Voluntary Accommodation (Section 20) or Remand in Youth Detention Accommodation (Section 21);	The same as for all other children looked after, including a duty to maintain the care plan, carry out regular reviews of their case And appoint an independent reviewing officer for the child. In addition, they must:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is aged 16 or 17, and • has been looked after by a local authority for a period of 13 weeks, or periods amounting in total to 13 weeks, which began after they reached 14 and ended after they reached 16. <p>This does not include young persons who are provided with care in a series of pre-planned short-term placements even if the total number of days exceeds 240 in a year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prepare an assessment to determine what advice, assistance and support is needed, both while the young person is still looked after and after they have stopped being looked after; • as soon as possible after the assessment of needs is completed, prepare a pathway plan (which includes the child's care plan); • keep the pathway plan under regular review; • appoint a personal adviser
<p>Relevant Young person.</p>	
<p>A young person who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is not looked after, aged 16 or 17 and was, before they last ceased to be looked after, an eligible child. <p>Or</p> <p>A young person who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is not looked after, aged 16 or 17, and at the time they attained the age of 16 was detained in a remand centre, young offenders' institution, a secure training centre, or any other centre pursuant to a Court order; • is in a hospital and immediately before they were detained or in hospital they had been looked after by a local authority for a period or periods amounting to at least 13 weeks which began after they reached the age of 14. <p>However, a young person is not a relevant child if they have lived for a continuous period of six months or more with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a parent; • Someone who is not their parent but who has parental responsibility for them, despite falling within section 23A (2). <p>Where those living arrangements break down and the young person stops living with the person as a relevant young person.</p>	<p>The local authority that last looked after the relevant child must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take reasonable steps to keep in touch • prepare an assessment to determine what advice, assistance and support is needed; • as soon as possible after the assessment of needs is completed, prepare a pathway plan; • keep the pathway plan under regular review; • appoint a personal adviser; • safeguard and promote the young person's welfare by providing maintenance, suitable accommodation and assistance in order to meet his needs in relation to Education, Training or Employment as provided for in the pathway plan.

Former Relevant Young People.	
<p>A young person who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is aged 18 or above, and either has been a relevant child and would be one if they were under 18, or • Was an eligible child immediately before ceasing to be looked after at age 18. <p>The duties continue until the former relevant young person reaches 21 or, where the pathway plan sets out a programme of education or training which extends beyond their 21st birthday, they continue for so long as the young person pursues that programme, or until their 25th birthday if a needs assessment is completed and support is deemed suitable.</p>	<p>The local authority that last looked after the former relevant child must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take reasonable steps to keep in touch and if they lose touch, to re-establish contact; • continue to keep the pathway plan under regular review; • continue the appointment of the Personal Adviser • provide financial assistance by contributing to expenses in living near the place where they are or will be, employed or seeking employment • provide financial assistance to enable him to pursue education or training; • if the former relevant child pursues higher education in accordance with the pathway plan, pay the higher education bursary.
Former Relevant Young people 21-25 years.	
<p>A young person who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has been a relevant child and would be one if they were under 18, or was an eligible child immediately before ceasing to be looked after at age 18; • is over 21 and aged under 25 years; 	<p>The local authority which owed duties to that former relevant young person may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appoint a personal adviser for that person; • carry out an assessment of the needs of that person with a view to determining what assistance (if any) it would be appropriate for them to provide; • prepare a pathway plan; • to the extent the person's educational or training needs require it, provide financial assistance.
Qualifying Young person.	
<p>A young person who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is aged at least 16 but is under 21, with respect to whom a special guardianship order is in force (or was in force when they reached 18) and was looked after immediately before the making of the order, or • at any time after reaching the age of 16 but while they were still a child were, but are no longer, looked after, accommodated or fostered. 	<p>The relevant local authority must consider whether the person needs help of a kind the local authority can give:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to advise and befriend and give assistance which can include financial assistance; • assistance in relation to securing vacation accommodation where the person is in full time further or higher education, is under the age of 25 and qualifies for advice and assistance or would have done if they were under 21.

Identification Documents

All young people should have a National Insurance Number from the age of 16, but they do not get issued automatically. At the age of fifteen and nine months, the Social Worker for the young person should contact the New Registrations Section of the National Insurance Number Office – HMRC to instigate the process of obtaining the National Insurance Number.

When the letter confirming the National Insurance number is received the Social Worker should record it in the Pathway plan and on front page on FWI.

To ensure young people have other documentation to prove their identity Children's Social Care will pay for the initial purchase of the following:

- Passport / travel documents
- Provisional driving licence
- Copy birth certificate
- Deed poll to change name legally, if required

Developing Financial awareness.

For children and young people in care, there needs to be an early emphasis on promoting the development of financial literacy and financial capability skills. Pocket money and identified allowances for e.g. leisure and clothing can be used whilst the young person is in foster or residential care to help develop these skills. This should be considered for all young people as early as possible and at the latest from the age of 15 onwards.

During the 6 months before leaving a care setting to move to semi/independence, further use of allowances for food, mobile phones, toiletries etc. should also be encouraged. Young people, foster carer/s, residential workers and, where appropriate, family members should be encouraged to think ahead and collect items that can be saved and used when the young person sets up their home.

It is expected that a young person should have at a minimum the basic essential items they will need when they leave a care setting including:

- Suitcase, day bag, school/college/work bag;
- Coats / jackets / footwear to cover all seasons;
- Clothing to cover all seasons and in sufficient quantity for at least 1 week;
- At least 1 smart outfit (interviews / special occasions);
- Clothing & equipment appropriate for hobbies / interests;
- Enough toiletries to cover at least 2 weeks post leaving;
- Mobile phone;
- Some means of accessing radio stations / music.

If for any reason they do not have these items, the Social Worker will arrange for them to be obtained.

Savings should be encouraged while in a care setting and where young people have saved and collected items in preparation for independent living, they will not be penalised, and will remain entitled to their full allowances.

Financial arrangements for Care Leavers, who have remained with their ex-foster carers under a Staying Put arrangement, are outlined in the Staying Put Policy and will be included in their Living Together Agreement.

Young People in Foster Care completing a Course of Education.

Extended funding should be considered where a young person in foster care is completing a course of education such as A-Levels as they approach the age of 18, and where a change in the arrangements for their care and accommodation is assessed as being potentially detrimental to their educational attainment. Payments should continue as normal for a maximum period of 26 weeks after the young person reaches the age of 18 years. Requests for extended funding for students in externally funded placement should be made to the Access to Resources Panel. Approval for extension of in-house placement under these circumstances should be sought from the Head of Provider services.

Allowances for Care Leavers in supported or independent settings

A personal allowance will be paid to relevant/eligible young people which is equivalent to the current welfare benefits rates for young people. Initially young people will be paid weekly, but as the young person develops financial capability, usually by the age of 17 and a half, allowances will be paid fortnightly, in preparation for transferring to the benefits system at 18. The timing of this will be agreed between the Leaving Care Worker and Leaving Care Team Manager. Where possible, allowances will be paid directly into the young person's bank account.

In some circumstances, particularly for those not engaged in education, training or employment, an arrangement may be made to collect their allowances at the same time as attending for a meeting with Leaving Care staff. In some circumstances, young people may need assistance with managing their money and allowances may be split to require more frequent collection. In extreme circumstances the Leaving Care Worker may need to shop for provisions with the young person or provide allowances 'in kind' instead of providing cash, with the purpose of supporting young people to gain financial independence.

Allowances cannot be accrued and paid as a lump sum at a later date, unless discussed in advance and agreed by the Leaving Care Team Manager.

If young people are living in supported accommodation, where contributions are required for utilities and/or food, an amount to cover these costs may be deducted from the personal allowance and paid directly to the provider. The amount and arrangements will depend on the type of accommodation.

It is the duty of the Local Authority to ensure that the income, maintenance and accommodation costs of Relevant young people are adequately covered, in line with the guidance included in this document. Young people who are not entitled to claim the major means tested benefits – Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance and Housing Benefit - are supported via Children's Services.

Important exceptions to this rule are lone parents or young people with long term health problems, or disabilities. Relevant young people can claim non-means tested benefits e.g. Disability Living Allowance, as appropriate.

Financial entitlement of Former Relevant Young people.

Care leavers who are not in employment are eligible for a number of means tested and welfare benefits via Job Centre Plus. This applies whether the young person has remained in foster or residential care or is living in supported or independent accommodation.

Care leavers can claim Universal Credit and Housing Benefit whilst in further education from their 18th birthday until the end of the academic year in which they are 21. If not in further education, Government benefits will apply.

N.B Universal Credit is replacing the following benefits:

- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Working Tax Credit

<https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit> for more information on eligibility and guidance on making a claim.

Leaving Care staff will help the young person to make their claims and to maximise their income from these sources.

https://www.becomecharity.org.uk/media/1411/factsheet1_financial_entitlements_english.pdf

Arrangements for Young People in Staying Put Placements.

Young people cannot legally remain 'looked after' beyond their 18th birthday. With agreement from both parties, arrangements can be made for young people to remain with their current carers after they have turned 18 years of age by converting their foster placement into a Staying Put placement. Please refer to the Medway Staying Put Policy and Procedures.

The following issues should be thoroughly explored;

- The change that this will affect in terms of the relationship between the young person and their ex-carers.
- Changes in the financial arrangements for the carers, including issues around tax liability for income received from the young person.
- The impact on the potential Staying Put carer's ability to take a further foster care child into their home.

Where the potential Staying Put carer is an IFA carer, the allocated Social Worker must discuss with Access to Resources Team who will negotiate with the IFA any potential funding reduction.

Setting up Home Allowance (SUHA).

Care Leavers are entitled to a Setting up Home Allowance (SUHA) Grant of £2000 on allocation of tenancy. The purpose of this grant is to support young people moving from supported accommodation into their own accommodation which they hold the tenancy for. This grant can be claimed up to the age of 25 as it is recognised that not all young people are ready to hold an independent tenancy before then.

Account must be taken of individual circumstances when considering items of importance for a young person setting up home. Young People should be given reasonable choice about how, and from where they purchase goods and services when setting up home. Advice should be given to young people about value for money, quality and safety in respect to the goods and services they wish to purchase.

Bond against Damage/Loss

For Relevant and Former Relevant young people who are setting up home for the first time, a 'bond' of £500 could be held back out of their SUHA to cover any costs incurred through damage to property, loss of rent deposit etc. which result directly from the actions/behaviour of the young person. This sum should normally be held back for a period of 6 months, or until the young person has satisfactorily demonstrated their ability to manage and maintain their tenancy etc. After this time, the money should be made available to the young person for general expenditure via their SUHA.

New Home 'Starter Pack'.

When a young person moves into their own accommodation for the first time they should be provided with a 'starter pack' up to the value of £50.00. Examples of items that should be contained in the starter pack are; Basic Food Essentials – Milk, bread, Margarine, powdered milk, crisps, biscuits, tea, coffee, cereal, cup a soups, beans x 4, Cleaning materials – washing powder, general purpose cleaner, washing-up liquid, washing-up cloths, window cleaner. Toiletries – toilet tissue, toothpaste, shower/bath gel, deodorant etc.

Transition to employment, training, education and welfare benefits.

There may be a need to bridge a financial gap for young people when their primary source of funding changes e.g. when starting work, transferring to benefits or waiting for a student loan. Transitional payments will usually be made to ensure that a young person is not without income. The amount will depend on the circumstances and will be decided on a case by case basis by the Leaving Care Team Manager. Details of what has been agreed should be recorded.

Emergency Financial Assistance

Pathway Plans should always contain arrangements for contingencies and emergencies that may arise. Generally, it is the responsibility of the young person's Personal Adviser, to act as the first point of contact should the unexpected happen or things go wrong. It is a guiding principal that the Local Authority should act as a good parent in these situations and that there is an understanding that young people do make mistakes, and these should be treated with sensitivity. Financial support for contingencies can be made in cash or kind with the approval of a Team Manager. Where young people repeatedly abuse contingency provisions staff should carefully consider other means to ensure that their basic needs are met.

Arrangements may be made to assist in an emergency. This could involve a small cash payment or payment in kind. Check young person has exhausted all other support prior to allocation of emergency funding, if authorised, the cause of the crisis and the details of help provided should be documented clearly in case notes. This should not be relied upon and therefore the young person's Personal Advisor will work to encourage the young person to manage without making this a regular occurrence,

Immigration and care leavers

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 applies to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in exactly the same way as other children in this country. They will, however, have an immigration status (applying for asylum, acceptance as a refugee, granted exceptional leave to remain, or refused to leave to remain) that will need to be taken into account when considering provision of services.

Children and young people who are accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 will accrue entitlements to the provisions of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 in the normal way. In some circumstances young people who receive a service via Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 will also be entitled to the full provisions of the Children (Leaving Care Act) 2000. This will apply where young people have been "*de facto*" looked after (as per the 'Hillingdon Judgement' 2004). The decision about individual's entitlements to leaving care provision should be made by the Team Manager on the basis of a clear assessment of the circumstances.

Medway Council may provide accommodation and financial assistance to care leavers when, due to their immigration status, they have no access to welfare benefits, council housing or homelessness assistance at the time they reach 18, i.e., they have no recourse to public funds (NRPF). This duty arises from section 23C(4)(c) of the Children Act 1989, which forms part of the wider leaving care responsibilities that local authorities have towards children who have been looked after under section 20 of that Act for a period of at least 13 weeks since they were 14 ('former looked after children'). Such duties apply until the young person is 21 or older if they are undertaking a programme of education or training (up until they turn 25).

If a care leaver has no immigration permission when they are 18 or older, then they will be excluded from accommodation and financial assistance under Schedule 3 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, although support can be provided if the local authority determines this is necessary to prevent a breach of the care leaver's human rights or rights under EU treaties. This means that when a care leaver has no status, because they have never regularised their stay or they are 'appeal rights exhausted' following an unsuccessful

asylum claim, a human rights assessment is required to establish whether support can continue or whether the young person can return to their country of origin. If, following a human rights assessment, the local authority determines that there is no duty to provide accommodation and subsistence, the young person will still be entitled to a personal adviser and reviews of their pathway plan until they are 21. (*Binomugisha v LB Southwark* [2006] EWHC 2254). They are also not prevented from 'staying put' in a foster care placement.

The local authority no longer have a duty as a corporate parent to safeguard the welfare of former looked after children who are visa overstayers, have never regularised their status, or are 'appeal rights exhausted' following an unsuccessful asylum claim when they are 18 or older. Instead, accommodation and financial support will be available to such destitute care leavers from either the Home Office or local authority when very specific circumstances apply. The legislation and type of support that will be available to care leavers is set out in the table below.

Immigration status of care leaver (and whether Schedule 3 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 exclusion applies)	Legislation	Type of support that may be provided
Asylum seeker (not excluded): - Pending asylum application/appeal	Leaving care provisions of the Children Act 1989	Local authority: - accommodation - financial assistance - all leaving care support
Refused asylum seeker (excluded): - Genuine obstacle to leaving the UK established in 'grace period'	Section 95A Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 <i>See (i) below for more information.</i>	Home Office: - accommodation - financial assistance <i>or</i> Local authority (funded by Home Office): - accommodation + Home Office: - financial assistance
	Schedule 3 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act paragraph 10B	Local authority: - welfare support
Refused asylum seeker (excluded): - Genuine obstacle to leaving the UK established after the 'grace period' has passed	Schedule 3 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act paragraph 10B - Provision D- the	Local authority: - accommodation - financial assistance - welfare support

	local authority is satisfied that support needs to be provided See (iii) below for more information.	
Valid leave to remain (not excluded): - Limited leave to remain (LLTR) - Indefinite leave to remain (ILR) - Refugee status (whether LLTR or ILR) - Humanitarian Protection (whether LLTR or ILR)	Leaving care provisions of the Children Act 1989	Local authority: - accommodation - financial assistance - all leaving care support
No immigration permission - First non-asylum application for leave to enter or remain pending (or subsequent appeal) (not excluded)	Leaving care provisions of the Children Act 1989 <i>See (ii) below for more information.</i>	Local authority: - accommodation - financial assistance - all leaving care support
No immigration permission (excluded): - Non-asylum application or appeal pending	Schedule 3 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act paragraph 10B - Provisions A-C <i>See (iii) below for more information.</i>	Local authority: - accommodation - financial assistance - welfare support
No immigration permission (excluded): - No application or appeal pending	Schedule 3 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act paragraph 10B - Provision D- <i>the local authority is satisfied that support needs to be provided</i> <i>See (iii) below for more information.</i>	Local authority: - accommodation - financial assistance - welfare support
EEA national (excluded)	Leaving care provisions of the Children Act 1989 - subject to a human rights assessment	Local authority: - accommodation - financial assistance - all leaving care support

Refugee status from another EEA state (excluded)	Leaving care provisions of the Children Act 1989 - subject to a human rights assessment	Local authority: - accommodation - financial assistance - all leaving care support
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Assistance and Support for Young People in Education / Training / Employment

Planning Financial Support for Higher Education (HE) Students.

As a general rule, young people planning to attend an HE institution will be expected to apply for the maximum amount of financial assistance available through universal grants, loans and bursaries available for the course that they are intending to study. A clearly informed estimate of the level of funding available should be made at the earliest opportunity.

Young People's accommodation options must also be explored and costed. Income from grants and loans should be included in calculations for term time only. Arrangements for the young person's accommodation and maintenance during holidays and vacations should be planned and where possible costed in advance. In some circumstances it may be possible to plan for the young person to return to stay with ex-carers during these periods under the Staying Put Arrangement. Creative options, such as providing young people with the opportunity to travel or engage in planned activities should be considered where appropriate.

Young people should be encouraged to supplement their income whilst in higher education through appropriate part-time work. Young people who are unable to work during vacation periods may be provided with basic financial assistance equivalent to what could be claimed if eligible for welfare benefits.

A financial plan should be drawn up covering at least the period of the first academic year (including the summer vacation) and presented to Team Manager for approval at the earliest opportunity. The plan should include all sources of income and essential outgoings, including the young persons living and accommodation costs and should be in 2 parts covering term-time and academic holidays/vacations.

Additional Support for Young People in Further/Higher Education.

Additional support for young people might include:

- Higher Education bursary £2000 to be paid to each young person
- Help with clothes for interviews, work placements etc.
- Fares to get to interviews, work placements etc.
- Special equipment/clothing not provided by the college/university
- Help with transport costs
- Help with special needs or health issues.

The list is not exhaustive, and Pathway Plans should take account of individual circumstances when detailing support to be provided.

Additional Support for Young People in Training

Additional support for young people might include:

- Help with clothes for interviews
- Fares to get to interviews
- Special clothing or footwear not provided by the training provider
- Special equipment not provided by the training provider
- Help with transport costs
- Help with special needs or health issues

The list is not exhaustive, and Pathway Plans should take account of individual circumstances when detailing support to be provided.

Young People Doing Recognized Voluntary Work.

If a young person, otherwise unemployed is engaged in recognized voluntary work for at least 4 hours per week an additional incentive may be paid. The level of the payment should reflect the level of the commitment undertaken by the young person and agreed by the Team Manager.

Additional Support for Young People in Employment.

Additional support for young people might include:

- Help with clothes for interviews
- Fares to get to interviews
- Special clothing or footwear not provided by the employer
- Help with transport costs during the first month of employment
- Help with special needs or health issues

The list is not exhaustive, and Pathway Plans should take account of individual circumstances when detailing support to be provided.

Other Financial Support with Contact

For eligible/relevant care leavers contact with family will be funded as assessed by social worker and agreed in care/pathway plan.

In exceptional circumstances a young person over the age of 18 may be given such assistance as agreed with the Leaving Care Team Manager.

Pathway Plans should identify significant people who the young person needs to keep in contact with, and how contact will happen. Suitable arrangements should be made to ensure that the young person has the means to facilitate a reasonable level of contact with family members and significant others.

Access to Leisure.

Young people should be encouraged to make use of leisure facilities, and to pursue sports, hobbies and pastimes. All young people should have a Passport to Leisure. Some young people may have talents or abilities which should be encouraged and nurtured.

Financial support through a Pathway Plan might include:

- Help with sports equipment

- Help with musical instruments, tuition costs, exam fees, sheet music etc.
- Help with membership fees of clubs, leisure centres, gyms etc.
- Special training or coaching fees
- Music or singing lessons
- Payment for services at sports clubs and facilities

Assistance may be available through other sources e.g. sporting or arts based organisations, or through education or youth work initiatives. In some circumstances it may be possible to fund part of the cost of activities by 'match funding' with another organisations, or for the young person to make a contribution themselves. This list is not exhaustive, and Pathway Plans should take account of individual circumstances when detailing support to be provided. As a general principal any activity which encourages the young person to use their time constructively, promotes a healthy lifestyle, and/or helps the young person develop and maintain positive relationships should be considered within the planning process.

Driving Lessons.

All eligible and relevant young people over the age of 17 years are able to apply for assistance with the costs of learning to drive. Access to funding will be based on an assessment of the young person's capacity to learn how to drive safely, including their ability to pass the necessary tests. The young person must also be able to demonstrate that they have a history of seeking and sustaining education, training and employment opportunities. Approval of funding will be by the Leaving Care Team Manager and will be subject to budgetary constraints. Where agreed, funding will cover the costs of:

- Provisional driving licence.
- Up to 10 driving lessons. In exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the Service Manager additional lessons may be funded.
- Theory test fee (and one re-take if needed)
- Driving test fee (and one re-take if needed)
- Full licence once test has been passed.

Young people will be excluded from applying for or continuing their lessons where:

- They have had any driving-related convictions, charges or charges pending during the preceding 18 months or
- They have had any convictions, charges, or charges pending in relation to violence, drugs or alcohol during the preceding 6 months or
- They have been in custody during the preceding 6 months or
- During a lesson they behave in any way which the driving instructor deems unacceptable.

Specialist Services.

Some young people may have special needs, or require specialist help or counselling and these requirements should be set out in the Pathway Plan.

Financial support through a Pathway Plan might include:

- Specialist counselling fees
- Specialist equipment costs
- Access to special cultural or religious facilities
- Access to community support facilities
- Help with accessing health advice and medical facilities

This list is not exhaustive, and Pathway Plans should take account of individual circumstances when detailing support to be provided. Financial assistance may be available from other sources. Where appropriate these should be explored and utilized.

When contingency provisions are repeatedly misused staff should carefully consider other means to ensure that their basic needs are met.

Specific groups of Care Leavers with additional or specific needs.

Care leavers who return home.

On returning home, the young person's parent/s are able to claim all benefits and tax credits if the child is under statutory school leaving age or, if over that age, undertaking full time education or training. The parent will be expected to make the relevant claims and provide financial support for their son/daughter from that. Also, parents who are in work and earning over the tax credit limit will be expected to support the young person.

However, if the parents cannot access benefits/tax credits and can produce evidence of an application that has been refused and the young person is under statutory school leaving age, the Social Worker and relevant manager will decide whether or not to offer any financial assistance.

For those over statutory school age, similarly all benefits should be claimed and if they cannot be accessed a personal allowance may be paid to the young person. The Leaving Care Team Leader will make that decision. However, the remainder of the range of Leaving Care allowances, setting up home allowance, festival payments and incentives etc. will not apply, with the exception of essential requirements in relation to Education, Training or Employment.

Where the young person has been discharged home from care, the allowance may continue for up to 6 months, or until the young person becomes 18, whichever is sooner. For those who continue to be looked after on a Care Order the allowance to the young person could continue until they are 18. The amount payable will be decided on a case by case basis and recorded in the Pathway Plan. If a return home is unsuccessful and the young person reverts to eligible or relevant status they would be treated financially as any other care leaver.

Care leavers who are parents

1. Living Costs

A pregnant 16/17-year-old young woman will continue to receive their personal allowance and equivalent of the benefits agency milk entitlement until her baby is born. Thereafter she, if she is a lone parent, is entitled to Child Tax Credit and Child Benefit, although not

Housing Benefit or Local Housing Allowance. This applies regardless of the young person's care status, i.e. on a Care Order, subject to S20 or discharged from S20. The Leaving Care Worker will assist in making these claims at the appropriate time with the Under 18s Benefits Advisor. Benefits received will replace the Leaving Care Personal allowance.

2. Maternity Grant

Care Leavers on benefits or a low income may be entitled to a Sure Start Maternity Grant of £500 to purchase what is needed for their baby. This can be accessed via their community midwife and claimed from 11 weeks before the birth, until the baby is 3 months old. It is not payable until after the baby is born, in which case the Leaving Care Worker may arrange an advance. The grant is non-repayable and does not affect other benefits or tax credits. Further information is available from <https://www.gov.uk>.

3. Childcare Costs

There is help available towards the costs of childcare. If the young person is under 20, Care to Learn could pay up to £160 per child per week towards the young person's childcare and travel costs while they are learning.

If the young person is aged 20 or over and studying at a school sixth form or sixth form college, they could get help with their childcare costs through the Sixth Form College Childcare Scheme.

If the young person is an out-of-work parent aged 20 or over with a partner who's working, they could get help with their childcare costs through the Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work scheme; click here for more information.

Cold weather payments

In cold weather, help towards the cost of heating for each qualifying week is available from the Benefits Agency for parents of children under 5 years who are in receipt of:

- Income Support;
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or;
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.
- Universal credit

The parent needs to notify the Benefits Agency if they have a baby or have a child start to live with them. Thereafter the payments are made automatically

Care leavers who are disabled.

Eligible/relevant sick/disabled care leavers who meet the criteria may be able to claim Income Support or Employment & Support Allowance / Universal Credit and some other benefits such as Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment. However, they cannot claim Housing Benefit or Local Housing Allowance. Processing an Income Support / Educational Maintenance Allowance is a pre-requisite for a number of other benefits and services so should be applied for where possible. The Leaving Care Service will assist the young person in making the relevant claims.

Information about Disability Living Allowance / Personal Independence Payment is available at <https://www.gov.uk/pip/what-youll-get> or from the Benefit Enquiry line 0800 882200, and from www.disabilityalliance.org.

For 16- and 17-year olds, full costs of supported accommodation will be paid for, and the support element of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment awarded will not be taken into account. The young person will be encouraged to use the money to aid their life opportunities or to save towards future needs. The mobility part of Disability Living Allowance however will be considered when awarding travel payments/tickets.

Where a young person over 18 is living in supported accommodation as a result of their additional needs, but the support element is not funded by Adult Social Care, the young person will be expected to contribute towards their support from the support element of Disability Living Allowance. Similarly, the mobility part of their Disability Living Allowance will be taken into account when considering awarding travel payments/tickets.

Care leavers residing with a connected person.

There will be circumstances where the most appropriate place for a young person to live is with a person connected to them, but who does not have parental responsibility. If the young person is still looked after, i.e. either on a Care Order or accommodated under Section 20, the connected person will need to be assessed in accordance with the fostering procedures.

If the young person is over statutory school leaving age and no longer accommodated or on a Care Order, i.e. a Relevant Care Leaver, the connected person may be approved as a supported lodging provider and payments authorised by the Leaving Care Manager. Benefits may be payable, and advice should be sought in the first instance from the under 18s Benefits Advisor. The young person will be expected in that circumstance to contribute to the provider for utilities and food.

Care leavers in custody

Young people aged 16 and 17 in custodial settings will not receive a personal allowance however the social worker/personal advisor will assess what additional support they require. This is because they will not have the usual expenses of living in the community and there are usually opportunities for the young person to earn some money. If this is not the case, exceptions can be made with the agreement of the Leaving Care Team Manager. Transport from custody will be arranged or paid for and any immediate needs on release considered.

Qualifying Care Leavers.

Qualifying Care Leavers are entitled to an assessment about what sort of advice, guidance and assistance they need. This can include financial support and could be provided until the young person reaches the age of 21, or 25 where they are engaged in education or training. The details of the support will depend on assessed need so decisions will be made on a case by case basis.

Young people qualifying for this in Medway will be:

- Under the age of 21 who were in the care of Medway Council between the ages of 16 and 18 for any period of less than 13 weeks, except those who returned home on leaving care;

- Eligible or relevant young people who have successfully returned home between the ages of 16 and 18 for more than 6 months;
- Those aged 16 to 21 who are or were subject to a Special Guardianship Order and were looked after by a Medway Council immediately before the making of the order;
- Those aged 16 to 21 who were privately fostered when 16 or over who live in Medway.

Leaving Care staff will aim to maintain contact with qualifying young people on a regular basis, at a minimum of 6 monthly, to establish whether they may be in need of assistance.

Care leavers returning over age of 21 and up to 25 years of age.

Young people previously eligible for Leaving Care services, may require additional advice and support after the age of 21 and up to the age of 25. They will have been informed of this as they approached the age of 21 and it will have been referred to in their last Pathway Plan prior to 21 years.

Support can be available for as long as the young person requires up to the age of 25 years. Where a care leaver requests this support, an assessment will be carried out by the Leaving Care Team. The assessment will focus on the needs of the individual and how best these needs will be addressed. It will draw on information about the young person's skills and capabilities, previous support given and the extent to which the young person made use of that, which will have been set out in Pathway Plans up to age 21. Where appropriate a needs assessment will be undertaken by the Leaving Care personal advisor and authorisation given by the Leaving Care Manager.

Complaints.

All care leavers with whom staff are working with, should be given information about how to give feedback, be that comments, compliments or complaints. Young people may request help in completion of the form.

Care leavers should have routine involvement in, and encouragement to make suggestions and comments about, the services they receive, and agreement should always be sought about any issues or differences of opinion that arise. However, where this cannot be done and the young person wants to make complaint about the finances they have or are receiving, in the first instance local resolution should be attempted.

The person receiving the complaint must acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 working days, saying who will deal with it and when a response will be received, and a substantive response must be given within 10 working days

Appendix 1 Student Finance

ADDITIONAL HELP FOR STUDENTS WITH CHILDREN: THE PARENTS LEARNING ALLOWANCE:

This is a grant to help with course-related costs for full-time students who have dependent children. How much is paid will depend upon the young persons income family's income.

More information is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/parents-learning-allowance/overview>

CARE to LEARN

If a young person is aged under 20 at the start of their course and has one or more children, Care to Learn can help with the cost of childcare while learning. Care to Learn can help pay for childcare and related travel costs whilst the young person attends their course. The allocated Personal Advisor must assist with claiming where the young person requires this support. This support is available to young people who are studying at school, 6th form, college or other learning providers, but does not cover university. For young people attending university, the Childcare Grant (below) may offer support.

CHILDCARE GRANT:

This is a grant for full-time, higher education students with dependent children. How much young people receive will depend upon their income, but the grant will cover up to a maximum of 85% of your childcare costs. This grant is only available for students whose childcare provider is on the "Ofsted Early Years Register or General Childcare Register" (the childcare provider will be able to tell you this). Students must be receiving student finance or be eligible for one. Further information on eligibility is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/childcare-grant/eligibility>

Any money awarded for childcare for the summer period will be included in the term three installments of the childcare grant, usually at the start of each term. Students can only receive help with childcare costs from **either** the Working Tax Credits system/ childcare element of Universal Credit or this grant, not both at the same time.

Since April 2004, all three & four-year old's can get 15 hours a week of free childcare and education, for 38 weeks of the year (term time). A child becomes eligible at the beginning of the first term following their third birthday.

Two-year old's may also be eligible if your child has an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC) or receives payments to assist with your child's disability or learning needs. Two-year old's may also be entitled to some free childcare sessions if you receive Income Support, Job Seeker's Allowance, Universal Credit or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

STUDENTS WITH AN ADULT DEPENDENT: ADULT DEPENDENTS GRANT:

This is a grant for students with a spouse/ adult dependant who is wholly or mainly financially dependent upon them. It does not have to be repaid. How much received will depend upon the care leavers and their dependent's income.

Further information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/adult-dependants-grant/what-youll-get>

STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY: DISABLED STUDENT ALLOWANCE:

If the young person has a disability, long term health condition or specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, which makes studying more expensive or less convenient than it would be otherwise, they may be able to receive extra financial help. This could be for academic support or equipment (e.g. a voice-recognition computer or tapes or Braille). These additional allowances are not means-tested in any way.

HOW AND WHEN TO APPLY FOR THE ABOVE GRANTS AND STUDENT LOANS?

The easiest way to apply for these grants or any student loans is online. Sometimes the whole application is online, other times you will need to download and print off a form. Your allocated Leaving Care Personal Advisor can support you to do this if you require help.

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-student-finance>

If you do not have a computer or access to the internet at home, then computers and printers are freely available at your local Job Centre or local library (although you will be charged a small amount to print). If you have difficulty using a computer, or have a question, you can call Student Finance:

Telephone: 0300 100 0607 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm; Saturday, 9am to 4pm)

There is also a textphone: 0300 100 0622 (Available Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm)

It is advisable to do this as soon as possible, even if you are not sure you will be starting the course, as Student Finance loans and grants are easier to cancel than arrange in a hurry. Once your application form is submitted, Student Finance England will then begin the process of assessing for the tuition fee loan, the student loan and the grants mentioned above.

Student Finance England will then send a **Student Support Notification**. This will list what financial support the young person is entitled to. The young person will also be sent a **Customer Reference Number** (what used to be called an (ART ID) which he/she will need to quote if he/she telephone Student Finance Direct (the call centre who answer enquiries about how the application is progressing).

The Student Loans Company will then process the loan and send a **Student Loan Payment Schedule** which will list the dates throughout the academic year when the young person will receive his/her student loan. At the beginning of the academic year, the first student loan instalment will be paid by the Student Loans Company into the young person's bank account 3 working days after they receive confirmation from the University that he/she has enrolled on your course. When you enroll, you will be asked to take your Student ID Card and Student Finance Direct Support Notification form to a central University point where the barcode on the form will be scanned. Your barcode number will be transmitted to the Student Loans Company on the day it is scanned, and they will then release the loan instalment into your bank account 3 working days later.

DYSLEXIA TESTS:

If you feel you have an additional learning need that will impact on your studies (such as dyslexia), this should be supported directly via your university. They will likely have information available on their website or a telephone number students can ring. The university will likely wish to conduct an assessment of a student's needs to find out how best to support them.

Students with dyslexia can also apply for a Disabled Student Allowance (see above).

HOUSING BENEFIT:

The following categories of students are eligible to apply for Housing Benefit/the Housing Element of Universal Credit to help with rent, if you're on a low income or already claiming benefits:

- Lone parents (and some student couples with children),
- Some students with a disability and students who have been certified as incapable of work by a doctor for 28 weeks.
- A student's partner who is not a student is also eligible to apply for Housing Benefit all year round.

However, Income Support and Housing Benefit are means-tested and therefore any student loan, adult dependent allowance and tax credits which you receive will all be counted as income when assessing your entitlement. This means that even though you may be eligible to apply, you may not receive anything. However, the student loan and adult dependent allowance is only counted as income over 43 weeks of the year. It is ignored over July and August, which means that you should re-apply at the beginning of July to see if you are entitled to anything over these two months.

Please see Job Centre if you want to know if you will be entitled to claim benefits whilst studying and if so, how much you will receive.

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA):

This used to be called Incapacity Benefit but is being replaced by the Employment and Support Allowance. Employment Support Allowance can apply to people who are employed, self-employed, unemployed or full-time students who have a disability or a long-term health condition. As a student, you would need to also be in receipt of Personal Independence Payments or Disability Living Allowance.

Employment and Support Allowance is means-tested, in so much as they will consider whether you have savings, and what your income (and if relevant your partner's income) is. Any student income you receive may therefore be counted when assessing your entitlement. Becoming a student does not mean you are capable of work. Please see the Student Advice Centre and/or the University Disability Advisory Service for further information if you are in receipt of this benefit.

You cannot receive Employment and Support Allowance and Job Seeker's Allowance at the same time. To speak to someone about ESA:

Telephone: 0800 055 6688

Textphone: 0800 023 4888

DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE (DLA) AND PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE PAYMENTS (PIP):

Disability Living Allowance is not means-tested and therefore any student income you receive does not affect this benefit.

If you are already receiving DLA, the DWP will likely have written to you, or write to you soon to invite you to apply for Personal Independence Payments as those benefits move to a new system.

CHILD TAX CREDIT:

Anyone with children can apply for tax credits, which are administered by the HM Revenue and Customs. Your pay, your partner's pay, certain benefits (including Income Support) will all be classed as income. There is no set limit now on who receives tax credits, eligibility is assessed on your income, the number of children you care for, and your childcare costs. The child you are responsible for must live with you, or you are the main carer.

WORKING TAX CREDIT:

You could get Working Tax Credit if either of the following applies:

- you're aged from 16 to 24 and have a child or a qualifying disability
- you're 25 or over, with or without children

You must:

- work a certain number of hours a week
- get paid for the work you do (or expect to)
- have an income below a certain level

The basic amount of Working Tax Credit is up to £1,960 a year - you could get more (or less) depending on your circumstances and income.

Any adult dependent allowance you receive will be counted as income. Please see the Job Centre or the online tax credits calculator for more information on money you could apply for.

You can't claim tax credits and [Universal Credit](#) at the same time.

COUNCIL TAX:

A full-time student living with other full-time students will not be liable to pay Council Tax. If there is only one adult non-student in the house, the Council Tax bill should be reduced by 25%. Full-time students living with nonstudents are not liable for Council Tax in respect of any date after 6 April 2004 (the date of a change in the Law) but the house will still attract the tax which the nonstudent will have to pay. Please see the Student Advice Centre or the University Information Centre for further information.

IF IN RECEIPT OF BENEFITS OR TAX CREDITS, WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD BE PROVIDE TO WHO AND WHEN?

If in receipt of income support and housing benefit, provide the DWP and the Council (Housing Benefit department) with details of student loan/ adult dependents allowance/tax credit amounts when you enroll. Remember that they should **not** count the Parent Learning Allowance or Childcare Grant as income when calculating entitlement to benefits. If in receipt of the Child Tax Credit, when enrolling provide the HM Revenue and Customs with details of any adult dependant allowance received.

If in receipt of the Working Tax Credit, when enrolling provide the HM Revenue and Customs with details of employment income and any adult dependant allowance received. If entitled to apply for Income Support and Housing Benefit, re-apply on 1 July, at the end of your first year, because the student loan and dependents allowance are not taken into account over the months of July and August. However, remember that from the 1 September, your student loan and dependents allowance will again be counted as income by the DWP and the Council (Housing Benefit) and will therefore need to notify them again of what will be receiving for your second year.

OTHER HELP

STUDENT OVERDRAFT FACILITY:

Most high street banks offer an interest-free overdraft facility, subject to satisfactory credit references. Provided that the account is managed within the agreed overdraft, there are no bank charges. If you are not able to access a current account due to a poor credit rating, ask the Bank if you can open a Basic Bank account. See www.fsa.gov.uk/consumer/pdfs/bank_account.pdf for details about which Banks operate these types of accounts.

HELP WITH SCHOOL MEALS:

You can receive help with school meals if you are the parent of a registered pupil and you receive income-based jobseeker's allowance or income support, **or** child tax credit only (and are not eligible for working tax credit) and your gross annual income is below a certain amount. Please contact your Local Authority for further details.

PART-TIME STUDENTS.

HELP FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITY:

Financial help is available if you study part-time. Please check the Department for Education (DfES) website for the latest information: www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport. You may also wish to contact either the University Information Centre or the Student Advice Centre who will be able to provide you with further details as and when they are received.

DISABLED STUDENT'S ALLOWANCE:

As above, if any disability, long term-health condition or dyslexia makes studying more expensive or less convenient than it would otherwise be, contact the University Disability Advisory service. You may be able to receive extra financial help. This could be for academic support (e.g. if you are dyslexic and you need a scribe for note taking) or equipment (e.g. a voice-recognition computer or tapes or Braille). These additional allowances are not means-tested in any way.

SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS AND TAX CREDITS:

You may also be able to claim certain Benefits. Please contact the Job Centre for further information.

FEE REMISSIONS:

If you are studying less than 50% of a full-time course and are in receipt of social security benefits or are on a low income, you may be entitled to a reduction in your tuition fees. Please contact your specific University's Information Centre for further details.

WHO'S WHO IN THE WORLD OF STUDENT FINANCE?

STUDENT FINANCE ENGLAND: Assess how much fee loan, student loan and additional grants a student should receive.

THE STUDENT LOANS COMPANY (SLC): Processes and pays the fee loan, student loan and additional grants and are the people who organize repayments when you graduate.

THE DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS (DWP): Calculates entitlement

to Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance and Incapacity Benefit.

HM REVENUE AND CUSTOMS: Calculates entitlement to Tax Credits.

MEDWAY COUNCIL: The Housing Benefit department within the Council calculates entitlement to Housing Benefit. If you do not live in Medway, then the local council or borough council where you live will be responsible for housing. To check which local authority is responsible for where you live, you can put your postcode into this Local Authority checker: <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

Designated member of Staff (DMS): contact person in college and universities who will assist you in assessing the support and help you require. This may also be called the Student Advice Centre.

OTHER USEFUL TERMINOLOGY:

PN1: The form a student fills in to apply to be assessed for a student loan, grants and help with tuition fees. Student Finance can also be applied for online.

STUDENT SUPPORT NOTIFICATION/FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT FORM: Informs a student how much student support they have been awarded.

STUDENT LOAN PAYMENT SCHEDULE: From the Student Loan Company. This tells a student when the student loan and any additional grants will be paid into their Bank account.

Customer Reference Number (formerly an ART ID): An identification number given by Student Finance Direct to each student who applies for support.